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A Social Space in Constant Reshaping: Umbrian Migrants in the Atlantic Economies (1900–1914)

THIERRY RINALDETTI

Dirk Hoerder's comprehensive survey of labor migrations, highlighting the complexity of historical mobility in the Atlantic economies, and Samuel Baily's "village-outward approach," pointing to the need to study transatlantic migration flows from their place of origin, have revealed the multipolar character of the international migrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They have also shown that European migrants did not travel exclusively to the Americas (Hoerder 1985; Baily 1992, 43–68); rather, migration chains often linked small European towns and villages to several international destinations on two, three, or even four continents (Audenino 1990; Gabaccia 2000). Complex issues concerning the direction—and redirection—of the migratory flows have been raised that can be addressed by focusing on the migrants' networks. Beginning with John and Leatrice MacDonald's definition of the migration chain as a "movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous migrants," many studies have contributed to a better understanding of migratory networks (MacDonald and MacDonald 1964, 82). Such studies have defined the social space (family, town, region) in which migrants' networks operated (Baily 1982, 73–91; Sturino 1990); made distinctions between personal relationship chains and occupational chains (Gabaccia 1988) and between horizontal chains (linking migrants to family and friends at home) and vertical chains (in which emigration agents or labor bosses, for instance, played a crucial part) (Harney 1984); and have proposed migration chain typologies (Devoto 1991). These works inform my study of the migration patterns and social space of a group of very mobile Italian migrants during the Great Wave of emigration.

I am comparing the various destinations of migrants from seven small neighboring towns in the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines (Umbria)—a low-mountain area whose population underwent massive migrations to mining areas of Europe and the United States during the period from the turn of the twentieth century to World War I—in order to infer their social space. The migrants' precise U.S. destinations from four small hamlets (*frazioni*) that make up the municipality (*comune*) of Fossato di Vico (Colbassano,

Fossato, Palazzolo, and Purello)¹ were first identified by crossing data from several nominal sources, and then they were compared with the destinations of their fellow migrants from neighboring towns. This article will argue that throughout the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines very local migration chains – initiated in each town or small hamlet by a few pioneers and based on networks of family and friends – gradually included residents from other towns and hamlets. This phenomenon increased over time as more and more people emigrated and migrants' social space was reshaped through contacts established in the *paese* (hometown), in the neighboring towns, during the journey abroad, and at the places where they eventually settled.

In the Footsteps of the Pioneers, Everybody's Got Their Own America

Fossato di Vico's relatively small population (about 2,800 in 1900 and 3,500 in 1911) and the quality of research sources (individual *nulla osta* applications were systematically logged in two registers from 1901 to 1960)² allowed me to create a database on migrants and their families from several nominal sources in Italy (*nulla osta* registers, population registers, marriage and death registers), Luxembourg (immigration registers), and the United States (Ellis Island ship manifests, population census schedules).³ More than four out of five migrants were born to peasant families, and two out of three to families of sharecroppers or farm laborers. By the turn of the century, there were many individuals among the remaining 15 percent of families whose heads were classified in nonagricultural categories (mainly as craftsmen, railway employees, bricklayers, or shopkeepers) who had joined the ranks of the municipality's unskilled labor force (and those of farm laborers in particular). Unsurprisingly, men made up the bulk of the town's migrants (78 percent) and an even bigger percentage of migrants to Europe (84 percent, compared to 76.5 percent to the United States).⁴

Having little or no previous experience with mining, an overwhelming majority of the municipality's male migrants found work as laborers and – increasingly, as the years went by – as miners⁵ in the small iron-mining towns of the Lorraine, France, and Luxembourg; the anthracite region of Pennsylvania; the iron ranges of Michigan and Minnesota; and the coal basins of Illinois and Kansas. Women migrants either ran family boarding houses or helped with domestic chores. Not only did many individuals – mainly men – repeat *nulla osta* applications⁶ and migration moves⁷ in the course of just thirteen years, but they also often traveled back and forth between their homeland and several distinct migration places instead of returning to the same migration destination (Rinaldetti 2012). Sixty percent of those who applied twice for a *nulla osta* between 1901 and 1913 changed

countries of destination, as did 85 percent of those who applied three, four, five, and up to six times during those thirteen years. In this process, they sometimes simply changed mining towns or companies within a general area—for example, crossing a river sometimes meant changing countries in the mining basin situated at the borders of France, Luxembourg, and Germany—or else they tried new mining basins, which in the United States meant moving to a different state, or they went to different continents. Some of these men even traveled directly from Luxembourg to the United States without returning to their homeland first.

These migration patterns were not exceptional, surprising as they may seem in a small rural town whose population had long remained relatively isolated in the Umbrian Apennines. Fossato di Vico lies at the heart of the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines, where mass emigration did not start until 1900 but took on spectacular proportions through the first decade of the twentieth century until the onset of World War I in 1914. Migration rates in the area varied from 34.22 percent in Sigillo to 60.02 percent in Costacciaro in the years 1901–1910 and from 45 percent in Gualdo Tadino to 83 percent in Fossato di Vico in the years 1911–1913 (Tosi 1983, 230–231).⁸ From Fossato di Vico's walls, Sigillo, Costacciaro, Scheggia, parts of Gualdo Tadino (the San Pellegrino hamlet), and Gubbio (the Branca hamlet) could be seen; three of Fossato di Vico's four hamlets lay so close to the surrounding towns as to serve as bridgeheads to them. In the north, the hamlet of Purello bordered nearby Sigillo at the foot of the Apennines, while Fossato di Vico's administrative center was perched on the mountainside 1.3 miles away. In the west, Colbassano, still further away from the town center (over 2 miles), was adjacent to Gubbio's Branca hamlet. From Palazzolo in the south, Gualdo Tadino's northernmost hamlet, Palazzo Mancinelli, was nearer than the town's walls (Figure 1).

This location in an area of mass emigration was coupled with Fossato di Vico's central position in the region's road and rail networks, and the train traffic in a town this size made an impression on German writer Hermann Hesse when he passed through in 1913 (Galassi 2007, 7). With no train station in Sigillo, Costacciaro, or Scheggia and only one railway line passing through Gubbio, Gualdo Tadino, or Nocera Umbra, Fossato di Vico's situation was remarkable indeed: Not only did the trains between Rome and Ancona stop there, but a second railway line had been opened in 1886 to Arezzo in Tuscany. Fossato di Vico also stood at the crossroads of two major road axes. The road leading from Gubbio to the foot of the Apennines ended between Fossato di Vico and Gualdo Tadino. Another road, which followed the ancient Via Flaminia, ran southward to Foligno in the Tiber plain and eastward—precisely between Fossato di Vico and



Figure 1. The Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines

Sigillo—across the natural barrier of the Apennines through the Valico di Fossato pass and to Fabriano in the Marches. From Fossato di Vico, the regional road and rail networks thus provided easy access to Terni and Rome in the south, the Marches in the east, and northern Umbria and Tuscany in the west.

From Gubbio and Gualdo Tadino (the region's two largest towns, located, respectively, to the west and to the south of Fossato di Vico), from Nocera Umbra further to the south, and from Sigillo, Costacciaro, and Scheggia (three smaller towns on the western side of the mountain to the north of Fossato)⁹ migrants headed for the same mining areas of Europe and the United States. In Luxembourg, they concentrated themselves in just four small neighboring towns (Esch-sur-Alzette, Dudelange, Differdange, and Kayl) while their presence in France and Germany was virtually limited to the French and (then) German parts of the Lorraine (and more precisely to the *arrondissement* of Briey on the French side of the border) (Tosi 1983, 126–127; Antenucci 1999, 135). The fact that migrants from the four corners of the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines all shared some common migration patterns becomes evident when their destinations in the United States are compared to those of migrants from the area of Norcia, a nearby mountain town in the Umbrian Apennines. The former and the latter actually followed such specific routes that their paths rarely crossed in the mining regions of the United States.

In the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines, the destinations of 766 migrants listed in Bernardino Pezzopane's directory of the region's migrants aged

over fourteen and traveling to the United States between 1901 and 1913 were found in Ellis Island ship manifests (Pezzopane 2006, Appendix). Ninety-three percent of the Eugubino-Gualdese migrants headed for Pennsylvania (63 percent), Kansas (11 percent), Minnesota (8 percent), Michigan (8 percent), or Illinois (3 percent). The remaining 7 percent followed less trodden paths to a wide range of states including California, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Wisconsin, Missouri, Maryland, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts (Figure 2).

On the other hand, a search at www.ellisland.org listed 206 “adult” (defined as over age fourteen) migrants who indicated Norcia as their residence upon arriving at Ellis Island between 1901 and 1913 and who noted their final destinations. Because the sample included over 150 different family names and a large variety of destinations, it can be considered representative. As with their neighbors from the Eugubino-Gualdese, they, too, migrated to Pennsylvania—though in smaller proportions (33 percent)—but their other destinations were West Virginia (28 percent), Ohio (21 percent), New York (11 percent), and New Jersey (6 percent). In New York state, the migrants, who went to New York City itself, were



Figure 2. Mining Destinations of the Migrants from the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines

- 1 Mesabi Range (Saint Louis County, Minnesota)
- 2 Upper Peninsula Iron Ranges (Michigan)
- 3 Anthracite Coal Fields (mainly Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, Pennsylvania)
- 4 LaSalle County, Illinois
- 5 Cherokee-Crawford Coal Fields (Crawford County, Kansas)
- 6 *Arrondissement* of Briey (*Département* of the Meurthe, France)
- 7 Esch-sur-Alzette, Dudelange, Differdange, Kayl (Luxembourg)
- 8 Moselle (German part of the Lorraine)

street musicians, known as *girovaghi*. Unlike their fellow Umbrians from the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines, the migrants from Norcia remained in the eastern United States, in the large coal basin on the borders of western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio, and never went to Kansas or the Great Lakes region. In Pennsylvania, they almost invariably preferred the bituminous coal districts in the west to the anthracite region in the east. Only about 1 percent chose another destination, again, always on the East Coast, that is, in Massachusetts or Delaware.

Throughout the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines, posters had been advertising ships to the United States since the late nineteenth century. Cinque Ditte Riunite, an emigration office whose headquarters were in Naples, was very active in Umbria, and the Società di Navigazione Generale Italiana had opened an office on Gualdo Tadino's market square in 1900. Throughout the region the mayors, local government employees, schoolteachers, and innkeepers acted as intermediaries between potential migrants and emigration agents (Polidoro 1973, 39–42). In Fossato di Vico too, an emigration office opened – though not until 1910 – on the initiative of Don Marinelli, the priest of the Purello parish, also known as “the priest of the emigrants.” The office, which was the headquarters of the benevolent society Opera Bonomelli, had been founded to address the needs of the parish's migrants and even published a short-lived newspaper (*Il Rocaccio*, from November 1911 to June 1912); it provided information on possible destinations and means of transportation and offered some help with the administrative procedures (Monacelli and Castellani 2002, 5). Yet by the time the international labor migrations gathered momentum in Umbria, many inhabitants had come to distrust the emigration agents and their practices, especially since the ill-fated episode of 1901, when thousands of Umbrians had been recruited and sent to recession-plagued Brazil (Tosi 1983, 83–84).

Nationwide, the emigration agents had been so harshly criticized by the landlords and the political establishment since the late nineteenth century that the Italian parliament even debated their legitimacy. Emigration agents were believed to have no true impact on the size of the migration flows, though they did have a significant one on the migrants' destinations (Sori 1979, 310). In Umbria, however, they seem to have assumed importance only belatedly in areas of mass emigration and to have merely helped migrants there to get their train and ship tickets and plan their journey to the seaports, among other things.

The Umbrian migrants probably depended more on the specific travel routes that had been pioneered in the different sectors of the Apennines than they did on the information spread by the emigration agents and offices. As a large number of complex factors contributed to shaping and

directing the flows of migrants, the prominent role of the pioneers is hard to demonstrate, but the oral testimonies collected by Eriberto Polidoro in Gualdo Tadino in the 1970s revealed that the town's first migrants to Pennsylvania had actually followed some fellow Umbrians from Fossato di Vico and Sigillo well before World War I (not incidentally, Sigillo had the highest migration rate in the whole Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines in the last decade of the nineteenth century) just before the advent of mass emigration from the Eugubino-Gualdese area.¹⁰ As for pioneers from nearby towns, they too had benefited from previous contacts with some migrants from the Marches and Romagna who had worked in Umbria in the lignite mines of Spoleto and passed along precious information about the work opportunities and conditions in Pennsylvania. As a matter of fact, the migrants who left Fossato di Vico from 1900 to 1914 were almost systematically headed for the same mining areas and the same mining towns as their fellow townsmen who had left long before them, sometimes as early as the 1880s. In the town's *nulla osta* registers, there were nine young men born in the United States between 1887 and 1897 to parents who had pioneered the routes to the very mining towns where the bulk of the town's migrants subsequently went between 1900 to 1914: Old Forge, Pennsylvania; Frontenac, Kansas; Iron Mountain, Michigan; and LaSalle, Illinois. Similarly, the town's migrants who declared at Ellis Island in the early twentieth century that they had been in the United States before had sojourned between 1885 and 1898 in those places that later became their fellow townsmen's favorite destinations: Iron Mountain and Bessemer, Michigan; Hibbing, Minnesota; Frontenac, Kansas; and Scranton, Pennsylvania.

From the Hamlet to the Nearby Towns: The Migrants' Social Space

Judging from their destinations in the United States and those of their neighbors from Norcia, the migrants from the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines would appear to have followed the same routes everywhere, regardless of which town they came from. In each town, though, they typically favored one or two of the mining basins that received the bulk of the region's transatlantic migrants. Pennsylvania's anthracite region attracted an overwhelming majority of the migrants from Gubbio, Nocera Umbra, and Scheggia, but only half of the ones from Gualdo Tadino and Sigillo. Costacciaro and to an even larger extent Fossato di Vico stood out as exceptions with significant yet much lower proportions of migrants to that area. Unusually large numbers of migrants from Gualdo Tadino traveled to Kansas, while significant numbers of migrants from Sigillo and, to a greater extent, Costacciaro traveled to Minnesota. Minnesota received as many migrants from Costacciaro as

Pennsylvania did. In fact, the iron fields of Minnesota and Michigan drew 50 percent of Costacciaro's migrants. In Nocera Umbra travelers virtually always chose coal-mining areas in Pennsylvania, Kansas, or Illinois, while significant proportions of people from Gubbio, Fossato di Vico, and Sigillo went off the beaten tracks and away from the five major destinations of the region's migrants (Figure 3).¹¹

	KANSAS	ILLINOIS	MICHIGAN	MINNESOTA	PENNSYLVANIA	OTHER STATES
COSTACCIARO	2%	1%	8.5%	41.5%	41.5%	5.5%
FOSSATO DI VICO	15%	9.5%	23.5%	12.5%	26%	13.5%
GUALDO TADINO	25.5%	5%	8.5%	0.5%	54%	6.5%
GUBBIO	3%	1%	5%	—	82%	9%
NOCERA UMBRA	4%	4%	—	—	88%	4%
SCHEGGIA	3.5%	—	2.5%	2.5%	88%	3.5%
SIGILLO	2%	—	9.5%	21%	51%	16.5%

Figure 3. U.S. Destinations from the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines

Because migrants to the United States almost invariably found work as miners or laborers in just a few small mining towns in this early period of international labor migration, one can assume that the occupational dimension of the migration chains and networks was of little significance and that local patterns in the direction of the migration flows should be attributed principally to the migrants' interpersonal relationships. In other words, if the migrants were found to have favored a specific destination, it was probably due to the contacts they had made in various social circles (relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances) and places (in their hometown, the surrounding towns, and the migrant communities abroad). The sheer number of migrants who apparently had very little trouble changing international destinations from one migration to the next, or who belonged to extended families with members already settled in various places of migration, seem to confirm the importance of primary relations in directing the flows of migrants.¹² With the exception of Pennsylvania's anthracite region, where immigrants settled in a more widespread manner, their destinations in the other mining basins were almost always just one or two neighboring towns between which the migrants often circulated (LaSalle, Illinois; Frontenac and Pittsburg, Kansas; Hibbing, Virginia; Eveleth, Minnesota; Bessemer and Iron Mountain, Michigan) so that a sustained migration flow, for example from Gualdo Tadino to Kansas, testifies to the existence of a specific migration chain.

In Fossato di Vico, a survey of the migrants' destinations from each of the four hamlets provides a microanalysis of the town's migratory flows. In each hamlet—Colbassano, Fossato, Palazzolo, and Purello—migrants followed the region's typical routes to the United States, Switzerland, and the mining basin on the borders of Luxembourg and the French and (then) German parts of the Lorraine. These regular patterns offer an exemplary case of multipolar international migration flows on a very small scale, one that is relevant to both Samuel Baily's village-outward approach and to Dirk Hoerder's focus on the multidirectional dimension of the international labor migrations in the Atlantic economies. In each hamlet, migrants to the United States often had a marked preference for one or two mining basins. For instance, Kansas attracted nearly 40 percent of the migrants from Palazzolo, only half as many in Fossato and Colbassano, and practically none in Purello. The Great Lakes region was the destination for half the migrants in Purello and two-thirds in Colbassano. More people went to Illinois from Purello than from any other hamlet, while in Colbassano one in two migrants went to Michigan. As for less frequented destinations, they had a particular appeal in Fossato, with almost 20 percent of migrants headed for such places as Connecticut, New York, Maryland, Missouri, New Mexico, or Utah. Those from Purello sometimes also chose less common locations, mostly California (Figure 4).

	KANSAS	ILLINOIS	MICHIGAN	MINNESOTA	PENNSYLVANIA	OTHER STATES
COLBASSANO	24%	6%	50%	10%	10%	—
FOSSATO	20%	7.1%	14.3%	4.3%	35.7%	18.6%
PALAZZOLO	38.2%	5.9%	5.9%	20.6%	26.5%	2.9%
PURELLO	1.3%	28.2%	12.8%	9%	39.7%	9%

Figure 4. U.S. Destinations from Fossato di Vico's Hamlets

Given Fossato di Vico's relatively small size and the tendency for several generations of extended family to live under the same roof, the migrants to all international destinations in the United States and Europe came from a limited number of households in each of the town's hamlets: 44 from Colbassano, 106 from Fossato, 47 from Palazzolo, and 79 from Purello.

The very existence of substantial migratory flows linking such small neighborhoods to quite specific mining basins in the United States seems to bear evidence that hamlet-based networks of relatives, neighbors, and friends played a crucial part in shaping the town's migration chains, from Palazzolo to Kansas, from Purello to Illinois, or from Colbassano to

Michigan. Indeed, on arriving at Ellis Island, the migrants from Fossato di Vico almost always indicated some relative's or friend's address as their final destination. A mere 4 percent gave a hotel name; one in two new arrivals stayed with some immediate family member; a little over one in three was accommodated by extended relatives, such as an uncle or an aunt, a cousin, or in-law; and one in ten relied upon some acquaintance or friend for accommodation.¹³

Kansas had a particular appeal in both Fossato di Vico's Palazzolo hamlet and in the nearby town of Gualdo Tadino. The state drew as much as 38 percent of the migrants from Palazzolo (compared to a mere 15 percent in the whole town and not even 1 percent from Purello) and 26 percent from Gualdo Tadino (compared to 11 percent in the whole Eugubino-Gualdese area, the smallest contingent being 2 percent from Costacciaro). Because of the hamlet's location—Palazzolo lay closer to Gualdo Tadino than to Fossato di Vico's center—its migrants and those from the nearby town probably benefited from common networks, with large numbers in both places taking part in a common migration chain to the Cherokee-Crawford coal fields of Kansas and to Frontenac in particular. Similarly, one may wonder whether the migrants from Colbassano, half of whom went to Michigan, were not taking part in a migration chain rooted in both their own hamlet and the neighboring sections of either Gualdo Tadino (in San Pellegrino, for instance) or Gubbio (in Branca). A microanalysis of the flows from Gualdo Tadino's and Gubbio's hamlets would be necessary to definitively make this case.

A shift in focus from the U.S. destinations of the region's migrants to their municipalities of origin reveals that, apart from Pennsylvania, where the migrants came from all over the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines, each state received migrants mainly from a smaller group of neighboring towns that seemed to be taking part in common migration chains (Figure 5). In Kansas, over 80 percent of the migrants came from Fossato di Vico and nearby Gualdo Tadino. In Illinois, a still larger proportion was from Fossato di Vico, Gualdo Tadino, and Nocera Umbra combined, three closely situated towns aligned in a north-south configuration on the western side of the mountain, with Gualdo Tadino positioned 5 miles to the south of Fossato di Vico and 7.5 miles to the north of Nocera Umbra. In the Great Lakes region, substantial migration chains linked the iron ranges of Michigan and Minnesota to Fossato di Vico, Sigillo, and Costacciaro, three towns separated by 2 or 3 miles between them and located on the mountain's western side when heading north from Fossato di Vico. In Minnesota, in particular, it was probably no coincidence that almost all migrants should have come from these three neighboring towns, while those from Nocera

Umbra and above all Gubbio (the region's largest *comune*) were conspicuously absent in that state, and the numbers from Gualdo Tadino (the region's second-largest town) barely worth mentioning.¹⁴ The migration chains of the Eugubino-Gualdesi depended heavily on the small distances between the different municipalities, if only because distances still for the most part determined the frequency and the intensity of the inhabitants' interactions and, consequently, the migration opportunities of would-be migrants. This phenomenon is in keeping with the migration chains of the Sirolesi and the Agnonesi to Buenos Aires (patterns that Baily found within a radius of 11 miles of the administrative center of Agnone), or those from Calabria's Rende area to Toronto (which Franc Sturino argued operated in "several communes within walking distance of each other") (Baily 1982, 89; Sturino 1990, 3).

	COSTACCIARO	FOSSATO DI VICO	GUALDO TADINO	GUBBIO	NOCERA UMBRA	SCHEGGIA	SIGILLO
KANSAS	2.5%	13.5%	68%	7.5%	3.5%	3.5%	1.5%
ILLINOIS	4%	29%	46%	8.5%	12.5%	—	—
MICHIGAN	14%	30.5%	32%	14%	—	4%	5.5%
MINNESOTA	65%	15%	1.5%	—	—	3.5%	15%
PENNSYLVANIA	8%	4%	24%	31.5%	13.5%	14.5%	4.5%

Figure 5. *Municipalities of Origin of the Migrants in the United States*

Owing to Fossato di Vico's central location both geographically and in the region's road and rail networks, its inhabitants probably had more occasions, especially during such events as the annual *festa* in honor of St. Peter on June 29, for instance, to meet or hear about other migrants (such as those pioneers from the Marches whose influence could be felt as far as Gualdo Tadino), to make friends with fellow Umbrians from the surrounding towns, and to forge family alliances with them through marriage. In other words, Fossato di Vico's citizens had many opportunities to establish such contacts as certainly proved invaluable in an age of international labor migrations, when the acquaintances and relatives by marriage, who were all following specific routes to the mining areas of Europe and America, could provide fresh opportunities that were not readily available to all potential migrants. As a result, people from Fossato di Vico developed substantial migration chains, available in no other town, to each of the region's five major U.S. destinations (Pennsylvania, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois). Unlike their neighbors, they did not seem to have any favorite destination. Significant and almost comparable

numbers traveled to these five American states, which people from their neighboring towns migrated to in a more targeted fashion.

Dirk Hoerder argued that “although the immigrants were moving across the world, they did not leave their networks,” and indeed that was the case with migrants from the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines as early as the 1880s (Hoerder 2005, 80). Since migrants everywhere relied upon contacts with people in their immediate areas, their networks were affected and changed by the migration process. In Fossato di Vico, the migrants’ town-based or hamlet-based networks soon evolved into broader ones, thus allowing the local population to try new routes—often those of their neighbors—and to eventually take part in several distinct migration chains, which could thus be represented as a “cobweb” linking the entire Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines to the migrants’ top five destinations in the United States (Figure 6).

The Eugubino-Gualdesi’s network allowed them to shift destinations in the course of decades or generations, like in Spain’s Baztán Valley—where the bulk of the migrants were successively redirected from Mexico or Venezuela to Cuba, Uruguay, Argentina, and California between the late eighteenth century and the 1950s (Moya 1998, 81). In Fossato di Vico, for instance, the flows to Luxembourg, the Lorraine, and the United States—which had come to an abrupt end with the outbreak of World War I—were revived just after the war, but in the aftermath of the immigration acts of 1921 and 1924, the town’s transatlantic streams were diverted to Europe.

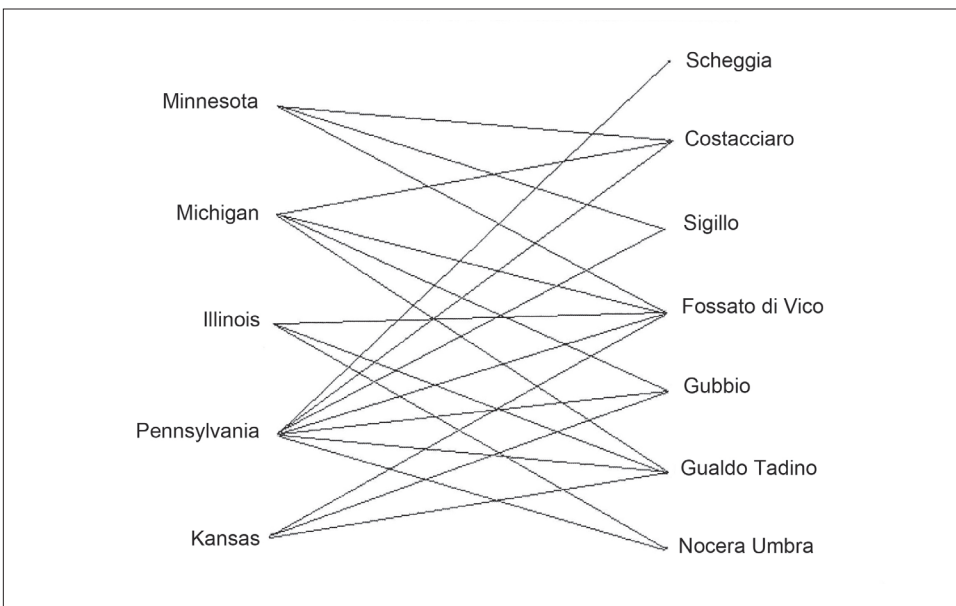


Figure 6. Migration Chains from the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines

After a second interruption under fascism, emigration to Luxembourg and the Lorraine resumed after World War II, with Belgium emerging as a new destination in the late 1940s and Switzerland a decade later. The migrants sometimes responded almost immediately to changing conditions in the host countries, as happened when a mine employing 4,000 Italians closed down in 1903 in Iron Mountain, Michigan (Francesconi 1974, 217–219), one of Fossato di Vico's most popular destinations at the time. The following year, the town's migratory flow to the United States reached its lowest level (24 percent) for the period 1901–1914, and in the transatlantic flows the proportion of migrants headed for Michigan dropped from one third in 1901–1903 to 15 percent. As a rule, the volume of the flows to the United States—or to any other single national destination—varied considerably more from one year to the next than the cumulative volume of the town's distinct migratory flows,¹⁵ a sign that in the face of adverse circumstances would-be migrants relying on broad networks still had some possibility of leaving, provided they were prepared to change plans and destinations.

