# Italian American Review

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## DIGITAL MEDIA REVIEW

## EXHIBITION REVIEWS

# "White Ethnicity": A Reappraisal

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"White ethnicity," a panethnic category created in the context of the modern Civil Rights era, is a dramatically dissonant phrase. Much in vogue in the academy, it neither confers an official ethnoracial status in the polity, nor does it mobilize a social movement under its banner. Copiously utilized as an analytical term in intellectual circles, it is rarely, if ever, deployed for popular self-ascription. Framed as a historical and political category, it is often unreflectively naturalized as a universal European referent. While it encompasses heterogeneous populations, it is commonly reduced to a monolithic racial entity, despite the ample use of quotation marks around the term. The inconsistency between widespread circulation in the academy and relative invisibility in the wider society is indeed striking. This disparity partly explains the blank stares in students and the public when they chance upon the term and also the bewilderment or derision this subject triggers among even progressive thinkers. How do we explain this disconnection? What is the significance of white ethnicity in contemporary discussions about American diversity? Does white ethnicity matter and if so, how, and to whom?

Naming populations, of course, carries social implications. Classifications demarcate boundaries and define identity, functioning as powerful instruments of inclusion and exclusion. They normalize what lies within their center of inquiry and in turn render invisible nonnormative peripheries and borders. They offer sites for identification, and they are powerful instruments in shaping public perception. This is why it is important to consider the above questions and reflect on the ways we think and write about "white ethnicity," this productive and ever-shifting yet simultaneously delimiting category.

Two interrelated developments make this an urgent task. First, the dominance of the "white ethnicity" trope in academia requires that we pause and reflect on the scholarship that consolidates this category. What knowledge does it produce and to what end? It is necessary to take stock of its gains and identify its limitations. Second, scholars increasingly register unease for reductive representations in white ethnic studies; noting its normalizing function, they call for its imaginative remapping.[1]

A critical rethinking of white ethnicity calls for historicizing specificity: the identification of the discourses, such as multiculturalism and

the melting pot, that have contributed to its articulation, and the political, civic, and cultural sites where these discourses are legitimized or debated (education, scholarship, public culture). The investigation calls for a discussion of discrepancies associated with its boundaries and meaning. It asks who formulates and who resists the category and how. It probes the power relations that align with one version while they displace another. Is it time to move beyond white ethnicity, and if so, along which trajectory?

This work aims to trouble academic narratives that construe white ethnicity as a thin cultural affiliation and/or bastion of racial politics against the interests of people of color.[2] It approaches the category as a historical construct, which constitutes—rather than documents—the meaning of the populations it purports to describe. The concept is produced in a web of discursive sites (journalism, the academy, research centers, think tanks, political activism) and in turn circumscribes boundaries of belonging and assigns value to difference. Thus, this article does not venture to answer the question: What is white ethnicity? Instead, it undertakes a selective genealogy of the concept. Who authorizes the definition at any time of its articulation and to what end? Who contests it and on what grounds?

This reconfiguration requires reflection on the interests and epistemological assumptions in dominant representations of ethnicity. It calls for the deconstruction of its consolidated meaning. What displacements and exclusions did this hegemony entail? The aim is to show how two narratives—critical studies of whiteness and symbolic ethnicity—work dialectically to construe a single narrative of white ethnicity as a site of privilege. In this function, they diminish the range and significance of ethnic identities and produce a monolithic construction of white ethnics as ahistorical and anti-people of color. The aim of this work is to challenge this absolutism and propose alternatives.

## White Ethnicity as a Minority Identity

Discussions about white ethnicity exhibit a recurrent slippage between race as a social construct and race as a reified category. On the one hand, there is explicit recognition of its boundaries as debated and, often, polemically contested. The place of the Irish or the Jews, for instance, has been invariably questioned; and the class position of European Americans has been a significant variable in the definition. On the other hand, white-ethnicity discourse routinely deploys "white" as a blanket identity in reference to Americans of European origin. That is, it equates Europeanness with whiteness. One finds an early example of this slippage in one of the most insightful discussions of white ethnicity, Perry L. Weed's (1973) *The White*

*Ethnic Movement*, a pioneering work particularly reflective on the constructiveness of ethnic collectives: "to the extent that a *white* American thinks and acts in terms of his *European* origins, to that extent he is a 'white ethnic,' that is the child, grandchild, great grandchild, etc., of European immigrants" (emphasis added, 13). Given the newness of the register "ethnicity" at the time (Roediger 2005a), it is ethnicity here that requires clarification, not the whiteness of ethnicity, which is taken as self-evident.[3] By the time *white ethnicity* entered the national vocabulary in the 1960s and 1970s, the uneven, fractured, and contested "racial odysseys" (Jacobson 1998, 3) of the southern and eastern European immigrants culminated in official inclusion as normative whiteness in the macrolevel of state and intellectual discourse.

Weed (1973) also discusses white ethnicity as a political construct, produced in the context of post–World War II minority politics, the politicization of disenfranchised racial collectives, and state policies designed to redress historical racial injustices. The resulting social and political reconfiguration rippled through all facets of the urban fabric: residential integration, access to jobs and municipal resources, city governance, electorate power, schooling, and educational curricula. Intergroup competition over material and symbolic resources contributed to the creation of racial panethnicities as strategies for empowerment.[4]

White ethnicity emerged out of this confrontational identity politics, tellingly as a "distinct minority" (Weed 1973, 3). It was construed as a community of shared sociopolitical and affective interests, largely implicating immigrants and their offspring still residing in urban or first-ring suburban neighborhoods in major metropolitan centers, particularly in the Midwest and the Northeast. In a textbook case of panethnic formation, diverse ethnicities—primarily of the lower-middle and working classes— joined ranks on the basis of common grievances in antagonism with the state-supported advances of people of color.[5] Feeling besieged, "alienated, forgotten, troubled, disillusioned, frustrated, and angry" (3), theirs was a "politics of resentment" in response to the profound transformation of the nation's racial order. Seen as a major political force, white ethnicity "gained widespread acceptance among public and private agencies concerned with the restoration of urban life" (14) and was placed at the center of the national debate over conflict and interracial relations.

The term *white ethnicity* was contested from the start, from its initial usage by an array of academics, intellectuals, religious leaders, and political activists. Unions, for instance, resisted it (Weed 1973, 16). Leaders such as Monsignor Geno Baroni, head of the Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs—one of numerous agencies to address ethnicity in relation to urban strife—

included the Irish only reluctantly, for the sake of political expedience (15). In what is seen as the infamous manifesto of the white ethnic movement, Michael Novak (1971) coined the provocative acronym PIGS, injecting a heightened sense of injustices inflicted on the Polish, Italians, Greeks, and Slavs; lashing out against the liberal establishment, he vehemently excluded the Jews who were seen as an integral part of the nation's elite. In contrast, Richard Krickus (1976) made the case for a shared working-class white ethnic subculture, which included the Jews and the Irish. He sought to rehabilitate white ethnics from the stigma of racism and to assert the legitimacy of their grievances in order to tap into this demographic as a political resource for the agenda of 1970s New Populism.

In addition to shifting boundaries, the meaning of this category was also a site of struggle. Who were the white ethnics? Was it cultural oppression or the state's racial policies that caused their discontent? Were they boorish, flag-waving, antiminority, and antiliberation movement conservatives, a collective coded "hard-hats"? Or was there substance to their claims of a plight that neither the liberal elite—the infamous "limousine liberals"—nor racial activists could possibly comprehend? Wasn't it that their anger deserved a sympathetic hearing to avoid racial polarization? In that case, perhaps there were prospects of forging progressive interracial solidarities to ameliorate poverty. "*Both* the Black and the white ethnic are defrauded in this society," Michael Novak (1973) wrote, admitting, at least this time, the latter's relative privileges: "No doubt the Black suffers more; no one denies that. The question is, how can one most practically *help* him?" (166). He advocated class-based coalitions founded on mutual understanding, not affective ties: "It is not even necessary to *like* white ethnics. But it does help to understand their history" (167). The interest was to articulate ethnicity's progressive political thread (Ryan 1973).

Thus, white ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s simultaneously stood for not only racial whiteness but also for a population with specific class, religious, gender, and regional boundaries. Its cultural content was debated. Its meaning was both closed off as white Europeanness and open-ended. In the early writings of the "ethnicity theorists" or "cultural pluralists" at the time, for instance, it was seen in terms of political instrumentality, available to forge alliances across racial and cultural lines and to advance class solidarity among the disenfranchised. It was also construed as an enduring cultural affiliation, in alignment with the project of *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Glazer and Moynihan 1963). Early definitions illuminate its internal diversity and debate its boundaries.

Fast-forward to the late 1980s and 1990s, when the academy dramatically redrew the boundaries of white ethnicity, crystalizing its meaning.

Its class and regional boundaries now referenced universal European American middle-class suburbanites (Steinberg 1981; Waters 1990). Secure in its whiteness, this demographic coalesced around a shared ideological core. Cultural divisions among European Americans were softened due to intermarriage, a sign in itself of assimilation. The porousness of internal boundaries provided conditions for the emergence of a white European identity and the concomitant hardening of external boundaries in relation to people of color, who were seen in antagonistic, if not hostile, terms (Alba 1990).[6] In this new circumscription of white ethnicity as assimilated Europeanness, it was as if the antiminority thread of white ethnic politics in the 1970s had taken a comfortable seat in suburban living rooms across the nation in the 1980s and beyond. In the academy this thread referred to white consciousness in antiblack politics among ethnics (Luconi 2001) and middle-class European Americanness. The boundaries between white ethnicity as a political category and a reified racial entity continued to blur.[7]

Conversely, the meaning of "white ethnicity" was breaking down in public usage during the 1980s. It lost its centrality as a desirable cultural template, being devalued even in popular culture. It lost coherence.[8] White ethnicity fragmented into a multitude of unique ethnic identities, and the language of distinct ethnic hyphenations—Irish Americans, Polish Americans, Jewish Americans—pervaded the national vocabulary. What accounts for the dramatic bifurcation between the academy's retention of racialized ethnicity and the public sphere's use of culturalized hyphenation? And what happened to those European American ethnicities, remnants of the collapsed New Deal interracial coalitions, who continued to support nonwhite interests? What about those at the borders and margins of European whiteness who did not conform to its aesthetic ideal? To answer these questions, we need to take a closer look at the historical and political forces that drove these developments.

## Culture Wars and White Ethnics

White ethnicity left no institutional identity imprint in the post–Civil Rights era. It has been subsumed under the label "white" in the official template of the nation, the so-called ethnoracial pentagon: It did not crystallize, for example, as a point of reference in public discussions, it did not serve as a site for self-identification, and it did not translate into academic units in the multicultural university. The prospect of creating a "national organization to represent white ethnic groups" (Weed 1973, 205)—with the NAACP as a template—never materialized. It ceased to mobilize political action, and it failed, for the most part, to produce enduring interracial coalitions.

While "white ethnicity" reconfigured its boundaries in the suburbs, receding from popular usage as an explicit signifier of panethnic interests, it featured centrally in the culture wars that divided the polity in the 1980s and beyond. One overriding issue, namely the definition of national culture, was the center of this acrimonious clash. Was the nation an egalitarian democracy of universal ethnic inclusion? Or was it, fundamentally, a stratified society of racial exclusion? The very tenor of national discussion on diversity and the role of the state in multiculturalism were at stake: celebration of the democratic polity versus critique of its egalitarian pretext; voluntary cultural pluralism among interested individuals versus state-sponsored group rights; fair competition in a leveled field versus the pervasiveness of structural racism even after the legal and political gains of the Civil Rights movement. At stake was the distribution of symbolic and material resources in all aspects of national life, from educational curricula to research-fund distribution, from museum representations of difference to affirmative action. In the ensuing disagreement over the interpretation and practice of diversity, the European American emerged as a contested trope. Two strands organized the infamous culture wars. On one side of the multicultural front it exemplified the very idea of an inclusive, egalitarian nation. Across the trenches, it stood for the nation's exclusive Eurocentric predisposition.

The polemic took place both inside and outside the academy, a collision of competing ideologies that continues to reverberate today. On one side of the divide were liberals affronted by minority claims for group rights and, paradoxically, political conservatives seeking positive entry into multiculturalism who elevated the European American as the icon of American diversity. That figure in turn became the exemplar of national openness, progress, and equal opportunity whose self-sufficiency, perseverance, and determination were key in overcoming poverty and discrimination in order to realize the American Dream. These represent the now well-entrenched topoi of the "Eurocentric formulation of American pluralism" (Jacobson 2006, 178), a narrative of inclusion in a progressive and benevolent democracy that was open after the dismantling of racially discriminatory legal barriers. On the other side of the divide, Eurocentrism as American multiculturalism was anathema for people of color and their intellectuals. The narrative obscured the realities and harmed the interests of non-European Americans. Its core ideology was interrogated as a concerted conservative shift aiming to curb civil rights gains.

In their classic work on U.S. racial formation, Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986) engage white ethnicity in the context of political and social history. They link the elevation of the European ethnic as the exemplar of

national diversity with the concerted opposition to civil rights advancements. Central to their analysis is the 1980s political realignment of American conservatism to attack the liberal—"the so-called 'welfare'"—state (112) and by implication undermine minority gains, notably affirmative action. In this account, the economic and cultural crisis in the 1970s (deindustrialization, inflation, loss of union power, and fragmentation) was attributed to the interventionist state, including its race-based policies. Political conservatism rearticulated civic ideals of fairness and equality in relation to the transformations brought about by the feminist, gay, and racial movements. The politics of interest groups had turned the United States into an unequal society whose victims, now white people, were targeted by reverse discrimination and racism. Affirmative action programs were unjust, victimizing whites while benefiting undeserving minorities. The meaning of "whiteness" was reconfigured from dominance to subordinance. Thus, in response, the idea of justice was rearticulated as a "vision of an egalitarian society where racial considerations are no longer the concern of state policy" (114): a color-blind society.

The figure of the model ethnic as the paragon of civic virtues was central to this "white ethnic immigrant narrative" (Lazos Vargas 1998). The question that organized the debate hinged on assumptions theorizing race as yet one more form of ethnicity. Social scientists working within the paradigm of ethnicity theory examined issues of incorporation, acculturation, assimilation, conflict, ethnicity's role in politics, cultural change, and retention via the prism of the experience of European immigrants; they saw race as yet another ethnicity that in post–Civil Rights America would eventually follow the "American ethnic pattern" of inclusion (Glazer 1975, 15). The nation, which previously opened up to include European Americans, was now extending a welcome mat to admittedly disenfranchised minorities. The legal barriers to ethnic equality had collapsed: Now needed were racial minorities performing the very ethos that propelled white ethnics to successful assimilation and to reaping its rewards. Hard work, discipline, deferment of gratification, and willingness to subdue collective ethnic interest to national interest were key to racial (seen as ethnic) success. This "myth of ethnic success" (Steinberg 1981, 82) organized the Eurocentric model of "immigrant analogy." If the Polish Americans and Greek Americans have made it, the narrative never tired of repeating, there should be no reason that in a liberal state others could not as well—unless, of course, it was their fault. The white ethnic advancement through the pulling up by the proverbial bootstraps served as the core ideology of individual meritocracy. Nathan Glazer (1973) asserted, "Only the individual has rights, not the group"; institutions "must be open to all, color blind,

and indifferent to group affiliation or group origin" (175). In turn, the narrative of a heroic overcoming of hardship in the past through toil and perseverance links European Americans together into uniform whiteness and interethnic solidarity.[9]

Eurocentric pluralism blanketed the public sphere in documentaries, films, biographies, memoirs, community histories, museum exhibits, ethnographic interviews, and community narratives. Sanctioned by the state, it was instrumental in rewriting the national myth of origin. As Jacobson (2006) puts it, making America a "hyphen nation"

> relocated that normative whiteness from what might be called Plymouth Rock whiteness to Ellis Island whiteness. In the years beyond the melting pot there arose a new national myth of origins whose touchtone was Ellis Island, whose heroic central figure was the downtrodden but determined greenhorn, whose preferred modes of narration were the epic and the ode, and whose far-reaching political conceit was the "nation of immigrants." (7)

This dramatic shift placed the European American at the core of reimagining the nation while consolidating its whiteness. This was taking place, as I noted, when white ethnicity was being displaced as an identity marker from popular culture, rendering invisible its association with racial dividends.