Changing Places of Migration, or the Migrants' Nonfinite Social Space

In his study of Portuguese migration from the Algarve to Argentina, Marcelo J. Borges observed that the social space of the migratory networks expanded beyond the parish limits for various reasons. Not only did roads favor interactions—and marriages—between residents from sometimes distant parishes, but these interactions were further reinforced as the Algarve's rural population shared some characteristic socioecological conditions and agricultural practices (Borges 2009, 159–161). The case of the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines shows that in addition to the new contacts they established in their *paese* and the neighboring towns, migrants were likely to further expand their networks at all stages of the migration process, first of all during the journey to Le Havre and across the Atlantic. As Donna Gabaccia argued in the case of the Sicilian migrants from Sambuca, whom she found to have settled in as many as eleven different U.S. states or cities, the sheer number of the migrants' international destinations can probably be explained only by regionalism and regional networks (Gabaccia 1988, 81). The information that migrants from Fossato di Vico gleaned here and there from fellow Eugubino-Gualdesi—during their journey, in the boarding houses of Europe and the United States, or in their cafés, clubs, associations, etc.—allowed them to devise new migration projects, change destinations between two successive international migration moves, or travel to another mining town or area.

The migrants from the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines traveled all the way to the English Channel or the North Sea harbors, like northerners did, while their neighbors from Norcia almost inevitably embarked for the United States from Naples, like southern Italians. In Fossato di Vico, for instance, 89 percent of the migrants started their transatlantic journey from some northern European harbor: Le Havre (78.3 percent), Cherbourg (5.3 percent), or Boulogne (1.5 percent) in France; Southampton (2.4 percent) or Liverpool (0.6 percent) in England; Rotterdam (0.6 percent) in the Netherlands; or Glasgow (0.3 percent) in Scotland. Only 8 percent of the town's migrants embarked from Naples and 3 percent from Genoa between 1901 and 1913.¹⁶ Surprising though it may seem, the choice of such distant harbors made sense to migrants whose "mental maps" (Gabaccia and Iacovetta 2002, xi) were shaped more by their familiarity with the continental route to the iron mines of the Lorraine and Luxembourg than they were by actual distances. In addition, they benefited from lower ship fares and rebates on the trains, which made this alternative financially worthwhile. After Italy's 1901 Emigration Act put an end to the stark competition between Italian shipping lines, fares to New York rose to an average of 175–210 lire from Italy in 1910, compared to only 115 lire from Cherbourg. And while it cost another 150 lire to travel from Umbria to Cherbourg or Le Havre, the Emigration Act provided a 75 percent rebate on Italian railway fares to all migrants traveling with at least four companions, and a second discount of 40–60 percent on fares from the Italian border to the port of departure to groups of at least ten people (Polidoro 1973, 98–99, 106).

In these conditions, the migrants tended to get together and travel through Europe and across the Atlantic in the company of other inhabitants from the region whom they did not necessarily know and whose final destinations in the United States could be different. (For a study underlining women's roles in connecting unrelated male migrants, see Reeder [2002, 51–52].) Even fellow townspeople who had traveled together all the way from Umbria to the United States frequently split and went their separate ways, sometimes heading for as many as five different states and an even greater number of cities. Onboard the *Savoie*, for instance, four of Fossato di Vico's migrants landed together at Ellis Island on June 1, 1907, but Gregorio Spigarelli was going to Hibbing, Minnesota; Bartolomeo Biscontini to Scranton, Pennsylvania; Palmira Mazzapicchio to LaSalle, Illinois; and Maria Pettinzenza to Frontenac, Kansas. Similarly, the *Philadelphia* arrived on November 16, 1912, carrying six of the town's male migrants, who were headed for three different mining areas, in Kansas, Illinois, and Pennsylvania, and four different towns.

The migrants' mobility is evidenced through a mere survey of the different states they went to from one migration move to the next. In Fossato di Vico, for instance, one in four migrants who declared at Ellis Island that they had previously sojourned in the United States did not return to the same state. The variety of situations reflects the migrants' extreme mobility, as they sometimes shifted destinations from one state to another (from Minnesota to Michigan, Pennsylvania, or New Mexico; from Kansas to Pennsylvania or New York; from Pennsylvania to Minnesota, Illinois, or New Mexico; from Michigan to Minnesota, Kansas, or Pennsylvania; or, finally, from Illinois to Pennsylvania). Most of them probably decided to set out for another mining area as they left Fossato di Vico for the second – or third – time. After all, this was not very different from migrating to Pennsylvania after some previous experience in Luxemburg or Germany. But, like those Italians in San Francisco who developed secondary migration chains once in the United States (Devoto 1991, 423), the migrants from the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines too sometimes circulated directly from one mining area to another. Some eventually acquired by this means a thorough knowledge of the U.S. territory, such as Efrem Bartoletti, from Costacciaro, whom fellow migrant and union activist Romolo Bobba contacted (in a letter from Kansas dated October 24, 1919) as he was planning a tour in the Great Lakes region to ask about the large number of mining towns with which his friend Bartoletti was acquainted.

Traveling across the United States from Pennsylvania to Kansas or Minnesota meant embarking upon a long and difficult journey, especially when one knew very little or no English. But then what should be said of those who journeyed all the way from Luxembourg to Le Havre and on to the United States without even returning home first, men such as Vincenzo Scaramucci, who arrived in Esch-sur-Alzette on February 28, 1902, and left a few months later, heading neither for some nearby mining town in Luxembourg, France, or Germany, nor for his hometown in Italy, but straight for the United States? Of course, such cases are difficult to document and too few to be really representative, but they are worth mentioning here, if only because they highlight the migrants' mobility in a most telling way.

In February 1906, Federico Pedana, age twenty-seven, returned from Kayl (Luxembourg) to marry his girlfriend, Luigia, in Fossato di Vico. The newlyweds soon migrated to Luxembourg. They stayed there for a couple of months before traveling on to Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, where their son Novello was born in 1907 and their daughter Violetta the following year. By the time the couple decided to follow the direct transatlantic route from Luxembourg to Pennsylvania, Federico already had a long and varied experience as a miner, a migrant, and a migrants' son. After a first

mining experience in Romania at seventeen, he had spent several years in Luxembourg, where he first arrived in 1900 with his father, his mother (who kept the family's boarding house), and some of his brothers and sisters, and when he left Fossato di Vico with his wife in 1906 he already had some family members and close relatives in both Luxembourg and Pennsylvania.

Like Federico Pedana, migrants from Fossato di Vico sometimes indicated a small mining town in Luxembourg as their residence upon arriving at Ellis Island. Among them were Federico's brother Tito, who had preceded him on the direct route from Luxembourg to Pennsylvania in 1904; Tommaso Spigarelli, who embarked from Le Havre in 1909 and had Michigan as his final destination; as well as Saverio Galassi and Biagio Bartoletti, who traveled together from Esch-sur-Alzette, where they lived, to Le Havre and Pennsylvania in 1901. Curiously enough, the *nulla osta* applications the two friends made in 1901 were for Luxembourg, not the United States, but they nonetheless landed in the United States on December 1, 1901. Perhaps after traveling repeatedly to Luxembourg they decided to "*fare l'America*" (literally, to make America), thus trying a destination migrants from the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines were still unfamiliar with at the time but that grew increasingly popular among them as the years went by.¹⁷

Other migrants who arrived at Ellis Island shortly after filling out a *nulla osta* application for Luxembourg—or some other European destination—seem to have come from Umbria. For instance, Giuseppe Angeli, who applied for Luxembourg in 1905 but arrived at Ellis Island on January 15, 1906, or Cornelio Purgatorio, whose 1901 *nulla osta* application indicated France but who was found to already be on U.S. soil in 1901; both declared themselves residents of Fossato di Vico. Of course, it is possible that some may simply have changed their minds after making their applications and traveled to the United States instead, which would confirm the hypothesis that the migrants *chose* their destinations. But one cannot rule out either that other migrants whose final destination was the United States may have taken advantage of the presence of relatives and acquaintances in Europe and made plans to stop and work there for some time—perhaps just long enough to earn what little extra money they needed to pay for the crossing or adjust to their new environment more serenely.

Conclusion

From the four corners of the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines, migrants to the United States headed for the same mining areas and towns as others of the region had done before them. While migrants from each munici-

pality or hamlet did have (at times very local) preferences for one or two destinations, a pattern of common migration chains and networks emerges. A comparison of the destinations of migrants from the Eugubino-Gualdese area and those of their neighbors from the Norcia area reveals that in both sectors of the Umbrian Apennines the migrants followed very specific routes to and in the United States, so that their paths actually rarely crossed (with the former embarking from Le Havre and the latter from Naples). The pioneers who had opened new routes as early as the 1880s or 1890s probably played a more crucial role than the emigration agents operating all over the Umbrian Apennines in directing the enormous flows of migrants who left the region from 1900 to World War I. In Fossato di Vico, for instance, the bulk of the migrants followed in the footsteps of the town's first migrants, settling precisely in the same small mining towns.

A microanalysis of the migrants' destinations in each of Fossato di Vico's four hamlets confirms the importance of networks of relatives, neighbors, and friends in shaping the town's international migration flows, as very specific migration chains originated from just a few dozen—or at most a hundred—households. Yet, in Palazzolo, destinations were found to be remarkably similar to those in Gualdo Tadino, as though the migrants had benefited from contacts beyond their immediate surroundings. I checked this hypothesis by shifting the focus to comparing not only the migrants' destinations from the small towns of the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines but also the municipalities of origin of the migrants in the U.S. mining areas. Everywhere—with the exception of the anthracite coal fields of Pennsylvania—the bulk of the Eugubino-Gualdesi migrants came from just two or three neighboring towns.

Arguably broader social links, established not only in the home communities but also in the migrant communities abroad and during the long journey to the United States, contributed everywhere to directing the migrants to precisely the same mining areas as their neighbors from the nearest towns, increasingly so as mass emigration kept reshaping the outlines of the migrants' networks. In the case of Fossato di Vico in particular, the town's central position in the region and its road and rail networks provided the inhabitants with more opportunities to make contacts outside their *paese*, and they actually migrated, like nowhere else in the surrounding towns, to each of the region's five most traveled U.S. destinations in almost equal proportions.

Notes

1. A fifth *frazione* (Osteria del Gatto) was introduced in the 1911 census, but there were only four in the 1901 census and, most important, in the town's population registers (1871–1901), which provided the migrants' family backgrounds and *frazioni* of origin.
2. The *nulla osta*, for which migrants applied to the local authorities, testified that there was "no obstacle" (*nulla osta*) to their leaving the Italian territory. The *nulla osta* was necessary to obtain a passport, but many of the town's migrants actually traveled abroad without a passport, as the *nulla osta* allowed them to cross the Italian border. Thus the *nulla osta* was often the only document the migrants held, especially in Europe. The original *nulla osta* registers, on which I have based my research, are located in Fossato di Vico's town hall, in their Archivio storico (historical archives) section. Copies are also available in Gualdo Tadino's Museo Regionale dell'Emigrazione Pietro Conti.
3. The following sources, which are listed under Primary Sources, were consulted to create the migrant database (from this point referred to as Migrant Data Base): U.S. Population Census Schedules, 1910 (www.ancestry.com, accessed from September 2007 to August 2008); Ellis Island Ship Manifests, 1901–1914 (www.ellisland.org, accessed from September 2006 to August 2008); Registre d'arrivée des étrangers, 1900–1914 (Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg: Biergeramt); Registri delle domande di nulla osta, 1901–1946 (Comune di Fossato di Vico: Archivio storico); Registri matrimoni, 1886–1915 (Comune di Fossato di Vico: Archivio comunale); Registri morti, 1901–1995 (Comune di Fossato di Vico: Archivio comunale); Registri popolazione, 1871–1901 (Comune di Fossato di Vico: Archivio storico). For a detailed description of the Migrant Data Base, see Rinaldetti (2010, 24–27, 363–367, 428–432).
4. Owing to the men's repeated migration moves and to the relative scarcity of data on women in the *nulla osta* registers (many did not apply personally and were merely mentioned, sometimes anonymously, on their husbands' applications), initial aggregate-databased estimates indicated that women represented just 14 percent of all migrants. By ensuring that male migrants be counted only once – even if they had migrated *more* than once – and that *all* women be taken into account, a count of all distinct individuals in the registers revealed that women actually accounted for 22 percent of all migrants, which represents a 55 percent increase! See Rinaldetti (2010, 79–87).
5. In a sign that male migrants often acquired higher skills in the mines, 34 percent of those who sojourned abroad between 1901 and 1913 and then made a new *nulla osta* application just after the war (between 1920 and 1922) were defining themselves as qualified miners, compared to only 7 percent of those arriving at Ellis Island between 1901 and 1913 – significantly, most of those in the latter group had already worked in the mines of Europe when they entered the United States.
6. Between 1901 and 1913 there were 1,582 *nulla osta* applications but only 1,001 different applicants, as 40 percent made at least two applications, with 14 percent applying three, four, five, or even six times over the period. Nearly one in two male migrants applied at least twice, compared to less than one in ten women.
7. *Nulla osta* applications indicated intentions – as opposed to actual migration moves. As such, they have never been used to describe the migrants' trajectories (unless evidence of actual migration moves could be found in other nominal sources), but rather to proceed to comparisons between categories of migrants and, more generally, to provide a global picture of the mobility of a large group of individuals and families. It is worth mentioning though that in a small town such as Fossato di Vico, where most people knew each other, one did not declare one's intention to leave thoughtlessly, for there might be consequences (landlords, for instance, had the right to modify, or even cancel, sharecroppers' annual contracts, a right that they often used to pressure or blackmail them). Further evidence of the true significance of *nulla osta* applications was found in the high proportions of applicants whose names could be found in nominal sources abroad (despite significant difficulties utilizing them due to inconsistencies within the records, among other

- challenges), as well as in the usually very short interval between a migrant's application and his arrival at Ellis Island (a month on average, and sometimes just a fortnight), a sign that migrants generally applied once their migration project was complete.
8. Only Gubbio, the area's largest town, had lower migration rates because it did not appear in Tosi's list of the twenty low- and high-mountain towns with the highest migration rates in Umbria (the last town on the list had a migration rate of 29 percent in the years 1901–1910).
 9. In 1901 Gubbio had a population of 26,100, Gualdo Tadino 10,800, Nocera Umbra 7,800, Scheggia 3,500, Costacciaro and Fossato di Vico 2,800 each, and Sigillo 2,100. *Censimento della popolazione, 1901* (Rome: ISTAT).
 10. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Sigillo had a migration rate of 11.8 percent, while the agrarian zones of the Val Topina (municipalities of Fossato di Vico, Gualdo Tadino, Nocera Umbra, and Sigillo) and that of the Alte Chiascio (municipalities of Costacciaro, Gubbio, and Scheggia) had average rates of 5.3 percent and 2.95 percent, respectively (Polidoro 1973, 142–143).
 11. Statistics based on the American destinations of 216 migrants from Gualdo Tadino, 186 from Gubbio, 94 from Costacciaro, 81 from Scheggia, 73 from Nocera Umbra, 73 from Fossato di Vico, and 43 from Sigillo, whose names appeared in Bernardino Pezzopane's directory of the region's migrants (Pezzopane 2006) and who were over fourteen on arriving at Ellis Island between 1901 and 1913. Though some of the samples are rather small, their representativeness has been tested in Fossato di Vico and in Nocera Umbra: In Fossato di Vico, the directory's relatively small sample and the much larger sample available in the *nulla osta* registers produced comparable results; in Nocera Umbra, the directory's sample and a 196-strong draft register sample produced almost identical results (*Leva militare, classi 1875–1894*, Archivio di Stato di Gubbio: Archivio storico del comune di Nocera Umbra). For a detailed analysis of the representativeness of the samples, see Rinaldetti (2010, 181–184).
 12. In a family of sharecroppers from the Purello hamlet, for instance, six of Giovanni Fofi's children and one of their first cousins made fourteen trips abroad between 1902 and 1913, seven to the United States and seven to some European destinations. Those of the Fofis who left at a time when some of their family members were in Europe and others in America certainly had to make a choice between the potential places of migration available to them.
 13. These statistics are based on a sample of 338 migrants who indicated the United States as their final destination in their *nulla osta* applications, whose names could be found in the Ellis Island ship manifests, and for whom the relevant information was provided in the ship manifests.
 14. The relatively large proportions of migrants from Gubbio and Gualdo Tadino in Michigan need reappraising, as these were the two largest towns in the Eugubino-Gualdese Apennines.
 15. Over the period 1901–1914, the peak-to-low ratio was almost 4 to 1 in the flows to the United States but less than 2 to 1 globally (*Migrant Data Base*).
 16. Statistics based on 336 crossings (*Migrant Data Base*).
 17. In Fossato di Vico, a little under one third of all *nulla osta* applications concerned the United States between 1901 and 1906, compared to 45 percent between 1908 and 1913 (*Migrant Data Base*).

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Food, Frenzy, and the Italian-American Family in Anne Bancroft's *Fatso*

NANCY CARONIA

Early in the film *Fatso* (1980), at the funeral of the DiNapoli family's thirty-nine-year-old cousin Salvatore, Antoinette DiNapoli blubbers at her brother Dominick (Dom DeLuise): "You're such good people. The good people are the fat people. And the fat people die young." As played by Anne Bancroft, Antoinette's outburst regarding her brother's health resonates with constructions of fat men and hysterical women. Antoinette's tone, which moves from panic to anger to frustration to compassion and back again, juxtaposed alongside Dominick's struggle with his gastronomic excesses, precludes easy laughter about or simple tragic configurations of food addiction, obesity, and gender identity. While Dom DeLuise is known for his comedic turns on film, his portrayal of Dominick deviates from humorous and sentimental portrayals connected with Italian Americans and food and gender. Bancroft's and DeLuise's performances reveal the ways in which manifestations of violence emerge not only as outwardly reactive physical and verbal abuse (whether through Antoinette's volatility or Dominick's response to being denied food) but also as a self-inflicted attempt to subjugate feeling, as seen in Dominick's food binges.

Fatso pushes against Hollywood constructions of gender and ethnicity through the complicated relationships between male and female members of an Italian-American family, and Dominick DiNapoli is a valuable example of the "fat male body," which Sander Gilman suggests is a subject woefully "unexamined historically" (2004, 6). If the film is, as Roger Ebert has written, "ambiguous" (1980), its ambiguity serves as a parodic intervention that slices open a well-intentioned but overcompensatory mode of nurturance to reveal how food consumption complicates and confronts notions of gender and violence without directly engaging a gangster trope.

While the plot embeds a "love conquers all" message within an Italian-American frame, familial relationships are conundrums of love and disappointment. Dominick's connection to Italian-American epicurean traditions offers up cultural markers not as sentimental reminders of a simpler past but as weapons of suppression and denial. *Fatso* refuses the ubiquitous sentimental cliché of Italian immigrant culture and its love of all that is edible; while it includes carefully shot images of Italian-American food staples including tomato sauce, macaroni, and bread, these markers

are countered by erratic camera movement and disjointed camera angles whenever Dominick's feelings overwhelm him or the DiNapoli siblings' exchanges become verbally and physically violent. The physical absence of the DiNapoli matriarch and patriarch does not diminish their concrete influence on their children's behaviors; coping methods learned from their parents during childhood work against each sibling's effectiveness in dealing with both the quotidian and any crisis. After his cousin Sal's early death, Dominick finds himself in a role as the scapegoat illuminating the family's anxieties regarding death of the body, and of the family, through their violent interactions with Dominick and his self-inflicted violence via food consumption.

Why *Fatso*?

Despite its potential contribution to ethnic, gender, and film studies, Bancroft's *Fatso* has been dismissed by critics and ignored by scholars. In *Food in the Movies* (2010), Steve Zimmerman argues that the film is a "disjointed affair" that never chooses "whether to play for laughs or pathos, neither of which is achieved to any commendable degree" (104). Zimmerman also insists that Bancroft's directorial and screenwriting debut is unduly and "unfortunately" influenced by her husband, Mel Brooks (104).¹ Ebert suggests the film is "ambiguous," but views this ambiguity as "problems with camera placement—*Fatso*'s an education in reverse about how often our audience reactions are cued by editing and angles" (1980).² Ebert also suggests that "DeLuise is not really that fat," which misses the point. Weight in and of itself is not an issue. Dominick's and his siblings' perception about how he looks or feels is at the heart of this film. In a 2005 column for *Fra Noi*, Otto Bruno offers the only positive review of the film when he states, "[*Fatso*] may not be the slickest film you've ever seen as it was not made with a big budget. But the story is one with lots of heart, lots of love, and LOTS OF FOOD!" [sic] (2006). Bruno's assessment is predicated upon a sentimental interpretation of the Italian-American aspects of this film, but he too dismisses the awkward camera angles as results of budget constraints rather than deliberate choices. None of these critics recognize that the seemingly chaotic camera angles highlight identities and relationships mediated through a minefield of complicated cultural markers tied to the siblings' anxieties about identity.

The only scholarship available on this film appears in a footnote to "Flesh and Soul: Food and Religion in Italian/American Cinema" (2010) where Alessandra Senzani suggests that Bancroft's *Fatso* is a work "of ethnic affiliation in the last stages of her career" (219).³ This pronouncement, perhaps

more than any critic's dismissal of Bancroft's film vis-à-vis her husband's involvement, ignores the five-time Oscar-nominated Bancroft's lifelong theatrical, film, and television career.⁴ When one denies Bancroft her talent, her ambition, and her artistic vision, her directorial ingenuity marks her as either a poor imitator of her husband's talent or an aging starlet looking back wistfully at the end of her career—an active one that lasted until her death from uterine cancer in 2005. Bancroft was born Anna Maria Louise Italiano in the Bronx, New York, to a mother whose maiden name was DiNapoli, and her film was produced by Mel Brooks' company Brookfilms and steeped in an exuberant and multilevel New York Italian-American vernacular; however, critical engagement with this work has been obfuscated by Bancroft's marital connection to Brooks as well as by expectations of sentimental portrayals of Italian Americans as gangsters (*The Godfather* [1972]; *Mean Streets* [1973]) or lovable, if mediocre, fat men (*Marty* [1955]). *Fatso* deserves a closer examination not only because of Bancroft's serious and long-standing commitment to her art (as well as the fact that she directed, wrote, and starred in the film) but because of the complex intersections of food, gender, and ethnicity within the film's narrative.

Bancroft's marginalized position as a female director is not unlike Nancy Savoca's. While Savoca co-wrote her first screenplay a short time after *Fatso* was released, it took seven years to find a producer willing to allow Savoca to direct *True Love* (1989).⁵ While Savoca has gone on to direct numerous films, *Fatso* is the only film Bancroft ever directed or wrote. In examining Savoca's *True Love*, Edvige Giunta points out that the kitchen, rather than a site of sentimental ethnic affiliation, is shot as a "claustrophobic setting that epitomizes women's entrapment" and "the inadequacy of the cultural roles [with regard to both genders] become blatant" (2002, 251). Like Savoca's film, *Fatso* rejects ease within the domestic space, but it challenges the roles of submissive women and the brutish men who dominate them through its refusal to privilege those types within the narrative structure. Dominick is a gentle and kind man, a caretaker whose violence is directed toward himself. Antoinette is the dominant personality who loses her temper whenever she is frustrated. While Giunta suggests that *True Love* accepts the narrative of a "patriarchal system [that] victimizes primarily women, [but] it also dooms men" (2002, 296), Bancroft's film upends linear constructions of an overarching patriarchal power in favor of a more tenuous thread that binds men and women.

Fred Gardaphé's study of parody in the evolution of the Italian-American gangster figure is useful in this reclamation and examination of the complexities of gender relationships found within the domestic sphere of *Fatso*. Gardaphé suggests that there are three distinct stages in the

construction of the gangster figure in the American landscape – minstrelsy, self-narrative, and parody (2010, 57). The last stage, parody, seeks autonomy through new iterations of the gangster figure by renouncing the American creation of the gangster as “representative of [Italian-American] culture” (2010, 57). Gardaphé’s focus does not connect figures such as Vito Corleone and Tony Soprano with a parodic figure like *Fatso*’s Dominick DiNapoli or female figures as dissimilar as Connie Corleone or Carmela Soprano with DiNapoli’s sister Antoinette.

Although DiNapoli is not a gangster figure, emotionally he is as direct a predecessor to Tony Soprano as Vito or Michael Corleone. Antoinette’s rage provides a reminder that, as John Paul Russo states about *The Godfather*, “the atmosphere of violence has seeped into the language and images of plenitude” (quoted in Giunta 2002, 267). *Fatso*’s display of plenitude is linked to markers of Italian-American culture including religious imagery (the ubiquitous images of the Sacred Heart and statues of the Virgin Mary, the crosses on the walls and on necklaces, the presence of the Catholic Church), food (pastry shops along the avenue, the tomato sauce and bread served at every meal), language (Italian interspersed within the American English dialog), and numerous character actors (Renata Vanni as Zi Marie, Argentina Brunetti as Zi Jule, and Delia Salvi as Ida Rendino, who people the Italian-American neighborhood in which the DiNapolis live and work). This plenitude is also revealed through the instability of Dominick’s consumptive habits and Antoinette’s attempts to control him: Dominick does not eat a meal, he eats everyone’s meal; and Antoinette does not simply become angry, she flies into a rage, hitting first and talking later. Dominick picks up his nephew’s birthday cake and eats one-fourth before delivering it to the party, he eats the Chinese food intended for Antoinette’s card party, and he and his sponsors at Chubby Checkers (the twelve-step-like group for overeaters) demolish his kitchen as they engage in an eating frenzy. Antoinette hits Dominick each time she is disappointed that he cannot control his appetite. Only after she expends her rage does her compassion emerge. Dominick does not hit her in return but remains passive, submits to her physical abuse, and blames himself.

The film emerges as an important example of how parody can be used productively to replace or reject the gangster figure of Hollywood’s imagination not by creating a more complex iteration of the gangster but by creating familial relationships devoid of Mafia references in a layered complexity of setting, character, and emotion. Gardaphé argues that *The Sopranos* (1999–2007) confronts national narratives about maleness in the twenty-first century through its parodic representation of the gangster figure. If so, *Fatso* serves as a bridge between earlier configurations of

gangsterism (as seen in *The Godfather* and *Mean Streets*) and sentimental portraits of masculinity, including *Marty*, and subsequent Italian-American constructions of gender in *The Sopranos* and *Goodfellas* (1990). In *Fatso*, the DiNapoli family serves as an important reminder that gangsterism is only one facet of parodic construction within an Italian-American context.

Discussions of gangsterism or Italian-American culture tend to compartmentalize constructions of gender, but *Fatso's* family members' identities are formed through each individual's words and deeds regardless of gender or hierarchal constraint. Michel de Certeau's ideas on tactics and strategies are useful to consider alongside notions of parody and power since "a tactic is determined by the *absence of power* just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power" (de Certeau 1984, 38). In order to carve out a space within a hierarchal structure, individuals must understand the boundaries already in place that can make upward mobility a challenge. Mobility, then, is predicated not only upon an individual's identity within and without hierarchal constructions of power but also on that individual's understanding of his or her place within the power structure. Mobility between and among community members is contingent upon knowing where the power in a relationship is held and playing one's designated role accordingly. In *Fatso*, masculinity is defined not by outward violence, the cultivation of a macho persona, or institutions such as the Mafia, the government, or the police but rather by the ways in which males respond to and behave with females in the domestic sphere. This construction privileges females, usually viewed as submissive to a dominant and patriarchal hierarchy. The DiNapoli matriarch, Antoinette, and Dominick's love interest, Lydia (Candice Azzara), exert power within heterogenous domestic relationships. What is unique about this construction is Dominick's innate sense that the women in his life emanate power in a way that he does not. When Dominick finds that he has lost weight without "even trying," he and his brother Frank (Ron Carey) believe that it has to do with Lydia's presence in Dominick's life, and Frank states, "Boy, girls are powerful." This dichotomy between the sexes is a central premise that is used to reveal Dominick's repression and lack of confidence.