## From White Ethnics to Culturalized Ethnics: Decoupling Race from Ethnicity

White ethnicity no longer incites discourse about difference in the public realm. Instead, the naming of ethnicities as distinct "ethnic American" groups dominates popular usage. The particularization of the hyphen inundates national culture. From festivals to parades, from cuisine to university programs, the culturalization of ethnicity pervades the national vocabulary. There are academic programs on Italian Americans, journals devoted to the Greek diaspora, and books on Polish-American cuisine. No socially legitimate forum exists to articulate a white ethnic identity. How do we account for this phenomenon?

The ascendancy of particularized cultures is closely associated with the triumph of the narrative of European Americans as a model of diversity in unity. Civic spaces for ethnic visibility were predicated on this cultural template, an unwritten contract, so to speak, of European Americans as exemplary American ethnics. In this scenario, ethnicity was a valued resource to be felt, displayed, admired, or consumed insofar as it was scripted in conformity to integrationist expectations as "acceptable difference" (Urciuoli 1998, 178). It was accepted proportionally to the degree to which it refrained

from speaking out against racial injustices, economic inequalities, and persecution of nonconformists in their midst. It muted cultural critique. This depoliticization of identity, Gregory Jusdanis (2001) observes, was exchanged for "admittance into the civic public sphere" (170). The dialectic between politics and culture, a key component in the struggle of racial groups for social justice and recognition, did not define the self-representation of hyphenated whiteness (180). No demands were made on behalf of the poor, no rallies for ending racism, no critique of inequality. Keeping at bay the political, these collectives projected an unthreatening and often tightly choreographed image of community-centered, pleasurable, exoticized sociability.

The particularization of ethnicity in multiculturalism unfolded under these conditions. If ethnicity announced inclusion and fulfilled the imperative for unique belonging in the age of heritage, individuals and collectives turned to the identities historically available to them. Ethnic revival animated the Greek-American or Italian-American component of the enduring hyphen, dusting off cultural expressions previously closeted or downplayed under the reign of assimilation. This was a historical moment where the ethnicization of American modernity encountered the identities of European nationalism, now depoliticized and softened, to elevate hyphenated European Americans as the paragon of national inclusiveness.[10] Ethnicity became a powerful source of identification because it anchored cultural uniqueness and belonging, interests and affective ties, all central ingredients in the search for combating modern anomie. Now it was a Greek-American family story or the solidarity of a folk dance that provided the compass to identity and not, say, interethnic coalitions to claim better living conditions for the poor. Distinct cultural affiliation animated ethnicity's public presence. Roots, family genealogy, and tradition were translated into a vast array of material and symbolic expressions: festivals, parades, language and dance schools, academic units, Internet sites, magazines, cultural organizations, films, and popular and academic writings. Ethnicity functioned as an aesthetic resource to be performed, enjoyed, and consumed, a site to advance symbolic capital and enhance status. In the culturalized public sphere, ethnicity flourished for positing uniqueness, social bonds, community, vitality, integration, and civic responsibility; it was embraced by corporate sponsors and was savored by the public. Its successful commodification sealed its wide social acceptance. Disassociating itself from class interests, recognition of racial oppression, and economic exploitation, it asserted itself as a desirable public good to be nourished and reproduced.

Displacing race, hyphenated ethnicity represents a major step toward fulfilling a central project in twentieth-century liberal American social

thought, namely the reconceptualization of difference in cultural terms: the making, that is, of a postracial society. Yet the politically loaded issue remains that the celebration of difference-as-culture takes place in a society where race still presents obstacles and constraints. This is why the cultur-alization of European Americans represents yet another chapter in the history of U.S.-European domination: the retreat from solidarity with disenfranchised populations. The cultural hyphen denies whiteness—"I'm not white; I'm Italian" (Jacobson 2006, 1)—and therefore its privileges and complicity in racial oppression. In this respect, it simultaneously and implic-itly promotes the antiminority immigrant narrative. As Lisa Lowe (1996) writes, multiculturalism "is the national cultural form that seeks to unify the diversity of the United States through the integration of differences as cultural equivalencies abstracted from the history of racial inequality unresolved in the economic and political domains" (30). The idea that the multicultural bounty of European-American postethnic revival represents dividends due to whiteness remains unspoken; when the idea is raised, it is ignored. But this claim of racial innocence does not remain uncontested. It was vehemently challenged, most vocally in the academy, where an alter-native version of politicized multiculturalism found a hospitable place.

## Reinscribing Race into Ethnicity

To consider ethnicity and race as equivalent, the central tenet of ethnicity theory, denies ethnicity as a function of power. It produces an aesthetic narrative that hides the articulation of the hyphen with racial hierarchies. The ethnicity paradigm constitutes difference in a political manner though it obscures this function. By celebrating self-propelled ethnic success via the immigrant analogy, it sidesteps the structural reasons that cause lack of mobility. By viewing national history as a pattern of progressive inclusion, it neutralizes contemporary patterns of exclusion. Embraced early by the Civil Rights movement as a strategic step in the struggles for racial liberation, ethnicity theory was later blamed for its failure to account for the continuing operation of racial inequalities and for the aborted liberal vision of genuine racial equality. A wave of sophisticated, far-reaching, and at times polemical scholarship was produced with the aim of empirically refuting and conceptually discrediting the ethnicity paradigm.

In an intellectual climate promoting critique of domination—enabled by the ascendancy of cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and critical race studies—and in the context of institutional empowerment of racial studies, ethnicity theory stood on trial. Scholars scrutinized the privileges associated with white ethnic incorporation to then debunk the immigrant

analogy and the off-the-boat myth of immigrant innocence. It was skin privilege, consent to the racial status quo, and cultural suicide that granted the ethnics entrance into unions, the middle-class suburbs, and eventually the elite. Whites claiming European ethnic affiliations were indicted for betraying early intraracial solidarities and for contributing, explicitly or implicitly, to the oppression of people of color. The making of European Americans into the icon of national diversity was in exchange for a Faustian sellout to whiteness.

While the white ethnic narrative triumphed in popular culture, it was resoundingly defeated in the multicultural academy. Ethnicity theorists were chastised as liberals-turned-neoconservatives who undermined racial interests. In their political realignment they were feeding, if not converging with, the interests of the radical right (Omi and Winant 1986). Moreover, the pervasive "disavowal of whiteness"—"the notion that Jews, Letts, Finns, Greeks, Italians, Slovaks, Poles, or Russians are not *really* white"—and the appeal of this denial in debates over affirmative action (Jacobson 1998, 280) incited new scholarship to deconstruct ahistorical ethnic whiteness. The critical tenor of "white ethnicity" shaped research projects even among academics with interest in empowering ethnic collectives (Guglielmo and Salerno 2003; Anagnostou 2009a). But scholars also sought to complicate the excesses and blind spots of ethnic whiteness studies, including symbolic ethnicity.

## The Promise of Symbolic Ethnicity

Symbolic ethnicity, the idea of a voluntary, private, thin, and malleable ethnic identity among middle-class whites, fundamentally shapes the conversation about white ethnicity. In fact, it intersects with the interests of critical studies of whiteness. Its influential and prominent practitioners effectively recognize the zeitgeist in U.S. postmodernity: the celebration of the self as a creative agent who playfully and eclectically combines semiotic codes to fashion multiple, context-specific identities. In a society where choice historically lies at the core of national identity, postmodernity further enhances the cultural imperative of individual self-fashioning. The primary interest of individuals is to voluntarily fulfill the personal self rather than to conform to the obligations of an ethnic collective whose social structure, furthermore, was severely weakened due to suburbanized assimilation. For symbolic ethnicity, these conditions present a valuable asset to whites with European ancestries since their whiteness affords the ability to voluntarily and situationally select from a range of suitable ethnic options. Identity provided a source of pleasure and empowerment

for ethnic suburbanites, an exhilarating sense of individuality as "freedom of choice" (Waters 1990, 150) afforded precisely because ethnicity denoted nonstigmatized identity "lacking in social costs" (157). Not so for peoples of color, Mary Waters rightly pointed out. The power of race as an ascribed category takes away the element of identity choice among peoples of Asian, American Indian, and African descent. In a society still structured in racial inequality, "the social and political consequences of being Asian or Hispanic or black are not symbolic, for the most part, or voluntary. They are real and often harmful" (156). Waters decried the blindness of whiteness to its own privilege of choosing and its concomitant inability to recognize the fundamental alterity in the everyday experience of nonwhite identity.

The latter inevitably raised issues of imposed constraints, stereotyping, or, worse, racism. White ethnics were in a position to celebrate identity as freedom; nonwhites were to experience identity as a social ascription whose meanings they most often did not control. This deconstruction of European-American privilege squarely placed white ethnicity within the orbit of critical studies of whiteness, a field committed to making visible the practices, beliefs, and ideas that contribute to racialized hierarchies; to naming the ways in which racial locations within the social structure are implicated with social power; and to identifying the historical processes—mechanisms, strategies, appropriations, and struggles—that were deployed to incorporate Europeans as whites in American workplaces, neighborhoods, and institutions. Its critical edge derives from its focus of inquiry. While in the past scholars focused on constructions of ethnic and racial Others, critical whiteness studies investigate the dominant group itself: how it produces and reproduces its dominance in the wider racialized system and how it asserts itself as a norm without naming itself.[11]

The construction of white ethnicity as symbolic in postmodernity builds on a powerful thread in American sociological thought: that of choice. From Andrew Greeley to Talcott Parsons, and from Herbert Gans to Mary Waters, choice operates as the key trope to constitute ethnicity. This thinking has been salutary. Biology is decoupled from ethnicity, the latter seen as a mode of cultural belonging detached from descent-based primordial ties. The biological model of ethnicity is questioned as insular and parochial, as a mechanism to reify identity, reproduce rigid conformity to norms, and enforce boundaries of exclusion. Instead, the emphasis on voluntary affiliation conceptualizes ethnicity as an open-ended, creative, and *inclusive* field. It enabled access to symbolic and material resources beyond ancestry: Ethnic scholarships will be extended to individuals on the basis of their *cultural* affiliation with ethnicity, not their *biological* pedigree. Community competitions for ethnic arts and letters should be open to any artist irrespective of ancestry.

Voluntary attachment was seen as the liberating alternative to the demands of conformity underwritten by ancestry-based ethnicity. In attending to the profound transformations of American ethnic structures and recognizing new forms of identity expression, symbolic ethnicity positioned itself to identify, articulate, and empirically map the changing contours of ethnicity in postmodernity. A whole range of cultural expressivity—crossing of ethnic boundaries, creative reinventions, playful appropriations, ironic identifications, situational deconstructions, ethnic parodies, satire, the making of usable pasts, new expressions of collective identity (media and the Internet), and reinvented personal identity—offered exciting scholarly prospects.

Through concerted research among prominent sociologists, symbolic ethnicity entered this landscape with empirical rigor. Its authority was based on ethnographic and statistical documentation. Because it drew from postmodern transformations in the making of identity and communicated its findings in compelling, jargon-free language, it enjoyed wide academic appeal. Asserting itself as the dominant paradigm of ethnicity within sociology, it shaped the direction of the discipline and "provided impetus and vital empirical footing for the interdisciplinary field of critical whiteness studies," thus making it impossible for other disciplines to ignore (Torkelson and Hartmann 2010, 1311).

Symbolic ethnicity works dialectically with critical whiteness studies. The latter builds on the notion of thin ethnic identity to construe a transparent white ethnic figure who, unencumbered by historical or critical consciousness, turns complicit to conservative racial politics. Whites of European ancestry, Charles Gallagher (2003) argues, deny that they have benefited from "past or present discrimination," and they steadfastly hold on to the ideology of the immigrant analogy: All groups (Irish Americans, Italian Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans) at one time or another have gone through the same experience as newcomers to the nation. White "ethnics" are thin in culture and thick in playing the "white ethnic card," the "foundation . . . [to] negate contemporary racism and defend white privilege while espousing the American creed of equal opportunity for all" (158). In its critique of color blindness, this position construes white ethnics as ahistorical subjects and antiblack. But this reification neglects to account for alternative ethnic subjectivities. In fact, a recent empirical study refutes a transparent association between white ethnicity and negative racial politics. Jason Torkelson and Douglas Hartmann (2010), for instance, show "that ethnic whites are more likely than others to believe in a shared vision of American society with African-Americans" and therefore "did not appear to be more aligned with colour-blind ideologies than non-ethnic whites, as more recent theories of white ethnicity would

otherwise predict" (1324). The equivalence between white ethnicity and antiblack politics is refuted: "White ethnic identity does not hold direct substantive explanatory power as far as determining which whites will hold onto colour-blind ideals" (1327).

## The End of European-American Ethnicities?

Symbolic ethnicity offers a new way of speaking about an earlier brand of assimilation: the melting pot, the idea of American identity as an ever-changing product of amalgamation. In sociological writings, the transformation of ethnicity in the suburbs stands for the making of a new American. Ethnic difference contributes to enhancing national identity; it falls within the purview of dominant ("American") meanings. Ethnicity matters, for instance, insofar as it fulfills "this particularly *American* need to be 'from somewhere'" (Waters 1990, 150, emphasis added); it represents a way "of claiming to be *American*" (Alba 1990, 318), "a means of locating oneself and one's family against . . . the backdrop of what it means to be an *American*" (319, emphases added). Americanness is normalized, construed as a single national position. A synthesis of ethnicity and national identity into a coherent whole neutralizes nonconforming ethnic identities.

The reconfigured significance of ethnicity into national identity renders it irrelevant for sociology. For a discipline where "European ethnicity among whites had been a bedrock of sociological research throughout much of the twentieth century" (McDermott and Samson 2005, 245–246), ethnicity has reached its analytical telos:

> The publication of *Ethnic Options* (Waters 1990) and *Ethnic Identity* (Alba 1990) heralded the end of this era [sociology's interest in European ethnicity], as the assimilation of European immigrants into American society was found to be all but complete. Consequently, there has been a gradual shift in focus from the study of white *ethnic* identity to white *racial* identity, reflecting the minimal impact of European ancestral origins on the daily life of most Americans. (246)

Ethnic identities are squeezed out as an insignificant residue, a statistical aberration with no academic prospect. In this sociological thread, the cultural boundaries of white ethnicity in the twenty-first century have become nearly extinct.[12]

It is illuminating to place this conclusion against the historical battle between "melting pot theorists" and "cultural pluralists" over "new ethnicity." Was the ethnic resurgence in the 1960s and 1970s a "dying gasp" (Steinberg 1981, 51) before the imminent end or an enduring phenomenon? In view of

Monica McDermott and Frank L. Samson's conclusion, the melting pot—a paradigm systematically reproduced throughout twentieth-century socio-logical thought—has asserted its dominance in sociology. The main plot of the melting-pot narrative has been oft-rehearsed: The weakening of the structural conditions (the immigrant institutions of family, community, and church) that reproduce an objective ethnic *group* and the subsequent turn to *subjective identity* (the transition from institution-based "being ethnic" to "feeling ethnic") parallel the transformation of authentic, "real and objective" ethnicity to shallow, superficial identities—all in all an ethnic "crisis of authenticity" (63). Stephen Steinberg's work in the 1980s helps us bridge amalgamation theory early in the twentieth century with symbolic ethnicity early in the twenty-first. Steinberg (1981) saw the ethnic revival as the latest stage of cultural change and adaptation, as ultimately yet another phase of "an ineluctable process of assimilation" (49). Once ethnicity is viewed in "the context of long-range historical trends" it is impossible to miss the continuing patterns of ethnic amalgamation into the dominant. This offered the grounds to dismiss the significance of ethnicity among the fourth generation: "The ethnic revival was a 'dying gasp' on the part of ethnic groups from the great waves of immigration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (51). Furthermore, his teleological view of history allowed for no *historical* significance to second- and third-gener-ation "modes of identity and cohesion" (49). If cultural pluralists saw in these modes the promise for enduring ethnicity, Steinberg saw the inevi-table succumbing to ineluctable historical evolution and ethnic decline.

Seeking to rehabilitate the melting pot, Steinberg (1981) traced an intellectual thread connecting major assimilationist writers in sociology. He reminded pluralists that early theorist Robert Parks spoke about amalgamation as "the final stage of assimilation" but "did not predict an abrupt and complete 'melting' of ethnic groups" (47). Though melting-pot theorists "saw assimilation as inevitable in the long run, they [never] gave it moral sanction" (48). Furthermore, Steinberg cited Milton Gordon, who explains that continued survival of ethnic subsocieties (indicators of structural pluralism) does not equal cultural pluralism because social boundaries in ethnicity could exist "devoid of distinctive ethnic content" (66). In fact, for a subsociety to retain its assimilated members, the main-tenance of boundaries and cultural erosion were dialectically reinforced. Thus, "the melting pot theorists of an earlier generation" were validated: "The ethnic subsociety is not the last bastion against assimilation, but an unwitting agent in the assimilation process" (67). From this perspective, the continuing existence of corporate ethnicities—Greek Orthodox or Jewish Americans—cannot possibly be seen as evidence of cultural vitality.

Herein lies the importance of Herbert Gans's symbolic Judaism in the 1950s and symbolic ethnicity in the 1970s, according to Steinberg. They represent a paradigmatic shift that reveals the extent "of quality and depth of reconstructed ethnicity" (61) among middle-class suburbanites or its lack thereof. Gans (1979) illuminates the plastic manipulation of ethnic symbols as an easily discarded and superfluous ethnicity. New ethnicity is no more than the latest stage in the assimilation trajectory, a sign of "the cultural atrophy that afflicts all ethnic groups in America" (Steinberg 1981, 61). Ethnic symbols are only "superficial reminders of the cultural past," a last gasp before final erosion. "In a few years," Gans wrote in 1974, "the revival of ethnicity will also be forgotten" (cited in Steinberg 1981, 50). Richard Alba's (1985) "twilight of ethnicity" reiterated this very prediction. And, as I have indicated, McDermott and Samson (2005) bring us full circle into twenty-first-century sociological thought of ethnicity as assimilation. The advocates of cultural pluralism, its "unabashed spokesmen" (Steinberg 1981, 49), were, after all, "upper-class intellectual romantic[s]" (Myrdal, cited in Steinberg 1981, 50). The real myth was not the myth of the melting pot but the enduring significance of ethnic revival.

## Symbolic Ethnicity: An Unfulfilled Potential

Steinberg (1981) aptly recognized the divergence in the "different definition and conception of ethnicity" between assimilationists and pluralists (49). The former saw it in relation to an originary authentic culture that was impossible for middle-class ethnics to genuinely revitalize. In his sanguine melancholy over "the passing of the rich heritages and cultural vitality of the nation's ethnic minorities" (74), Steinberg was right in this respect. Revival efforts to reconstitute what was under threat of extinction were "doomed from the outset" (51) because "the real and objective basis for ethnic culture is disappearing" (63). But "the dilemma of revivalism" was gravely misplaced, misidentifying the complete restoration of the authentic original as its principal aim (74). Pluralists hardly advocated or theorized the reinstatement of the immigrant culture.

In a neglected piece, Novak (1973), an intellectual maverick of cultural pluralism, offers a radically different and, in fact, strikingly contemporary approach to ethnic revival. Instead of envisioning an unmediated return to the past, he recasts ethnicity as a dynamic process of making usable pasts. It is instructive to quote his position fully:

> The young are more ripe for the new ethnicity than the old, for the new ethnicity is an attempt to express the experience of *their* generation, not of

an earlier generation. It treats past history only as a means of illuminating
the present, not as an ideal to which they must return. The new ethnicity
is oriented toward the future, not the past. (161)

Today we would call this reinvented ethnicity. Indeed, ethnic identity
as "a (re-)invention and discovery of a vision, both ethical and future-
oriented" constitutes the core of Michael Fischer's (1986, 196) approach
to the formation of identity. Generations of assimilationist sociology have
been reticent to probe this key insight.

If symbolic ethnicity aptly endows ethnics with agency, it gravely neglects
to theorize identity in the context of suburbanization. The complexity of
individual affiliations is lost in large-scale demographic surveys concerned
with macrotrends, patterns, and regularities. Its macrolevel language of
generalizing science cannot name the vagaries of identity formation—the
notion of identity as becoming—including depths, ambiguities, and contra-
dictions at the level of lived experience. The "being" of ethnicity is seen
as weakened in relation to social structure, but still, the making of deeply
felt identities and ethnic habitus is not adequately mapped. Its (symbolic
ethnicity's) emphasis on the privatization of identity and uniformity among
European Americans sidesteps communal institutions and networks of
mutual support still operating among certain ethnoreligious collectives
(Jews and Greek Orthodox, for instance); its analytical priority on choice,
though acknowledging social constraints, does not tackle the power of (the
transformed) social structure, discourse, and psychic processes to partially
determine (and not merely mediate) aspects of ethnic affiliation. Moreover,
symbolic ethnicity fails to probe how developments like globalization and the
state's ever-evolving policies toward diaspora populations may reconfigure
identities beyond national boundaries. Along these lines, the idea is lost that,
under global competition for prestige, ethnic groups will defend cultural
capital and make it their center of identity, in fact an obligation to uphold
(see Anagnostou 2003). Symbolic ethnicity's practice of interview-based
ethnography may have offered valuable insights on situational ethnicity
and life history, but it does not probe the "thick description" of ethnic lives.
By celebrating choice it downplays the depth of identity. Significantly, it
underestimates the power of multiculturalism and new cultural forms asso-
ciated with postethnic revival (heritage travel, ethnic scholarships, dance
collectives, language schools and programs, ethnic media, the Internet, and
popular culture) to incite various forms of meaningful interest in ethnicity,
at least among certain European-American populations.[13]

The sociology of white ethnicity approaches its subject as a *national*
phenomenon. This is why the diaspora and the transnational are virtually

absent from symbolic ethnicity, or for that matter assimilationist social theory. Even though Irish-American, Italian-American, and Greek-American cultural studies have been accounting for the constitutive effect of diaspora connections on subjectivity, and even though the U.S. government is sanctioning diaspora as a political and cultural capital for the country,[14] a major thread in the sociology of white ethnicity insists on its nation-centric focus, what Nina Glick Schiller calls "methodological nationalism" (2010, 109). This sociology brackets processes such as roots travel, heritage study-abroad programs, and summer camps as well as material links with ancestral homes. Why this inattention if these practices represent a vital resource for identification? Diaspora, as a location of affiliation with the "elsewhere" beyond the nation, complicates the nation-centric narrative of a single belonging, a unitary national identity. It carries the potential to challenge the management of acceptable *ethnic* difference within the polity. Hence, the hyphen in assimilationist sociology stands for an attenuated ethnic affiliation, not a transnational connection that may disrupt uniform national belonging. In Greek America, for instance, diaspora attachments currently inspire novels, poetry, popular ethnographies, and literary societies, activities that necessarily require in-depth and long-term commitments.[15] The insistence on the superficiality of ethnic identities—the "minimal impact" identities—mutes artists, researchers, and those sectors of the public whose social imagination is nurtured by diaspora. Relegating meaningful lives to a footnote exercises epistemic violence.

## Beyond White Ethnicity?

The normalization of Europeans as whites erases the fault lines within the category, namely those who neither conform to the aesthetic norms of whiteness nor consent to its ideology. To start troubling the equation between whiteness and Europeanness, let me share an ethnographic anecdote. It is a story I was told in 2012 in Columbus, Ohio, by a Greek American in a (bilingual) conversation about subway encounters among U.S. Greeks: "And here you have two Greeks entering the [San Francisco] BART, huge mustaches, you know (gesture to mimic the well-groomed traditional mustache style, a sign of early immigrant masculinity); and then you see this Greek woman all uneasy, telling her child to move over and take extra seat space so that 'αυτοί οι Μεξικανοί να μην καθήσουν εδώ'" [these Mexicans will not sit next to us]. Regardless of its factual status—whether it refers to an actual encounter or a fictive narrative—the story registers the contradictions and ambivalences associated with a

particular "European ethnicity." Who are the Greeks in this instance, white or nonwhite? Both, depending on the register of the discourse. On the one hand, the male phenotypes animate negative stereotypes of Hispanic Americans, marking the (immigrant?) men outside (safe) whiteness. The internalization of racial (and racist) hierarchies, on the other hand, concretely places the (Greek) woman within the realm of ideological whiteness. The story simultaneously registers anxiety about and ambivalence over the racial location of (some) Greeks and captures the tragic irony of intraethnic racism. It fractures, no doubt, the naturalization of Europeans as whites.[16]

We enter, then, the unstable, variegated terrain of the ways in which race is experienced in everyday life, an ethnographic maze of situated local meanings in flux that break down reductive classifications of whiteness as skin color or European ancestry. The gulf between whiteness as an abstract category and the concrete ways in which racializations are negotiated in everyday life is not readily captured in surveys or interviews. John Hartigan's (1999) breakthrough ethnographic mapping of race as lived experience brings attention to the ambivalences, anxieties, contradictions, resistances, and shifting racial situations in various localities and interracial contact zones. To paraphrase Hartigan (2005), "the easiest stage of studying [*ethnic*] whiteness is behind us" (emphasis added) (223). The fundamental reconfiguring of the ways in which the nation experiences and discusses race—"race is losing its unity and coherence as a social phenomenon" (Hartigan 2010, 186)—requires a new sophistication in the analysis of racialized ethnic meanings.

The shift of focus from the macrolevel of the generalizing language of race to the microlevel of ethnographic particulars disrupts white ethnicity as a monolithic category. This is a most welcome development to illuminate the fault lines within whiteness that remain largely marginalized. How do the "dark Caucasians" or "olive-skinned" Europeans, to recirculate for a moment earlier racializations, experience their identities, and how are they seen by their neighbors, partners, in-laws, and co-workers? How do European Americans confront whiteness? What social dramas of ambivalence, exclusion, negotiation, or rejection does our generalizing language fail to grasp? In what ways do Americans of mixed European, Middle Eastern, Latino, or African backgrounds locate themselves—and in what ways are they located in turn—in U.S. and transnational racializations? The naturalization of European affiliation with whiteness erases the histories and experiences of populations who either do not fit the culturally prescribed phenotypes of whiteness or else consciously reject its ideology.

To make absolutely clear: This is not to deny the reality and broad-scale inclusion of European Americans into whiteness. Certainly it is not to claim that Americans of southeastern European ancestries are now all "not quite white" (*Not Quite White* 2012). One of the most potent contributions of critical studies of whiteness studies lies in establishing the historical participation of the peoples from Europe in the reproduction of U.S. racial hierarchies and their reward with privileges. But once this fact and its implications are acknowledged, one might ask, how about those "white ethnics" who supported interracial coalitions, fought to include the immigrant left in historiography, interrogated racism within their own communities, engaged in activism for fair-housing policies and immigrant rights, or supported affirmative action policies? Have there been no "white ethnics" in grassroots activism advocating for racial justice, crossing the color line in solidarity, writing against whiteness, advocating the causes of the people of color? Why have they not been granted the visibility they deserve in race-centered scholarship?

In a compelling telling of the white ethnicity narrative, Matthew Frye Jacobson (2006) offers a key insight into these questions. The political potency of the ethnic revival lies "not [in] the politics of 'identity' for individuals," he writes, "but [in] the politics of 'heritage' for the nation at large" (6). It was the collective ascertainment of the narrative that so deeply entrenched European ethnics in the national fabric and in turn excised structures of racial oppression, tipping the racial game to white ethnic advantage. In this configuration, alternative ethnic positions of "prominority" activism did not matter. If collective narratives prominently flouted the Eurocentric multicultural model, the political priority was to dismantle its hegemony. Why should a critique of whiteness excavate the archive to reclaim alternatives? Still, this displacement of progressive currents by racial multiculturalism underlines a dramatic irony. While racial studies were celebrating difference, notably deconstructing Eurocentric binaries, their political expediency reduced white ethnicity to a singular, "antiminority" constituency.

The task of rehabilitating ethnicity's heterogeneity matters for reasons beyond restoring historical accuracy. Recovering identities that were ignored, forgotten, repressed, or footnoted because they did not fit hegemonic discourses injects a new politics into ethnic studies. If writing history and culture is where "alternative forms of subjectivity, collectivity, and public life are imagined" (Lowe 1996, 22), academic work also contributes to the process of subject formation. The reclamation of ethnicity's internal heterogeneity—both within European Americanness and within a specific ethnicity—obviously challenges unitary constructions, destabilizing the

duality plaguing ethnics as either cultureless or racial conservatives. And it makes available alternative usable pasts that could center around a politics of ethnicity.

## Reconfiguring "White Ethnicity"

A key question remains: Under what rubric do we frame our work? Is an expanded definition of "white ethnicity" still workable? Will European American studies serve us better? What if we make particular hyphenations (Italian Americans, Russian Americans) the starting point of inquiry? Is there an alternative term? The category "ethnicity," for instance, remains transparent in this analysis. An array of competing concepts, post-ethnicity, biculturalism, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism among others, vie for attention. Similarly, the ascription "American" remains unexamined. Categories frame the kinds of questions we ask and the kinds of knowledge we generate. Making "American white ethnics" the object of analysis will produce different scholarship than, say, "European-American diasporas."

These issues cannot possibly be debated without considering the context in which we practice scholarship. Answers depend on our institutional location and disciplinary specialization, as well as on our own intellectual and political priorities. In the national scene, for example, the options for a comparative analysis of European-American ethnicities within a single academic unit are not optimal, due to the specific management of diversity in the multicultural academy. While Asian American or Latin American studies are, for historical reasons, integral parts of the academic fabric, European Americans, or for that matter "white ethnics," lack a corresponding space. This absence of an institutional center makes it necessary to think of strategies for greater visibility. It requires exploration of the academic landscape and the modalities that it may enable. It calls for reflection in the existing divisions of academic labor and the power relations that intersect it, including the ever-shifting institutional priorities of the university and how they affect "minor" fields of study such as many language and culture programs.