Size Matters

In "Feminism and the Invisible Fat Man," Kirsten Bell and Darlene McNaughton argue that "major feminist approaches to weight issues," including iconic texts such as Suzie Orbach's *Fat Is a Feminist Issue* (1978) and Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993), "have . . . failed to question the experiences of males, largely as

a result of their commitment to the notion of patriarchy as an overarching framework for their material" (2007, 111). Bell and McNaughton see this dismissal of fat and masculinity as an "inadvertently" misleading trope of feminist rhetoric (2007, 111). Their argument challenges the notion of a male body being examined through patriarchal constructions of feminist rhetoric. *Fatso* cannot offer such an easy view of patriarchy, although in some respects Dominick's size is due to a familial structure that places the male at the head of the household. The film swerves away from strict patriarchal linearity in that Dominick's consumptive habits develop not from his unwillingness to control his eating or some defect in his psyche that causes him to be in conflict with patriarchal norms but through his mother's child-rearing techniques and his family's insistence that he lose weight. Dominick's situation is made more difficult by the fact that, until his cousin Sal's fatal heart attack, no one confronts Dominick about or is concerned with his eating habits. While Dominick is, as Antoinette intimates, loved by everyone due to his caring demeanor toward his family and his customers at the family-owned card shop, his mother's overcompensatory nurturance has taught him since birth to use food to quell sadness, disappointment, fear, grief, anger, and depression.

In thinking about how *Fatso* upends notions of gender without privileging or finding fault with a patriarchal construct, it is prudent to call upon Anna Camaiti Hostert's argument that Nancy Savoca's "films seem to embody a gendered perspective and portray stories that emphasize the unheard voices of invisible fragmented subjectivities, making—through the contradictory feeling and positions they occupy in society—visible their bodies, without glamorizing them" (2010, 143). Hostert's assertion focuses on gender constructions of the female, but Bancroft's *Fatso* challenges most directly the Italian-American gangsterism, prevalent in the 1970s, which constructs men as brutes and women as silent, submissive figures of denial, especially in the ways that Dominick and his sister Antoinette interact with one another. Before contemplating the siblings' relationship, *Fatso* predicates their interactions on a view of the mother that is at once caring and damaging to Dominick. She emerges as an "invisible fragmented subjectiv[ity]" (Hostert 2010, 143), whose face is never revealed. But Bancroft centrally locates Dominick's voice as the antithesis of both gangsterism and sentimentality and Antoinette's voice as a reminder that femininity is a complex, mediated, and dominant construction within an Italian-American vernacular tradition.

Dominick's mother's use of food, beginning with breast milk, is a tactic designed to comfort Dominick in the short term. *Fatso*'s opening montage reveals a mother who loves and cares for Dominick without thought to how

her actions will stunt her son's emotional growth. Each of her appearances on screen signals an end to Dominick's suffering; food empowers her as a mother but disempowers Dominick since he does not learn how to work through negative emotions. This love is not so much suffocating as it is a road map to the adult Dominick's pattern of food bingeing: His mother's love shields him from any emotional distress by feeding him whatever he wants, whenever he wants. Tactics, according to de Certeau, are meant to be flexible, adaptable, and easily substituted when they no longer empower the powerless—they are connected to the temporal and are thus meant not as stable entities but short-term solutions to long-term powerlessness (de Certeau 1984, 38). Dominick's mother's use of food is inflexible and unadaptable. She never varies how food is used or when it is used. The mother's centrality as caretaker privileges her agency, but her tactics are revealed as stopgap measures since her image is fragmented, her face is never seen, and the only words she utters are directed at comforting Dominick.⁶

The repressive qualities of consumption are reinforced from the first shot of the film, which opens upon a black screen. Only the diegetic sound of the infant Dominick's cries and the film score by Joe Renzetti are heard through the darkness. *Fatso's* opening shot is an intertextual visual and aural parody of *The Godfather*, which opens with a black screen and Nina Rota's iconic score. The parodic implication emerges with the way in which the male voices are constructed. Instead of a male infant crying, the first line in *The Godfather*—"I believe in America"—is uttered by Amerigo Bonasera, an undertaker. Bonasera's plea for justice to Don Corleone after his daughter has been assaulted is as much of a plaintive wail as the infant Dominick's. Bonasera's face comes into focus slowly, but in *Fatso*, a bedroom lamp is turned on to reveal the infant Dominick to the right of the frame, his mouth wide open in a cry. If Amerigo Bonasera is the archetype of death dressed in a black suit in his role as the undertaker, Dominick DiNapoli emerges out of the darkness and into the light as the epitome of innocence with a white dressing gown and an unquenchable need. Dominick's mother appears in the frame at the left of the screen. At first, she is only a pair of arms in a nightgown reaching for her son, then she becomes a torso holding her child, and, finally, her gown is opened as Dominick's mouth is coaxed to her breast. Rather than an erotic object, the breast is both a source of nourishment and repression. The camera never reveals the mother's face—only her torso, arms, and a hint of her breast are seen. This portrait reenacts a Madonna and Child image—the mother's nightgown reminiscent of Mary's blue robes. The mother and child in this frame, however, are not a static image of unconditional love but of the beginning of Dominick's inability to express emotion in a healthy manner.

Dominick's father is revealed as a hand reaching toward his wife, offering encouragement. He pats her arm as she feeds their son. He repeats twice, "buona, buona," before stating, "What a good mama." After this approval, he removes his hand and retreats back to his side of their bed. While the mother is the one offering succor to her son, it is the father who controls how the mother behaves—she is rewarded as a "good mama" for feeding her child in the middle of the night. The father offers an approving hand, an image that evokes Bonasera kissing Don Corleone's hand in a pledge of loyalty. Although in *Fatso* the father's presence is only a hand upon his wife's shoulder, like Don Corleone, he is a hand of power. In order to be a "good mama" and receive a pat of approval from her husband, Dominick's mother must administer to her infant's every need. In this configuration, Dominick is squeezed into the corners of the frame. The father's hand creates a pressure on Dominick to be satisfied, to be quiet, to be still.

Complicating the father's agency is the knowledge that the DiNapoli parents lost two sons before Dominick was born. Dominick's birth is viewed as a miracle. His mother's nurturance fulfills not only his every need without understanding what that need might be but also assures his survival. Once Dominick's younger brother Frank is born, the tactical maneuver, now stagnant and routine, continues to be used on Dominick even though neither Frank nor Antoinette is nurtured in this all-consuming way. The endless supply of food available to Dominick becomes not only the proof that his mother will not abandon her son and is thus a good mother but also of the way he learns to abandon himself each time he eats rather than work through his emotions. When as an adult Dominick dates Lydia, allowing him, for a time, to eat without bingeing, he has no foundation on which to build this sense of connection.

If Dominick's infancy were the only period during which we witnessed his mother's role as caretaker, that image might be construed as the bond of a mother and child such as the connection seen in *Marty*, but *Fatso's* aims are different. The next image is of the toddler Dominick sitting alone on the living-room floor while Antoinette watches him cry. His mother's appearance continues to be fragmented. First, her hand (holding a cannoli) emerges from the left side of the frame. Next, there is a cut to her legs walking toward her son and then a third cut to her hand giving Dominick the cannoli. There is another abrupt and quick cut to a close-up of Antoinette scrunching her face and saying, "Blech," before cutting back to a close-up of Dominick sloppily eating the cannoli, cream smeared across his mouth. The older sister's reaction reinforces how Dominick's appetite, developed with his mother's tactical nurturance, is transgressive and does not jibe with the rest of the family's eating habits. Antoinette's disapproval also

suggests that not all Italian Americans have an insatiable urge for Italian gastronomic staples. Throughout the film's narrative, Antoinette expresses no interest in pastries, and her family eats boxed cereal for breakfast and take-out Chinese food on special occasions.

In the next sequence of the montage, a preteen Dominick watches as his mother changes the infant Frank's diaper. The father's disembodied voice yells, "Watch out, Dominick, you're gonna get it" before Frank accidentally urinates on his brother. His mother's comfort is a ciabatta roll with butter, while Antoinette wipes his face with a kitchen towel, and his father remains the all-knowing, off-screen presence. As Dominick ages, the parents' influence, particularly the mother's tactical nurturance, is innate. His cousin Sal, whom Dominick equates with his mother since "he always had something to eat," sneaks Dominick a Hershey chocolate bar during their First Communion. The opening montage ends with the DiNapoli siblings in bed with the measles. Antoinette and Frank are incapacitated, but Dominick is eating a bowl of spaghetti. The cultural markers of an Italian-American household are prevalent throughout this montage, but they are not sentimental reminders of a cohesive community. The fragmentation of the mother, the disembodied voice of the father, Antoinette's disapproval of and impatience with her brother, and Dominick's skewed appetite privilege familial conflict and an ethnic identity in transition.

Dominick's first appearance as an adult is in a medium full-frontal shot at his cousin's funeral. Dressed in a black suit, he stands in front of a window covered in a white sheer curtain reciting a prayer in Italian. Tears stream down his face as he struggles to continue the prayer. The camera pans out to reveal a living room filled with members of a connected and familial community. A seemingly incongruous and abrupt cut focuses on a pot of tomato sauce cooking on the kitchen stove. The shot lasts only as long as it takes the priest to utter, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The image of the sauce is a reminder that the wake takes place in a domestic space and food is as spiritually central to the ritual as the priest. When the scene returns to the living room, Zi Marie, Sal's mother, approaches her son's casket and cries out, "Figlio mio, che' successe?" (my son, what happened?) (translation mine). Zi Marie appears in a full-frame shot of her entire body, and as she weeps a close-up centers on her face. This is in contrast to Dominick's mother, who when she nurtures is shown only in fragment.

The model of courtesy, Dominick comforts his aunt until he is sent by the priest to fetch her a drink of water, but this caring gesture, typical according to Antoinette, is also a mode of self-preservation that he has learned through his mother's tactical actions. The camera cuts to the pot of sauce and pans

up as Dominick enters. Before bringing the water to his aunt, he stops to stir the sauce. He even adds a sprig of basil from a plant by the window over the kitchen sink. Between his sobs, he takes a sip of water before turning to the loaves of thick and crusty Italian bread on the table. Zimmerman suggests that Dominick is being gluttonous and is “stuffing [the bread] into his mouth” (2000, 105), but this view is inaccurate. Dominick does not stuff anything into his mouth; he carefully slices the bread, delicately dabs a bit of the sauce, and judiciously sprinkles the Parmesan cheese before he nibbles at his creation. He savors each bite before his choked sobs subside and he exhales fully. His movements create the outward structure that denotes the Italian-American love of food narrative, but his exhalation conflicts with this sentimental trope since the viewer already knows Dominick may love to eat, but he has also been taught to use food as a stopgap measure for any emotional upset. The kitchen’s privileged place as a site of satiety is transformed into a space of self-destruction.

Patricia Mellencamp argues that when rituals and their “strict sequence” are “interrupted, the compulsion will begin over again until it is completed. Rituals are repetitive and stereotyped (like sitcoms), becoming progressively complex and time-consuming (like catastrophe coverage)” (1990, 29). At his cousin’s wake, Dominick quietly comforts himself with food. His ritual is short-lived, immediate, simple, and within the public view. Up until this point, Dominick’s emotional discomfort is assuaged with a roll, a pastry, a bowl of spaghetti, a piece of bread. As *Fatso* unwinds, Dominick’s ritual eating becomes more complex and secretive, making the kitchen a threatened and threatening space where violence erupts. Giunta, in her assessment of *True Love*, suggests Savoca “demolished [the image of the kitchen as] the domestic haven” (2002, 262) through a breakdown of emotional and cultural expectations. Bancroft’s direction and DeLuise’s unsentimental performance enact the same schema that Giunta finds in *True Love*, but in *Fatso*, the kitchen also is destroyed literally when Dominick, along with his Chubby Checker sponsors, go on a binge in Dominick’s kitchen. Together, the director and actor destabilize normative notions of fat men as depicted in film by allowing Dominick a complex emotional landscape with regard to his relationship with food. Food emerges not as a tactical and mobile strategy but as a stultifying and grotesque escape hatch, and the kitchen can no longer be considered a safe or neutral place. Dominick hides his binges from his family until food becomes his primary marker of identity and he can no longer deny his anxiety or his self-loathing.

Dominick’s self-consciousness about his food intake is not revealed until after Sal’s interment. The ritual that has been used to comfort becomes disrupted by Dominick’s first view of Lydia during his early morning hot

dog run. He has already eaten two breakfasts — his and Frank's, but he stops at the hot dog cart before opening the card store. As Dominick lifts one of the two hot dogs he has purchased to his mouth, he spots Lydia across the street and is smitten. There is no dialog, only five-second cuts that offer close-ups of Dominick's and Lydia's first view of each other. He hesitates in taking his first bite of his hot dog, but after an extended contemplation where he lifts and lowers the hot dog, consumption wins. He takes a bite and walks away rather than taking a chance and introducing himself. Dominick hides his bingeing from Antoinette and Frank; although they are not present, their attitude about his weight contributes to his hesitation in this scene.

The siblings' intrusions in Dominick's comfort rituals are both covert and overt. At the wake, Antoinette's interruption of Dominick's eating of the bread is an aural signal that suggests he has heard and been a target of her tirades in the past. There is a medium shot of Dominick jumping slightly as he hears his sister screaming, "You son of a bitch, you son of a bitch." The camera leaves Dominick and cuts to focus on Antoinette leaning over Sal's casket while she rants at her cousin's corpse. Her face moves from background to foreground as though she might jump out of the frame. Her violent speech, although directed toward a dead man, is intrinsic to understanding the family's difficulty in dealing with sadness and grief and its inability to take responsibility for assisting in Sal's consumptive habits. Her behavior at the wake also illustrates that ranting first and compassion later is Antoinette's default reaction to most events that upset her.

The difference between Dominick's and Antoinette's responses is that she uses violence extended outward while Dominick self-inflects pain. Antoinette laments, "Why didn't you listen?" and shifts from anger to sobs as she wails that she is "gonna miss [him] so much" before she breaks out into screams of "you son of a bitch" once again. This is an operatic moment, one that Antoinette repeats whenever she becomes frustrated with Dominick. Bancroft's choice to refuse easy comedy or a strict dramatic arc complicates notions of women as submissive or victims of circumstance. These choices also refute sentimentality or reminiscence as the implied tropes of Italian-American ethnicity or culture. Bancroft's performance parodies both the silently suffering Corleone matriarch and her daughter, the willful and explosive Connie, in *The Godfather*, but the difference in Antoinette's behavior is that she stands on her own and is not afraid to offer advice and take charge when she deems it to be necessary. The narrative privileges Antoinette as an equal member of the family, not a minor character relegated to the background like the Corleone matriarch or a plot device like Connie.

Antoinette's interruption of Dominick's calming ritual immobilizes him, and he returns to his default position, comforting others, a tactic also learned from his mother's seemingly selfless and endless action as a caregiver. But as his mother's behavior traps her in the role of "good mama," Dominick's causes him to be viewed as one of "the good people. The fat people." Only after he calms Antoinette and promises to see a diet doctor is he able to return to the kitchen where he partakes in another slice of bread with sauce, only in this instance, he looks more like his toddler self as a bit of the Parmesan cheese becomes stuck to his upper lip. His only means of escaping his grief—because the rosary in his hand, the prayers in the living room, and his caretaking of Zi Marie and Antoinette do not comfort—is in the deliberateness of his food preparation. His single-mindedness with regard to creating the perfect delicacy subordinates his grief. The ritual's transgressive nature is most overtly seen in the way that Dominick is framed on a slant within the shot, with his body in the same position as in the opening montage—slightly off-center as though this connection to food is compromised. The sauce, bread, and cheese cannot be trusted as simple markers of Italian-American ethnicity any more than the look of contentment that passes over Dominick's face after the third bite can be viewed as a gesture of epicurean delight. His exhalation, followed by his gesture of resting his hand on top of the stove, demarcates food as a pacifier, but now the kitchen is Dominick's crib.

Dominick's discomfort reemerges at an increasing level whenever he is challenged. His siblings view his food consumption as a "morally or mentally defective" behavior that can be changed (Stearns 1997, 117). All Dominick needs, according to Antoinette, is willpower to overcome his addictive eating.⁷ His inability to display the necessary willingness to be thin is viewed as an attack on the family. Neither Dominick nor his siblings recognize or will admit that his mother's tactical behavior created his default strategy—something that becomes a permanent solution to an ever-changing dynamic. This twisting of a short-term tactic into a life choice is what makes him powerless over his emotions, his eating habits, and his weight. Avi Santo argues that Tony Soprano's relationship to "his fatness [is based upon] a lack of control, which he exhibits in both bursts of violence and greediness as well as in his anxiety attacks" (2002, 78). This inability to express clearly how one feels can be connected with Dominick's inability to control his appetite in *Fatso*. Eating becomes a violent action that leaves him unable to express himself clearly, confidently, or maturely.

Early in Dominick's journey to curb his appetite, Dominick returns from the neighborhood bakery with his nephew's birthday cake—a Neapolitan ice cream cake. After Antoinette opens the cake box and sees the piece with the letters "O-N-Y" missing, she turns on Dominick with a knife. Only

Frank and her husband (Robert Costanza) hold her back from a full assault on her brother. The camera jumps from one sibling's point of view to the other, refusing to maintain a stable connection with anyone as though to commit to one or the other would be to choose sides. Antoinette's response lacks empathy toward her brother, but she is also a mother who does not want her son to be disappointed. Dominick upends Antoinette's attempts to emulate *her* mother, the perfect caretaker and nurturer.

Her husband intervenes and attempts to assuage her by sending Dominick out to purchase another cake, although Antoinette screams, "Don't give him any money." She wants Dominick to suffer for his actions, but she cannot see that he has been in pain since he snuck into their kitchen and quietly handed her the cake box. Before leaving to find another birthday cake, Dominick turns to Antoinette, Frank, and his brother-in-law to ask what they are going to do with "that cake." Antoinette reduces it to crumbs by plunging her hands into it over and over again as though she is punching a person and not destroying a cake. This moment is shot in a manner reminiscent of the way in which in *The Godfather's* Connie Corleone is beaten by her husband Carlo and then Carlo is beaten by Sonny as retaliation. The victim is in the background of the shot and what is foregrounded are the perpetrator's actions. Even when the camera focuses on the destruction of the cake, Antoinette's hands dominate the frame. Her rage, which Dominick downplays as "dramatic," is as dangerous as Dominick's eating binges. Frank and Antoinette's husband become casualties in this battle for control of Dominick's eating habits. Neither Dominick nor Antoinette can win this war since Dominick always feels helpless and Antoinette tells him that she loves him while physically abusing him and yelling, "You son of a bitch." Neither is able to hear the other, and their automatic reactions reinforce this pattern of engagement rather than break it.

Michael Kimmel argues, "[A]ggression will take other routes besides gendered violence" when men are viewed "more 'like women' . . . —nurturing, caring, frightened — and [women] more 'like men' . . . —capable, rational, competent in the public sphere" (2008, 317). Kimmel's ideas on aggression explore what emerges once males are in touch with attributes gendered as feminine, but they do not take into account what occurs when males caretake and nurture, but instead remain repressed emotionally. Dominick is "more 'like women'" in that his body is soft, not hard, he cries openly at his cousin's funeral, and he lovingly creates breakfast for his brother each morning, although his submissive caretaker role is compromised by Frank's insistence that Dominick does not understand his taste. The outward markers of Dominick's emotional availability are disingenuous, and his food rituals suggest that other emotions are being

ignored or pushed aside. This emotional repression cannot be a sign of maleness but is a rewarded mode of expression within the DiNapoli family structure. Antoinette is an opinionated and tempestuous woman, suggesting an innate aggression that is typically viewed as male, but her love for Dominick cannot be stereotypically gendered since she verbally and physically assaults him when she is frustrated by what she deems his masochistic, suicidal behavior. Dominick's preferred mode of avoidance is food; he binges in a secretive and violent manner whenever he is overwhelmed, but he does resort to physical violence when food is withheld. *Fatso's* parodic portraits of masculinity and femininity suggest that gendered violence is not erased simply through male nurturance and female empowerment, but that "other routes" emerge and aggress toward violence of the self and others unless and until these modes of discourse are more than compensatory (or consumptive) and allow for an individual to mature emotionally and break free of stultifying rituals.

Due to Dominick's discomfort with asking for what he needs, the camera uses an inordinate amount of close-ups on Dominick's responses to Antoinette's diatribes and Frank's accusations. The reaction shot reinforces Dominick's dependency on his family's words and actions. The tragic and grotesque implications of their familial roles, as when Frank yells at Dominick after his older brother berates him for not knowing how to "run his plate" during breakfast ("You love bread," Frank responds. "I don't love bread. I like bread."), suggest that unless they can listen to each other their family will break apart—both literally and figuratively. When the film employs the reaction shot in such a ubiquitous manner, the family dynamics are seen as tied to Dominick's pain, which no one acknowledges. While Ebert suggests that the camera placement is problematic because Bancroft did not understand how to construct a shot for the audience's maximum understanding and response, he disregards the possibility that Bancroft has constructed the shot in just such a manner. Antoinette's rants may be the active site of engagement, but they don't vary much beyond, "You son of a bitch, how could you do this to me?" and could be translated into the gibberish spoken by the adults in a *Peanuts* cartoon although their ubiquity points toward a kind of pathology. What is important is Dominick's response to her ranting, which is more uncomfortable to watch since DeLuise plays these moments quietly and without any fight as if Dominick is to blame for her emotional tirade. The stereotype of the brutish Italian-American male who takes revenge first and eats spaghetti afterward is nowhere in sight. Giorgio Bertellini makes an interesting argument that Italian-American cinema of the 1970s examines "superficially the moment of ethnic redemption" even if "the protagonists . . . still exhibit ancient

wounds in an intensive desire for revenge" (2010, 100). *Fatso* breaks this rule since Dominick does not seek revenge on anything or anyone. Bertellini argues that "violence and pathos [in these films] . . . mark a range of actions and passions tied to a generosity that is, at times, epicurean (in terms of food, sex, and friendship), but more often stoic, if not martyr-like, of both body and mind" (2010, 102). Dominick's stoicism is repressive in nature rather than self-sacrificial although this repression is the result of his mother's behavior, developed due to her fear for his survival. While his mother's actions compromise Dominick's psyche, he cannot be considered a sacrificial object. His journey allows him to accept the consequences of his actions as an adult without placing blame or responsibility upon his mother. Ultimately, his life is not diminished by his mother's fear. His experiences suggest that living is not simply about learning how to survive to adulthood but rather about acceptance and embracing the possibility of change through living a full and complicated existence.

Genre Bending

In *Fatso*, Dominick serves as the most physically obvious perpetrator and victim of an outsider rhetoric, but each family member participates in a destructive discourse that mirrors the narrative trajectory of a film such as *The Godfather*. In thinking about parody as not only a renunciation of a representative, if stereotypical, figure, Yury Tynyanov argues that literary constructions of parody must create "a disjunction" within the work itself and the work that is being parodied ([1921] 1979, 104). Tynyanov suggests that a "dislocation of intent" may be as simple as creating a comedy out of tragedy or it may be more subtle in that "a double nuance" can be "perceived from a double standpoint" ([1921] 1979, 104, 117). In *Fatso*, Bancroft and DeLuise upend notions not only of gangsterism but also of comedy. *Fatso* purposefully doubles the rhetoric of criminality and inverts comedy through the increasingly chaotic and destructive representation of Dominick's consumption and his family's role in pushing him toward this destructive behavior. If this construction parodies a film like *The Godfather*, it is also the most direct and obvious precursor to what Santo suggests is *The Sopranos'* "struggle over the construction of masculinity" (2002, 73). Dominick's weapon of choice is food, but the destruction to both his psyche and the family structure is as palpable as if he possessed a loaded gun.

The space where this criminality comes to its most violent and destructive end is not at a tollbooth on the Jones Beach Parkway as happens to Sonny in *The Godfather* but in Dominick and Frank's small and claustrophobic kitchen space. Dominick's enlistment of the family's assistance in

developing a workable strategy to control his eating occurs after joining the self-help program the Chubby Checkers, a group based on the strategy that there is help in communal empathy. Once he commits to the program, his bingeing can no longer remain a secret. When he is in crisis, he is told to call “a checker” and ask for someone to talk him through his desire to eat; he does not have to feel helpless, and he does not have to go through his feelings alone. As Peter Stearns points out, “By the 1970s . . . it was generally acknowledged that men’s eagerness to lose weight began to match that of women.” Stearns further suggests that “[m]ale worries about appearance, and the resultant need for slenderness, increased, along with ever-wider publicity about the perils of cholesterol for men” (1997, 102). In *Fatso*, Dominick’s and his siblings’ fears are exacerbated by a media and health frenzy that suggests men are unhealthy consumers if they do not control their eating habits. In this regard, his siblings’ insistence that he needs to control his eating habits and Dominick’s preoccupation with dieting, weight control, and his willingness to engage assistance from a twelve-step group are consistent with “standard parts of American middle-class life” (Stearns 1997, 108).⁸ If *Fatso*’s narrative structure is a parodic reinvention of *The Godfather*’s criminality and masculinity, the Chubby Checkers are a further parodic interpretation that examines twelve-step rhetoric and the growing diet industry of the 1970s. In confronting Italian-American ethnicity and identity through parodic reinventions of these two American obsessions—gangsterism and weight control—*Fatso* points the finger not at constructions of Italian-American vernacular practices or community insulation but at American capitalism, which causes the DiNapoli anxiety over the purported life-threatening practices of their culinary tradition and demands asceticism in order for Dominick to be “cured.”

In the most absurd construction of control within the film’s narrative, Dominick and Frank secure the food in the kitchen with an oversized chain and numerous locks. Whether this is a good or realistic strategy is beside the point: Their action is a short-term solution for Dominick’s increasing food binges. It also satirizes the 1970s diet industry motto that “fat people should be able to control themselves” (Stearns 1997, 117). Male thinness is reinforced within a paradigm that is dependent upon “a chance to display male character and independent initiative” (Stearns 1997, 101), but Frank and Dominick’s initiative, tellingly American in its overkill, is akin to taking a chainsaw to a birthday cake.⁹

Dominick’s plan is compromised by late-night television’s ubiquitous images of food. Bancroft intersperses this scene with shots of food and Dominick’s reaction to what appears on the television screen. Dominick’s attempt to use the television as a narcotic to help him sleep is confounded

by the images of homemade noodles, ice cream sundaes and pies, and Charles Laughton as Henry VIII spouting, between bites of a chicken leg, "There's no delicacy these days. . . . Refinement is a thing of the past." Bancroft's choice in using this clip from the 1933 comedy-of-manners film *The Private Lives of Henry VIII* amplifies the absurdity of Dominick's situation. Dominick clicks off the television after Laughton shouts, "Am I the king or a breeding pool?" This line emphasizes food's power over Dominick, which compromises his ability to enter into a procreative relationship with Lydia. The choice itself is absurd and reveals the pressure that a single forty-year-old man such as Dominick feels. Dominick's and his siblings' perceptions of his weight and appearance have created a false picture of who he is: an unlovable, defective bachelor who will never be good enough to marry. The pressure to conform so as to be worthy of a wife causes Dominick to engage in an unrealistic and dangerous plan to keep himself away from food. The television reminds him not only of all the food that he is missing but also of what this denial has reduced him to—an insatiable man who insists that no identity is complete unless he is seen as the king of his castle.