Against histories of academic displacement and devaluation, knowledge about the hyphenated ethnic is currently produced in a web of international circuits. Greek-American, Italian-American, or Irish-American scholarship—each with its own diverse histories, materialities, demographics, and institutional power—are now practiced transnationally. Anthropologists based in Italian universities now conduct ethnographies of Italian Americans in New York City. Greek Americans are studied in European departments of history, English, cultural studies, diaspora, cultural geography, and even

anthropology (Anagnostou 2010). Irish studies call for situating Irish America within postcolonial diaspora theory. Thus, knowledge is produced within a transnational network of institutional economies and ideologies across disciplines and area studies. American ethnic hyphenations are construed through a plurality of epistemological vantage points, a range of ec-centric positions.[17]

The transnationalization of "American ethnic studies" parallels the expansion of geopolitical frames of reference in the making of identities. Even the state, as I mentioned, once the primary pressure point of nation-centric assimilation, now recognizes—arguably appropriates—diasporas as an economic, political, and civic capital for national life. Under these conditions, the conventional hyphenated American category bursts at the seams as it finds itself entangled in all kinds of diaspora, transnational, national, postethnic, ethnic, and cosmopolitan affiliations. This is not to diminish the state's power to produce hegemonic ethnic narratives. The enduring reproduction of national mythologies like the American Dream illustrates the power of national culture to normalize difference.[18] It serves as a reminder, however, of the function of identity topographies beyond the nation-centered paradigm, about the lessening analytical capacity of "ethnicity" to capture multivalent and flexible (yet not superficial) identities increasingly participating in multiple exchanges and circulations.

"White" also represents limitations as *the* center of inquiry, though it certainly enables the visibility of power, when the ethnicity paradigm sees none. It contributes to reified racialized polarities in an era of dramatic reconfigurations of racial boundaries and shifting racializations, including the emergence of multiraciality. More important, for my purposes, "*white* ethnicity" offers no location for progressive identity politics. The term refers to no constituency that critiques material and symbolic domination. Thus, its value as a position of "strategic essentialism" that animates the politics of panethnicities like Asian Americans cannot apply.[19] The naming of categories offers sites for identification. Is it advisable to keep reproducing the reified identity "white ethnicity," particularly when its meaning in popular imagination is deeply entangled with racial nationalisms?

Given the material and symbolic organization of European identities in the United States, hyphenated specificity (Irish Americans, Italian Americans, etc.) offers a pragmatic departure point for a new politics of ethnicity. To be sure, focusing on ethnic identity is fraught with challenges. It may obscure internal class, gender, and cultural heterogeneity. It risks culturalism and missing the relational construction of identity. It certainly makes itself vulnerable to dismissal as yet another scholarly embodiment of whiteness that denies its power. The analytical privileging of specific

hyphenations narrows the potential for identifying multiple affiliations and mixings. How then to maneuver the limits of a distinctive identity without losing sight of ethnicity as a function of power?

A new politics of ethnicity moves beyond the reification of whiteness but is in conversation with critical studies of whiteness. It resolutely interrogates whiteness—understood as ideological reproduction of racial hierarchies—and examines situated racializations across gender and class lines. At the same time, this approach to ethnicity expands the geopolitical boundaries of hyphenated affiliations beyond the nation to investigate heterogeneous transnational cultural fields (Irish America, Greek America), ethnicity not as sameness but as a web of relations in systems of inequality. A new politics of ethnicity capitalizes on notions of "invented ethnicity" (Conzen Neils et al., 1992), recognizing the limits of "the single-group approach" (32). It takes into account, instead, cross-cultural interactions and multiplicity. Rudolph Vecoli (1995) offers a useful—albeit limited in the context of his overall project—point of departure when he proposes this about Italian-American history and immigration: "We, the descendants of *contadini*, should not tolerate those who say, 'Oh, but our immigrant ancestors were different. They suffered hardships, but because they were hardworking, self-reliant, honest, etc., they made it.' . . . [ethnic history teaches that this is] a slander on the new immigrants" (159). Knowledge of ethnic particularity serves as a usable past that extends beyond the interests of a single ethnicity.[20]

In keeping with Karen Brodkin's thoughts (2005) on the transformative potential of critical whiteness studies, the new approach asks: If studying ethnicity entails a transformative project, what kind of project is it? The concept of *rearticulation* offers a key critical tool for further reflection, particularly in relation to the (re)making of ethnic subjectivities. Rearticulation, Omi and Winant (1986) write, "produces new subjectivity by making use of information and knowledge already present in the subject's mind. They take elements and themes of her/his culture and traditions and infuse them with new meaning" (93). This strategy circulates within ethnicity discourse. Greek-American popular ethnographers, for instance, have deployed folk immigrant culture and religion ("the knowledge present in the subject's mind") to advocate for the interests of disenfranchised Others (Anagnostou 2009a). Rearticulating ethnicity offers the prospect of sustaining cross-ethnic conversations. In the academy, it encourages cross-disciplinary and cross-ethnic-studies dialog; in society it encourages alliances based on shared understandings of the histories of maligned collectives. This is crucial if a configuration is indeed under way toward the "Latin Americanization of whiteness"—that is, a tri-racial system where

the "light-skinned" Asian Americans and Latinos as "honorary whites" will work against the interests of the "black collective" (Bonilla-Silva 2003, 278). The Irish Americans, the Greek Americans, the Italian Americans, the Polish Americans, and the Russian Americans in the United States "must either chose solidarity with people of colour or once more hide under the veil of . . . whiteness" (Gibbons, cited in Rains 2007, 220).

## Conclusion

The reclaiming of ethnicity raises issues of cross-cultural translation, contact zones, identity and difference, the poetics and politics of textured life-worlds, processes of mixings, possibilities, contradictions, dialogs, crossings, flows, and transformations. The internationalization of ethnic studies produces ec-centric orientations. Some scholars may privilege diaspora cultural connections; others may look into cultural expressivity at a local level; still others may adopt a transnational perspective connecting issues of culture and race. Others would continue centering on whiteness or working on macrotrends associated with demographics and large-scale patterns. This plurality decenters white ethnicity as a bounded category. It is a development that is positioned to address the continuous reconfiguration of ethnicities and the importance of experience and discourse in shaping identities.

This decentering and the ensuing fragmentation pose the challenge for the practitioners to speak to each other across paradigms and disciplines, to establish a dialog across area, ethnic, diaspora, and global studies. How do we sustain a vibrant interpretive community? We may wish to reflect on the gains that could accrue once we affirm commonalities and confirm differences by entering into an agonistic exchange. This will foster cross-fertilization against disciplinary insularity. It will promote a network of scholarly entanglements instead of isolated nodes of inquiry. It will connect us with wider debates in the academy. It will produce ec-centric readings bringing in productive tension identity, cultural expressivity, and racial politics. All in all, it stands to reclaim complexity for ethnicity.

Ultimately, the practice of ethnic/diaspora scholarship may require the knowledge and skills of a cultural translator. It requires that we speak more than one language and that we command more than one discipline. We must, in a fundamental sense, operate with hyphenated scholarly identities if we wish to engage our interpretive commonalities and differences, if we wish to reach out to diverse audiences, including students and the wider public. A demanding task, surely, this offers a tantalizing route to reimagine ethnicity.

### Editor's Note

The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute invited Yiorgos Anagnostou to deliver a keynote at its 2012 conference "Reimagining White Ethnicity: Expressivity, Identity, Race." Subsequently, he was invited to submit to the *Italian American Review* a revised version of that talk.

### Notes

1. See, for example, the conference "Reimagining White Ethnicity: Expressivity, Identity, Race," organized by the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, April 27–28, 2012, New York City.
2. A number of projects rehabilitate white ethnicity. Jeffrey Louis Decker (2006) considers the work of Matthew Frye Jacobson (2006) and Thomas Ferraro (2005) as revisionist scholarship that moves white ethnicity studies beyond white privilege and its denial. Ferraro's is seen as a "study [that] *purges* any lingering essentialism from the concept of white ethnicity as it was conceived during the 1970s" (1240) and Jacobson's as a project that "go[es] beyond well-worn leftist critiques of white ethnicity by locating progressive currents in its revival" (1241).
3. Immigrants from southeastern Europe (and their offspring) were listed in the 1960 census, which Weed draws on for his analysis, under the category "foreign white stock" (4). The official inclusion of all Europeans into whiteness creates an objective category that obscures the diverse and contradictory ways in which racialized people experience the instabilities and contradictions of racial ascriptions. Though the Census included Mexicans under "foreign white stock," Weed refrains from discussing this demographic, though hinting at the prospect of non-European whiteness: "Are racial minorities part of the 'white ethnic' category?" he asks (3). Conflating Europeanness with whiteness excludes non-European experiences of whiteness, as Alastair Bonnett points out (1998). The following definition of white ethnicity by a Chinese American in Chicago underlines this point: " 'What's a white ethnic? Me!' says Daisy Cannatello, who is pure Chinese-American. . . . 'I'm white ethnic. Why? My skin is light. I was born here'" (Keegan 1989).
4. Social science writing still construes "white ethnicity" in this contradictory manner. It is discussed as an ideological construct (di Leonardo 2004) but also, until recently, as a universal referent to "European ethnicity among whites" (McDermott and Samson 2005, 245; see Bonnett 1998) and middle-class "whites of European extraction and Roman Catholics" (Waters 1990, 12). David Roediger (2002) problematizes the equation between Europeanness and whiteness when he defines "white ethnicity" as both self-ascription and social classification, as "the consciousness of a distinct identity among usually second- or third-generation immigrants who both see themselves and are seen as racially white and as belonging to definable ethnic groups" (328). This formulation allows space for whiteness outside Europeanness. Fault lines emerge, however, in the potential dissonance between self-ascription and an individual's "ethnoracial assignment" (Brodkin 1998, 1) by the collective. An unstable category of fluid boundaries, "white ethnicity" does not easily yield to any single definition. Open to appropriations and contestations, it invites analysis of contextual boundary-making rather than fixed meaning. For example, how does scholarship account for those who may not see themselves as white but are seen as white (or the reverse)? A new recognition of whiteness as situated identity now gains currency, away from reified whiteness (Hartigan 1999; Perry 2001). In sociology, whiteness is most recently seen "not as an identity of uniform privilege but as a complex social identity whose meaning is imparted by the particular context in which white actors are located" (McDermott and Samson 2005, 249).

5. "Panethnic groups in the United States," Espiritu (1992) notes, "are products of political and social processes [rather] than of cultural bonds" (13), pointing to the importance of external structural conditions in the creation of new ethnic boundaries (3).

6. This is a noninstitutional identity, not to be confused with European Americans United, a racially nationalist group (http://www.europeanamericansunited.org/home/). Still, the construction of nonnationalist European-American identities does take place—see, for instance, Ray Massa's band EuroRhythms—deserving analytical attention.

7. Luconi (2001) explains the development of a white racial consciousness among Italian Americans in post–World War II Philadelphia as a backlash against African-American advancements. Italian Americans mobilized in grassroots "multiethnic white coalition[s]" (127) and voted for explicitly white platforms against African-American interests, which they saw as gains at the expense of their own ethnicity. This particular politics of racialization marks the transition "from Italian Americans to White Ethnics" (119). In his work on white ethnicity in New York City, Joshua Zeitz (2007) details the political realignments in the 1970s "that drew white voters from across ethnic boundaries into common alliances" (227). He cautions, however, that the shift of Jews and Catholics against liberalism and interracial coalitions was not due solely to racial polarization at the time. "The potential for backlash existed long before race politics injected itself into the center of the fray" (228). Both studies refreshingly introduce regional specificity in the scholarship of ethnicity.

8. Lack of consensus over the definition of the term undermined any single definition in political and popular discourse (see Keegan 1989; Lipinski 1989). Di Leonardo (1994) connects the receding of white ethnicity in the 1980s "to Reagan-era script revisions in the national ethnic/racial morality play" (181). Her gender-inflected analysis shows how images of elegant domesticity of bourgeois WASPness displaced the white ethnic as the exemplar of national virtues. She also identifies how popular culture turned white ethnics from paragons of authentically close-knit families and communities "into [objects of] permanent condescension and even minstrelsy" (181–182).

9. For Glazer (1975), group-based policies are divisive, "spreading resentment among the disfavored groups against the favored groups" (220). This was his key explanation of white ethnic grievances against black people. Ethnic political discontent was due neither to economic deprivation nor cultural loss, nor racism but a "strong sense of unfairness" generated over state-sponsored racial policies (195).

10. This does not mean that American ethnicities refrain from diaspora and ethnic politics. They mobilize on behalf of their own interests and largely within an American political framework (see Moskos 1990).

11. The literature on whiteness is vast. For a discussion of its emergence and ideology, see Doane (2003). On the difference between whiteness studies and critical studies of whiteness, see Roediger (2005b).

12. A fuller genealogy of white ethnicity will address cultural anthropology's relative inattention to white ethnicity, a neglect associated with constructions of European ethnicities as culturally attenuated. Michael Novak (1973) registers an early complaint: "Our anthropologists know more about some tribes in New Guinea than about the Poles in Warren or Lackawanna" (167). A fuller analysis will also probe the gendered dimension of white ethnicity and postcolonial and cultural studies' neglect of "white diasporas" (Rains 2007, 190).

13. For a pioneer (and vocal) critic of symbolic ethnicity as assimilation, see Vecoli (1995). He saw ethnicity as a source of vitality, creativity, self-understanding, and progressive politics. Ethnicity entailed "bone-deep identities rooted in history, culture, and memories" (Vecoli 1996, 522–523), a position driven by his own personal feeling and commitment to preserving that ethnicity. Scholars intimate with ethnic communities experienced the complexity of ethnic identities. For a critical exchange on symbolic ethnicity, see Anagnostou (2009b, 2009c), Waters (2009), and Gans (2009).

14. See the nonprofit, nonpartisan International Diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA), an "organization managed via a public-private partnership between the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Migration Policy Institute (MPI)" (http://diasporaalliance.org/about-us/). Note also the 2013 National Endowment for the Humanities–funded seminar that explores "the 'Russophone Experience' in America," in a diaspora and transnational framework (http://nehsummerinst.columbia.edu/). On diaspora connections in Irish America, see Rains (2007).

15. Novelist Natalie Bakopoulos, for instance, reclaims cultural identity through writing from a diaspora position (Williams 2012). For the (dis)connection between assimilationist sociology and diaspora studies, see also Rains (2007).

16. Ambivalent racial classification has been used to both distance from and foster solidarity with "nonwhites." This is how Dan Georgakas (2006) recalls his community's turmoil in the 1950s when Tom, a classmate, was about to marry Carol, a Mexican American: "Some of our Greek friends were upset that Carol, who looked Greek when seen in a crowd of Greeks, was actually Mexican Catholic. Their criticism . . . [was] stir[red] anew with the appearance of her dark-skinned grandparents. My mother was uncharacteristically aggressive in defending Tom's choice, asserting that Carol's grandparents were no darker than many Greeks" (193).

17. For ec-centric knowledge in Asian America, see Chuh and Shimakawa (2001).

18. I share the reservation about "self-congratulatory post-modern 'transnational identity'" (di Leonardo 1994, 166). Scholars writing within Asian American, African American, and American studies caution against displacing national discourses in favor of diaspora or global categories. For Dorothy Wang, "the move toward diaspora studies could be viewed as the latest episode in a long history of attempts to de-politicize race" in the United States (Wang 2002, 271–272). For Winfried Fluck, "the idea of dissolving 'America' as an object of study in a diffuse globalism and replacing it with a new object defined hemispherically or globally . . . is suggested at a time in which understanding the United States has become perhaps more important than ever" (Fluck 2007, 30–31). Diaspora affiliations and transnational exchanges certainly entangle themselves with the national.