In the next series of shots, Dominick's image is fragmented. At first, only his hand holding his nephew's water pistol is visible in the darkness of his brother's bedroom. The frame is dark, however, and at first the gun appears real. The shot is also a reversal of the opening image of Dominick's father's hand on his mother's shoulder. If his father is the hand of power, Dominick's power is illusory. This shot, with its dark palette, also mirrors the framing device used in Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973) when the hitman (played by Scorsese) in the back seat of the car shoots Johnny Boy. What is dissimilar between these two shots is that Dominick is not holding an actual gun, but a child's toy. He wakes his brother from a sound sleep with a threat to "blow [his] nose right off [his] face" unless Frank hands over the key to the locked kitchen cabinets and refrigerator. While the knowledge that Dominick does not have a real gun in his hand might suggest a slapstick moment, the ambiguous tone of the scene reinforces and complicates notions of violence. Dominick's violence, whether in this interaction with his brother or as his food binges escalate, is simultaneously debilitating as depression and energizing as hysteria. The violence is one more repressive mask that Dominick wears to cover his sadness and fear, and it works against Virginia Wright Wexman's argument that the clown figure in television and film "conquers fear by incorporating it" (quoted in Mosher 2001, 177, footnote 8). Although Dominick might be viewed as a clown figure, this image is upended first by his violent impulse and second by the fact that his fear is not incorporated but acted out.

The framing splits the screen evenly between Dominick and Frank. The brothers' vulnerability resonates in their dress—white boxer shorts and white sleeveless T-shirts. Once Frank points out that the gun is not real, Dominick places the gun on the kitchen counter in defeat, but the camera shifts to Dominick as he picks up a large knife on the counter. Any comic tenor to the scene vanishes as Dominick becomes an actual threat. Power resides in the weapon Dominick brandishes, which has turned Dominick into a malevolent figure capable of grotesquery—not to comic but to murderous effect. He threatens his brother with gutting, when he screams, "Gimme those keys or I'll cut your throat down to your balls." Beneath the rhetoric of the kind and gentle fat man lies the story of a frightened male who would murder for a meal. Dominick's threat to his brother's life upends notions of gangsterism that suggest the threat to the family emanates from an outside force. Although Dominick is squeezed by an American diet industry that profits from individuals' insecurities, the violence is an inside job.

Dominick points the knife first at his brother's throat and then at Frank's genitals. The camera follows the movement of the knife in a long shot. Frank's pleading convinces Dominick to "look at [himself]" and he drops the knife on the sofa, but the camera does not acknowledge Dominick's weeping. The long shot pans over to catch Frank as he picks up the knife and chases his older brother into a corner. At this point both brothers are in a reactive position, and after Frank exhausts his anger and puts the knife on the television set, Dominick picks it up and chases Frank to the center of the living room. This role reversal between perpetrator and victim occurs three times before Dominick recognizes how disruptive and dangerous he has become and Frank empathizes. Once Dominick puts down the knife permanently, he clings to Frank like a child needing comfort. While the knife has not been used to emasculate them, their behavior has. The entwined pair make their way to the phone in order for Frank to call Dominick's Chubby Checker sponsors. The brothers are locked in learned emotional reactions due to the way in which Dominick has been conditioned to use food. They are consumed by Dominick's bottomless need and the self-inflicted violence of his new and impossible dietary regime. Dominick's use of physical violence escalates because the solution to his consumption is tied to denial, a denial of all that he loves and values about his family and community. Dominick's love of food is criminalized in the dieting rhetoric, which in turn causes him to behave like a criminal.

When the Chubby Checkers arrive, Frank moves to the periphery of the frame as he performs the role of waiter for Dominick and his two sponsors, Sonny Lapidus and Oscar Lapidus, fetching the men hot water and lemon.

Frank has moved through the roles of family supporter, victim, perpetrator, anchor, and waiter in one short scene. Frank's dismissal is also a warning that the family has been pushed aside in favor of outside influences, in this case the sponsors who share a similar experience with Dominick regarding food. Each time Frank attempts to add to their conversation, he is ignored. The camera frames the men in close-ups, and Frank is relegated to an occasional moment in the background. The topic of Lydia dominates the conversation at first, she being the sustenance that Dominick is denied and denies himself; he is missing her signals of romantic interest. Rather than assisting him in working through his feelings of helplessness, the three men's conversation becomes consumed with a recounting of their favorite foods and meals. Dominick recalls that the only thing that his dead cousin Sal "could be involved in was a meal," which mirrors how Dominick, Sonny, and Oscar cut Frank out of their conversation. In this scene, the business of eating, like Don Corleone's criminal business dealings in *The Godfather*, is relegated to those whose appetites fill gargantuan needs. Frank becomes suspect and untrustworthy and must be isolated because he does not understand the rules and threatens the power structure, and his presence calls into question the place that food has in their lives.

The men's discussion of their favorite foods becomes more obsessive, and the camera's close-ups spill over the frame so that only their mouths, nose, and eyes are emphasized. Their conversation is both intimate and criminal in nature. Food is sustenance and weapon, and as their focus shifts from helping Dominick to avoid an eating binge to recounting their favorite foods, Frank becomes the reminder of what it means to be emotionally attached to food and the obstacle who keeps them from indulging. The camera cuts to a medium shot of Frank as the three men's demands on him become increasingly unreasonable and bizarre. The camera shifts to a medium shot as Dominick and the sponsors, like zombies, march toward Frank in order to take the key by force. The Chubby Checkers' intervention turns from a conversational frenzy about food into an eating orgy. Dominick's behavior has escalated throughout the narrative of the film, but there is no preparation for what ensues once he and the sponsors literally take the doors off the kitchen cabinets. The camera shoots the men from above as if the roof has been blown off the apartment. The men cook everything in the cabinets and refrigerator, and even this food is not enough; Dominick calls for take-out.

Dominick's binges have only been hinted at, and until his meeting with the Chubby Checkers, his food consumption has been controlled, and even, as in the scene at his cousin's wake, delicate and sophisticated in nature. It is only once he and his siblings engage with the rhetoric of the diet industry

that his violent nature emerges. The only physical violence that has been witnessed up to the arrival of the Chubby Checkers is Antoinette's outburst when she destroys what is left of her son's birthday cake, but even this outburst comes after Sal's death when she and Frank have put pressure on Dominick to conform to a more rigid standard of consumption. This displacement of aggressive behavior onto the female upends expectations of Dominick until an actual binge erupts on the screen. It is not enough that Dominick acts out. This behavior is supported by his cohorts in food crime; suddenly, Dominick is part of a gang, a legitimate enterprise, but their devolution into a gangster mentality occurs without too much provocation and in spite of the legitimacy of the Chubby Checkers. Dominick's binge is not a singular action since the men's violence develops out of their conversation, almost pornographic in nature, about food. Although the sponsors are supposed to "check" Dominick from committing this type of transgressive behavior, they wind up as participants. These men's violence is palpable. The comic frame is nothing more than a false construct that smashes to pieces the notions that Italian-American food is only sustenance and that violent men are agents of power. In this moment, the "leave the gun, take the cannoli" mentality is refused and eating the cannoli *is* eating the gun.

Until the destruction of the kitchen, neither Frank nor Antoinette have witnessed one of Dominick's food binges. As Dominick and his sponsors eat through the night, Frank and Antoinette hide in the hallway, observing the carnage. Frank whispers, "Dominick put up a pot of spaghetti, first thing, but the big guy couldn't wait so he ate my leftover lasagna. Frozen. Then Dominick ate a big pot of pasta fa'zool. He ate the whole thing himself. All of them. Nobody shared." Ironically, sharing their struggles and no longer hiding their addictions does not create community; a deeper isolation is reinforced by the group's coming together. The singularity exhibited in their food orgy is indicative of the men's disconnect to their communities and to each other. This isolation is also exhibited in the way that the siblings have been pushed aside and marginalized so that these men can maintain (and further develop) a pathological connection to food.

The camera shot of Antoinette and Frank supports the growing isolation between Dominick and his family. While the kitchen is lit in a bright, almost florescent glare, the hallway is dark, and the siblings' position is marginalized by placing them in the background. The hallway that connects them to Dominick and his Chubby Checker sponsors dominates as the siblings walk downstairs to Antoinette's apartment. The hallway's transformation from a space of mobility and connection to a place that cannot be breached is most obviously rendered in Antoinette's silence. While her expected response would be to rage at her brother, and the destruction of the kitchen

would seem to be a legitimate reason for one of her rants, here she not only does not lose her temper but she is in awe of what has transpired. By forcing Dominick to control his diet through a rhetoric that is not supported by the numerous connections to Italian-American culture portrayed within the film's narrative, they become witnesses to the destruction that is possible when Dominick's identity is compromised and isolated from all that he knows and loves.

This scene demarcates an essential moment in Antoinette's understanding of what has happened to Dominick. After witnessing one of Dominick's binges, Antoinette changes tactics. Instead of berating Dominick after the Chubby Checkers leave, she talks to Lydia. This conversation occurs off-screen and is only revealed when Lydia visits Dominick during his food hangover. Lydia, unlike Dominick's family, is circumspect, equating his "fall" with Christ, who "fell three times. And he was Christ." Lydia's expectation that people will fail bolsters Dominick's confidence, and the two begin a relationship. In an extended montage of the couple kissing, Lydia's lips become manna for Dominick. They kiss outside in parks, inside in Lydia's apartment hallway, on the street outside the card shop, on a sofa between an intimate conversation. The couple's closeness is also revealed in Antoinette and Frank's relative silence during this wooing period. The change in the family dynamics allows the family to remain intact and Dominick to mature emotionally. The film, however, is not interested in a storybook ending that enfolds Dominick safely back into the community as a permanently changed man. Instead, the film works toward a more ambiguous and open ending that suggests Dominick and his siblings will never be free from their pasts – for good and ill.

On the evening that Dominick plans to ask Lydia to marry him, she disappears. He does not realize that her brother, a firefighter, has been injured and that she has gone to Boston to be with him during his recovery. Her absence sends Dominick spiraling downward into despair. There is one final binge – \$40 worth of Chinese take-out – intended for a card party in Antoinette's apartment. The binge is relegated to the hidden actions of a distraught man – only Dominick jumping the curb in the car that he has taken to pick up the food indicates what he is about to do.

If Dominick's binge returns to the place of hidden shame, Antoinette's behavior is revealed in a mirror image of his food orgy with the Chubby Checker sponsors. Her movement as she confronts Dominick is also a reversal of the scene in *The Godfather* where Carlo chases Connie Corleone into their bathroom and beats her. The action moves from the foreground into the background until the married couple disappears and the only indication of what is happening are Connie's screams. In *Fatso*, Antoinette

enters the apartment and discovers Dominick sitting by a window in the foreground of the frame. She beats her brother with a cane while she yells, "You son of a bitch. You rat bastard" over and over again until Frank and her husband pull her away from Dominick. The moment is made uncomfortable, with its rage and shame, since the camera focuses on Dominick sitting silently while Antoinette's physical and verbal blows rain down on him. Antoinette's rage is as frightening and transgressive as Dominick's compulsion to eat when he is emotionally vulnerable.

What is different in this scene is Dominick's ability to self-reflect, which forces Frank and Antoinette to listen. The siblings' positions become reversed as Antoinette weeps when Dominick states, "I'm trying to blame that darling Lydia for what I did. . . . Mama started it all. How she loved to feed me . . . but look what you did. . . . You made me a fatso. . . . I can't stop the fat, Mama. It's killing me. Mama, mama, mama." In the first sign of sibling understanding for the depth of Dominick's pain and shame, Antoinette holds him as they both cry. This closeness allows Dominick to further clarify his position and acknowledge that their mother "did what she thought was best" and now he needs to be a responsible adult. He turns to Antoinette and Frank and suggests he may not be able to "control" himself and both he and his siblings will have "to love me the way I am. Fat. You gotta love me for who I am and so do I. So do I." Dominick's self-awareness that he cannot be perfect and will, more than likely, fall again, draws upon the complex mediated identity both he and Antoinette have been negotiating since the film's opening montage. *Fatso's* narrative privileges community over isolation, messiness over order, and dysfunctional nurturance over mainstream American practices. While Dominick discovers that Lydia had to return home and does want to marry him, the ending refuses to wrap up the family in a neat blanket of positive assimilation or Dominick in the pervasive rhetoric of the diet industry. The family will continue to evolve and change as the closing images of Dominick's growing family of many children attest.

Fatso suggests that problems within the Italian-American family arise not from one source but from a clashing of interests and needs. While violence is prevalent in Dominick's interactions with his family and food, it is not a marker of masculinity. Antoinette's use of physical and verbal abuse dominates constructions of violence normally viewed as tropes of gangsterism. Dominick's masculinity emerges from his willingness to engage in an emotionally vulnerable manner with Lydia and his siblings. He cannot reject his love of food, but he does recognize that until he can be emotionally truthful, food will be a substitute for human interaction rather than a positive marker of his heritage. After his last binge, when he believes he has lost

Lydia, Dominick is at his most fragile, but he refuses to retreat from uncomfortable feelings. He confronts Antoinette and Frank with his awareness of who he is and who he wants to be as a man, as a brother, and as a husband and father. The film suggests that his siblings embrace this admission as a sign of masculinity and maturity, and that male and female dynamics may be complex, but men and women must mediate identity together.

Bancroft's film, although not as rigid in its artistry as Coppola's *The Godfather* or Scorsese's *Goodfellas*, offers a fresh and innovative view of the Italian-American male and the myriad relationships that exist between Italian-American men and women. Bancroft and *Fatso* need to be treated with as much respect, detail, and interrogation as Coppola, Scorsese, and Puzo—or female artists as diverse as Savoca, Diane DiPrima, and Louise DeSalvo. This multifaceted exploration of the film's parodic reimagining of Italian Americanness—through both gastronomic and gender lines of inquiry—has sought to offer further insight into how these complex themes might enrich future research in the fields of film, gender, and Italian American studies.

Notes

1. Leonard Maltin expresses the same idea, almost word for word, when he states: "Film veers unevenly between comedy and pathos, with a few too many excrement jokes, perhaps the uncredited contribution of Mel Brooks" (2009, 444).
2. Gabbard and Luhr note that "the film industry has always operated upon gender presumptions about the likely tastes of their audiences. . . . In the 1970s feminists argued that spectatorship was tightly gender-specific, but only a few years later a new wave of feminist theorists argued there are many ways in which women, or in fact the same woman, can respond to a film" (2008, 2). Film critics' negative responses to *Fatso* seem predicated on their inability to read the film without these gender presumptions.
3. For an interesting read on mothers and their children in mainstream cinema, including a brief acknowledgment of *Fatso*'s mother figure, see Esposito (2002).
4. Bancroft's portrayal of Annie Sullivan in the Arthur Penn-directed film *The Miracle Worker* (1962) and its predecessor on Broadway received an Oscar and a Tony Award. By her own admission, "Arthur Penn taught me everything. . . . He really was, I think, more help to me in my acting than any other person alive or dead" (quoted in Ridge, 1999). Penn went on to direct *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *Little Big Man* (1970), and *The Missouri Breaks* (1976), films similar to *Fatso* in that they work against easy categorization and stereotypical portrayals. In 1967, at the age of thirty-six, only five years older than Dustin Hoffman, Bancroft was nominated for an Oscar for her role as Mrs. Robinson in *The Graduate*, and in 1978 she received another Oscar nomination for her work in *The Turning Point* (1977). After making *Fatso*, Bancroft starred in *Agnes of God* (1985) and *'night, Mother* (1986), for which she was nominated, again, for an Oscar.
5. For the specifics regarding Savoca's journey from first idea to finished production of *True Love*, see Giunta (2002).
6. The 1955 film *Marty* attempts a similar upending, but its sentimental love story undoes the connection between mother and son through the intrusion of an outsider female

who is educated, unattractive, and not Italian American. See Casillo for an interesting sociological reading of the way in which *Marty* examines lower-middle-class values and connections (2011, 585–598). See also Blake for a summary of how *Marty*'s need for connection threatens not only his relationship with his friends, but also and most especially, his connection with his mother (2005, 51–52). See Bondanella for a discussion of the Italian female immigrant in *Marty*—women who fear displacement by the white ethnic female (2004, 44–46).

7. Stearns notes, “[I]n 1950 7 percent of men and 14 percent of women professed to be on a diet, whereas in 1973, the numbers had risen to 34 percent and 49 percent. But the main point was the impact of the steady pressure of diet advice and *the growing need to believe that discipline was required*” (1997, 125) (emphasis added).
8. See Gardaphé (2002) for a discussion regarding gangsters and class issues, particularly the way in which *The Godfather* plays with notions of assimilation (2002, 62–64).
9. Mosher (2001) suggests that dieting is such an American staple that “sitcoms sooner or later do a ‘dieting show’” (188, footnote 7). What is interesting in this connection is that “sitcoms showed that eating disorders affected men as well as women,” including with regard to such iconic figures as Ralph Kramden and Archie Bunker (2001, 188, footnote 7). In addition, Mellencamp suggests, “The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (which is free) are at the base of other therapies, differentiated to deal with various problems— which, like cars, cleansers, and lipstick, have multiplied” (1990, 28). The ubiquitous and growing nature of the diet industry during the 1970s alongside the rhetoric of twelve-step groups reveals *Fatso*'s plot to have more than a passing concern with American middle-class stress and confusion.

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Notes and Documents

Vita Brevis: An Appreciation of the Life and Work of Paul Giaimo (May 8, 1962–June 8, 2012)

FRED GARDAPHÉ

When I was young, I used to think that death was something that happened to old people. When my family would bring us into the rooms of dying relatives—the ones we watched, touched, and gave last kisses to—they were always very old with gray or white hair, wrinkled skin, and thin hands stretching out fingers that could barely squeeze ours.

Now I am a survivor of the deaths of many others. Grieving the death of someone you know and love is difficult, but more difficult still is when the person who dies is younger than you. This is what I face in the death of Paul Sebastian Giaimo. I can accept Paul's death at age 50, and have, but I can also wonder just how much more he could have given the world had his life continued even a few more years. Paul was a committed scholar and colleague, and though his energy and ideas will be missed by all of us, his works and actions will live on through the art of his academic writings and through the memories that those who met him continue to carry with them.

I first met Paul at one of the American Italian Historical Association's conferences in Chicago, just after he had landed his first job. He was filled with such enthusiasm and creativity that I knew his work would eventually have a strong impact on the field, and it did. Paul's insights into the relationship between Italian American studies and the larger field of American studies were cutting-edge and transformative. His 2003 *MELUS* essay "Ethnic Outsiders: The Hyper-Ethnicized Narrator in Langston Hughes and Fred L. Gardaphé" was a great example of how his mastery of American studies helped to expand the audience for Italian-American subjects. I will always be appreciative of this.

Reading his obituary made me realize that the people we meet in academic contexts, even those we go on to call colleagues and friends, offer only a small part of who they really are at the annual venues when we gather to exchange ideas. We are all so much more than the arguments we present, than the social behavior we exhibit when we are away from home, than the knowledge we reveal through talks and after-session conversations in restaurants, bars, and hotel lobbies. While I knew that Paul was close to

the Catholic Church (you can read that in some of his articles and especially in his study of Don DeLillo), I was unaware that he was a member of such organizations as the Catholic Worker and the Knights of Columbus.

The last time I saw Paul was at the March 22, 2012, presentation he made at the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute on his new book, *Appreciating Don DeLillo: The Moral Force of a Writer's Work*. The energy with which he presented his ideas and the force of his rhetoric masked the fight against cancer that his body was waging. He cut a fine figure that night as he took people through some of the main points of his past work and revealed to us the direction he would be taking going forward. You could not tell from his physical presence during the lecture that he was dying, for he projected so much energy that it couldn't help but enter the audience. It was as though his intellectual life had taken over his physical life, pushing it to extremes that his body was incapable of maintaining. In that presentation he sketched out the scope of his study and carefully built arguments for the value of reading DeLillo as no other critic had done before. Paul challenged the typical ways of viewing DeLillo as a postmodern writer and made strong arguments by including the Italian-American and Catholic signs in his novels. Paul's book is mandatory reading for anyone working on DeLillo and will no doubt affect future DeLillo scholarship. At the end of his talk Paul revealed an elaborate and ambitious plan for his future work.

After the presentation I suggested we walk back to his hotel and grab a drink, as we often did after the conference presentations he made earlier in his life. He looked at me very seriously and said that he just couldn't do it and asked if we could take a taxi. We did, and when we arrived at his hotel he excused himself from the drink, saying that he had to recoup his energy for meeting his family the next day. He left me with an incredibly strong hug, stronger than he usually gave, and one that must have taken whatever energy he had left that night. We promised to see each other soon, but it was a promise neither of us kept, for just a few short months later I received news of his death.

Paul's work here is done, and with it he has advanced Italian American studies by shining the light of American studies on this growing field. While he never completed all he planned, he has left a legacy of thought to future scholars who will certainly benefit from his enormous contributions to the field. We thank Paul for enriching us through his scholarship, his collegiality, and his friendship. Hippocrates wrote, "Ars longa, vita brevis," and Paul's life reminds us that indeed the things one does can live on long after their maker's life when they are done well and with passion and precision. *Grazie*, Paul, for your life and work.

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Book Reviews

Contours of White Ethnicity: Popular Ethnography and the Making of Usable Pasts in Greek America.

By Yiorgos Anagnostou.

Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009.

304 pages.

Editor's note: The Italian American Review asked three scholars from the fields of sociology, literary criticism, and Italian American studies to review Yiorgos Anagnostou's book Contours of White Ethnicity: Popular Ethnography and the Making of Usable Pasts in Greek America in order to engender an interdisciplinary dialog around issues concerning the study of white ethnicity. The author in turn responded to the reviewers' comments and critiques.

American sociology has fixed the identities of white ethnic groups in relation to the mass immigration from Europe before 1924. This follows from a model of assimilation that entails a structural decline in ethnicity by the third generation. At that point, ethnicity becomes a private option, as delineated in Herbert Gans's concept of "symbolic ethnicity." It is located in "individual psychology," specifically in "feelings" of "nostalgia," and is dis-embedded from collective structures of cultural difference and status inequality. Ethnic assertion is compatible with expressive individualism and pop-culture multiculturalism and is thus a trivial subject compared to groups with assigned racial difference.

Yiorgos Anagnostou makes a case for continuing to take white European ethnic groups seriously. The book interrogates how "various pasts are used to create identities and communities and to imagine the future of ethnicity," and at the very outset the author posits "the enduring relevance of ethnic pasts for the contemporary social imagination" (3). The core of the book is an incisive analysis of Greek-American narratives of ethnic remembrance in the form of "popular ethnographies"—cultural texts or representations produced not by professional anthropologists or folklorists, but by ethnics themselves, including memoirs and novels, immigrant family biographies, oral history projects, and museum exhibitions. The proliferation of a cultural archive is attributed to identity politics orchestrated by "intellectual elites" (25) to compose a narrative counter to ethnic stigma. The author finds in these popular ethnic self-representations nuances or "contours" that are overlooked or dismissed in academic writings. Popular ethnography is accorded "analytical importance" because it reaches "wide audiences" (17) like the PBS documentary *Greek Americans* and the commercially successful film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. Mass-media texts, alongside university ethnic-studies programs and ethnic festivals, are all "public sites of multiculturalism." Anagnostou believes that these texts are "expressions of enduring *collective* belonging" (95) that are able to "forge enduring group commitments" (26).

Anagnostou seeks to "complicate" ethnic meanings in regard to the self-representations of Greek Americans and of white ethnic groups in general. Ethnicity is "ideological," and therefore the "politics" of "usable ethnic pasts" entails a struggle

for power on both sides of the ethnic boundary. He maintains that Greek self-representations have always been hotly contested. There is perhaps no better example than the controversy surrounding the photo reproduced on the book's cover, portraying Cretan immigrant laborers saluting with bottles of alcohol and handguns — an image that many inside the ethnic boundary worried “makes Greek America ‘look like a Greek Mafia’” (5). In a manner that is typical for white ethnics, dominant narratives of “acceptable difference” like the PBS documentary *Greek Americans* align Greek ethnicity with mainstream American ideology of “multicultural” whiteness. This is a prominent thread in the volume, and Anagnostou deftly excavates identity frameworks that link Greek pasts, including the ancient civilization, to the interests of middle-class white America. The author adds that the “dismantling” of whiteness is “perhaps less visible” (225), which is probably an understatement. A notable example is an ethnography, authored by Helen Papanikolas, which appeals to interracial solidarity growing out of empathy for recent Mexican immigrants rooted in the initial Greek immigrant encounter with prejudice in America.

The contours of Greek-American ethnicity, supported by compelling religious difference and living roots, “complicate” the assumption of a “uniform” multicultural whiteness. Anagnostou maintains that the “powerful commitment” to a Greek heritage refutes a model of white ethnic identities that are “neither wholly privatized nor weak and readily disposable” (95). However, the Greek-American case cannot be generalized to all white ethnic groups because nationality is reinforced by religious affiliation. Greek-American ethnicity is also centered on a post-World War II immigration, which assigns a more formative cultural role to the immigrant generation in comparison to Italian-American ethnicity. The recent emergence of a third generation precludes the development of a “symbolic ethnicity” that undermines his criticism of that concept. Similarly, more recently arrived groups do not have a range of “ethnic options,” another concept in the sociological armament that Anagnostou criticizes as too individualized (14).

Anagnostou understands that the construction of compelling ethnic pasts takes commitment. However, absent institutional structures, “popular ethnographies” are likely to be occasions for symbolic ethnicity, especially as a third generation emerges outside the ethnic neighborhood. In particular, if he wants to contest sociological models privileging assimilation and “privatized” ethnic expression, it is necessary to ground ethnographic representations in collective practices and construction sites. The Greek Orthodox parish is critical for ethnic group formation, but Anagnostou treats it as an abstraction (99–100). A promising construction site is the nexus of ethnic interests and culture formed by the family restaurant business. In metropolitan New York City, this economic niche sustains a Greek-American status group based not only on similar work conditions but also on consumption styles. Orthodox parishes and a small-business-class culture sustain a residential Greek-American diaspora moving out of Astoria to suburban Long Island, including a summer colony on the east end.

Anagnostou does not mine local cultures for ethnic contours. Local demographic and structural factors play a critical role in shaping identity narratives. Academic rather than popular ethnographies are needed to complicate sweeping generalizations based on census data. The “twilight of ethnicity” metaphor originated by Richard Alba in his book *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity* (Prentice Hall, 1985)

can explain the emergence of a historic and commercialized “Little Italy,” but not outer-borough communities like Bensonhurst, with a population of 100,000 persons of Italian ancestry. These outer-borough communities “complicate” Alba’s assumptions about assimilation, which are pegged to a pre-1924 folk culture. Communities replenished by renewed flow of immigration from Italy in the decades after World War II supported high rates of home ownership and yet were framed by conflicts with core American values that focused on the Mafia and episodes of racial violence in Howard Beach in 1986 and 2005 and in Bensonhurst in 1989. They combined Italian immigrant culture and American youth culture, notably the development of the notorious style known as “Guido.”