19. Many thanks to Kristin Anne Rodier for a tip on this issue in a conversation during the Calandra conference.

20. Rudolph Vecoli (1995) advocated hyphenated identities as an analytical center. "Neither white, nor black, nor brown, nor red, nor yellow," he wrote, "we are distinguished by our unique experience in these United States. Let us claim our rightful inheritance as Italian Americans" (159–160). His emphasis on ethnic victimization, reticence to probe ethnicity's racial advantages, and confrontational posturing vis-à-vis multiculturalism make him vulnerable to accusations of reviving the politics of "cultural pluralists"; or even of a neonationalist who disavows white ethnic privilege. Still, scholarship on hyphenated identities conceptualizes difference in terms of interethnic and interracial relations, transnationalism, and beyond the duality of Self and Other (see Pramaggiore 2007; Negra 2006; Sciorra 2011).

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## Notes and Documents

## Nunzio Pernicone (1940–2013): A Remembrance

MARY ANNE TRASCIATTI

I met Nunzio Pernicone in the spring of 2001, when I was a junior faculty member at Hofstra University organizing a conference to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti. It was Fred Gardaphé who encouraged me to contact Nunzio. He and I were talking on the phone, discussing the conference; I had just invited Fred to participate and asked for suggestions for other scholars. Fred responded without hesitating, "You should really get in touch with Nunzio Pernicone. He's in the deep end of the literature on Italian anarchism." He then added, "He can be pretty tough, but he knows more about this stuff than anybody else."

When Fred and I got off the phone, I searched the Internet for Nunzio's office number, took a few deep breaths, and gave him a call. The machine at the other end prompted me to leave a message, and I willed my voice not to quiver. Nunzio called back a few hours later, and the five- or ten-minute polite conversation I imagined we would have turned out to be an animated hour-and-a-half discussion of anarchist propaganda, Italian radical newspapers, the love affair between Carlo Tresca and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee, and a host of other things related to radical history. I was hard pressed to decide if his intelligence or his wit was the sharper. He seemed to know everything about Italian anarchism (Fred Gardaphé was right!), he was a formidable arguer, with strong opinions about everything and everyone, and he could hurl an epithet like no one I had ever known before. I liked him immediately. Before we hung up, Nunzio said, "I hope I haven't bored you to death. I can talk forever about this stuff, but most people don't give a damn." I assured him I was anything but bored and asked if he would be willing to read an essay I was working on. He agreed without hesitation. Thus began a professional and personal friendship that lasted twelve years, until his death from pancreatic cancer on May 30, 2013.

Nunzio Pernicone was an only child of Sicilian immigrant parents, born and raised in Manhattan's Greenwich Village. His parents chose a name for him that trumpeted his Italian-ness to the world. I once asked him if he had a middle name. "No!" he cried. "And thank goodness. I can just imagine

what it would have been: Fortunato or Sigismondo or something awful like that. Nunzio is enough." Nunzio's parents exemplified traditional southern Italian notions of masculinity and femininity. His father, Salvatore Pernicone, an anarchist tailor from whom Nunzio inherited his classic sartorial style (he was always impeccably dressed), ruled the household with an iron fist; his mother, Rose Consolazione Pernicone, regularly deferred to her husband's authority. Notwithstanding his name, Nunzio was a typical working-class, New York kid of his generation: He played stickball in Washington Square Park and attended public schools. His intelligence and high level of achievement violated expectations for Italian-American students and earned him admission to Peter Stuyvesant High School. After high school he enrolled in the "Harvard of the Proletariat," City College. Most of the other high achievers he knew at Stuyvesant and City College were Jewish, he recollected, and although he made friends and had girl-friends, as an Italian American he always felt something of an outsider.



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Nunzio's work on Italian anarchism, and especially on Carlo Tresca, was kindled at an early age by stories his father told him "about the days when he directed an amateur theatrical group (what Italians call a *filodrammatica*) that performed plays to help raise funds for Tresca's *Il Martello* and other Italian radical newspapers" (Pernicone 2005, vii). He penned his first academic paper on Tresca for a graduate seminar and wrote his Ph.D. thesis on Italian anarchism at the University of Rochester, where he studied under the direction of noted European historian A. William Salamone. Nunzio spoke with respect and admiration for Professor Salamone, and upon re-reading the proceedings of the 1979 Sacco-Vanzetti conference at the Boston Public Library, where both Salamone and Pernicone gave talks, I saw, not surprisingly, that the professor had equally high regard for his student. "As to Nunzio Pernicone," he said when he introduced him to the assembled audience, "I know him too well to have any doubts as to how finely, with what historical light and . . . thunder, he will close the 'formal' part of this symposium" (Salamone 1982, 93).

"Light and thunder" is an apt expression for Nunzio's personality and his work. His first book, *Italian Anarchism, 1864–1892*, published in 1993 by Princeton University Press and re-issued in 2009 by AK Press, elucidates a complex subject in impressive but not overwhelming detail and is widely regarded as an essential reference text in English. His introduction to the 2003 *Autobiography of Carlo Tresca*, which he edited and the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute published, offered a vivid portrait of a fascinating and once famous but lamentably now forgotten rebel and foreshadowed the prodigious biography of Tresca that he would publish in 2005, titled *Carlo Tresca: Portrait of a Rebel* and issued by Palgrave. In addition to these volumes, Nunzio authored numerous articles on a variety of subjects, including antifascism, the internecine warfare among Italian anarchists (as illustrated by the rivalry between Tresca and Luigi Galleani), and the Sacco-Vanzetti case. When he died, he was completing a book on Italian anarchist terrorism, which will be published posthumously, thanks to the generosity and hard work of Fraser Ottanelli.

In addition to his published works, Nunzio's vast knowledge, rapier wit, and the sheer force of his personality ensured frequent requests to lecture in academic and community venues. Unlike most academics, he was a great public speaker: dynamic, engaging, overflowing with fascinating anecdotes—many of them derived from his personal encounters with anarchists—respectful of time constraints, in short, a delight to hear. He also shone in media productions. He was a featured speaker for the radio program *Sacco and Vanzetti* (produced by Curtis Fox, 1998), and he appears on camera in the documentaries *Pane amaro* (directed by Gianfranco

Norelli and Suma Kurien, 2009) and *Sacco and Vanzetti* (directed by Peter Miller, 2007) . For me, his personality and sardonic sense of humor shine most evidently in the latter. Although I've seen the film countless times, I still chuckle when Nunzio remarks that Vanzetti called Judge Webster Thayer (who presided over the case) "a cobra in a black frock," then pauses, smiles, and continues "that just about sums it up."

Along with a forceful exterior, Nunzio had a kind heart and a generous spirit. He was never too busy to read the work of aspiring scholars, and he was a stalwart supporter of women academics. In 1999, he sponsored a conference on Italian-American women writers at Drexel University that resulted in a volume, *Breaking Open* (Purdue University Press, 2003), which the editors dedicated to him. Shortly after his death, Jennifer Guglielmo, with whom he had disagreed publicly about the scope of Italian women's anarchist politics, remarked that he read her book manuscript with great care, perhaps "more closely than anyone else."

Nunzio was married for thirty years to a vibrant, fun-loving woman, Christine Zervos. He loved animals, especially cats, and opera. When I complimented him for his distinctive voice, he responded wistfully that his gravelly timbre had shattered any illusions he harbored as a young man of becoming an opera singer. Something that weighed on him while he was battling cancer was what would happen to his collection of antique opera records after he was gone.

Nunzio Pernicone was a first-rate scholar who leaves behind an impressive and important legacy. He was also a fine person, a valued mentor, and a dear friend. I miss him terribly. Once when we were discussing qualities that made for good scholarship, he observed that the best work was that which conveyed the spirit of radicalism. My aim for this remembrance has been, in some small way, to convey his spirit. I hope I have succeeded. And although he professed no belief in an afterlife, I hope that somehow, somewhere, Nunzio approves.

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# Book Reviews

*Families, Lovers, and Their Letters: Italian Postwar Migration to Canada.*
By Sonia Cancian.
Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2010.
192 pages.

During the 1940s, my grandmother wrote letters for her Italian compatriots who were illiterate and sought her help corresponding with the relatives and friends they had left behind in Italy. Fortunately, the Italians who emigrated after World War II were better educated and could write their own letters to loved ones on both sides of the Atlantic. In *Families, Lovers, and Their Letters*, Sonia Cancian brings to life the words and thoughts of people torn apart by migration in the years following World War II.

Using the correspondence of fourteen women and men, Cancian examines letters as material objects revealing how migrants and those who remained in Italy responded to the separation wrought by emigration. Letters exchanged between lovers, wives and husbands, and children and parents reveal the deep need to stay emotionally connected. The author's skillful analysis of the letters, along with oral interviews she conducted in both Canada and Italy, examine the historiographical context of the role of letter writing. Cancian demonstrates an impressive understanding of the literature and theoretical perspectives on letter writing as she discusses the work of scholars such as David Gerber, who looks at the importance of letters in "reformulating and sustaining personal identities and relationships that had been disrupted as a result of migration" (7).

These letters reveal important insights into individual and family circumstances that compelled Italians either to migrate or to stay behind. Cancian discusses three themes revealed in the letters: kinship networks, gender roles, and emotions. The strong kinship networks revealed in letters served to encourage the migrants' performance of duties and responsibilities to those remaining in Italy. In one example, Cancian cites migrants who were solicited to help fund local religious festivities back home in exchange for public recognition of the family's contribution. This recognition showed local townsfolk that migrants who had left the town had become economically successful elsewhere and yet retained their connection to it. It was important to both the townsfolk and the migrants to ensure that they remained part of the town's social memory. In one instance, Carmela Losanto wrote to her brother in Montreal, "My dear brother . . . Don Mario Filippo is the organizer of the *Festa di San Rocco* and he told me, 'write to your *fratello* [brother] and to your *marito* [husband], have them send ten dollars each directly in my name. I will place the banknote on the Saint when the procession starts'" (50).

The letters reveal how kinship networks provided vital forms of transnational support to loved ones and migrants. Not only money went back and forth between separated parties; people also sent clothing, medications, family recipes, photographs, and official documents. One of the most striking features of kinship support discussed in the letters is the extensive care provided by family members in Italy

for those who felt abandoned as a result of their relatives' migration. As Maddalena Franchi's brother assured her, "Don't worry about mamma, because either I or Assunta, now more than ever, we are close to her, and we'll do our best to help her enjoy these days as serenely as possible" (54). It was also important that migrants fulfill their filial duties to family members; Daniela Perini's letters to her migrant daughter in Canada exhorted her to write her uncles and aunts back in Italy.

These collected letters also reveal highly gendered relationships. Cancian argues that "gender norms and gender roles were not only reified, but also reinforced by the letter writers, and subsequently reinscribed in a rigid division of transnational labor that was upheld by both women and men in the kinship networks and the personal worlds of the writers" (72). She maintains that the large percentage of Italian women gainfully employed in Canada throughout the 1950s and 1960s continued to identify themselves (and be identified by others) according to their reproductive roles. Nonetheless, Italian migrant women took opportunities for leisure and freedom (*libertà*), such as going to the movies and dance halls, attending language classes, going fishing, and sightseeing. For Giordano Rossini, who remained in Italy while his lover, Ester diLeonardi, lived and worked in Canada, Ester working outside the home and the new *libertà* she was experiencing were more than a little disconcerting. The fact that she worked in an environment that was not socially controlled by kin caused Giordano to worry about the possibility of other men courting her. Cancian asserts that the patriarchal structure of the family remained intact throughout the migration process, but I question this assumption. What changes would female migrants experience as working women in Canada? How would this new independence, even if only temporary, change the intimate relations between man and woman, husband and wife? Although men and women expressed in their letters a desire to return to the "traditional" life they enjoyed before the disruption of migration, the letters alone cannot tell us how successful they were in doing so.

The last theme that Cancian takes up is one of the most poignant examples that access to letters provides about the migration experience—the emotional narrative between migrants and their loved ones. The most intense letters were love letters between married couples, betrothed couples, or courting couples. Dante del Moro's departure from Arcugnano (Vicenza province) to Powell River, Canada, was part of a household strategy that required a temporary separation until Dante could send money for his wife and children to join him. In nearly every letter to his wife, Sara, Dante included special words of affection, reassuring his family of his constant love for them. Dante and Sara's intense correspondence of love and longing captures the emotional highs and lows of migration as experienced by a married couple: "The feeling of missing all of you becomes stronger and stronger, as does my wish to have you here with me. I want to tell you that I love you very much and that my heart continues to be with you and our dear children" (120). The letters of the courting couple Giordano and Ester convey the strongest intensity of affective expressions, likely, as Cancian explains, because the probability of a breakdown in their relationship was imminent. "Write to me, tell me everything," writes Giordano to Ester in Canada, "I feel so lonely. I miss you terribly. I cannot live without you, don't leave me!!!" (121).

This provocative collection of letters tells the story of migration from the people who experienced it firsthand. Cancian's work in this book is an example of transnational history at its best, revealing the interconnected worlds of migrants in their new locations and in the world they left behind through the powerful medium of the letter.

—DIANE C. VECCHIO
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*Hidden: Reflections on Gay Life, AIDS, and Spiritual Desire.*
By Richard Giannone.
New York: Fordham University Press, 2012.
198 pages.

Certain novels and memoirs have a special way of opening up windows onto specific places, moments in time, and the lives and cultures of particular groups of people in ways that historical and social scientific readings cannot do. For example, novels about Newark, New Jersey, and its surrounding areas, such as Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959), and *American Pastoral* (1997), capture what anthropologist Clifford Geertz referred to as "local knowledge" with an emotional impact to which the so-called hard facts of history or the distance of the anthropologist's or sociologist's methodology of "participant-observation" cannot compare. Further, to read about places such as Newark and its suburbs or about Manhattan through the eyes of those for whom it was their hometown but who were also the "other"—either because of their sexual orientation, gender, race, or ethnicity—really provides one with a sense of what life in such a place was like to those who were different and marginalized and in some cases disenfranchised. Nevertheless, what incredibly powerful novels such as Philip Roth's do not provide is a sense of what it is like to grow up in Newark and its environs as a young Italian-American, Catholic, gay man who is struggling mightily to make sense out of his religious faith and his ethnic identity in relation to his gay sexuality, as Richard Giannone does in his moving memoir *Hidden: Reflections on Gay Life, AIDS, and Spiritual Desire.*

Giannone grew up in Newark, in the West Ward of the City—not the Central or North Wards, where the majority of Italian immigrants, most from the *Mezzogiorno*, settled, often coming by way of Brooklyn before finally ending up in Newark. *Hidden* is a delicious book, and Giannone does an excellent job of opening a window onto the local knowledge of Italian-American life in Newark's West Ward. At the risk of invoking stereotypes of Italians and food to talk about this book: In the same way that I find it hard to turn away from a good meal, it was equally hard to put down Giannone's moving book about his life as an Italian-American, Catholic, gay man and university professor teaching at a Catholic university. Particularly fascinating and poignant is the way Giannone manages to draw on his religious faith while at the same time acknowledging that his is not the Catholicism of the institutional church and the all-male hierarchy whose vision of human sexuality and relationships is retrograde

and out of step with modern science, to say the least. As Giannone puts it, "The church held an entrenched disregard for the truths of human experience that attests to fluidity in sexual attraction and it turned a blind eye to modern science" (13). A few lines later Giannone indicts not only the Catholic Church but Christianity in general for its failure to recognize the findings of science in relation to human sexuality: "For Christianity to discredit these findings was the Galileo affair again, now battling neuroscience. The distortion of these credible judgments and real-life experience to fit official under-standing bespeaks willful dishonesty" (13).

Despite his criticism of the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and of Christianity, Giannone has not abandoned his faith. The pages of this memoir are indeed filled with one gay man's struggle to separate the wheat from the chaff of Catholicism and its rich spirituality. In *Hidden* Giannone illustrates by his own example what many Catholics, both gay and straight alike, often must do in relation to official church teachings that are seemingly at odds with modern science and contemporary life when they wish to preserve whatever remains of their religious heritage. In the pages of this emotionally and sometimes painful-to-read memoir, Giannone traces the steps by which he created for himself a spiritual life that is inspired by the teachings of Jesus as he understands them and based on his own hard and thorough study, research, prayer, and meditation, rather than solely on what the Catholic hierarchy says Jesus taught. For Giannone, these are two different things, and *Hidden* is clearly a record of his alignment with Jesus rather than with the church. But this is only one aspect of this many-faceted memoir.

While Giannone's relationship with Roman Catholicism is a central theme of his book, the other relationships that are elevated in the 198 pages of *Hidden* are those that any Italian or Italian American, and certainly any Italian or Italian-American gay man, would recognize as central. I mean here the relationship with one's family and specif-ically, as in Giannone's case, his relationship with his mother, Nellie, and his sister Marie, both of whom he will accompany on their journeys through dementia and even-tually death. The other significant relationship that is central to *Hidden* is that between Giannone and his partner Frank (also Italian American), who was once a Catholic priest and who grew up in the predominantly Italian Silver Lake section of Belleville, New Jersey, just a few short blocks from nearby North Newark, where there are still a number of Italian-American families who moved there in the late 1960s and early 1970s from the former Little Italy of Newark located in the Central Ward of the city.

In addition to exploring the intricacies of Giannone's relationships with his mother, sister, and partner, as well as the range of emotions that accompanies such significant connections to those persons who are central to one's life, *Hidden* is also a chronicle of New York City in the early days of the appearance of a strange new disease that seemed at the time to be targeting only gay men and that would eventu-ally be identified as the HIV virus and the various opportunistic infections of which AIDS is comprised. Giannone arrestingly captures the fear and panic that went along with this particularly dark and painful period that ravaged the gay community that at the time was thriving in Manhattan's Greenwich Village. Still, Giannone brings a deep sense of spirituality and compassion to this particular dimension of *Hidden*. What the reader will appreciate here, especially if he or she is from an Italian-American, Catholic family, is the unique perspective that Giannone brings to the issues of religion, ethnicity, sexuality, life, death, prayer, and spirituality when looked at through the lens

of Italian-American ethnic identity, Roman Catholic religious identity (as if these two features of identity could be so easily separated), and gay identity as they interpenetrate each other with such fluidity.

Richard Giannone is a good writer, although in the last few chapters the writing begins to lose some of its cohesion. Be that as it may, each page is filled with warmth—but *Hidden: Reflections Gay Life, AIDS, and Spiritual Desire* is definitely not a feel-good, warm and fuzzy memoir. Rather the reader should expect to encounter struggles, regret, grief, remorse, repentance, resistance, and the desire for acceptance and recognition of which Giannone's emotionally charged memoir is a good example. This is definitely a memoir that anyone interested in Italian-American life and culture, love, spirituality, and sexual desire should read.

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*Vite Italiane: Italian Lives in Western Australia.*
By Susanna Iuliano.
Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2010.
220 pages.

Susanna Iuliano's *Vite Italiane* provides a visually and textually rich and nuanced history of Italians in Western Australia, focusing on first-generation migrants. The author, herself second-generation Italian Australian, writes from the thick of things, both in a biographical sense and in an archival one. As Loretta Baldassar writes in the foreword to the book, Iuliano, "like many second-generation migrants, was motivated in her work by a deep sense of gratitude and pride shaped by an intimate knowledge of the sacrifices of her parents' generation, much of which was ultimately intended 'for the benefit of the children'" (v). This sense of gratitude sets the book's tone as a giving back to the Western Australian–Italian community, which, while including about 100,000 people, is also an aging population.

Iuliano's position of ethical and intellectual generosity is the starting point for understanding the desire to keep alive and celebrate the stories of the 40,000 Italians who migrated to Western Australia, the majority in the post–World War II years. *Vite Italiane* distinguishes itself from the plethora of books celebrating the contribution of (insert migrant group of choice) that have become the standard introduction to similar projects involving chronicles of non–Anglo-Australian cultures. On the contrary, *Vite Italiane* addresses the issue of migrant legacy elegantly and from a double perspective, illustrating how Italians certainly helped shape Western Australia, while Western Australian culture and environment also shaped its Italian community.

Every section of the book is illuminated by a deep understanding of the complexity of the issues at hand—which in itself makes the book essential reading for anyone interested in migration studies in Australia—and the richness, diversity, and resonance of the author's sources are impressive. This book is in fact part of a multimodal project,

composed of an Australian Research Council-funded collaboration between the University of Western Australia and private, community, and government organizations. The project, also called *Vite Italiane*, comprises a website (http://www.italianlives. arts.uwa.edu.au/vite_italiane_book), an archive of oral histories collected between 2004 and 2008, an education kit for schools, and an exhibition held at the State Library of Western Australia in 2011. The website provides links to resources, including archival and statistical information, and a section with text, audio, and video stories of individual people, part of the 200 oral histories Iuliano collected for the project.

The book is divided into chapters built around a particular narrative at the intersection of the experience of Italian migrants in Western Australia and local Australian mythologies. Each chapter narrates the history of Italian migration from a particular angle: spatial practices, including architecture, urban development, and gardening; politics and the impact of the governments' policies on people's lives; labor, work, and economy; family lives, gender roles, and weddings; social and community institutions including welfare, religion, social and regional clubs, and sport (that is, soccer); and cultural practices from language schools to food and performing arts.

Chapters are organized around figurations, some imported from Australian lore (the bush, the lost sheep, the rags-to-riches story), showing a change in migrants' sensibilities and also Australia becoming a multicultural place. The first chapter, for instance, is dedicated to bush pioneers, and it illustrates the early Italian migration to Western Australia and the settlement in many "Little Italies." The title "Bush Pioneers" refers ironically to the reality of the government resettling migrants in remote areas (as a participant explains: "Prima m'hanno mandato nel bosco" [First they sent me into the forest]) and images from the Australian myth of the frontier as taming of the wilderness (11). This theme, Iuliano notes, is carried through as the taming of nature in the suburban garden, which later produces fine local examples of ethno-aesthetics. The garden, together with the "Fediterrenean" house (the improvement of the façade of a typical early-twentieth-century Australian house built in Federation style with the addition of concrete columns, driveways, and statuary lions), become a clear indicator of status and regional identity while at the same time producing vegetables that hitherto could not be found in Australia.

Tensions between commonly held perceptions and more complex realities are explored throughout the book. The chapter dedicated to family, for instance, demonstrates clearly how the remoteness of Western Australia, coupled with a predominantly male population of newcomers migrating before their families or as singles, influenced marriage patterns and rates of marriage by proxy. Similarly, the chapter explores how attitudes toward women's roles changed with time under the influence of Australian culture.

*Vite Italiane* brings together familiar themes in the histories of migration, such as labor and government policies, with more ethnographic sensibilities, for instance, in the chapters about family and gender and in the description of cultural practices. The inclusion of everyday life also signals a shift away from the rather arid master narratives of migration as hardship followed by success—and, like Loretta Baldassar and Donna Gabaccia's *Intimacy and Italian Migration*, this book redresses the gendered history of Italian migration.

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*Undermining Race: Ethnic Identities in Arizona Copper Camps, 1880–1920.*
By Phylis Cancilla Martinelli.
Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009.
240 pages.

In *Undermining Race: Ethnic Identities in Arizona Copper Camps, 1880–1920*, Phylis Cancilla Martinelli seeks to expand on the role of Italian immigrants in the West by offering a corrective to studies that see the region solely through the lens of "heroic myths of white adventurers, explorers, settlers, and of course the pan-global figure of the cowboy." Examining three mining communities in Arizona from 1880 through 1920, the author highlights the roles of northern, southern, and eastern Europeans (primarily Italians and Spaniards) and Mexicans in order to construct a "re-envisioned West." According to the author, part of this re-envisioned West, and a central aim of the book, means complicating the racial landscape of these frontier towns beyond a simple racial binary of white and other (108). Working within scholarship discussing southern and eastern European immigration and race and whiteness, *Undermining Race* seeks to do the same for Italian immigrants in the West.

The book's first three chapters provide background information detailing Arizona's development into a state of mining towns; Italian and Spanish emigration; and discrimination directed toward Italian and other minorities in the West, particularly in Arizona. Chapters 4 through 6 concentrate on the three mining towns in Arizona central to Martinelli's study: Globe, Bisbee, and Clifton-Morenci. The author contends that laborers in western mining camps remained multiethnic and multiracial. If workers happened to work side by side, they received differentiated wages based upon where they were placed within racialized categories. According to Martinelli, "variations in racial microsystems meant that the parameters of acceptance changed from one place to another. Such differences were not random but were related to identifiable social factors in each of the isolated mining districts in Arizona's eastern mountain zone." Throughout the book Martinelli positions Italians (both northern and southern) as an "in-between" racial group (167).

In Globe, Italians found themselves in a stronger situation than in Bisbee or Clifton-Morenci. For example, the presence of a strong pro-immigrant union, such as the Western Federation of Miners, offered lower-skilled Italian immigrants a chance for unionization and social mobility. According to Martinelli, "had Globe developed as did some other white camps, Italians there would have been excluded from the union" just as Globe's Mexican immigrants and Apache Indians had been (167). The author also contends that a critical mass of Italian immigrants (from Piedmont) served the community well by fostering a more cohesive, thriving "Little Italy," to use her term. On the other hand, Bisbee remained, as the author's chapter title suggests, "the whitest white camp." Martinelli claims that a much more unfavorable view toward Italians in Bisbee, coupled with segmented occupational roles between Italians and Mexicans, hindered any form of unity between these groups. However, this was not the case in Clifton-Morenci, at least for a brief period. According to Martinelli, "situational factors allowed a coalition of Latins to band together on labor issues to resist mining company interests" (169). Most notably, the author points to unionization efforts during 1915–1917 as evidence of this racial unity. Martinelli contends that the cooperation of

Italian and Spanish, or what she would describe as EuroLatins, with Mexican miners, although divided, offered proof of the in-between status of Italians in Clifton-Morenci. According to the author, "it was this melded culture, residential proximity, and a shared place in the unequal wage structure that led to resistance. . . . In the right racial microsystem, unity was nurtured, and it proved to be long lasting" (164).

Although *Undermining Race* sheds new light on the racial and ethnic composition of these sparsely populated mining towns, the book often falls short in delivering on its stated mission in significant ways. One has to do with terminology and its usage; the other has to do with inadequate discussion of how Italian immigrants responded to conditions on the ground. Terms such as *nonwhite*, *white*, *ethnic*, *racial*, *European*, *EuroLatin*, *Italian Latin*, *southern Italian*, and *northern Italian*, for example, are often used interchangeably or in contrast to one another. It is true that some terms, such as *Italian*, *southern Italian*, and *Latin*, could be used as substitutes during this period, however, the author assigns labels (some historical, many contemporary, e.g., *EuroLatin*) without clearly defining to whom these terms were applied and why. In some paragraphs Italians are referred to as "European," "Latin," and "EuroLatin"; however, there's no sustained evidentiary analysis to support why these terms are necessary (127). How are Italian Latins different from EuroLatins? Do these terms have historical significance, or are they contemporary terms imposed on the past? In a microstudy that seeks to understand how differing groups interacted in fluid racial and socioeconomic environments, these terms must be defined or they risk becoming meaningless.

The next problem with terminology is that the author frequently treats northern Italians, southern Italians, and, by virtue of this, northern Europeans and southern Europeans as monolithic groups. According to Martinelli, "Southerners were viewed as clannish, explosive, and a shade or two darker than northerners. However, to some Americans all Italians were outsiders, and the North-South split did not make a difference" (38). No doubt some Americans lumped southern and northern Italians together as Italians; however, the racialized differentiation among northern and southern Italians in Italy and the United States remained prevalent. Among provincial Italian immigrants it remained more immediate (United States Immigration Commission 1911, 81–85; see also Roediger 2005, 112–114 and Orsi 1992, 313–347). What did this mean for Italian immigrants? How did the north–south question affect how they viewed, or learned, the American racial code? Sidestepping these questions often impairs the author's analysis. It is especially important to address this issue when most of the Italian immigrants who immigrated to Arizona mining towns hailed from northern Italy.

The chapter on Bisbee provides an example of this terminological fuzziness. The author states that the Bisbee "camp matured as a white man's camp . . . as skilled native-born and northern European hard rock miners took over the stratification mores of the area." We assume from this statement that "northern European" means "white" in Bisbee. According to Martinelli, as the "racial climate became evident . . . Mexicans were lowest, with native whites and northern Europeans at the top. The inbetweeners were the central and southern Europeans" (108). However, in providing an outline of the Italian immigrants who comprised the bulk of the Italian population, the author states that the three primary groups who settled the area (the 1900 census listed fifty-nine people with Italian ancestry) originated from Trentino, Piedmont, and Sicily.

Did the Trentini and Piemontese see themselves as northern Italian—and therefore white and superior racially? Did they see themselves as "inbetweeners" because they were Italian? Given that northern Europeans occupied the top of the racial ladder in Bisbee, did northern Italians identify more closely with those groups or with Sicilians (or their "southern cousins," as the author describes them)? Speaking of the Trentini, for that matter, the author states "they kept themselves apart from southern Italians." How would this fact support the notion of a pan-Italian identity (114–116)?

Unfortunately, as in other sections of the book, we never get a sense of how Italians responded in any substantive manner. Given the sectional divides among Italians, it is entirely plausible that Bisbee's northern Italian population may have had a clearer path toward assimilation than their southern counterparts. This, along with their sparse numbers, may have more to do with why a more cohesive ethnic community did not form in Bisbee, rather than attributing it to the "generally unfavorable attitude toward Italians" (132). In addition, other major examples of how Italians learned race and color in Arizona remain unexplored. For example, what did it mean for Italians to see blacks segregated in school? Or to witness Mexicans forced to sit in the back of the bus? How did the fact that they could worship at a church for "Anglo parishioners" and "socialize with influential people through church ties" influence their perception of Mexicans and African Americans? Was this not race-making right before their eyes? Did this serve to "whiten" these immigrants? Were they already white due to the privilege of not being segregated (122–124)? These are the types of questions that must be explored in order to provide a deeper, more nuanced analysis of how race is made in American society.

However, despite these shortcomings, *Undermining Race* provides a useful window through which to examine how American, Italian, Mexican, and Spanish mine workers interacted and created race in Arizona mining towns. Phylis Martinelli's book remains a timely contribution to the ever-expanding and complex fields of immigration, race, and whiteness.

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*Looters, Photographers, and Thieves: Aspects of Italian Photographic Culture in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.*
By Pasquale Verdicchio.
Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011.
199 pages.