The author’s “intervention” into white ethnicity taps a diverse academic literature. Its theoretical backbone is a cultural studies perspective that grounds social identities in meaning-making by groups and individuals under conditions that are fluid and contested. This is the central idea of constructionist and transactional perspectives that frame the conversation about ethnicity in American sociology. However, Anagnostou does not reference this literature, notably the works of Joane Nagel and of Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann. Also omitted is the work of E.E. Roosens, which is particularly attentive to “the manipulation of symbols” (160) and the dynamics of power in the “reconstitution” of ethnic pasts (156), and of Anya Royce, an anthropologist who understands that ethnicity has to be “invoked” and that the ongoing creation of ethnicity results in a “traditional style,” an apparent oxymoron, which recognizes that the past has always been open to change. The author could have mined the cultural studies literature further. His reliance on Stuart Hall’s work on identity fails to locate it in a “system” of difference. The concepts of “hybridity” and “bricolage” would enhance the discussion of assimilation as ethnic production. Minority youth subcultures like Guido are noteworthy because they use and abuse ethnicity to assemble mainstream styles.

This is an important book for Italian American studies. Its principal value lies in its attention to diverse and often conflicting vernacular cultures that delineate alternatives to straight-line assimilation. However, its relevance to the scientific studies that it criticizes is perhaps compromised because it aspires to be ideological like the popular ethnographies it investigates. The author is pro-ethnicity as a cultural and moral position and endorses an ethnicity that expands through “dissent.” He subscribes to the view that the alignment with whiteness “strangles” Greek-American identity, and he critiques “white ethnic narratives that explicitly or implicitly contribute to the devaluation and domination of racial minorities” (16). In lieu of racialized identities framed by exclusion and power, he proposes an “ethical vision of becoming in the future” (160), specifically an alternative that “builds on the ecumenical and humanitarian ethos of Christianity” (227). This hope appears all the more idealistic because it is imagined without a basis in social structure.

—DONALD TRICARICO

Queensborough Community College, CUNY

This book is a useful addition to the growing literature on white ethnicity. Yiorgos Anagnostou is concerned with endowing the notion of white ethnicity with a degree of nuance that will defeat simplistic uses of the category. With that end in view, he introduces a baroque figure of speech that almost defies analysis or application: “contours of white ethnicity.”

Anagnostou calls this phrase a “metaphor,” but that is perhaps too modest. He aims to find an approach that allows him to recover, without losing a critical or self-critical edge, a degree of cultural authenticity, a way of framing narratives of cultural production. This new figure of speech, contours of white ethnicity, is what a technical rhetorician might call a topographical metaphor—topographical because it implies the presence of a contour map; metaphor because an abstract noun like *ethnicity* does not refer to an existing thing that can, strictly speaking, be said to display any contours. Let us briefly interrogate this intricate figure of white ethnicity. *Ethnicity*, an old and very political noun, refers to the quality of belonging to a nation (itself a metaphor of birth), particularly to a foreign nation—and often, in its earlier usages, to a heathen (or ritually unclean) nation. *White ethnicity*, an oxymoron, has grown in popularity during the past twenty-five years, particularly in the United States, where, as Anagnostou frequently admits, whiteness is the mark of *clean* nationality, the standard against which the fallings-off of other (what used to be called “heathen”) nationalities can be seen clearly. Thus, the coiner of this figure has endowed the metaphors of birth (ethnicity) and of standards (white ethnicity) with powers of embodiment that belong to characters in a play or with powers of movement that belong to landscapes as shown by a tracking camera. The question of what white ethnicity does and does not do is the motor of this book’s argument.

The contour creates perspectives, and it also blocks vision. For example, this figure allows Anagnostou to take apart the simplistic identity formations that make such fools of many popular ethnographers, his chosen targets of satire. When a Greek-American apologist puts his own family’s struggles and star possessions into a narrative featuring the achievements of Aristotle and Pythagoras, the effect may not be as flattering as the account wants to suggest. A successful diner in Cincinnati, a university chair in Tulsa, a vast kitchen gleaming with polished marble in San Diego may be admirable possessions, but their virtues are not really commensurable with those belonging to the foundations of philosophy or the first great experiments in physical science. Such unconvincing attempts to appropriate the greatness of suppositious “forebears” call for serious dismantling, and they receive it in this book.

On the other hand, the twisting of topographical contours allows Anagnostou to advocate assuming positions that enjoy many benefits of whiteness while keeping a safe, or at least visible, distance from some of the standard-setting effects of white privilege. He refers to “polyphonies of belonging” and is able to examine the complex structures of white ethnicity, separating its rigidities from its historical turns and ironies. At times he needs to disavow his major figure of speech:

The image of ethnic contours I have in mind does not match the logic of a topographical map, where each contour marks a line of equal elevation and where contours never cross. In my view of ethnicity’s map, contours connect texts, statements, and practices that claim to represent ethnicity; because these representations are interrelated in vastly complex ways, ethnic contours intersect, tangentially touch each other, or converge in dense hubs. (60)

Nonetheless, his Jamesonian concentration on historicizing themes that are too often presented as eternal and essential gives him the opportunity to “interrogate ethnic whiteness,” to distinguish its constitutive features, and to analyze their deployment. In a chapter titled “Ethnicity as Choice,” for example, he offers a telling distinction between “identity as sameness” and “identity as difference” in the general narrative project of ethnicity.

This is at times a difficult book. Its historicizing ambitions are deconstructive, and they lead the author occasionally into rhetorical excesses where it is hard to follow him. Less difficult, but worthy of mention, is the author’s amazing fondness for the personal pronoun *I*, sometimes using it eight or nine times on a page, announcing how he plans to proceed in the manner of a magician warning the audience of miracles to come. This is not, however, a book of miracles. It is a serious attempt to revise the metaphors by which we shape arguments in ethnic historiography. The book leaves this reader both pleased and a little puzzled. Sometimes it exhorts us to political action. Other times, it laboriously points out that it is useful for any group to study its own specific position, both historically and politically. That is a good idea, though it is not a new one. In the long run, I think, the fortunes of this book will rest upon whether or not readers can take up Anagnostou’s ambitious metaphor and use it to analyze ideological positions in ethnic discourse, as well as to remember when framing arguments and narratives. This book encourages us to explore how things appear from various positions on the ground instead of just looking at them on a single plane, as if in a satellite photo. In his many evocations of the richness of the ethnic territories, Anagnostou has made a real contribution to the study of not only Greek Americans, his specific focus in this work, but also of all peoples who live in heterogeneous societies, places where everyone is someone else’s heathen.

—ROBERT VISCUSI
Brooklyn College, CUNY

Yiorgos Anagnostou’s book is a welcome addition to the sparse amount of contemporary literature on white ethnics. Many in the social sciences have assumed that Greeks and other European immigrants have quietly assimilated into the American mainstream. Anagnostou’s work has the potential to reignite the debate over white ethnics, their history, and their contemporary place in American society and to bring this diverse group back into the general consciousness of Americans.

In surveying the varied and powerful experiences of Greek immigrants, Anagnostou advocates a search for a usable past. Such a past is not a carefully scripted valorization of an immigrant rags-to-riches story or a complacent view of transplanting a Greek village, down to the extended family, into some American urban enclave. No, his usable past is constituted from the reality of diverse contours of the immigrant experience as seen in the deliberately selected cover of his book, which features a controversial photo of Greek immigrants: We see a group of miners, dandified in their sartorial best, solemnly posing while brandishing pistols and liquor bottles. While upsetting to some community leaders, who saw it as portraying Greeks

as crude and dangerous, his choice encourages us to recognize another authentic representation of immigrants' lives. According to Anagnostou, within ethnic groups there are often disagreements over how to depict the group to society. Nonthreatening images of a smiling Greek family or a prosperous store owner play nicely into the dominant discourse of benign multiculturalism. Yet, he opines, we need images with a rough texture as well. These images and stories encourage deeper exploration of an array of newcomers, such as images of strikers or exhausted women and men in ramshackle shanties.

Anagnostou's book uses a somewhat unique methodology, which he considers critical to postmodern analysis of ethnic identity. Rather than ignoring popular ethnographers as "amateurs," he recognizes the importance of their work. Many of the debates about "authentic" white ethnicity are often played out in the marketplace rather than in an ethnic enclave or the confines of the academy. Videos, films, books, and festivals represent a commodified ethnicity more accessible to many people seeking identity in a fluid and somewhat ambiguous modern world. Postmodern ethnicity is not the primordial ethnicity of the first generation, where blood ties superseded all other connections, the heart ached for the glorious "old country," and accented English, however fluent, still gave the speaker away as "foreign." The author recognizes that contemporary ethnicity for younger generations may not include direct knowledge of any early immigrants or their lives. Some ethnic contact may be preserved through hallowed photographs, stories, or trips to Greece. Yet others may grow up knowing nothing of their ancestry. What, then, is available for a seeker of identity – beyond yearly fund-raising festivals? Is their heritage to be dismissed except for carefully orchestrated activities designed to give a bit of flavor to people in a rapidly changing society?

To this question Yiorgos Anagnostou gives an emphatic *no*; Greek-American ethnicity is not a superficial shadow destined to fade into the twilight. He suggests the shapes of contemporary identity are simultaneously uncovered, recovered, and reworked into something new that still has a stamp of Greek-American culture. Furthermore, he makes it clear there is no one "authentic" version of the past. The past is a weaving together of various points of view rather than a neatly packaged history to be bought and put on a shelf. For example, Anagnostou's discussions of gender divisions are an important acknowledgment of what hides beneath the sepia tones of a treasured family portrait. Were Greek immigrant women adored as keepers of tradition while simultaneously producing the next generation, or were they mute and oppressed within the patriarchy of their rural peasant culture? Raising such questions in their ethnographies, Greek-American women press their community to reexamine the past. Gendered differences can be found in remembering of the immigrant past and in forging contemporary gender roles for Greek Americans today, according to Anagnostou.

Adding to these ethnographies he also carefully addresses the influential scholarly work of Richard Alba, who sees the immigrant generation as the epitome of an authentic ethnicity that gradually erodes with each successive generation. The reader is made aware that Greek-American ethnicity is alive and persists into the new millennium. The cornerstone of contemporary Greek-American ethnicity, Anagnostou suggests, can be found in how people forge social linkages through the effort to preserve and honor

a heritage that stretches back to the origin of the Western canon through the social discourse of Hellenism. The primordial ethnicity was part of the Industrial Era and could not be expected to persist into the technologically sophisticated computer age. Anagnostou brings forward a more complex view of ethnicity for Greek Americans in postmodern society. Rather than blending into the dominant white Anglo-Saxon culture, Greek Americans and others have established a claim to many benefits of whiteness without relinquishing a sense of Otherness. The nexus of Greek America may be a social psychological phenomenon existing among those who trace their roots materially or symbolically to Greece. In addition, Greek cultural festivals are popular, inclusive events that people of all ethnicities can enjoy. This point is very relevant if connections are to be forged from the white ethnic experience to the injustices that nonwhites still face, albeit in more subtle forms than before.

Greek Americans initially had an in-between racial status. Yes, they were Europeans and enjoyed many white privileges, such as voting, owning property, and being able to marry anyone of their choosing, rights that were not accorded to many minorities. But socially they were not quite white in a society where darkness was a liability. Working in dirty and dangerous jobs but paid less than native whites, Greek immigrants were aware of their low status and at times united with other racial outsiders to protest injustices. Still, over time their whiteness was less questioned, and they and other white ethnics need to admit that their gain was at the expense of others. Anagnostou takes care that his work does not contribute to the standard narrative demonstrating why Greek Americans deserve to be allowed into the white fold based on their ancient civilization's contribution to the Western canon or their hard work and business acumen, which raised them into the middle class. While such an image of Greek-American "acceptance" by the dominant society is enough to comfort many descendants of early Greek immigration, it is not enough for Anagnostou. He notes that glossing over a turbulent past on the road to acceptance leaves Greek Americans as the European version of the Asian-American "Model Minority." The Model Minority narrative supports an American ideology that anyone can find success in a free and independent nation that offers safe harbor for disenfranchised groups fleeing mistreatment; simultaneously it serves to silence those within the group who would remember the mistreatment. This model has been challenged by many Asian-American scholars, and Anagnostou similarly finds the model lacking historical accuracy. Instead he challenges the scholars of ethnicity to admit that Greek Americans and other white ethnics are alive and well. Once his view is accepted, new avenues of scholarship can open up that will benefit all Americans.

—PHYLIS CANCELLA MARTINELLI
St. Mary's College

It is particularly gratifying to participate in this discussion, an exchange that cuts across disciplinary specializations. If the principal aim of *Contours* is to open up new ways of thinking about ethnicity, this peer review enhances it, illuminating further angles of inquiry and expanding conceptual boundaries. Both generous and reflective,

the reviews raise questions about aims, scope, methodology, rhetoric, and ideology in scholarship. I appreciate the recognition that *Contours* has the “potential to reignite the debate over white ethnics” as a timely call to examine the kind of cultural work that this category performs and reimagine “white ethnicity,” a collective project currently under way.

In order to anchor the exchange let me retrace the book’s principal claims and identify the stakes of the book in the scholarship of ethnicity. This is to respond particularly to Robert Viscusi’s somewhat ambivalent reception. The work leaves him “both pleased and a little puzzled.” What does this book ask scholars to do? he asks. It seems to be “exhorting us to political action.” The metaphor of contours indeed aims to evoke, in his words, “the richness of the ethnic territories.” The purpose is to reclaim heterodox, noncanonical, silenced, and emergent cultural forms within white ethnicity, a field whose heterogeneous and invisible topographies the metaphor seeks to bring to the center of inquiry. *Contours* sets itself numerous tasks: It situates ethnicity vis-à-vis power relations, notably racialization, in order to subsequently recognize and interrogate narratives that reproduce racial hierarchies; it works at the borders of disciplines to trouble canonical paradigms; and it analyzes the poetics and politics of popular ethnographies by raising public consciousness about the political implications of identity narratives. Ultimately, it makes a plea for a particular critical practice: to interrogate ethnic whiteness (i.e., narratives reproducing racial hierarchies) and recover identity locations construed around reinvention and an ethic of inclusion. It is primarily in this capacity that it stakes a claim to the scholarship of white ethnicity, arguing for the analytical value of charting ethnicity from a multitude of vantage points.

In this respect, *Contours* undoubtedly represents ideologically driven scholarship, an attribute that Donald Tricarico sees as a liability. His caveat is that the ideological texturing of the book may compromise its “relevance to the scientific studies that it criticizes.” This claim draws a wedge between ideological and “nonideological” scholarship, to subsequently attach higher value to the latter. I have taken exception to the position of an ideology-free social science elsewhere, in a debate—tellingly—with the very practitioners of the scientific studies to which the reviewer points (Anagnostou 2009). The explicit recognition of the ideological dimensions of one’s works stands, in my view, as one of the most enduring legacies of the interpretive turn in the humanities and social sciences.

It is necessary to clarify, however, that *Contours* does not endorse “an alternative that ‘builds on the ecumenical and humanitarian ethos of Christianity.’” This perspective is specifically associated in the book with a particular figure, Stella Petrakis, and her advocacy of the Christian ethic as an enabling principle for interracial acceptance in Greek America. Still, her activism may not be as idealistic as the reviewer maintains, for its power lies precisely in its *structural* alignment with the ethnoreligious orientation of the community. Once advocated institutionally, as in a recent editorial in the *Orthodox Observer* (Bakas 2011), the official publication of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, it stands to perform valuable antiracist work. It rearticulates a religious tradition to endorse interracial acceptance within U.S. Greek Orthodoxy. *Contours* notes the strategic uses of this position.

Why interrogate ethnic whiteness? Why identify progressive narratives among “European Americans”? Why, in other words, turn to culture to critique and inspire?

These questions directly speak to an acute skepticism raised in the reviews: Placing value on texts as agents for cultural change appears idealistic. Doubt is expressed that texts could indeed function as loci to shape meaningful ethnic subjectivities without the mediation of social structure. Donald Tricarico poignantly captures the crux of the matter when he writes that “absent institutional structures, ‘popular ethnographies’ are likely to be occasions for symbolic ethnicity, especially as a third generation emerges outside the ethnic neighborhood.” If we agree that symbolic ethnicity associates ethnic identity with “easily expressed and felt” cultural symbols (Gans 1979, 9), the passage above raises two interrelated points: It posits social structure (here the ethnic neighborhood) as the necessary condition for an enduring, deeply felt ethnicity and, in doing so, doubts the capability of culture (popular ethnography) to perform a similar function. I find great value in the invitation to examine the role of social structure in the making of ethnicity. The juxtaposition of cultural (textual) and social production introduces the long-standing debate over the constitutive power of “idealist” and “materialist” forces, “subjectivist” and “objectivist” perspectives. Revisiting this debate and examining its relevance to “white ethnicity” studies seems to be long overdue, given that structural realities (regional demographics, patterns of residence in both urban and suburban areas, institutions, material ties with the ancestral homeland) as well as cultural expressions (festivals, parades, documentaries, literature, films) contribute to the making of ethnicity. We stand to gain a great deal by sorting out the interface between the material and the symbolic in ethnic cultural expressivity and maintenance. The case of Greek-American family business owners in metropolitan New York City and outer-borough communities like Bensonhurst undoubtedly offers ideal sites to examine these processes, even calling for (gravely needed) cross-cultural comparative analysis.

For my purposes I stress the book’s approach to culture as an arena of contested meanings and to narratives both popular and academic, as crucial sites in the struggle for hegemony. Texts are of fundamental importance in this process as they shape to some extent the worldviews of subjects: How they speak about and act toward ethnicity is a function of culture too, not merely of social structure. Thus culture may act upon reality, and it is not merely acted upon by structure. After all, it was the discovery of a poem that motivated one of the authors I discuss in the book to undertake the arduous task of writing an ethnography, a text that represents committed production of ethnic meanings and contributes to the making of “community.” Popular ethnography, then, cannot simply reflect yet another expression of a superficial dallying with ethnicity. Why should a text reflect loose affiliation and not a deeply felt experience? Texts can inspire action directly bearing on social structure, transforming it in the process.

I fully embrace the call to “mine local cultures” in order to situate ethnicity in concrete ethnographic contexts, because “thick description” of community and institutional life is positioned to particularize ethnicity and recognize the complexities of cultural affiliation. Ethnography offers a key analytical tool to examine the multiplicity of ethnicity across class, gender, cities, regions, and even neighborhoods and to disturb social-science generalizations. It could indeed provide answers to the issue of privatized identities. Though the production of ethnography was beyond the scope of *Contours*, I do not fully understand how my work treats community as an abstraction. I certainly did not mean it in this manner when I spoke about community as social

construction. I wrote, for instance, that “[l]ocal Greek Orthodox communities, though fractured, nevertheless continue to command fierce allegiance from diverse publics,” and I emphasized their role in providing mutual support and advancing ethnoreligious and cultural interests (100). My research acknowledges collective practices that produce habitus that mediates individualized ethnic choices.

I thank the reviewers for citing sources that enhance my analysis. Diachronic in scope, *Contours* cuts through and across disciplinary boundaries—anthropology, folklore, sociology, history, and cultural, ethnic, women’s, and diaspora studies—representing an interdisciplinary project that required the navigation of a vast literature. It is precisely the kind of discussion initiated here and the dialog across disciplines and specializations that help amplify the analytical scope of our work. This is certainly a productive template on which to proceed. Furthermore, while ethnic and diaspora studies of particular groups produce exciting scholarship, a conversation that brings various cultural collectives in a comparative conversation presents itself as a compelling research direction. Italian Americans, Irish Americans, Jewish Americans, Greek Americans, and increasingly Asian Americans, among others, intermarry, entangling their stories, opening spaces for cross-cultural fertilizations, and creating novel cultural expressions. Isn’t it time for ethnicity studies to follow suit?

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The Hellhound of Wall Street: How Ferdinand Pecora’s Investigation of the Great Crash Forever Changed American Finance.

By Michael Perino.

New York: The Penguin Press, 2010.

341 pages.

In 1933, three and a half years into the global economic crisis that began in 1929, a Senate investigation that seemed to be going nowhere sprang to life. With banks on edge and starting to fail around the country and in the waning days of the administration of President Herbert Hoover (who had initially trusted but progressively lost faith in the leaders of the financial industry), a freshly appointed committee counsel with a mind for detail and an aptitude for asking simple questions about complicated matters

set the media ablaze. His name was Ferdinand Pecora. His family had immigrated to New York a year and a half after his birth in Nicosia, Sicily (Enna province), in 1882. The family settled in the predominantly Irish-American neighborhood of Chelsea in Manhattan, where the young Ferdinand went to public school, although it was the family's attendance at the neighborhood's St. Peter's Episcopal Church that aroused an interest in debate and drama that Ferdinand would channel effectively as he rose slowly to prominence as a trial lawyer and Tammany Hall politician.

Pecora (which he pronounced "Pecòra") created for himself a public persona that seemed to play off of the stereotypical perceptions of Italian Americans at the time while also undercutting them. A bantamweight who accentuated his dark complexion with regular sun-lamp treatments, he spoke with a mid-Atlantic accent that revealed no trace of his immigrant origins or his working-class upbringing in New York City. He was a well-suited foil to the awkward but well-intentioned Republican Senator Peter Norbeck, a South Dakotan with a Norwegian-American accent, who chaired the Committee on Banking and Currency. Upon his arrival in Washington, despite little time to prepare and low public expectations, Pecora electrified the Senate chambers with pungent cross-examinations of the day's leading financiers. Michael Perino's book about the process offers a splendid mix of biography, hearing-room fireworks, and political context as he shows how Pecora prepared the way for some key financial reforms of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first term: a national bank holiday, the Glass-Steagall Act separating the banking and securities industries, deposit insurance, and the Securities Exchange Act that created the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Pecora did encounter resistance. The bankers hired expensive and influential lawyers, and there were some in Congress who stood by them. The frequent mentions of Pecora's ethnic background, as quoted in the press, were sometimes offensive. The hearings' most infamous episode of all took place in June 1933, during the examination of J.P. Morgan, Jr., when Pecora had a contretemps with Senator Carter Glass (of Glass-Steagall), who complained, "We are having a circus; and the only things lacking now are peanuts and colored lemonade" (286). A publicist for the Ringling Bros. Circus, which was then appearing in Washington, saw an opening, and the next day he brought the circus's female midget to the hearing room. Amid the ensuing laughter, she walked over to Morgan, who was then photographed with her sitting on his knee. Although the episode served somewhat to humanize Morgan, it did nothing to dim the energy or public appreciation of Pecora's continuing efforts.

Perino boldly tells the story as if it were Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, and he deserves credit for managing to keep the book a page-turner even as he gives us, among other things, a splendid account of the workings of Tammany Hall, a group biography of the period's leading Wall Streeters (that complements numerous group portraits we have had of the New Dealers), and a precise, day-by-day accounting of the financial crisis that was sweeping America at the time of FDR's inauguration. Historians of the Great Depression, of American capitalism, and of popular culture in the 1930s, along with anyone interested in American finance, will find Perino's highly readable book as instructive as it is entertaining. The several Wall Street acquaintances to whom this reviewer recommended it promptly passed it on to their friends after reading it.

What is missing from the book is a more extensive discussion of the consequences for Pecora himself. The reader learns about the financial legislation and the bankers who were sent to jail but less about the protagonist after his period in the limelight was over. Perino's focus on the hearings of 1933 is understandable, for reasons to be discussed shortly, but to skip lightly over the remainder of Pecora's career does the man a disservice. Six pages are hardly adequate for the nearly four decades of distinguished public service that followed these events. Although Perino speaks of "Pecora's unsuitability for administrative work" (301), he never presents evidence of it. This reader would have liked to know more about Pecora's time on the SEC, his fifteen years on the New York State Supreme Court, and the politics behind his unsuccessful run for mayor of New York City in 1950, when he opposed Vincent Impellitteri as the nominee of both the Democratic and Liberal Parties. Once he's done with the 1933 hearings, it seems, Perino is simply looking for a way to conclude the story.

Given the parallels between the Great Depression and the Great Recession that began in 2008, Perino's book implicitly invites readers to hope for a contemporary Pecora. In fact, on January 6, 2009, in the *New York Times*, Ron Chernow published an Op-Ed column under the headline, "Where Is Our Ferdinand Pecora?" Perino's book offers a chance to reflect on what happened, or rather did not happen, during the latest crisis. Why has there been no Pecora in a situation that appears to have needed one?

It is difficult to know for sure, but one of the more delicate aspects of the Pecora story is that the lawyer's 1933 airing of improper practices and malfeasance at the top echelons of the largest banks may have worsened matters for the economy as a whole. A cascading effect on public confidence made FDR's bank holiday, toward which there was much resistance, even more necessary. The essence of Pecora's approach was to show that problems that were well known to be affecting local and regional banks, resulting in bank runs, were similarly endemic in the nation's largest financial institutions. The crisis in confidence became such that Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) insurance, which FDR initially opposed, was now an absolute requirement for reestablishing the faith of depositors. It can be argued that these things would have happened anyway—that the damage would have continued to spread regardless—but all the same it was Pecora who brought them to a head.

Another issue that Perino's book raises is the way today's attempts to bring rationality to bear in governance so often involve a struggle with "regulatory capture"—the term that describes situations in which regulators are, to a large degree, controlled by the entities they are supposed to regulate. Regulatory capture is usually discussed with respect to an agency like the SEC or invoked ominously vis-à-vis the Federal Reserve. By now many of us worry that it encompasses the legislative branch, too—that Congress as a body is largely beholden to the entities that it oversees. In the 1930s, as Perino shows, the U.S. Congress was sufficiently heterogeneous and reflective of local interests as to allow for vigorous, multifaceted discussion, with proposals for action and reform coming from many directions. The situation today seems quite different, thanks especially to the homogenizing effects of media coverage and the inability of government to establish limits on campaign financing and expenditures.

Curiously, neither of the authors of our latest set of banking regulations, Christopher Dodd and Barney Frank, ran for reelection in 2012. It is hard not to look back nostalgically to the day when a brilliant Italian immigrant had the courage—and our Congress the ability—to call the banking system to public account.

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Since When Is Fran Drescher Jewish? Dubbing Stereotypes in The Nanny, The Simpsons, and The Sopranos

By Chiara Francesca Ferrari.

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

176 pages.

In her book *Since When Is Fran Drescher Jewish? Dubbing Stereotypes in The Nanny, The Simpsons, and The Sopranos*, Chiara Francesca Ferrari grapples with the complexities of dubbing U.S. television series for an Italian audience, focusing on the practices of a media industry that aims to recreate the success of the English-language original in a different national and cultural context. She argues that dubbing not only represents a way to allow for the “invisible” translation and adaptation of unfamiliar aspects of the culture of origin into the receiving culture but, more significantly, dubbing functions to preserve Italian cultural and linguistic diversity and to resist the homogenizing effects of globalization.

In the book’s first two chapters, Ferrari lays out the historical background and the theoretical foundations for her case studies of *The Nanny*, *The Simpsons*, and *The Sopranos*. She discusses the development of audiovisual text translation and cultural adaptation, traces the history of dubbing from the xenophobic and nationalistic policies of Mussolini’s dictatorship to the present, and underscores the economic dimensions of the current practice of dubbing, which—far from being a remnant of fascist ideology—is an effective U.S. marketing tool that ensures the widest distribution of American cinema and television products in Italy and in most of Europe.