Pasquale Verdicchio's *Looters, Photographers, and Thieves: Aspects of Italian Photographic Culture in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* covers a diverse array of topics, from images of wax anatomical figures to Italo Calvino's use of the medium. The breadth of Verdicchio's knowledge often delights, and most readers will likely discover at least one aspect of "Italian photographic culture" with which they were unfamiliar before picking up his handsome tome. Unfortunately, this same eclecticism just as often frustrates. Lacking a thorough discussion of Italian nationhood, *Looters* considers Americans' work alongside that of German image-makers active in Sicily and an Italian photographing in Mexico, as well as textual and visual art from well before the Risorgimento and more than a century after unification. The absence of theoretical, geographic, chronological, and artistic foci leaves the reader struggling to piece together the book's larger meaning.

The first sentence of *Looters*'s back jacket proclaims, "Working toward an analysis of the influence of photography on the construction of an Italian 'type' to serve the mandates of the new nation in the 1860s, this book engages the work of writers and photographers who have addressed or participated in this venture." Given this introduction, one expects the influence of Benedict Anderson to loom large. Verdicchio briefly addresses Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) only once, however, explaining that while "Anderson's critique tends to isolate the imagined construction within a state that go [sic] to govern the formation of imagined communities . . . within a . . . nation itself . . . much of what was imagined and imaged as a coherent community of types . . . was, in the case of Italy, . . . external to the nation itself" (81). Fair enough, given the enormous emigration from Italy just after unification. Without a doubt, photographers such as Jacob A. Riis, a Danish émigré active in New York City around the turn of the twentieth century, did as much—or more—to shape our understanding of an Italian type as perhaps an anonymous studio photographer born and working in Milan at the same time could have in that city. Nevertheless, Verdicchio dismisses too quickly the possible utility of Anderson's seminal work. The mention of Anderson occurs only in the middle of Chapter 3, rather than in the introduction, where it might have been foregrounded as a theoretical framework. (*Imagined Communities* does not even appear in *Looters*'s impressive bibliography.) Instead, Verdicchio claims Walter Benjamin as an intellectual ancestor. The ultranationalism against which Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" fought—it was written in Nazi Germany in 1936—certainly complements one of Verdicchio's own goals: to "lead to an understanding of how photography could work toward the dissolution of nationalist categories" (5). Nevertheless, Benjamin's central argument—that photography undermined the "aura" of the "authentic" work of art in the modern age—does not bolster Verdicchio's ostensible goals and might even detract from them. Rather than adopting Benjamin for his shared politics—"the dissolution of nationalis[m]"—

Verdicchio might have been better served by reimagining how Anderson's theory of nation-building might look in the case of late-nineteenth-century Italy.

Such a reformulation, though, would have required Verdicchio to consider different instances. For example, the work of late-nineteenth-century criminologist Cesare Lombroso would have been a natural fit for a book examining how photography helped to establish an Italian type—especially one associated with "looters" and "thieves." (In fact, one of the disappointing aspects of the book is that its title is not fully integrated into the entire discussion, and the wonderful cover photograph is not analyzed.) Moreover, Lombroso's work, which borrowed from France's Alphonse Bertillon—inventor of the "mug shot"—and which influenced New York City police practices in the detection of criminals, would have coincided nicely with Verdicchio's belief that the "coherent community of [Italian] types . . . was . . . external to the nation itself." In fact, Lombroso's absence from *Looters* is so unexpected that it leaves one wondering whether the choice of works examined was largely a consequence of the author's previous work (most of the chapters of *Looters* appeared in modified form in journals or edited volumes, and Verdicchio's background is in literature rather than the history of photography). Certainly, Lombroso—to name just one such figure—had infinitely more to do with "the construction of an Italian 'type'" during the formation of the Italian nation-state than did Tommaso Campanella, working some three centuries before, or Gesualdo Bufalino, a twenty-first-century author, two writers whose work Verdicchio considers in Chapter 1. The chronological distance of these sources from the event allegedly at the heart of the questions that Verdicchio asks dilutes the impact of the answers they might provide. The fact that they, along with many of the book's other sources, are also literary artists and not photographers further undermines the potential of the *Looters* project.

The choices of the photographic work that Verdicchio does examine—a German working in Italy, an Italian active in Mexico, a Dane and an American photographing Italians in New York City, and just one Italian working in Italy—doubtless grow out of his philosophy that the medium of photography has the potential to disrupt nationalist projects. His chapter on the work of Baron von Gloeden is one of the best in the book. Verdicchio viewed not only the images of barely clad Sicilian youths well known to students of photographic history but also more than 1,000 prints from the Alinari Archives in Florence. The author's extensive research on von Gloeden allows him to state confidently that the range of the artist's "subjects is quite extensive and contradicts common categorization of him as only a photographer of male nudes" (142). The chapter's lengthy notes, in conjunction with this archival research, lead Verdicchio to raise some thought-provoking questions on page 150. One just wishes that the author had taken his analysis one step further, tying these provocations to the larger questions of his book. What does it say about Italian types, for example, if von Gloeden's subjects were denied individuality in his portraits? And what does it say about the role of Sicily in the new Italian nation if the "subaltern bodies" he photographed "taunt[ed] the viewer"? These are tantalizing questions that the reader must ponder on her own as Verdicchio goes on to consider equally interesting—but perhaps tangential—questions of self-representation. Throughout *Looters*, the author delves into the fascinating topic of

photographic self-portraiture, but except in the cases of Giovanni Verga and Tina Modotti, these discussions do not shed much light on its goal of analyzing *Italian* "types." Nevertheless, the chapter on Modotti is another one of the book's strengths, providing extensive biographical background on the photographer that helps to illuminate her artistic and political decisions as well as Verdicchio's own belief in the transnational possibilities of the medium.

Unfortunately, Verdicchio's less thorough work on Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis leads him to make the grossest oversimplications of the book. The relatively few notes for the chapter titled "Imaging America" show that the author consulted just one book on Hine; the bibliography contains just one on Riis (versus several on both Modotti and von Gloeden); and the author does not mention that he conducted the sort of archival research on the Americans that he conducted on von Gloeden. This relative lack of familiarity with their works prompts Verdicchio to conflate the two, characterizing the work of both as "aggressive and often invasive photography that met immigrants at the doors of the new nation, or chased them down in their ghettos" (124). While this description was true of Riis—whose photographs of the Italian rag-picker discussed by Verdicchio accompanied text (surprisingly *not* mentioned by the author, who dedicated a substantial part of the book to literature) like, "The Italian is gay, light-hearted and, if his fur is not stroked the wrong way, inoffensive as a child" (Riis 53)—it could not have been farther from how Hine practiced photography and what his work was about. Verdicchio's blind spot about Hine is surprising given the abundance of scholarship about both photographers; most glaring in its absence is Maren Stange's (1989) *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary in America, 1890–1950*. Unlike Riis, who "affirmed middle-class privilege, associating the images he showed with both entertainment and ideology" (xv), Stange argues convincingly that "Hine's work . . . set forth workers' humanity" (86) and "allow[ed] for an expression of individual qualities that lift[ed] the portraits to a realm beyond the mere depiction of immigrant 'types'" (52). Though Stange asserts that middle-class reformers ultimately appropriated Hine's photographs to uphold the values of the emerging corporate capitalist state, to assert as Verdicchio does that his images were akin to those of Riis, who exploited immigrants and reduced them to stereotypes, unfairly maligns the reputation of one of America's great social documentary photographers.

Lastly, while Verdicchio's book is beautifully illustrated and laid out, it might have been better copy edited. Substantive and grammatical or typographical errors abound: Riis's first name is incorrectly identified as "Herbert" throughout the first half of the book, for example (and "but" is used instead of "by," page 148; "this visits" appears on page 151, to cite just two of a couple of dozen such errors). Moreover, Modotti, the only female photographer considered, is also the only one referred to repeatedly by her first name alone.

Notwithstanding my earlier critique of the author's eclectic choice of subject matter, I found his epilogue one of the most delightful moments of the book. Examining a photograph that he himself took on the day that his family left Italy for Canada, "Autobiographical Post Face as a Way of Conclusion" is a beautiful musing on the emotional resonance of photographs for immigrants during the twentieth century. In the pre-Skype, pre-Facebook age, portrait photographs like the one Verdicchio so

generously shares with us possessed—dare I say it?—the aura of selves we struggle to sculpt inside of, or in the shadow of, or in spite of, nationalist forces attempting to whittle us down to size.

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# Film Reviews

*Vito.*
By Jeffrey Schwarz.
Automat Pictures and HBO Documentary Films, 2012.
93 minutes. DVD format, color and black and white.

Like the Academy Award–winning documentary *The Times of Harvey Milk* (Rob Epstein, 1984) and last year's Oscar-nominated documentary *How to Survive a Plague* (David France, 2012), Jeffrey Schwarz's *Vito* is an act of recovery. The film tells a story of the gay rights movement and in doing so sheds new light on the pursuit of equality in the United States. Due to institutional and social prejudice against sexual minorities, such stories are often excluded from textbooks, leaving many students unaware that the roots of the gay civil rights movement extend back at least to the 1920s. *Vito* works to repair some aspects of that oversight by using archival footage, film clips, and original interviews to profile famed activist and media critic Vito Russo from his early childhood in the Italian-American neighborhood of East Harlem, Manhattan, to his far-too-early death at the age of 44 in 1990.

Russo played a number of significant roles throughout his life, many of which Schwarz's documentary recounts. Russo was a teen who rarely hid or apologized for his sexuality. He was a witness to the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York's Greenwich Village. He was a freelance journalist who published a number of important interviews, including the one for *The Advocate* in which Lily Tomlin came out as a lesbian. He was a media archivist, a film programmer, and a critic who shot to fame with his "Celluloid Closet" presentations, which chronicled the representation of gay and lesbian characters in the movies. *The Celluloid Closet* later became a ground-breaking book that Russo authored as well as an award-winning 1995 documentary made by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman. Russo was also an early member of the Gay Activists Alliance and led efforts to reconcile competing factions within the group. He was a writer, producer, and host of *Our Time*, a documentary series focused on gay communities that aired on WNYC-TV in New York in 1983. He was a co-founder of both the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP). And he was also an Italian American.

Schwarz's documentary pays close attention to Russo's family and in doing so performs a second act of recovery—one of an ethnic culture. Far too often, Italian Americans are represented, especially in popular culture, as hyperheterosexual and exclusionary. And this reputation is not altogether unfounded. In a July 9, 2012, blog post for the Huffington Post, Michael Carosone writes, "It must be stated, and known, that with its conservative and traditional ways of thinking, the Italian-American community—my own community—has not always been accepting and understanding of my sexual orientation." Carosone oversimplifies the diversity of opinions that exists within Italian-American communities on this matter, but his experiences of prejudice are far from unusual, and the situation is often complicated by the frequent media representations of hypermasculine Italian-American gangsters. As George De Stefano (2011) has shown, cinematic and televisual *mafiosi* frequently rely on antigay language

and actions in order to proclaim their own heterosexuality. "Marriage and children, and the obligatory 'gumads,' or mistresses confirm their heterosexual public image," De Stefano writes, "but the absence of women from mob society raises questions about homoerotic desire" (116). Antigay slurs like "finook" are common in any number of films that feature Italian Americans, from *The Godfather* to *Mean Streets* to *Donnie Brasco*, but the cinematic and televisual representation of gay Italian-American characters is rare and representations of their acceptance within their ethnic culture even more so. There are some notable exceptions, such as *Mambo Italiano*, a 2003 film by Émile Gaudreault about gay Italian Canadians, and *Kiss Me Guido*, a 1997 comedy directed by Tony Vitale. But Schwarz's documentary adds to these representations by moving away from the comedy genre and offering a representation of an actual Italian American and his family rather than one of fictional characters.

Through interviews with Russo's brother Charles and his cousins Phyllis Antonellis and Denise Romanello, a portrait emerges not just of Vito Russo but also the Russo family. Vito Russo was open about his sexuality, and initially this created some discomfort within the family, especially when Vito would bring his friends and lovers to Sunday dinners. "If they showed undue affection," Antonellis recalls, "his dad would leave the room. And we would say, 'Vito, please don't do that.' And he would say, 'Why?! Heterosexuals can be blatant and we can't?!' So, then if I would sit on [my partner's] lap [Vito] would say, 'You can't do that. That's not allowed!'"

However, Vito's parents eventually came to accept their son for who he was. "My father was so accepting and gentle, and my mother, well, was pretty wonderful," Charles Russo recalls. "[Vito] knew that they had unconditional love for him. It gave him a little power and strength that others might not have had." The bond between mother and son was particularly strong. Romanello recalls, "His mother was so proud of him. He really always had the love and admiration of his mom." Love continued to permeate the relationship between Vito and his family as AIDS ravaged the activist's body. "The final stages, Vito was in the hospital," Rob Epstein remembers. "His family was very involved, and Vito was on the phone with his mother daily. He had no doubt of her love for him and his love for her. I know that they had no unfinished business between them." Representing the acceptance of gay sexuality within a culture that is often typified as exclusionary is one of the most important contributions that Schwarz's documentary makes. This aspect of the film gives hope to young gay, lesbian, and bisexual Italian Americans who may be struggling with fears of ostracism and at the same time provides a model for an Italian-American audience whose love of family and fear (or even hate) of sexual difference are difficult to reconcile.

While Vito's family accepted him, the film highlights ways others in the neighborhood were not so welcoming. At twelve or thirteen years old, Vito learned to leave the neighborhood, which he recalls, "nobody else in my family or my neighborhood did." This gave the young Vito a sense of "freedom" and allowed him to explore the city. As he got older, the trips introduced him to other gay boys and sometimes led to sexual encounters. After such experiences, Russo would return to his neighborhood and dutifully confess to his priest. After weeks of hearing such confessions, the priest told Vito that if he continued to confess such sins, he would not offer him absolution. "I never bought it, not for one single, solitary second. I don't know how I escaped it. I don't know what was different about the way I was raised or the way I reacted, but I never

once—not for a second—believed that it was wrong to be gay, that it was a sin, that homosexuality was evil," Russo says in one of the film's many archival interviews. "I always knew they were full of shit. And that I was right and that there was nothing wrong with this, because something this natural couldn't be wrong." By focusing on an individual and that individual's relationships with family members, his faith, and his neighborhood, Schwarz is able to tell a more intimate and personal story.

Nevertheless, this biographical approach, out of necessity, leads to some oversights. There is no doubting that Russo played a formative role in the groups he co-founded, that he personally experienced and initiated some of the most historically important events in the gay rights movement, and that he played an important role in reconciling competing factions within those groups. Yet he was but one individual among many. Groups like ACT-UP were powerful in part because of their numbers, and they took on a life of their own as other people within the group headed committees with which Russo was not involved. Russo's co-founding of the group created a platform from which others could work, but his involvement in some of ACT-UP's accomplishments was minimal compared to the work of others. (David France's *How to Survive a Plague*, for instance, details the ways in which several members within ACT-UP and Treatment Action Group [TAG] worked together to make possible better drug treatment options for people living with HIV.) Similarly, *Vito* is heavily focused on events in New York City because that is where Russo lived and worked most of the time. New York, admittedly, was a hub of activity, but so too was San Francisco, and the advances toward gay rights that were made in the Bay Area are largely ignored in the film. Furthermore, the work of Los Angeles's Mattachine Society in the 1950s and Chicago's Society for Human Rights in the 1920s are not even mentioned.