Ferrari focuses her attention on the use of southern Italian dialects and accents, which, after their successful use in the dubbing of *The Godfather* in 1970, have been systematically employed to further characterize a fictional stereotypical persona in dubbed cinema and TV imports. Borrowing Antje Ascheid’s felicitous metaphor of dubbing as a form of “cultural ventriloquism” that allows for the subliminal retelling of the receiving country’s national narratives, Ferrari correctly contends that, in the dubbed versions of U.S. imports, Italian audiences are presented with their nation’s narratives as an “us” versus “them” contraposition, which both nurtures a sense of Italian regional belonging and continually asserts a divide between northern and southern Italy. In this context, the use of southern Italian dialects and accents in the dubbed versions of *The Nanny*, *The Simpsons*, and *The Sopranos* serves to reiterate the dominant national narrative in which the Italian south is the Other.

In her analysis of the three television programs, Ferrari shows how their successful dubbing involves both a process of “domestication” (i.e., making familiar) and at times of “foreignization” (i.e., making unfamiliar) of cultural and linguistic elements present in the original. In the case of *The Nanny*, Jewish-American Fran becomes Italian-American Francesca, replacing the original Yiddish sayings with words and expressions in the Ciociarian dialect from Lazio. Ferrari argues that such changes were prompted by the lack of corresponding stereotypes of Jewish-Italian women and the fear that Fran’s Jewish identity would clash with that of the Italian audiences. Both here and elsewhere in the book, Ferrari overstates the influence of the Catholic Church on the Italian populace—which, by all indicators, is largely secular—while she neglects to point out the actual power and influence exercised by the Vatican on politics and the media.

At times it seems that Ferrari’s own representations of Italy are informed principally by stereotypes and not by a nuanced understanding of the context of the TV programs under discussion. In fact, one of the major shortcomings of the book is its lack of careful social, political, and historical anchoring, a deficiency that often results in a rather impressionistic and tentative analysis. For example, a closer look at the wider social, cultural, and political contexts of production and broadcasting of *The Nanny* would have revealed the fact that from the 1990s on, Italy’s national narrative about World War II was revised to incorporate and give great importance to the Shoah and the 1938 racial laws. It is likely that a TV serial with a stereotypical Jewish-American nanny would have diminished this revised narrative.

Save for a fleeting reference to Italy’s contemporary immigration from other countries, Ferrari’s analysis of *The Simpsons* is also detached from an actual cultural and social context. Ferrari contends that the fact that the various U.S. ethnic identities are not transposed into the dubbed version of *The Simpsons* reflects a form of erasure of difference that promotes a narrative of national homogeneity (18–20). In fact, except for Willie, the Scottish gardener who speaks with a Sardinian accent, and Carl Carlson, Homer’s African-American co-worker, who has a Venetian accent, the vast majority of American ethnics in *The Simpsons* are dubbed with southern Italian accents: Roman, Neapolitan, Apulian, and Sicilian; that is, they are identified as Italy’s internal Others. However, judging from the dubbing of Apu, the Indian store clerk, it does not appear that the transposition of U.S. ethnic stereotypes onto Italy’s immigrant communities promotes multiculturalism and reflects a positive sign of inclusion. In fact, in the Italian version of *The Simpsons*, Apu’s speech is not only marked by nonstandard intonation but also by grammatical errors, as if to underscore a flaw in his identity. While it is arguable that a negative representation is better than no representation at all, closer attention to the Italian history of migrations, both within and outside of the country, could have helped shed light on what Ferrari calls ethnic “erasure.” In fact, the transposition of the different ethnicities present in the original show to southern Italian identities appears to be, first and foremost, an implicit reference to the national narratives of past Italian migrations. Italian national discourse conceptualizes current migrations to Italy in terms of preexisting frames of “migrations” out of Italy and within Italy, established categories of difference, and stereotypical labeling. Thus, within this conceptual framework one could argue that southern Italian accents in *The Simpsons* seem to mark both the stereotype of the Italian emigrant and that of the internal migrant who performs “ethnified” occupations such as groundskeeper, policeman, etc.

In her analysis of *The Sopranos* (dismissing the “enraged” reaction of Italian-American groups to the all-too-familiar depiction of Italians as mobsters), Ferrari aptly compares Italian Mafia programs and the HBO serial, illustrating how the complexities of the latter’s translation and adaptation ultimately determined its late-night scheduling for a niche public and its limited success in Italy. While the accent of Tony Soprano, the Italian-American mobster, is domesticated into that of a native of Avellino, the word *mafia* is “defamiliarized” (120) and replaced with *mala*, short for *malavita*, i.e., criminality, “to stop perpetrating the stereotype that all Italian Americans are mobsters” (123). While Ferrari considers this substitution a form of censorship, she fails to explain to the reader that *mala* was the celebrated and glorified criminal milieu of Milan during the economic boom years (mid-1950s to early 1970s) and that such a choice may indeed add more of a positive connotation to Tony’s shady activities. Her discussion of *The Sopranos* is largely unfocused, as she flounders from one hypothesis to another to finally find the most likely answer to the difficulties surrounding the dubbing of the show in a short article in *Variety* that correctly points out the dangerous liaisons that former prime minister and owner of Mediaset Silvio Berlusconi had with *mafiosi*.

In her examinations of *The Nanny*, *The Simpsons*, and *The Sopranos*, which she enriches with quotes from various authors and experts, Ferrari does an excellent job of framing the three TV series within their genres and tracing their intertextual relations to other TV programs on American and Italian television. However, she does not clearly illustrate how cultural ventriloquism works in each case, nor does she identify for the reader the contextually relevant narratives in which Italian southerners figure as Other. In fact, Ferrari’s discussion of Italian national narratives and Otherness appears to be an afterthought rather than a foundational aspect of her project. Failing to provide any informed criticism of the Manichean opposition between north and south, the author herself seems to participate in the perpetuation of the dichotomy by repeatedly presenting the divide as insurmountable or “rooted in history.” She is also heavy-handed in her descriptions of the “defining” traits of some stereotypes, for instance, those that turn a Jewish-American nanny (or a working-class woman as in *Roseanne*) into the quintessential Italian American or southern Italian. One would have expected greater tact or more careful editorial advice.

In fact, in Ferrari’s exposition, her stated concern for the plight of the Other appears to be in blatant contradiction to what, in case after case, is an uncritical acceptance of the transposition of stereotypes from one national context into another in the name of preserving humor and producing an effective (i.e., successful and marketable) translation: “Thus, ironically, what should be a division to be overcome becomes in reality one of the most successful sources of ‘humor’ on Italian television, whether nationally produced or imported from abroad and dubbed” (97).

Contrary to her stated intentions (3, 18), and thus confounding this reader’s expectations, Ferrari does not scrutinize the practice of stereotypical characterizations of particular ethnic and social groups. In fact, her overarching interest in showing that successful dubbing involves the exploitation of regional and linguistic stereotypes prevents her from offering a critical look at the effects that stereotypes actually have on audiences. Ferrari does not propose a viewer-oriented analysis of the practice of dubbing stereotypes, nor does she problematize the effects that stereotypes have on a

socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse target audience, which in the case of *The Simpsons* in Italy consists primarily of children.

Ferrari makes no reference to the ongoing debate in the field on the effects that the stereotypical rendition of accents and dialects can have on audiences, nor does she discuss the ways in which the systematic use of Italian accents and dialects to elicit humor or add a negative connotation to characters or plot effectively teaches audiences to discriminate against the speakers of those dialects, who in turn are either marginalized or forced to succumb to standard language ideology in order to be accepted in mainstream society. Rather, without offering proof for her assertion, Ferrari states that, in the context of a global media market, dubbing becomes a way to preserve cultural and linguistic diversity and to resist the homogenizing forces of globalization. One would be tempted, however, to ask how language diversity can be preserved by the inferiorizing representation of accents and dialects. How can the use of largely artificial codes that draw their distinctive traits from different southern Italian dialects, but are often descriptive of none, represent a form of resistance to globalization? And why should it be acceptable and unchallenged to devalue Italian accents, dialects, and their speakers in the name of humor? Not too long ago, ignoring the effect that such conventions had on African-American audiences, white actors in blackface were thought to be funny and their performances a great source of humor. We should hope that, not too far in the future, greater attention will be paid to stereotypical and hurtful representations of accents and dialects in Italy and that such a convention will be abandoned just as blackface has been in the United States.

Throughout her book, Ferrari intersperses her discussion with excerpts from interviews she conducted with professionals in the Italian dubbing industry. While these quotes provide an insider's view of the politics of dubbing, nevertheless these media experts' ideas and opinions on Italian culture, society, and language are at times rather impressionistic and uninformed. Unfortunately, the author does not take into account scholarly literature that would have led her to a more nuanced analysis of the TV programs. Readers would have benefited from greater attention to the political, social, and cultural climate surrounding the production and broadcast on Italian television of these shows. Particularly glaring in this respect is Ferrari's failure to make any reference to the role played from the mid-1980s to the present by the overtly racist Northern League party in rekindling and fueling regional antagonism and in fomenting antisouthern prejudices, thus creating a hostile environment that informs the choice of accents in dubbed TV serials. Moreover, one would have expected a few words of comment on the fact that all three TV programs were acquired and broadcast by Berlusconi's Mediaset network, whose headquarters are in Milan. The question then arises as to how the geographic location of the media relates to the largely positive representation of the north and the overwhelming negative representation of the south.

While presented as an interdisciplinary study, *Since When Is Fran Drescher Jewish?* is firmly anchored in the field of media studies and the media industry; any foray outside those specific fields of expertise appears somewhat tentative and confused. Particularly fuzzy and imprecise are Ferrari's explorations of linguistic issues, such as the distinction between Italian national language and dialects, the discussion of the contextually determined use of second-person address pronouns (63), the explanation of the status of Sardinian as a language rather than as a dialect (91), or the description

of dubbed Italian-American accents (110). Furthermore, save for a very few cases in which she focuses on the transposition or substitution of particular words, Ferrari does not provide examples of the “accented” speech and dialect of the various characters, thus leaving the reader perplexed.

Because of its lack of solid, in-depth, historical and social research, this book would be difficult to assign as a text for interdisciplinary courses. Nevertheless, *Since When Is Fran Drescher Jewish?* is a timely contribution to the field of contemporary Italian media studies and provides a media-industry perspective on the translation, adaptation, and dubbing of foreign audiovisuals into the Italian national context. Ferrari’s book represents a good point of departure for anyone who desires to begin an investigation of the complexities of audiovisual translations.

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Corbino: From Rubens to Ringling.

By Janis and Richard Londraville.

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011.

221 pages.

An artist’s life is rarely easy. Even for the best, a tenuous livelihood and elusive recognition are a common fate. The Italian-American artist Jon Corbino was more fortunate than most. Nevertheless, amid some notable achievements and successes that enabled him to sustain a lifetime career as a leading painter of his generation, he faced his share of disappointments, frustrations, and struggles. Moreover, almost sixty years after his death, he is largely forgotten. All this is captured in *Corbino: From Rubens to Ringling*, the first-ever biography of the artist, penned by Janis and Richard Londraville. On the one hand, the couple has done us all a favor by recalling and chronicling Corbino’s worthy career. On the other hand, their earnest account of Corbino’s life and work becomes at times so intensely personal and colloquial as to lack nuance and an appropriately deft balance.

Giovanni, or Jon, Corbino was born in Vittoria, Sicily (Ragusa province), on April 3, 1905. His father was an intellectually disposed, politically active anarchist who fled to Argentina and then to the United States in order to evade arrest, abandoning his nineteen-year-old pregnant wife. Adding insult to injury, Corbino’s father financed his escape by selling his wife’s dowry, a family home. Thus, Corbino and his mother were left behind in Sicily to depend for support on her parents’ largesse. Hopes for a family reunion in New York City were thwarted either by miscommunication or the continued improvidence of Corbino’s father. Traveling to the United States, mother and son were detained for two weeks at Ellis Island in December 1910 and then deported back to Sicily when Corbino’s father failed to meet them at the New York docks. It was almost another three years before mother and son successfully immigrated to the United States and reunited with Corbino’s father.

Corbino was only eight years old when he landed in the United States for the second time. Yet throughout his life he was to retain vivid memories of Sicily and his two trips to American shores, especially his sight of the earthquake-devastated port of Messina, his harrowing, tempest-tossed transatlantic crossing, and the trauma of being separated from his mother at Ellis Island. Fortunately, in dealing with the tumult and insecurity of his own life, compounded by his immigrant status in the United States and the relative poverty of his parents, Corbino had a knack for drawing. Enrolled in New York City schools, he had the opportunity to pursue an education in art that helped him tap his native talents and transcend the tough streets of New York City's Little Italy.

As a student at the elite Peter Stuyvesant High School and then the Ethical Culture School, founded by Felix Adler, Corbino often felt like "some Sicilian bandit's son on the loose" (17). But he enjoyed studying with distinguished art instructors who encouraged his considerable gifts and taught him the necessary skills to make the most of them. After graduation, Corbino continued with studies at the Art Students League, arguably the "most important art school in the United States" (22). By the age of twenty-one, Corbino was exhibiting paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago. Just a year later, in 1928, he was invited to present a one-man show of his work at Oberlin College's Allen Memorial Art Museum. What followed was a brilliant thirty-six-year career that saw his paintings acquired by such major art institutions as the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Images of his paintings were frequently reproduced on the cover of *Art Digest* and other leading art periodicals.

Although Corbino did not like to be identified as an Italian-American artist and resented the condescension it sometimes engendered, he was deeply indebted to his Italian heritage and, more generally, to the European baroque tradition in art. Along with Roman mythology and transmuted moments from his earlier life in Sicily, his grandfather's horses were a perennial inspiration in his paintings of rural and circus life. Attracted to the "masters of color" – Tintoretto, Titian, and Rubens – Corbino also embraced the dramatic narrative flair of Caravaggio, Delacroix, and Géricault. In such early paintings as *Stampeding Bulls* (1937), *Vigilantes* (1936), *Montana Earthquake* (1936), and *Flood Refugees* (1938), Corbino strove to capture a tense moment in which action was about to explode. The muscular fleshiness of the artist's figures, together with a use of vivid color and the deployment of strong diagonal lines, helps convey an energy and emotional intensity that are striking and memorable.

Corbino's penchant for depicting disaster scenes wrought by the vagaries of brute nature was bound to resonate in a nation still seared by recent natural and economic calamities. In 1938, *Life* magazine published a full-length feature on Corbino at his new Rockport, Massachusetts, studio, dubbing him "the Rubens of New England." Impressed by the freshness and relevance of his work, art critics further acclaimed him "the founder of the school of baroque-romanticism."

However, in the late 1940s and early 1950s Corbino shifted to religious themes and circus scenes. He also adopted a softer, lighter palette and a more surrealistic style where horses, dancers, and acrobats appear in virtual flight, never touching the ground. While critics sometimes found this new direction less "convincing" and "coherent," they were still admiring. It was only after Corbino's death from cancer on July 9, 1964, that his work and reputation truly went into deep eclipse.

Part of Corbino's appeal from the late 1930s to the late 1950s was the vibrant and accessible alternative he seemed to offer to more controversial art trends, exemplified by the abstract expressionism of Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning, and Jackson Pollock. Corbino had only scorn for abstract expressionism, which he first dismissed as a short-lived trend and then denounced as the ruin of American art. He never understood or appreciated that, beneath its outward chaos and abandonment of traditional representational forms, abstract expressionism was a legitimate effort to reveal something profound about being and existence. Corbino refused to allow his art to be displayed in close proximity to abstract expressionist works. The fact that major American art institutions were avidly acquiring paintings by Rothko, de Kooning, and Pollock thoroughly discredited them in his eyes.

While Corbino certainly deserves to be appreciated for his vision, talent, and craft, particularly as an immigrant who made his place in a new land, he is not likely to match the stature of Edward Hopper or Thomas Hart Benton, who also opted not to go the way of abstract expressionism. Perhaps the best explanation is to be found in the frank assessment of fellow artist Will Barnet, who knew Corbino for more than three decades. Acknowledging that "there was something spectacular in Corbino . . . a fabulous voice," Barnet simultaneously observes that in using "the language of the great masters" his friend never tried "to invent a language of his own, and he should have tried, even if he had failed" (69). The Londravilles cite the vigor of Corbino's final paintings as evidence that his creative muse was not yet done with him. Nevertheless, even had he enjoyed a longer life it seems doubtful that Corbino would have accomplished what Barnet found lacking in his work.

In their biography, the Londravilles dwell a great deal on the more intimate details of Corbino's personal life. It does not make a pretty story. Corbino was married three times and had five children. Although he could be generous as a teacher and friend, his failings as a son, husband, and father were many. He held grudges and never resolved his resentment and ambivalence toward his parents and former wives. He took a wry pleasure in ridiculing his father in old age. Without any apparent provocation, Corbino once held a knife to his second wife's throat. One of his sons was hospitalized for almost a year due to polio, and Corbino never visited him. In another revealing moment, Corbino slammed a desktop down on the outstretched hand of his second-eldest son in order to teach him not to trust anyone. Perhaps exacerbated by the stress of a vocation where you are only as good as your last painting, Corbino suffered from an obsessive-compulsive personality, tinged with paranoid tendencies that left him perennially suspicious, keeping an "enemies list." All this rendered him barely fit to live with. Yet it does not necessarily make him exceptional among artists, given the proverbial artistic temperament. The Londravilles would have offered us a more useful and enduring biography if they had focused primarily on Corbino's professional career and more incidentally on his private life as it affected his art, rather than the other way around.

There are literary problems with the biography, too. Recollections of Corbino's family, friends, students, and colleagues—sometimes unattributed and often embarrassing in their frankness and haphazard informality—are awkwardly spliced into the text. The chapters are also rife with clichés and breezy, imprecise language that good editing should have averted. Not untypically, the biography's closing chapter remarks

that “Jon Corbino was never soft, and he didn’t die softly” (184). This is apparently a euphemistic reference to the night sweats, coughing fits, and convulsive spasms that beset Corbino in his last, heavily medicated days. Here, as elsewhere, the authors’ choice of phrasing borders on the glib and insensitive. Despite such flaws, which are considerable, the Londravilles’ book laudably begins to fill a gap in our record of a twentieth-century American artist who painted well, even gloriously so.

—GEOFFREY G. DRUTCHAS
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Squeeze This! A Cultural History of the Accordion in America.

By Marion Jacobson.

Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

288 pages.

“With only one instrument, you can travel the world.” Thus begins Marion Jacobson’s fascinating exploration of the piano accordion’s history, diverse cultural meanings, and multifaceted musical and social roles in the United States over the last century. A chance encounter in a Lower East Side accordion store—where she was dazzled and inspired by the musical possibilities offered by the instrument—led Jacobson on a decade-long journey across the United States investigating the piano accordion’s past and present in all strata of society, a physical and metaphorical journey that has culminated in this valuable book. Throughout, the accordion is presented as a symbol of ethnic and national identity, a reflection of shared cultural values, and, simultaneously, a way for diverse groups of people to engage in dialog with audiences and fellow musicians across the nation, whether they use the instrument to perform polkas, tarantellas, Bach, or rock.

New York City, itself a microcosm of U.S. society, is Jacobson’s home base and constant point of reference; she holds a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from New York University (where this project began as a doctoral dissertation) and frequently performs in the city. From this starting point, the book takes the reader on a remarkable tour of accordion communities from San Francisco to Houston to the Midwest. Jacobson’s conversational style, wide-ranging subject, and wealth of ethnographic analysis make the book appealing and engaging for scholars and casual readers alike; fans of *They Might Be Giants* and Balkan-music aficionados will find as much relevant and thought-provoking material as will those who grew up watching the *Lawrence Welk Show* or singing along to Valtaro songs in New York’s Italian neighborhoods. A scholarly audience will be particularly interested in her methods and successful application of a wide range of theoretical material to her ethnographically diverse and geographically scattered subjects.

Readers of Italian descent will no doubt be aware of their community’s contributions to the worldwide accordion industry, both as manufacturers and as virtuoso performers. Jacobson’s study will be of particular interest to this audience for both

its exhaustive historical review of Italian and Italian-American accordion makers—many of whom had a decisive effect on musical tastes and styles across Europe and the United States through their ingenuity and constant innovations—and for its nuanced biographical treatment of several prominent twentieth-century Italian-American virtuosi, such as the brothers Guido and Pietro Deiro, Pietro Frosini, John Brugnoli, and others.

In the introduction, Jacobson recounts the experiences as a musician and listener that drew her to the accordion, explains how she transformed her curiosity into a full-blown ethnographic and ethnomusicological research project, and lays out the theoretical foundation of the study. She engages with a wealth of classic and recent work in ethnomusicology and anthropology, citing the writings of James Clifford, Arjun Appadurai, Kevin Dawe, and Andrew Bennett, among others, and focuses on the accordion as “a thing with a complex ‘social life,’ career, and networks of exchange” (5). Accordingly, she approaches the accordion as a “cultural technology,” a “network of circulating objects and relationships involving musical skills and a means of organizing cultural work” (6). This is the orientation that guides the course of the book, as she explores the many ways in which the manufacture, design, and marketing of the accordion and its consumption by the American public have contributed to its cultural significance as much as the actual music played on and associated with it. From this perspective, one of the more interesting themes explored is the accordion’s gradual transition from an immigrant instrument in the early twentieth century to a shiny, ultramodern musical machine representing mainstream 1950s white America—a product of what Jacobson calls the “accordion industrial complex” (52). From there, Jacobson shows us, the accordion became a symbol of banal decadence and nostalgic schmaltz after the triumph of rock ‘n’ roll and finally achieved its recent resurgence of popularity in the postpunk era, when it has been embraced by the counterculture as well as the mainstream as a compelling, warm, and physically engaging instrument.

Chapter 1 traces the history of the accordion from its beginnings in mid-nineteenth-century Europe through its introduction to the United States in the early twentieth century. Jacobson explains the details of accordion design and function, the difference between the piano accordion and the diatonic button accordions that it largely displaced, its paramount importance in vaudeville, and the issues surrounding innovations in construction and aesthetics. The role of Italian manufacturers, particularly the factories in the town of Castelfidardo (Ancona province, the Marches) and their astoundingly prolific production, is explored in detail along with the role played by Italian immigrants to the United States in the dissemination of the accordion in this country, both as performers and entrepreneurs who opened factories and shops in San Francisco, New York, and Chicago. Jacobson profiles important vaudeville performers such as the Deiro brothers, and she discusses the accordion’s role in dance bands, the recording industry, and radio.

Next, Jacobson details how the mass-produced accordion made a transition into mainstream American society through accordion schools, method books, clever marketing, and inclusion in programs of “highbrow” classical music. Chapter 2 begins with accordionist Charles Magnante’s symbolic “invasion” of Carnegie Hall in 1939. The American Accordion Association’s role in organizing and promoting competitions and providing a network of instructors and performance opportunities is shown to

have been decisive toward this goal, as was the decision to market the accordion as a sleek symbol of American ingenuity in the World War II era. Jacobson explains how the accordion's move away from ethnic enclaves and into classical and popular music resulted in its entry into not only thousands of American homes, where it was played by men, women, and young children, but also into conservatories and concert halls.

Chapter 3 details the accordion's rise to the level of pop stardom with the likes of Dick Contino, its increasing familiarity to the white middle class through the careers of Lawrence Welk and Myron Floren, and its eventual fall from popularity as American youth embraced rock 'n' roll. Jacobson shows how accordion manufacturers and educators failed to respond adequately to changing issues of taste, image, and cost in the 1960s, resulting in the accordion being displaced by cheaper and more fashionable instruments like the electric guitar and keyboard.

In Chapter 4, Jacobson profiles three accordionists who rose from their respective ethnic communities to national fame: Finnish-American Viola Turpeinen; Italian-American John Brugnoli, pioneer of New York City's unique Italian "Valtaro" style; and Slovenian-American Frankie Yankovic ("The Polka King"). All three artists demonstrated success in taking their inherited traditions and transforming them into culturally and economically successful "refolklorized" products that crossed social and ethnic lines.

The "accordion revival" of the 1980s and 1990s is the subject of Chapter 5, in which Jacobson shows how artists such as They Might Be Giants, Those Darn Accordions, "Weird Al" Yankovic, Carl Finch, and Guy Klucevsek used the instrument as a subversively creative tool for social commentary and musical exploration. She invokes David Byrne's characterization of acoustic instruments as "machines of joy" (163) to explain the appeal of the accordion to audiences and musicians alienated by the electronically produced sounds of the disco and techno era.

Finally, Jacobson evaluates the degree to which the accordion has found a place in the daily lives of American music lovers by discussing accordion clubs, festivals, and music scenes in Texas and California. Emphasizing the "grassroots" character of these local scenes, where individual citizens join together to share their love of the instrument and a diversity of musical styles—including Czech-Texan, Zydeco, Celtic rock, and cabaret—Jacobson demonstrates in Chapter 6 how the accordion has become not only an important means of forming and interrogating group identity but also a symbol with even farther-reaching political and cultural capital.

Jacobson concludes by offering some thoughts on issues of power, gender, cultural authority, and the often playful use of cultural tropes surrounding the accordion's use in popular music in America. She analyzes the accordion as a means of community-building and connecting to a real and imagined heritage, contemplates its ideologically complex role in the "world music" scene of the last several decades, and speculates on the future of the instrument as its ever-increasing presence in popular music and a new wave of affordable Chinese-made accordions make it even more accessible to the general public.

The book is enhanced by a wealth of color and black-and-white photographs, many—including historic promotional photos and gorgeous plates of vintage instruments—culled from private archives and the World of Accordions Museum in Superior, Wisconsin. The volume contains some minor editorial errors that occasionally

confound the reader but do not detract from the experience as a whole. Ethnographically rich, compellingly written, and resting on a solid theoretical and methodological foundation, Marion Jacobson's cultural history of the accordion is a welcome addition to the extant literature on popular music, free-reed instruments, and cultural and diaspora studies.

—PANAYOTIS LEAGUE
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The Godfather Effect: Changing Hollywood, America, and Me
By Tom Santopietro.
New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2012.
337 pages.

The title of Tom Santopietro's *The Godfather Effect: Changing Hollywood, America, and Me* makes a wide-ranging promise to study the influences both Mario Puzo's novel and Francis Ford Coppola's epic film trilogy have had on moviemaking, American culture, and the author himself. It is a tantalizing promise but one that is, at best, only partially fulfilled. Santopietro's often genial prose is chock-full of anecdotes from his family history (and from Hollywood) and broad commentary on the Italian-American experience, all set in relation to the Corleone saga. But the rigor and complexity necessary to sustain yet another book-length inquiry into the rich meanings of that story, much less the dexterity to integrate family memoir into a historicized interpretation of it, are largely missing here.

The book comprises a series of loosely connected essays on topics ranging from the expected ("The Lure of the Corleones" or "*The Godfather: Part II*") to the oddly impressionistic ("Religion, Death, and Grief" and "Frank Sinatra"). Both this looseness and this impressionism consistently undermine the development of Santopietro's stated thesis that Puzo and Coppola jointly "succeeded in delivering nothing less than the Italianization of American culture" (7). *The Godfather*, in either or both of its generic incarnations (Santopietro does not always distinguish between them), is ostensibly a central issue: Whatever historical material or personal narrative enters Santopietro's analysis intends to demonstrate the rootedness of the Corleone saga in the American experience, past and present. Indeed, without *The Godfather* in both the title and the pages of this work, Santopietro's excursions into history and memoir would likely not have made their way into print. Too often, however, I found myself thinking of the old (and ill-advised) method for testing the doneness of pasta: Throw it against the wall and see if it will stick. Over 285 pages, a lot gets thrown at *The Godfather*, and not enough of it sticks.

Santopietro's work is most fully realized when he recounts the backstory of Coppola's trilogy. Here, Hollywood anecdotes are entertainingly mixed with appreciative observations of the extraordinary craftsmen who turned a potboiler novel into cinematic art. If much of this material is available elsewhere, it nonetheless provides the book with its

most unalloyed pleasures, though it is distressing to see such errors as that of misplacing Anthony Corleone's debut in *Cavalleria rusticana* in Rome instead of Palermo.

The going gets rough when Santopietro ventures out into the interpretive territory to which his title lays claim. His overall thematic readings of the films are generally on safe ground, though they largely reiterate interpretations regarding the American Dream, criminality and politics, or Italian-American ethnicity already well-established (and often more successfully argued) in the voluminous existing literature. When Santopietro attempts, however, to define the broad cultural appeal of *The Godfather*, his work becomes troublingly inadequate. To begin with, his claims regarding audience reception of the Corleone saga are short on methodological rigor and interpretive nuance. "Lacking any direct immigrant experience themselves," Santopietro writes, "latter-day generations of Italian-Americans seem to perceive their past through the refracting lens of Hollywood, responding to the *Godfather* films as received wisdom" (78). Such mediation of ethnic identity may be true, as Santopietro avers, in his own case. But despite repeat assertions of what "[a]udiences responded to" (147) or what "audiences found eminently satisfying" (90) in the film and/or novel, Santopietro provides little evidence to substantiate his claims. (His habitual collapsing of film and novel, whose separate audiences cannot be imagined to neatly overlap, is especially problematic here.) Reference to contemporaneous media sources, existing scholarship, and fan discourse (not to mention employing audience surveys and reception theory) would have helped immensely.

The primary basis for Santopietro's claims about *The Godfather's* reception seems to be his own nostalgia-driven interpretation, which he routinely attributes to either the mass audience or the Italian-American audience in particular. In so doing, Santopietro strips *The Godfather* of its complexity. Drawing upon Richard Gambino's conception of *la via vecchia* (literally, the old way), Santopietro doggedly pursues a thesis that claims Vito Corleone's embodiment of traditional Italian values (in contrast to the Americanized Michael) held powerful appeal for Americans during the social upheaval of the 1970s. In so doing, Santopietro repeatedly dismisses the Don's murderous criminality in asides: "Just as a sense of connection and well-being resided in the comfort of food and a shared meal, so too was there comfort to be found in the enveloping, if potentially murderous, embrace of a godfather who took care of all problems" (89). Having preserved nostalgia by the rhetorical containment of cold-blooded killing in a parenthetical phrase, Santopietro thus dismisses the monstrous hypocrisy of the *mafioso*, whose claims to "honor" and "family" pervert core Italian values within a discourse and a set of rituals that mask Vito Corleone's venal self-aggrandizement. In so doing, Santopietro re-inscribes the false consciousness not only of the *mafioso* in his ludicrous defense of his "family values" but also of his naïve admirers, taken in by empty talk and grand gestures. If the casual viewer is seduced by the sunny spectacle of Connie's wedding and by the Don's affectations of gentility, it is up to *The Godfather's* critics to note what they mask. Even on the day of his daughter's marriage, the so-called paragon of Italian family values is working in his office, running a "family business" that will, of course, lead to the death of two sons and the tragic ruin of a third. The power of the films in particular is in their invitation to romanticize a world whose brutality they simultaneously expose, ultimately indicting the nostalgia upon which Santopietro's analysis unfortunately rests.

These characteristic weaknesses in Santopietro's argument make many of his claims feel ultimately unearned. Oddly enough, that feeling persists even in the most personal sections of the book. Santopietro's lengthy passages of family memoir are potentially compelling material; as the son of a WASP mother and an Italian-American father born to immigrant parents, he appears poised to tell a rich and valuable story. But his personal narrative feels sketchy at best. (Reviewing the book in the *New York Journal of Books* on May 12, 2012, George De Stefano suggests that Santopietro's "evasiveness" about his gay identity weakens his personal narrative, especially with regard to his considerations of masculinity. Surely many readers, including this gay Italian American, would have welcomed a franker discussion.) Even more, Santopietro's assertion that *The Godfather* "Italianized" a then-twenty-year old who up until that point "had never cared to be Italian" is discomfiting (7). His effort to hang his personal history (and his book) on *The Godfather* (and its marquee value) leaves us with the tale of an Italian American "Italianized" by a movie. The effects of such "Italianization" are, unsurprisingly, thin. A representative passage notes that the now fiftyish Santopietro has "embraced the Italian-ness" of his heritage by "sprinkl[ing] the phrases I've learned from *The Godfather* into my conversation" (27). When he claims that "nothing gives me greater pleasure than to use the word 'paesano' when describing a fellow Italian-American," ethnicity appears reduced to the performance of a few catch-phrases (in their American spellings), which are, in fact, liberally in evidence here, if not always adeptly employed. (Andy Garcia's Vincent Mancini is no "gavone," and neither is *la busta*—the envelope containing a cash gift for the bride and groom—a "gavonelike reminder of cash vulgarity" [172].)

Italianization also seems to mean engendering an interest in one's family history, as Santopietro credits *Godfather II* with inspiring a reconnection to his Italian-American ancestry. But an adult interest in an ethnic heritage ignored or reviled as a child (Santopietro claims that his Italian ethnicity "played next to no part in forming my self-identity," [12-13]) is conventional third-generation behavior, not distinctly "Italian." Nor is "theatricality" in the rituals surrounding death, many of which constitute, in their way, a form of theater in cultures across the globe. The interpretive task for Santopietro here is to define the specifically Italian (or, perhaps more to the point, Italian-American) theatricality at work in the family funereal rituals, a task he does not really assume in his recounting of family stories. These stories, moreover, too often highlight figures such as death-obsessed Aunt Angeline or Uncle Carmine, "the quint-essential paesano" (213), taking them into the realm of stereotype that Santopietro claims, admirably, to deplore but that he cannot, finally, seem to avoid.

In the wake of Thomas J. Ferraro's *Feeling Italian: The Art of Ethnicity in America* (New York University Press, 2005)—not to mention substantive work on Italian-American history and culture, the construction and performance of ethnicity, and the experience of third-generation Americans—ample materials exist to have facilitated a far more fruitful analysis of the intersections of the Corleone saga, the Italian-American experience, and Santopietro's family history. Santopietro's minimal engagement with this work (and his over-reliance on the worthy but by no means definitive *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience* by Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale [HarperCollins, 1992]) critically undermines the contribution he might have made. In the end, *The Godfather Effect* may provide some pleasure for the novice reader, but

even he or she, I think, would find a more rewarding introduction to the Corleone family and their cultural legacy in the material with which Santopietro has done his seemingly earnest but ultimately cursory homework.

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Film Reviews

Reviewing Other Aspects of the Italian Diaspora

The films reviewed in this issue of the *Italian American Review* have little in common formally even though each adopts and adapts different elements from the documentary tradition: stock footage, constructed montages, scripted interviews, talking-head interviews, impromptu interviews, diegetic and exegetic sound, on-location shooting, and filmmakers who may or may not appear on screen. Thematically, they are all related to issues of transnationalism, globalization, and migration as these topics concern Italy. The *Italian American Review* by its own definition publishes scholarship “about the history and culture of Italian Americans, as well as other aspects of the Italian diaspora.” Given that focus, the films reviewed in this issue might seem at first glance misplaced.

Three of them focus on contemporary migration to Italy (*Visit India, 18 Ius soli*, and *Io sono Li*). While each alludes to or directly references the history of Italian emigration, these films are engaged principally with the political, legal, and cultural complications that have arisen in the last thirty years because of Italy’s own mass influx of immigrants. Another film reviewed here (*Italy: Love It or Leave It*) places the contemporary emigration of university-educated, Italian-born men and women as a backdrop to a critical investigation of the ongoing political and economic instability of Italy. And the fifth film reviewed, *Refugees in Cinecittà*, documents a little-known aspect of the history of Italy’s film industry and its surprising relationship both to the United States and to displaced people, offering thus simultaneously a different slant on the term *migration* and an important reminder of how enmeshed the United States has been with Italy.

In a sense then, the films reviewed in this issue are at odds with the basis of much Italian American studies scholarship, with its standard focus on the experiences of the Italian diaspora physically outside of Italy. These films and the reviews themselves ask us to recognize the dynamic relationship Italy has to the transnational movement of people and culture. They challenge us to be mindful of the continued reshaping of the history and culture of Italy, rather than imagine Italy and Italian culture as static. They encourage scholars and students of Italian American studies to expand further our understanding of the multitude of ways Italy, Italians, and objects and people related to both interact with one another and with the world at large. In other words, to consider how the geopolitical state of Italy reflects and responds to Italian migration, broadly understood.

These reviews by no means mark the first (nor the last) time the relaunched *Italian American Review* publishes film reviews that focus on Italy rather than on Italian emigrants to the United States or to other countries; however, it is the first time we have clustered such reviews. Grouping these films allows us to highlight the wide breadth of contemporary experiences and historical recovery that still need our attention and the multitude of cinematic journeys we still have to take.

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Visit India.

By Patrizia Santangeli.

Chiara Cavallo Productions, 2011.

55 minutes. DVD format, color.

The Pontine Marshes (Agro Pontino) in Italy's Lazio region were developed after being reclaimed from marshland in the 1930s, wished to life by the dictator Benito Mussolini himself. The area's long and remarkable history is narrated in Antonio Pennacchi's novel *Canale Mussolini* (Mussolini canal) (Mondadori, 2010), which recounts the complexities of life as experienced by those Italians who migrated from the north of Italy to populate the brand new towns in order to construct and maintain the canal system and cultivate the fields. Theirs was an arduous life, made even more difficult by frequent instances of crippling malaria. In 1934, the well-known writer and journalist Corrado Alvaro wrote *Terra nuova: prima cronaca dell'Agro Pontino* (New land: first chronicle of the Pontine Marshes), a book devoted to describing this unprecedented achievement of the fascist regime. Published by the Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista, Alvaro's book documents the monumental system organized in order to create new land for cultivation to feed the nation.

Cities rose quickly in the new territory and were given names such as "Littoria," in honor of the *fasci littori*, symbols of fascist Italy, or "Sabaudia," in honor of the Italian royal family. Built according to a fascist modernist style that marks other rural and urban spaces in Italy, the cities in Agro Pontino were intended to represent the strength and glorious achievements of fascism. Propaganda films, such as Giovacchino Forzano's 1933 *Camicia nera* (Black shirt), document the evolution of the area's development from rudimentary huts among the marshes to a newly colonized area. This locale was intended to be seen as both fascist and modern but still devoted to agriculture. In the 1930s, nobody could have imagined that, once "de-fascistized," Littoria would one day be renamed "Latina," a bureaucratic choice made so that the "LT" indicating the province on car license plates could be retained.

Neither could they have imagined that this agricultural area would, in the last twenty years, attract many non-Western immigrants whom the fascist 1938 racial laws would have declared racially inferior. However, even during the fascist period, this area was a place of complex contradictions: For instance, the Partito Nazionale Fascista of Littoria was dedicated to a Jew, Camillo Barany. Well known in the area, Barany was an Italian war hero and an expert land-reclaimer who died during the colonial conquest in Ethiopia in 1936, two years before the racial laws that would have defined him as an inferior Other. Immigration to the Agro Pontino had the unintended consequence of creating a hybrid, heterogeneous space because at the time circulation within the country was not free (special permissions had to be granted in order to relocate), and thus the presence of others within a territory that symbolized a fascist modernizing triumph was striking. The diversity of the fascist period foreshadowed recent, more radical changes of the human landscape in this area, changes connected to a global process of people's migrations.

Patrizia Santangeli's documentary *Visit India* is a highly valuable and successful project relating to the most recent layer of the area's change due to another kind of immigration. This very original documentary allows the Sikh community in Bella

Farnia to tell the stories of the multiple transmigrations that led them to this small village. The coastal town of Bella Farnia located in the province of Latina, near the city of Sabaudia, is quite small and outside the tourist season has a population of about 460 inhabitants. It has become the destination for a number of Sikh men from the Punjab region of India who have been employed mainly in agricultural activities: working in the fields, in greenhouses, and in stables. Santangeli recalls that on her drive from Rome to the beaches of Sabaudia, she used to see turbaned men riding their bicycles to and from work. Her interest in the Sikh community began after witnessing the changing human landscape of the Latina province and Sabaudia in particular and culminated with this 2011 documentary. (Santangeli has produced another documentary dealing with the representation of Agro Pontino and its history. Her 2006 film *Erano paludi* [They were marshes] focuses on land reclamation, using historical and contemporary images to illustrate the transformation of the territory.)

Visit India benefits from the collaboration of a sociologist, Marco Omizzolo, whose statements (heard as voice-overs) complement the immigrants' narratives. He describes the history of Sikh immigration to Sabaudia and personalizes the life histories of the protagonists of the documentary. In fact, Omizzolo travels to Punjab with one of the men introduced in the film, Hardeep, who is returning home to find a bride. The trip to Punjab uncovers the fact that Hardeep, like some other migrants, comes from a rather wealthy family of landowners, and his migration is motivated by the desire to protect the family from the current downturn in the global economy. Having a son in Europe is an act of economic diversification that gives Hardeep's family the possibility of investing in something other than agriculture and the Indian economy.

However, many of the other protagonists of the documentary do not come from such privileged backgrounds. Deep Singh tells of his harrowing experience of migration to Italy, through Russia, Slovakia, and Austria with very little food to sustain him during the trip. After paying 6,000 euros, Deep found himself living as an undocumented migrant and working in the countryside near Sabaudia. After nine years in Italy, he sent a picture back to India in the hopes of finding a wife, and in fact he later returns to India. Throughout, Santangeli presents Deep in relationship with Italy and Italians: We see him as a worker in a greenhouse, and he introduces himself by showing a photograph of himself with some Italian friends. This is a curious visual juxtaposition given that the Sikh community is rather isolated from the other residents of the Sabaudia area. On the other hand, it is important to note, as the film does, that there are volunteers who teach Italian to immigrants in order to facilitate a possible integration of this particular community into the larger society. To its credit, the documentary does not dwell on the work of Westerners with the Sikh community, a perspective that would have contributed to creating a problematic narrative—one that displaces the attention from the immigrants, the focus of the documentary, to the altruistic work of a rather small group of people. However reassuring to the (presumably native Italian) audience such a portrayal of Italians might have been, it is very relevant to document instead the lives and struggles of people who confront discrimination and intolerance, especially in a country where racist episodes against migrants are numerous.

Among the Sikhs interviewed, it is Satwinder who stresses the importance of language acquisition by stating that if one cannot speak Italian, he or she can only find

a job in agriculture. Satwinder came to Italy from Finland, where part of her family had migrated, in order to marry a member of the Sikh community in Italy. She has made an effort to learn Italian and has held a number of positions in the food industry. Although she lives among the Sikh community, she has developed a more eclectic approach to Italian culture. She has two daughters who were born in Italy and actively participate in local culture. The girls' Italian is native and, Satwinder concludes, her daughters would not feel at ease back in India. Italy is their (hybridized) homeland. For Satwinder, a migration of return is not a viable option, although she is determined to keep some Sikh traditions: When questioned by her mother, one of Satwinder's young daughters states that when it is time to marry, her mother will choose her spouse. Traditions are also maintained through religious attendance and participation in prayers at the temple (*gurudwara*), which are important aspects of life in the Sikh community. The temple is the symbol of traditional values, the location where customary activities can take place, and a meeting point for the community. Anybody can frequent the temple and take advantage of the meals served there. Men and women belonging to different castes, together with local Italians, can freely partake in the ritual repast. Harbajan, a lumberjack and an assiduous participant in temple activities, supervises the meals. He also oversees the Sikh food preparation process to which both men and women contribute.

Although most of the documentary is devoted to highlighting the complex and peaceful lives and celebrations of the Sikh community in Sabaudia, hardships, racism, and loneliness emerge in many narratives. Dhillon Karanjit Singh, the president of the Sikh community in Italy, remembers the violent attacks that targeted the early Sikh migrants to the Sabaudia area. When he arrived in 1985, some local teenagers would throw rocks to make immigrants fall from their bicycles or mopeds, even putting their lives in danger. He also remembers that loneliness drove some of the members of the then small community to fall into the trap of alcoholism, a problem that was even highlighted in the local news as a warning to other immigrants. Anna, an Italian who lives in Bella Farnia, remembers the brawls among Indians that took place in the early days of the community. She also stresses that the process of family reunification, the formation of new families, and the birth of children among the Sikhs improved the relationship between locals and immigrants. It is thanks to the immigrants that Bella Farnia has been revitalized, as they are now living in houses that had long been empty, and, according to Anna, the new residents have contributed to a collaborative atmosphere in the neighborhood.

Santangeli has created a documentary that avoids easy dichotomies in the description of the relationship between immigrants and locals. The testimonies of the interviewees allow *Visit India* to construct a rather inclusive narrative connecting the contemporary experiences of the Sikh community to the area's own local history of internal migrations. For example, Armida remembers her family's migration from the north of Italy to Sabaudia in the 1930s in search of better work opportunities in the newly reclaimed lands. She remembers the hardships, her desperation as a ten-year-old girl, and the daily fight against insects that never gave her any respite. The members of her family were treated as slaves by the local land managers, who could either grant or withhold permission for the internal migrants to return for a visit to their relatives still living in northern Italy.

Recent migrants from Punjab can supply even harsher examples of exploitation due to their status as undocumented migrants. Their precarious conditions embolden some local employers to either curtail their wages or withhold their pay entirely. An undocumented migrant cannot report any mistreatment to the police without taking the risk of being deported. Connected through similar difficulties of life and the complexities and sacrifices inherent in migration, the experiences of Armida, Satwinder, Dhillon, Hardeep, Deep, and Harbajan reject any stereotypes in the definition of the experiences of migration and in the portrayal of contemporary Italy as a destination country.

Visit India is highly successful in presenting the complexity in the life of a community of immigrants in Italy and simultaneously presenting the complexity of the process of narrating other people's lives in a documentary directed and written by nonmigrants. Santangeli and her collaborators chose to highlight the testimonies and celebrations of the protagonists and tried to limit the space allowed for the intervention of experts on others' lives. Hopefully, in the near future we will have narratives authored both by members of this Sikh community and by members of other communities of recent migrants to Italy who can complement and dialog with works such as Santangeli's extremely valuable documentary.

—GRAZIELLA PARATI
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18 Ius soli.

By Fred Kuwornu.

Struggle Filmworks Production, 2011.

49 minutes. DVD format, color.

In the last two decades, scholarly and artistic works dealing with contemporary immigration to Italy have mainly been geared toward questions of the rights of illegal immigrants; but as large numbers of immigrants continue to cross the Mediterranean to Italy either as a final destination or as a portal to other European countries, debates about immigrants' rights have become more heated. The documentary *18 Ius soli* (18 Right of the soil) sheds light on a new aspect of the immigrant presence in Italy that has been largely ignored: that of legal immigrants and their right to citizenship, a right already granted to them but only by a problematic law not yet put into effect. The ultimate goal of the film is to campaign for a new proposed law, "Modified Ius Soli," put forward, according to the film, by the St. Egidio Community (a Roman Catholic lay association) with the support of social networks of second-generation children and the bipartisan support of fifty members of the parliament. The new law proposes to grant citizenship automatically to children born in Italy "to a family legally resid[ing] in Italy for at least five years." In this way, the documentary, by being "uno dei primi documentari 'grassroot' prodotti in Italia" (one of the first grassroots documentaries produced in Italy), as explained on the film's website (www.18-ius-soli.com), stands as a form of political activism (although what is meant by "grassroots" is not clarified).

In this innovative film Fred Kuwornu gathers a myriad of pieces of contemporary and historical footage, creatively interlacing them with interviews with eighteen young and promising second-generation immigrants who, despite being seemingly well-integrated into their Italian communities, are marginalized by the existing law. Their positive social, cultural, and career experiences are contrasted with the negative reactions they get when applying for legal documents. Their different backgrounds and accents echo different Italian regional cultures, reminding the audience that Italy itself is already diverse in culture and dialect.

The documentary (in Italian, with English subtitles) skillfully employs a montage technique that supports its equating contemporary discrimination with the racist discourse of the fascist era. The film begins with footage from a 2010 soccer game between Italy and Romania. A group of Italian fans jeers, “Balotelli son of a bitch” at their own team’s player, black Italian striker Mario Balotelli. We hear the derisive phrase over a dark screen; then the film cuts to a young interviewee who asks, in Roman dialect as if to emphasize his Italian identity, “Ma che stanno a di?” (What are they saying?). This is Paolo (one of the eighteen individuals interviewed in the film), a young black Italian who demonstrates maturity and common sense in contrast to the irrationality of the angry crowd. A title card explains that the Italian “ultras” (translated as “hooligans”) are shouting, “There are no black Italians!” Ultimately, Kuwornu connects Balotelli’s situation in this 2010 game with another case from history: that of the black boxer Leone Jacovacci, in reference to whom a 1928 headline in the Italian *Gazzetto dello Sport* read, “A black cannot represent Italy!”

One of the great strengths of this documentary is that it effectively campaigns for the rights of second-generation immigrants by evoking a sense of hope and reassurance rather than sympathy and guilt from the audience. The film structure echoes a speech given by Italian President Giorgio Napolitano—portions of which are quoted in the documentary—in which he states that the diversity offered by immigrants is “a fruitful stimulus” and “should not be a source of concern.” As such, while the documentary points to negative moments of discrimination and racism, it aims at gathering support for the proposed law both by portraying Italian-born second-generation men and women as a very well-integrated group and by displaying their positive contributions to Italian society and culture. In addition to lines spoken by interviewees such as “I’ve always been accepted and liked,” and “There was on my part a predisposition, a desire, so I had to take the first step because I had to become part of a group,” the film shows abundant photographs of these young people with their Italian friends. Moreover, we see these second-generation Italians depicted as great contributors to their society as they recount donating blood, volunteering, working part-time to support their education, and training to represent Italy in sports.

Unfortunately, while successfully resisting the racial component in the construction of Italian identity, the interviewees—themselves part of Italian society—understandably fluctuate in their statements regarding the possibility of defining and qualifying what it means to be “Italian.” Aravinda, one of the interviewees, comments on the beauty of Naples, where he lives, describing it as a culture “[he] wouldn’t really define as Italian but actually Neapolitan.” The suggested contrast between the two cultures (the Italian and the Neapolitan), while complimentary to the character of the southern

city, implies his acknowledgment of the existence of a defined Italian culture, one that cannot encompass the cultural diversity of Naples.

Such a statement comes as a contrast to another statement, by Anastasio: “You can’t really define an Italian as Italian. We all know well that Italy is a country that has been influenced by different populations starting with Africa, Tunisia, the Scandinavian countries.” In addition, while inviting the audience to reconsider the “right of the soil” as a basis of access to citizenship, Aziz, of Moroccan origin, speaks about his marriage to a Neapolitan woman as a deliberate attempt to integrate into an Italian community. Filmed buying bread and eating pasta with his wife, Aziz says that he purposely decided “to marry someone who was not from Morocco but a girl from Naples.” Earlier in the film, Anastasio says, “I like Italian food much more than the stuff from my country,” and Waheed, of Pakistani origin, says, “We decided to integrate with Italians and not to spend all our time with Pakistanis or Tunisians,” which gives the impression that these young people have been successfully Italianized. By placing so much emphasis on what makes these young people Italian, the film unintentionally reflects the already existing challenge of breaking down the old paradigm that erroneously claims the need to define what it means to be Italian as an indispensable component of the national project of Italian unification. As such, while the film campaigns for alternative positionings of second-generation immigrants vis-à-vis hegemonic definitions of Italian national identity, it cannot escape being a product of such hegemonic discourse.

On the other hand, while the current law allows second-generation immigrants to request citizenship, the film efficaciously portrays this law as crippled by bureaucratic measures and ambiguity. According to law No. 91 of February 5, 1992, governing the citizenship “issue” in Italy:¹ “Aliens born in Italy who have been legally resident in Italy up to the attainment of their majority” have the right to become citizens “if, within one year of that date, they declare the wish to obtain Italian citizenship.”² Difficulties encountered today by legal immigrants—as illustrated by the documentary and sometimes even by Italian citizens residing abroad—underline the law’s ineffectualness. The narrated experiences indicate ignorance and malpractice on the part of some officials in addition to their sometimes intentional reluctance to provide guidelines to applicants. Sentences uttered by the interviewees such as “they [police officers] know nothing,” or “the best knowledge comes from other immigrants” attest to a convoluted procedure that demands improvement. As such, the film makes a very good case for the call for reform to the current citizenship law.

Finally, by interlacing the interviews with a rich mosaic of archival material—from stories of black Italians, to Italians who migrated to the United States, to individuals from diverse backgrounds who contributed to the shaping of Italy—*18 lus soli* rewrites Italian history to encompass alternative Italian identities. Produced the year of the 150th anniversary of Italy’s unification, the film contributes to ongoing discussions about the construction of an Italian national identity. The film justly challenges the outdated connotations of the term “Italian,” especially through the voices and images of those interviewed. According to Heena, “[F]eeling Italian is not just a matter of eating Italian food or wearing Italian labels. Being Italian [. . .] means being citizens.” Aravinda says, “I feel Italian even though I don’t have citizenship yet for the simple reason that I’ve been here since I was three. So, if I don’t feel Italian what am I supposed to feel?”

A close-up shot of Dorkas's eyes confronts the audience with her balanced statement: "When you grow up in a country, you live there and you get your education there, it's normal to feel a part of that country." At some other point, Fakir expresses his fear of the possibility of being deported to his family's country of origin. His question: "Where would I go?" echoed by Dorkas's question "Where do you think I would go?" is followed by Fakir's remark: "I'll always have this fear of losing my new life, my new adopted country, the fear of losing my new homeland, the fear of losing all the people I've loved up to now." The voices of these young people, in addition to historical examples, such as Roman Emperor Caracalla (of African background, and a somewhat problematic choice given his violent reign), the boxer Jacovacci (of Congolese origin), and Giorgio Marincola (the antifascist partisan of Somali origin killed by the Nazis) invite a revision of the history of both ancient and modern Italy. It is a revision that embraces new examples that are pivotal to understanding Italy's multiculturalism as an ancient condition rather than a modern one. As such, the documentary expands the limits of Italian diaspora studies to encompass other marginalized Italians whose identity is questioned by the Italian law despite their indisputable relationships with Italy and its culture.

18 Ius soli would be an ideal resource in a course in cultural studies, ethnic studies, or Italian film that addresses issues of identity, race, and migration, especially for a non-Italian student body less familiar with these issues as they pertain to Italy. The documentary offers a very good example of the role of film in resisting or challenging existing social relations in Italy, while also proposing alternative forms of political activism. Within a seminar on film studies, for instance, it would be a very good example of innovative documentary-making while closely examining the roles of music, interviews, and montage as efficient and interesting technical effects in campaign documentaries and psychological filmmaking. At the same time, the film, with its ability to appeal to a younger generation, would be useful in initiating a discussion in an undergraduate course that addresses issues of immigration and diversity in Italy in particular and in Europe in general. Finally, if used in a course focusing on U.S. ethnicities, it would provide an important reminder of how legal and social issues around race and ethnicity function abroad, while also acting as a reflection on the United States' own policies around immigrant rights, past and present.

—NADINE WASSEF

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Notes

1. The term "issue" seems to be used unironically in the English version of the Italian Ministry of Interior official website.
2. Article 4 Section 2 of the mentioned law. It is relevant to note that despite the availability of an English version of the Ministry of Interior website, the full text of the law is only available in Italian. The English translation cited here, with its awkward and ungrammatical syntax, is available on the UNHCR website where it is described as an "unofficial" translation (ct No. 91 of 5 February 1992, Citizenship [Italy], 15 August 1992, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b4edc.html> [accessed September 10, 2012]).

Io sono Li.

By Andrea Segre.

Jolefilm Production and Afternam Films, 2011.

96 minutes. DVD format, color.

Andrea Segre's *Io sono Li* (literally "I am Li," but released in English as *Shun Li and the Poet*) went directly from the 2011 Venice Film Festival to the Cinema Farnese in Rome's Campo dei Fiori. The film is billed as Segre's first work of fiction, a label I would reject because I believe it denies the work's value as social commentary. He is best known for a number of impactful documentaries that directly address issues surrounding Italy's troubled relationship with immigration. *A sud di Lampedusa* (South of Lampedusa, 2006), *Come un uomo sulla terra* (Like a man on Earth, 2008), *Il sangue verde* (Green blood, 2010), and *Mare chiuso* (Restricted sea, 2012) all have as their focus immigration to Italy. In particular, these films ask questions regarding the place of immigrants within a national historical narrative that has itself been defined by emigration for over 150 years. As such, and given the fact that Italians have not rigorously addressed their own history of emigration, Segre's oeuvre contributes to opening a dialog. Again and again, he effectively faces the contemporary situation of immigration to Italy, overlaid on the unstated backdrop of Italy's diasporas, leaving it up to his viewers to connect the two histories.

Those who regard documentary films as inferior to feature films might view Segre's *Io sono Li* as a maturing of sorts, as an opportunity to express himself in the "real" medium of cinema. However, to suggest such a thing would, in effect, dismiss and deny his documentaries their rightful place as engaged cinema and diminish the worth of their intent and impact. As demonstrated by the success of *Mare chiuso*, his previous film, Segre has by no means abandoned documentary for a more commercially viable venue. Instead, I would suggest that his foray into feature film evidences many traits of documentary work, something akin to Vittorio De Seta's movement between the Direct Cinema style of his short documentaries of the late 1950s, such as *Parabola d'oro* (Golden parable, 1955) and *Contadini del mare* (Peasants of the sea, 1956), and his feature-length films, such as *Banditi a Orgosolo* (Bandits of Orgosolo, 1961) and *Lettere dal Sahara* (Letters from the Sahara, 2006). Rather than fiction, I would categorize *Io sono Li* as a nonfiction film, a term that better suggests a continuation of the thematic arc of Segre's documentaries with a slight recombination through which to express different insights.

The cast of *Io sono Li* includes Zhao Tao—winner of the 2012 David di Donatello Best Actress award for her role as Shun Li—Rade Sherbedgia as Bepi, Marco Paolini as Coppe, Giuseppe Battiston as Devis, and Wang Yuan as Lian. The story centers around Shun Li, who works in a textile plant on the outskirts of Rome. She is working off a debt to her Chinese sponsors, who will enable her to receive the legal documents needed to bring her eight-year-old son to Italy. Without warning, her Chinese sponsors send Li to Chioggia, a small island city south of Venice, where she is to manage a bar-restaurant frequented by some of the town's locals: fishermen, retirees, petty criminals.

Bepi is one of the regulars at the establishment, an older Slav fisherman known to all as "the poet" for his habit of referring to each day's events in rhyme. He is widowed and unwilling to give up fishing and move to a more sedentary life off the island, despite his son's urgings. Bepi soon strikes up a friendship with Li through poetry,

and it is this celebration of a creative engagement with the world that helps them both relieve their solitude as expatriates. Bepi's long residence as a refugee from war-torn Yugoslavia has resulted in a fairly well-integrated life in Italy: He married an Italian, found a place among the community of fishermen, and has a caring son who wishes to see him work less and age more comfortably. But it is his experience as a foreigner in Italy that gives him insight into Li's life and helps bring to the surface some of the young woman's feelings, struggles, and hopes. Bepi and Li are mirror images of each other, whose existence within a social context not their own displaces them not only in space but in time. That is to say, Bepi's decades-long residence in Italy has gained him only a superficial integration. The depths of his otherness are fully brought to the surface when his interactions with Li lead to suggestions of his own nonbelonging.

Some of the leitmotifs threaded throughout the film effectively link disparate cultures. The uniqueness of each culture finds meaning through the metaphorical language of poetry or poetic existence. The most effective of these leitmotifs is the one that opens the film. As Shun Li and another woman are lighting floating lanterns to celebrate the poet Qu Yuan (340–278 BCE), the frame is filled by Li's face, the lanterns, and the softly moving water. Li's soothing voice recites some of the poet's verses as the equally soothing reddish light of the lanterns casts its glow in the dark. The serenity of this moment is broken by a man abruptly walking into the room and turning on the light. The magical moment of poetry is shattered as the setting is revealed to be a bathroom; the softly moving water is in a bathtub. The man proceeds to curse at the women for their "stupidity" and walks to the toilet bowl to relieve himself. This type of exchange also becomes a leitmotif in that there will be other moments of kindness, compassion, friendship, and attempted communication that will be shattered by gruff, unthinking men. And yet, these violent interferences become a clear illustration that location, cultural differences, or the unkind behavior of some cannot destroy the potential magic of human relations.

In keeping with the lyrical tone of the film, the very name *Shun Li* suggests a wonderfully poetic play between the main character and her presence in the landscape. Since *I am Li* could also be (mis)read by Italian speakers as *I am there*, it stands as the silent declaration of an individual, a woman, who is rendered almost completely invisible by both her co-nationals and Italians. Adding even greater depth to the title is the fact that the word *Li* includes in its range of meanings "to stand, to exist." The film is sometimes distracted by its own elaboration of a sort of female essentialism and to some degree, orientalism, which aside from a few examples leads to the almost complete relegation of Chinese males to the lowest forms of human behavior (Italian males do not fare much better and are equally unredeemable). As an intelligent filmmaker who makes the most of his actors, landscapes, and frames, Segre handles delicate issues extremely well so as to bring to light some of the painful and complex realities of immigration; while not explicitly, he suggests parallels between this film's scenario and Italian emigration.

Segre delves into the system of exploitation whereby Li and other Chinese women are taken advantage of by their own (we can assume that this exploitation is not gender specific, but in this film we are privy only to its effect on women). Individuals are held almost as slaves, generating revenue in any number of ways, held in check by their countrymen's promise of eventual freedom in Italy. In the case of Li and other women,

the promise is of an eventual reunion with their children or other loved ones. The “contracts” are shown to be the worst type of exploitation, as women work long hours, day in and day out, to pay off their “debt” to their bosses or those who have made their (most likely illegal) entrance into the host country possible.

At the same time, the director sheds light on the frustrations of an Italian population struggling to deal with high unemployment, an ever-increasing cost of living, and a changing economic culture that continues to outsource, to erase traditional occupations, and to displace workers with poorly paid immigrant labor. Unfortunately, the hardships that have befallen the local population make it hard for them to sympathize with the plight of the new immigrants, who are merely seen as the cause of their problems. Chioggia as a location is particularly interesting for its historical ties to the powerful Venetian Republic and for that republic’s historical ties with China, which brought it great benefits and wealth. This contemporary expression of xenophobia therefore directly contradicts past interactions between the two cultures, beginning with Marco Polo and extending for centuries afterward.

The film does, however, have its kinder, more human side and what might be considered a somewhat cautiously happy ending. Much of this gentler aspect is due to the friendship that Shun Li finds in Bepi and in her Chinese roommate Lian. Both represent a dangerous transgression of the defensive limits set by both sides—dangerous for the potentially disruptive power that human relations have in proposing alternatives to the controlling hold under which each individual is made to function.

Friendship is a transgression that neither side can seem to tolerate for the openings and communicative opportunities that it provides; as a result, relationships are soon threatened with physical and coercive violence. Such impositions result in a deeper isolation for Li as a lone woman, and a painful reminder that Bepi remains, at some level, a foreign body among the Italians. Nevertheless, Li, Bepi, and Lian (no less important as a peripheral actor for her immensely impertinent act of resistance) will, as the film moves toward a conclusion, act in a way that sutures the wounds of imposed isolation with a poetic activism of mutual aid and recognition.

The film’s conclusion effectively braids the leitmotif threads through the image of floating lanterns. The closing scenes blend together the lanterns and Bepi’s fishing shack in a final homage to the poet Qu Yuan and Bepi the fisherman/poet. Throughout the film, the constant presence of water is an element that provides the opportunity for movement and escape from the rootedness of land. Like Venice, Chioggia is at the mercy of the rise and fall of tides that flood parts of the city and invade people’s everyday lives. This phenomenon of *acqua alta* (high waters) blurs the distinction between *terra ferma* and the sea, a reality that further underscores the beckoning to freedom from the restrictions of conventions. The scenes shot during high waters become fundamental in understanding the ambiguous stance of the region’s inhabitants living a precariously perched existence—an existence that has become more vulnerable as a result of their displacement and loss of livelihood due to a bad economy, a drop in fish resources, and the effects of global industrialization. Again, Chioggia is doubly important as a location because it stands in contrast to its more aristocratic and powerful neighbor Venice, which in turn suggests a past of maritime glory and a long-standing relationship with Asia.

Andrea Segre’s *Io sono Li* beautifully pays homage to the poetry of life and human relations without overlooking the painful aspects of the contradictions inherent in

migration: exploitation, prejudice, and fear. It is a touching and important work of fiction by an engaged filmmaker whose films take the medium well beyond its assumed limits, thus meriting greater distribution and attention. The place of documentaries cannot be usurped as a means of social expression and the recounting of marginalized histories, just as the term *fiction* cannot diminish a film's social impact. As I write this, notice has come that *Io sono Li* is a finalist for the European Parliament's Lux Prize and that it will be shown again at the Venice Film Festival a year after its premiere — a most deserved honor and recognition.

—PASQUALE VERDICCHIO
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Italy: Love It or Leave It.
 By Gustav Hofer and Luca Ragazzi.
 Hiq Productions, 2011.
 75 minutes. DVD format, color.

Visitors to Italy often express admiration for it based on a superficial understanding of the *bel paese* — its ancient past, its picturesque towns and landscapes, and its local traditions and cuisine. While Italians are often proud of their own regional cultures and customs, their love for Italy has historically been complicated and put to the test by long-standing problems such as widespread corruption, a weak sense of national identity, and a shortage of attractive job opportunities, issues that still today play a crucial role in many people's decision to leave the country. An estimated 60,000 young people, most of whom have a university degree, leave Italy every year to explore professional opportunities that cities like Paris, London, and Berlin may offer or else take up the challenge of proving themselves in less familiar non-European destinations.

Whether or not to stay is the pressing question that informs and substantiates the documentary film *Italy: Love It or Leave It*, by Gustav Hofer and Luca Ragazzi. After six years of living in an apartment in Rome, the couple receives an eviction notice that compels them to confront the possibility of moving out not only of their usual living space but out of Italy altogether. Berlin could become their new home, Hofer proposes. The reasons for leaving are partially summed up at the beginning of the documentary through letters from their expatriate friends — parents with young children, colleagues, other couples. While an Italian audience is presumably familiar with these reasons, the film takes a closer look at specific aspects of contemporary life that appear to keep the country stagnant: the precarious conditions of factory workers, lack of respect toward the environment, an aging and often corrupt political class, and the commodification of women's bodies. In doing so, the film also provides a non-Italian audience with a more contemporary view of the most urgent issues affecting Italy in recent years. The film's exploration of a more hopeful Italy runs parallel to this disenchanting gaze; it is an Italy that often operates out of the limelight, made of people who fight daily against different forms of social and cultural inequality.

The film is successful in striking a balance between the two opposing viewpoints that frame Hofer and Ragazzi's dilemma of whether to stay or leave. In fact, each of them takes up a side, sharing his opinions mostly through voice-over narration as they both guide us through the film. Hofer, a northerner from the Trentino-Alto Adige region, has a practical, almost cynical approach to the question. For him, Italy has no allure. The latest statistics on the socioeconomic state of the country support his position, and he does not buy into clichés. To Ragazzi, a Roman with a visceral love for Italy and its traditions, Hofer replies (as translated in the subtitles): "You're ridiculous. We can't stay in Italy for the aqueducts. And Sophia Loren is 75 and lives in Switzerland." Before making a final decision, the couple takes six months to travel across Italy in search of inspiring stories and tangible realities that may revive their passion for their country and convince them to stay. From north to south, we see them driving a series of ever-changing vintage Fiat 500s as they attempt to unpack some of the political, social, and economic contradictions of contemporary Italy. That the filmmakers choose to take their trip in Fiat 500s comes to illustrate one of the ways the film counters stereotypical images of iconic symbols of Italy with a more accurate and up-to-date view of the nation. For instance, the archival footage advertising the original Fiat 500 of the Italian Economic Boom of the 1950s contrasts with the sense of uncertainty that currently dominates the Turin-based Fiat and its factory workers, as suggested by interviewee Mary Epifania who works on the assembly lines. Similarly, the relocation of production of the classic Italian stove-top espresso maker Bialetti from the Piedmont region to Romania calls into question what a good Italian coffee is and if such an item can be made outside of Italy. These examples indirectly raise the deeper issue of how much immigration to Italy and the Italian diaspora shape, support, and produce what we commonly conceive of as Italian. However, despite the topic of migration as the opening conceit of the film, the filmmakers seem not to fully address its multiple manifestations. For instance, they do not take note until later in the film of how much the "Made in Italy" label relies on immigrant workers; nor do they ever acknowledge, even subtly, contributions Italians have made outside of Italy.

Hofer and Ragazzi also unpack the stereotypical image of the Italian landscape. Although we still get a sense of picturesque Italy during their trip, the documentary focuses on the alarming connections between environmental neglect, organized crime, and political corruption, as exemplified by the waste-management issue in Campania and the so-called Ecomonsters in Sicily, large incomplete concrete structures resulting from failed public- and private-sector decisions. Another important contradiction the film pinpoints is with regard to food and human rights. Indeed, if sharing a meal has a social and affective value in Italy (that is, food creates conviviality, as the founder of the Slow Food movement Carlo Petrini states in one interview), it is equally true that a good part of the produce that makes Slow Food possible and successful is picked by immigrants. To illustrate this, the filmmakers drive to Rosarno, a town in Calabria that symbolizes the exploitation of immigrant farm workers and that drew international attention for workers' riots in January 2010. In this instance, Hofer and Ragazzi make an admirable effort to come to terms with Italy's relationship to migration; however, they do not openly acknowledge their own privileged position and the choices they have even as they consider immigrants who leave their own countries for lack of economic options.

The consistent use of interviews throughout the film, cleverly interspersed with animation sequences that impart a dynamic rhythm to the narrative, effectively serves to emphasize Italy's contradictions. One of the most fascinating themes emerging from the interviews is the nature of change that is slowly catching on in the country. As Ragazzi admits, complaining is not enough to make you love Italy and stay. The interview segments suggest a variety of approaches for contending with present difficulties but also for forging a better future. To mention a few, the mayor of Capo Rizzuto (Crotone province, Calabria), a town plagued by the 'Ndrangheta crime syndicate, reminds us of the importance of applying the law to defy the threats of organized crime; Giuseppe, a volunteer in Rosarno, speaks of the Italians' loss of memory of their own experience of migration; Neapolitan actress Loredana Simioli shows how irony can be powerfully used to spur reflection on environmental issues; while Claudia D'Aita argues for a creative reuse of unfinished public works in Sicily as a source of tourism. But perhaps the film's most compelling interview in relation to the urgency for change comes from the co-director of *Il corpo delle donne* (Women's bodies, 2009), Lorella Zanardo. She addresses the issue of the degrading role of women's bodies in Italian media in recent decades, the cultural impact of those images on women themselves, and the relevance of the Internet to carry out an active protest against a pervasive model shaped by the male gaze, which, as she points out, "in Italy is a powerful force."

The topic of women in *Italy: Love It or Leave It* is also part of the political scene centered on the figure of former Prime Minister Berlusconi and his recent sex scandal "Rubygate." The references to Berlusconi are plenty, and if on the one hand they may seem to burden the documentary, on the other they reflect the great extent to which this political leader has catalyzed the discourse about Italy at all levels in the past several years. In fact, the film premiered a few months before Berlusconi resigned in November 2011, amid a heated political climate and a polarized social scenario characterized by his supporters and detractors. Through a sound bite that sums up Berlusconi's conservative views on the rights of homosexuals, Hofer and Ragazzi touch upon the topic of gay couples explored in their acclaimed documentary *Improvvisamente l'inverno scorso* (Suddenly, Last Winter, 2008). Instead, in the latest and broader examination of Berlusconi's Italy, Hofer provocatively asks a group of Berlusconi's older fervent supporters: "What country have you left us with?" which opens the problematic question of how wisely the older generations have used national resources to build a future for their children in Italy. In a country layered with contradictions, the documentary's message, spelled out by Ragazzi toward the end of the film, seems to be that "you have to focus on the beautiful aspects or you won't survive."

In what begins as a personal quest, Hofer and Ragazzi's documentary raises numerous discussion topics about contemporary Italy that seem to require an audience somewhat familiar with the country's current national affairs. In addition, the film's adoption of a transnational perspective makes it fascinating to an international viewer, although the latter should not expect to find much historical depth in it. This, unfortunately, holds especially true in relation to issues of migration, which often remain vaguely defined, despite the title and opening scenes, which suggest otherwise.

—EVELYN FERRARO
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Refugees in Cinecittà.

By Marco Bertozzi and Noa Steimatsky.

Vivo Films, 2012.

52 minutes. DVD format, color.

Acclaimed for his *Appunti Romani* (Roman notes, 2004), a strikingly beautiful reworking of archival footage of Rome, documentary filmmaker and scholar Marco Bertozzi has followed up with a work whose subject has inspired few recorded images and whose treatment of the themes of memory, loss, migration, and exile asks us to rethink the ontology of found-footage cinema itself. A collaboration with film scholar Noa Steimatsky (on whose research the documentary is based), *Refugees in Cinecittà* pieces together a history that, when mentioned at all in standard histories of Italian cinema, had been reduced to a one-sentence contextualization of the practical necessity (that then became neorealism's defining aesthetic choice) of filming in the city streets immediately after World War II: The Cinecittà studios were unavailable to the reemerging Italian film industry from 1944 until 1950 because they were being utilized as a refugee camp.

Steimatsky and Bertozzi's collaboration not only unpacks the hidden history of Cinecittà's refugee camps but also turns it on its head since the repeated refrain of the film is the question: Why did neorealist filmmakers ignore the reality of the refugee camp? After all, the subject matter seems tailor-made for a Cesare Zavattini script, with the requisite poverty and desperation visited particularly and heartbreakingly upon children. The film provocatively leaves the question unanswered and instead goes on to right a historical wrong by retrieving rare archival footage of the refugee camp, mixing it with newsreel footage from the era, and cross-cutting it with brightly colored images of some of the camp's former residents returning to the site. Now elderly, these are the children of Cinecittà, those forsaken by neorealism, whose accounts of their memories as refugees, both vivid and fragile, support and elaborate on what little filmed footage exists of the camp from the period: snippets of Italian and U.S. newsreel footage; images from a relatively unknown fiction film funded by the Allies titled *Umanità* (Humanity, 1946), part of which used the camp itself as a backdrop and its residents as extras; and fragments from an informational film called *Thanks, America* (1948), which acknowledged U.S. charity efforts on behalf of the camp.

With images of the camp itself in such short supply, the film instead uses the refugees to reflect on the discrepancies between the present and the past and between history and memory. The opening sequence sets the tone with aerial views of Rome from newsreel footage accompanied by scratchy recordings of the refugees' voices (from the English subtitles): "I never said a word. So far nobody has." "We were right there, in Cinecittà." "I tried to forget." This acknowledgment that the story is untold gives way to memories of the camp and descriptions of the living conditions there. The overlapping voices convey a fragmented history, acting as the soundtrack to newsreel footage that pans across the postwar Roman terrain, from its outskirts to its center and finally to its opposite edges, the Cinecittà lots. With these visuals the film announces its strong sense of place, but it is a sense that is attenuated by the memories — some fading, some reluctant, some perhaps idealized or even incorrect — of the past residents of the camp who return to tell their stories.

In addition to Steimatsky's narration, the film uses the former residents' testimonies to supplement its archival images in various ways. They serve as our tour guides to the space, pointing out where their family cubicles might have been on the soundstage (in one particular case, the narration notes with irony, the location is Soundstage 5, where Federico Fellini later recreated the Via Veneto). But the ex-refugees also narrate the archival footage themselves, as when one man watches rare old clips digitized onto a laptop. The flow of images is manipulated—stopped, played backward and forward—as he spots his mother, sister, and the boy who would become his brother-in-law. Sometimes the former refugees “animate” still images from photographs and carefully assembled albums that they pass from one to the other as they try to decipher or remember the stories behind them. Lastly, and perhaps most compellingly, they serve as straightforward interviewees, talking heads addressing a camera that at times seems to want too much from them, lingering on their faces as their voices trail off, unable or unwilling to recall further details.

The interviewees' reconstruction of memory is fragile, as we see when a woman is telling the story of the mice she once found nesting in her straw bed at Cinecittà: Suddenly her home phone rings. She stops, a look of genuine worry settling on her face. “I didn't shut off the telephone. What should we do?” she asks. The interruption breaks the spell and brings the viewer squarely back into the here and now.

The legacy of the Cinecittà camp is far-reaching: In addition to housing those Italians who were left homeless by wartime bombing, the camp also acted as a way station for orphaned Jewish children from all over Europe who were to be sent to Palestine, as well as for Italian nationals who had been temporarily repatriated from the North African colonies. Although not represented by the selection of ex-residents appearing in the documentary, many of its former residents would settle in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Cinecittà, then, was just one stop on many postwar migrants' voyages to new homes in the Italian diaspora.

Recently, Cinecittà has undergone a different kind of occupation: Striking workers (lighting engineers, set builders, etc.) occupied the soundstages in the latter half of 2012 to protest the proposed building of a movie theme park, hotel, and health spa on the grounds. While Cinecittà's days seem to be numbered, its history is still being told. Bertozzi and Steimatsky's film provides us with images of a Cinecittà that had been (willfully, as the ex-refugees attest) forgotten and hints at how many more stories might yet emerge from there.

—ANITA ANGELONE

The College of William and Mary

Contributors

NANCY CARONIA is a Ph.D. candidate in English, a teaching assistant in Literature and Writing & Rhetoric, and an online instructor in the Gender & Women's Studies Program at the University of Rhode Island. Her intellectual interests include twentieth-century transnational discourses, especially ethnic and immigrant literature, popular culture, and drama and film. Her essay "Meeting at Bruce's Place: Springsteen's Italian-American Heritage and Global Notions of Family" appears in the Dennis Barone and Peter Covino co-edited collection *Essays on Italian American Literature and Culture* (Bordighera Press). With Edvige Giunta, she has co-edited a critical anthology, *Personal Effects: Essays on Memory, Culture, and Women in the Work of Louise DeSalvo*, which is currently under review.

FRED GARDAPHÉ is Distinguished Professor of English and Italian American studies at Queens College, CUNY, and the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute. His books include *Italian Signs, American Streets: The Evolution of Italian American Narrative*; *Dagoes Read: Tradition and the Italian/American Writer*; *Moustache Pete Is Dead*; *Leaving Little Italy*; and *From Wiseguys to Wise Men*. His most recent book is *The Art of Reading Italian Americana*.

THIERRY RINALDETTI teaches English at the University of Paris 8. He has written several articles on the labor migrations of Umbrian miners at the turn of the twentieth century. A book version of his Ph.D. dissertation will be published in 2013 by the Museo Regionale dell'Emigrazione Pietro Conti.

Italian-American Foodways

Call for Papers for a Special Issue of *Italian American Review*

Italian and Italian-American food has a long history in the homes, markets, and restaurants of the United States. For many immigrants, the hunger and food shortages associated with *la miseria* (literally, “misery”) were a primary motivation for emigration, and thus the foodways these immigrants and their descendants brought to and developed in the United States were not only a means for maintaining ethnic identity and culture, but also a marker of success and assimilation. In addition, given that these foodways emerged as the United States’ first notable “ethnic cuisine,” they have long functioned as a primary representation of that ethnicity to American society at large—a context, then, in which Italian-American identity and culture were expressed, encountered, negotiated, and re-formed over time.

This special issue will build on existing scholarship in the fields of history, anthropology, and folklore and folklife studies, and it welcomes contributions from those working in the area of food studies. Overall, this special issue of *Italian American Review* proposes to investigate a range of historical and contemporary topics related to Italian-American foodways, with the goal of broadening the scope of scholarly discussion and exploring innovative approaches to research. To this end, all submissions should demonstrate knowledge of previous scholarship and identify theoretical perspectives. Suggested themes include, but are not limited to:

- Representations of Italian-American foodways in popular culture
- Critical studies of Italian-American culinary literature (cookbooks, memoirs, etc.)
- Regional variations in Italian-American foodways
- Relations between Italian and Italian-American foodways
- Mass-marketing and “branding” Italian-American foodways
- Histories of Italian-American restaurants, food merchants, and food producers
- The evolution of Italian-American foodways
- The chef as Italian-American icon
- Foodways, assimilation, and national identity
- Foodways and class, gender, and/or sexual identity
- Relations between Italian-American foodways and other ethnic American foodways
- Italian-American food establishments (restaurants, markets, etc.), ethnic neighborhoods, and the urban landscape
- Italian-American foodways and the politics of food
- Comparative discussion with other communities within the United States or with parts of the Italian diaspora.

Deadline for Submissions: May 1, 2013

Abstracts for scholarly papers (up to 500 words) and a brief curriculum vitae should be emailed to guest editors, Rocco Marinaccio (rocco.marinaccio@manhattan.edu) and Peter Naccarato (pnaccarato@mmm.edu), to whom other inquiries may also be directed. Requests to submit full papers will be sent by July 1. Final article submissions will be subject to review by the editors and external reviewers selected by the *Italian American Review*.

Guest Editors

ROCCO MARINACCIO is associate professor of English at Manhattan College in New York City. His previous publications on Italian-American literature and culture have included

essays on Sacco and Vanzetti, Frank Sinatra, John Fante, and Italian-American foodways and have appeared in such journals as *MELUS*, *Italian American Review*, and *LIT: Literature, Interpretation, Theory*. His current research examines the relations of food and eating, literature, and culture in modern New York City.

PETER NACCARATO is professor of English and currently serves as chair of the Humanities Division at Marymount Manhattan College. His recent scholarly work is in the area of food studies, focusing on the roles of food and food practices in circulating ideologies and sustaining individual and group identities. With Kathleen LeBesco, he has co-authored *Culinary Capital* (Berg Press, 2012) and co-edited *Edible Ideologies: Representing Food and Meaning* (SUNY Press, 2008).

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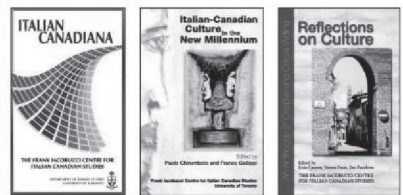
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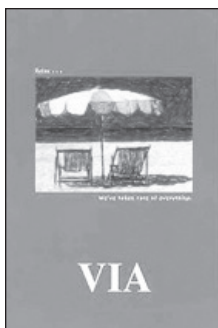
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