This does not undermine the value of *Vito*. Giving a human face to issues that are sometimes divisive is an effective way to shift perspectives and opinions, and throughout the film Schwarz includes interviews with others who worked with the activist or were involved in gay rights struggles in other parts of the country. Russo's biographer Michael Schiavi, documentarian Rob Epstein, journalist David Ehrenstein, ACT-UP co-founder Larry Kramer, writer and actor Bruce Vilanch, actress Lily Tomlin, filmmaker Larry Friedman, and author Armistead Maupin all make appearances to discuss Russo and provide a greater historical (and geographical) context for his life and work, and other films like those listed above along with Gus Van Sant's *Milk* (2008) have worked to address some of these blind spots. What none of these other documentaries and historical biopics offers that *Vito* does is a representation of gay culture and gay activism in the United States that highlights the Italian-American community, thereby showing viewers that there are elements within Italian-American life that are not imprisoned by homophobia and exclusionary thinking. The film's focus on Italian-American issues makes it a unique and valuable addition to any Italian American studies course; its focus on a population that is rarely represented in Hollywood films would add an important note of diversity to any media studies or American film or television course; and its representations of activism and white ethnic culture would be noteworthy inclusions in queer studies classes.

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*Le mamme di San Vito.*
By Gianni Torres.
Associazione Culturale Altre Produzione, 2010.
65 minutes, DVD format, color.

*Le mamme di San Vito* (The mothers of Saint Vito) is a touching documentary that recounts the story of the work of an Italian immigrant association in São Paulo, Brazil. The film revolves around the annual Feast of Saint Vito, a feast that was created in 1918 by Italian migrants from the community of Polignano al mare (Bari province) and that continues to this day. The film provides an engaging look at the feast itself and all its sights and sounds, including participants dressed in traditional Polignano costumes, music, dancing, and, of course, lots of food. The director, Gianni Torres, also does especially well in highlighting the role of the feast's elderly volunteers in this ninety-one-year tradition. These immigrant and Brazilian-born women, all over seventy years old, are affectionately known as the "mothers of Saint Vito." They cook typical Italian dishes in order to raise money to support their association's charitable work for underprivileged children. The director chooses to end the film on a somber note with participants expressing their fear that the feast may not continue much longer as the older generation disappears and the younger generations lose their ties to their local Italo-Brazilian version of southern Italian cuisine and culture, a trend that can be seen in Italian immigrant communities throughout the world. This final scene, like much of the film, suggestively hints at the complex question of Italian identity in Brazil. This is in fact an important underlying theme that should have been further developed and more thoroughly explored.

Although Torres frames his work with the Feast of Saint Vito, he actually does much more than simply depict the popular local event. His film additionally discusses the history of the Polignano community in São Paulo as well as the association's ongoing charitable work, which provides daycare services for 120 children. Also interspersed throughout the film are descriptions of the food itself (e.g., *orecchiette*, *focacce*, and *ghimmirelle*) and how it is prepared. In addressing these different themes, the film does particularly well in highlighting the importance of voluntary associations among Italian immigrants and their descendants, as well as the centrality of local rather than national forms of identity. It also demonstrates quite effectively the significance of local religious beliefs and practices along with regional cuisine in maintaining community bonds and preserving identity.

Interviews with the association's elderly members inform the documentary's history of this community and give visual shape to the film. Without the interference of a narrator, the viewer has a direct and immediate relationship to the film's participants. This technique has the advantage of personalizing and giving voice to their collective story; however, a wider historical context that speaks to the overall experience of Italian Brazilians would have been helpful, especially for viewers who may be unfamiliar with that history. The need for such historical breadth is made clear when a woman interviewed in the film suggests that this community's history was not typical of the overall Italian immigrant experience in São Paulo. Furthermore, it would be interesting to know more about how this local association, which is now (according to the documentary) famous throughout Brazil, compares to the work of other Italian associations and to what extent their work is interwoven into the wider history of Brazil.

The most moving scenes in the film depict the children (all under three years of age) who are cared for in the association's nursery—the reason for the feast. In one particularly touching scene we see one of the elderly volunteers joyfully playing with them. Later this volunteer emphatically declares, "The children are my flag! They are the most important part of our association." The scenes in the nursery call attention to the challenges faced by poor working-class families in Brazil, which is an important facet of the film's overall story in that it speaks to the volunteers' commitment to helping others as the primary motivation for their work. These scenes also suggest that the society's charitable work is directed primarily toward Brazil's racially diverse population. It is, however, unclear in the film whether this relationship is a recent phenomenon, the result of changes in the neighborhood's demographics, or whether this has always been the focus of the association's effort. Although we do not know from the film, it seems likely that the association may have originally served the children of Italian immigrants, but as the neighborhood changed so too did the population it served. Similarly, these scenes make one wonder to what extent the members of the tight-knit Polignano community in São Paulo identify with their new Brazilian homeland or see themselves as a distinct group, a question the film does not address directly.

The director's excellent technique of moving shots through hallways helps advance the narrative and allows the viewer to experience the participants' point of view. Background noise and street sounds also enhance the sensation of actually being there. They are, however, quite distracting during interviews. The film is also heightened by the sweeping and at times haunting original score by Vincenzo Abbracciante.

All in all, this film is memorable and well worth watching for anyone interested in local Italian culture in the diaspora, although a more thorough historical-sociological examination of the association within its wider Brazilian context would have enhanced its value to students and scholars. That being said, *Le mamme di San Vito* is especially successful in capturing the heart and spirit of a community that is proud of its traditions and happily devoted to helping others and, in so doing, preserving its own local identity.

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*My Reincarnation.*
By Jennifer Fox.
A Zohe Film Productions Film, 2011.
101 minutes. DVD format, color.

The documentary film *My Reincarnation*, by Jennifer Fox, is a familiar story of father and son from a peculiar perspective—that of spiritual transformation from within the Tibetan diaspora in Italy. Using footage culled from the years 1988 to 2009, Fox sheds light on the lives of a Tibetan Buddhist master and his son by skillfully examining the notion of diaspora as both a universal and a personal experience. As a case study of cultural transactions between Tibet and Italy, Fox's film is a unique contribution to the current flurry of cinematic representations of transnationalism and migration to Italy. This moving tale of self-reinvention is likely to please audiences interested in individual paths to spiritual enlightenment. However, I believe that the film's thinly veiled conversion narrative would not resonate among viewers skeptical about notions of reincarnation and core identities, both of which are essential to Tibetan Buddhism.

The film's thesis is straightforward. It aims to reveal the fundamental Tibetan Buddhist teaching of Dzogchen: that an individual is able to achieve his or her real condition, or primordial state, through practice. The narrative proof of the thesis is the story of Yeshi Namkhai, who was born in Italy to a Tibetan father and an Italian mother and recognized as a reincarnation at birth. Over a period of twenty years, Yeshi transformed himself from an assured Italian businessman skeptical about his Tibetan spiritual lineage to an emerging and dedicated master of Dzogchen. To be sure, Yeshi's story is one of spiritual exile from Dzogchen. To parallel it and to further explore the meanings of diaspora, the film depicts the political exile of his father, Namkhai Norbu, who fled Tibet, migrated to Italy to teach, married an Italian woman, and became a great living master of Dzogchen in the West. During the meditation and consultation sessions with Norbu, the camera often intercuts between him and his European students in medium close-ups, suggesting the migration of Eastern knowledge to Western audiences. The striking scene in which an HIV-positive man asks Norbu for spiritual advice powerfully reminds the viewers of the extent to which the teachings of Dzogchen have traveled from their original contexts.

The strength of the film's arguments derives mainly from two juxtapositions that concern the father and son. In the first instance, Fox contrasts Norbu's spiritual mission and lectures as a master of Dzogchen with Yeshi's nonchalant and at times skeptical attitudes toward his father's activities. This contrast is also presented as one between Norbu's Tibetan and Yeshi's Italian identities. Commenting on period footage, the voice-overs of both men reinforce their different worldviews. Often shot from Yeshi's perspective, the film depicts Norbu as a gregarious person, a beloved teacher, and an eloquent interlocutor in public. This characterization of him is at odds with Yeshi's insistence, stated in an interview that Fox inserts in sequences focused on Norbu, that his father is stern and emotionally detached, owing to his busy lecture schedule, which accounted for his absence from Yeshi's childhood. Fox correlates the two seemingly contradictory facets of Norbu's personality with his Tibetan background: Just as Norbu was driven by his spiritual mission to actively promote Dzogchen teachings among Western audiences, so too did his upbringing in a Tibetan monastery contribute to his

way of behaving as a master, rather than as a father, to his son. Although Norbu resorts to English and Italian in conversations with his followers and with Yeshi, the cinematic representation of his linguistic accommodation only accentuates the exclusive focus of the content of these conversations—namely, Tibet and Dzogchen.

Much evidence in the film points to Yeshi's Italianness, which is reinforced by contrasting it to Norbu's Tibetanness. Although he was recognized at birth as the reincarnation of a Tibetan Buddhist master, Yeshi was not responsive to the hidden meanings his father suggested were in his childhood dreams, meanings that might reveal important information about the past. The beautiful montage at the film's opening anticipates, and later footage confirms, this conflict. As revealed in his interviews, Yeshi's reservations about interpreting his dreams in order to gain an understanding of present events occurring in Tibet are depicted as a Western pragmatic attitude toward Eastern mysticism. In this instance, therefore, Yeshi's Italianness refers to a shared cultural disposition by other Western Europeans. However, in other episodes of the film, Yeshi's identity is constructed as specifically Italian. In a notable scene, Fox juxtaposes images of the conviviality of a family reunion with Yeshi's voice-over about his frustration at Norbu's apparent failure to appreciate the Italian notion of traditional family. Along with other similar statements, the film effectively establishes Yeshi's Italian perspective on his father's Tibetan outlook and practices.

The film's overall persuasiveness rests on Fox's depiction of Yeshi's conversion. Significantly, Fox does it by showing increasing affection shared between father and son, both of whom contemplate their legacy and religious mission about halfway into the film. In this second juxtaposition concerning the father and son, the humanism of both men, whose reincarnations were designated at birth rather than by choice, is touching. As Norbu was stricken with cancer, he retreated from his public lectures. Through medical care, meditation, and exercises, he was eventually healed of his cancer. Meanwhile, as stress at work intensified for Yeshi, he began to listen to Tibetan Buddhist chants. With his dreams growing stronger and clearer, he discussed their possible interpretations with his father. Yeshi then studied Dzogchen teachings and rituals with him, voluntarily engaging in the master-pupil relationship he used to detest. Yeshi's trip to Tibet puts the definitive end to his spiritual exile. To prove his newly acquired Tibetanness in the rest of the film, Fox reduces Yeshi's Italianness to signifiers such as typical Italian hand gestures and his reliance on an interpreter while in Tibet. The film ends with a scene in which Yeshi lectures and advises Dzogchen followers independently in English, recalling his father's deeds.

To be sure, Yeshi's spiritual transformation is part of the film's larger agenda to examine the conversion of personal memory into collective memory, a mechanism crucial to any historical narrative of the Tibetan diaspora. This broader theme is the focus of a long montage of the Dalai Lama's visit to Italy in 1988 in which, through a voice-over narration, Norbu's escape from Tibet in 1959 is explained. Norbu says that that year "the Chinese occupation started in East Tibet. The Chinese Communists imprisoned and killed many Tibetans." The film effectively shows how this and subsequent traumatic events were transmitted from Norbu to Yeshi, as well as from ordinary Tibetans to Westerners.

Here, however, set among sympathetic believers both within and beyond Italy, *My Reincarnation* struggles to transcend its self-proposed thesis concerning conversion

and diaspora in order to embrace oppositional views. The film sympathizes over-whelmingly with the Tibetans, leaving audiences wondering if all available evidence has been investigated and interpreted critically. The representations of several cognitive aspects of Yeshi's conversion seem forced or trite. One notable gap is Yeshi's under-standing of Dzogchen in the intervening years between his initial nonchalance and his sudden awakening. An explanation of Yeshi's growth could make the motives of his conversion more convincing. Another example of this problem can be seen in Fox's camerawork during the two men's conversations about their supernatural visions and experiences in which the camera seldom shies from frequent close-ups on their faces. This imagery draws on a visual pathos that often suggests nothing more than their inscrutable mental absorption.

The most serious flaw of *My Reincarnation*, I believe, is that by emphasizing Yeshi's "return" to his Tibetan and spiritual self from his Italian and secular self, Fox perpetu-ates the notion that an individual has an unchanging core identity determined at birth. This is precisely what the teaching of Dzogchen intimates. Understanding the self in its pristine condition is potentially what a great number of Western viewers wish to see in a documentary on Dzogchen, which is presented as a spiritual answer to a chaotic and perilous world (here represented by contemporary Italy) in which these viewers reside. Ultimately, then, as a social commentary on Western existential anxiety, Fox's invitation to learn from Tibetan Buddhist wisdom is much in keeping with Norbu's and Yeshi's spiritual mission.

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# Digital Media Review

## Italian-American Oral History and Its Digitized Sites.
(accessed periodically from October 10, 2012, to August 23, 2013)

This review concerns itself with the degree of the digitization of multimedia archives that focus on Italian-American oral historical research. It seeks to address some of the problematics related to remote public access to such archives, to highlight the standards to which institutions might aspire, and to suggest a course of continued development of this type of research tool. The review concludes that the resources are not nearly as developed as scholars in the field of Italian American studies might wish. My perspective here regarding access, content, and usability is that of an oral historian and a scholar of Italian-American culture and history, not that of an archivist.

That oral history has become an increasingly engaged methodology, attracting public interest no less than scholarly attention among Italians in America, can be observed on many fronts.[1] Oral interviews have formed a primary methodological tool of research in a variety of disciplines, from the social and historical to the scientific,[2] but they have not been prominent in scholarship of matters related to Italian American studies. Several significant projects have made oral history central to their subject and method of enquiry (see, for example, Fox [1990] and Di Stasi [2001]). Indeed, the widespread use of recorded first-person accounts, especially with the advent of the cassette tape recorder in the 1970s, has meant that oral history as a methodology and as a discipline came into its own in the second half of the twentieth century and benefited Italian Americans along with other ethnic groups. Many have created private sound and visual field collections within their own research area or for community projects, but because so little of this material has been digitized, precious few of these documents are accessible to anyone beyond the original researcher(s), other than what may have found its way into print, film, exhibitions, or other public media. (This is not to say that all fieldwork or oral history interviews should form part of the public record. Some may best be left in the family memorabilia closet.)

Multimedia archives, including oral histories relating to the Italian-American experience, are found nationwide—some are specifically created as oral history projects, while others are produced as research for specific publication projects by a range of scholars. But only a fraction of their contents is ever digitized or published. One could wish for an Italian-American equivalent of the guide to sound archives in Italy, such as Barrera, Martini, and Mulè's *Fonti orali* (1993). Still, digitization modalities of multimedia archives are today in rapid transformation—so much so that an ambitious multi-institutional initiative (beginning in 2009) to create a best practices guide to digitization is currently in progress.[3] It brings together major U.S. institutions involved in oral history and information technology (a fourteen-minute video of proceedings on this topic at a 2012 WebWise webinar can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DPTCafk3QA&feature=plcp). The Oral History Association is likely the best entity to take the pulse of this necessarily ephemeral and evolving situation (http://www.oralhistory.org/resources/oral-history-in-the-digital-age/).

Archives as public repositories of individual and community memory form the very substance of oral history. Oral history archives often take on the task of public education, providing some means whereby scholars accessing them may read brief explanations of what oral history is before getting to the descriptions and indices of the specific holdings. For instance, the Youngstown State University oral history collection and the University of California Berkeley's Bancroft Library both take on didactic roles in describing the basics of oral history on their websites:

> Human beings make sense of their lives in story. Oral history allows us to use those first-person narratives to explore the private dimensions of public careers, add new voices to the historical record, track the creation and recreation of historical memory, and present history to the public in creative new forms. http://www.maag.ysu.edu/oralhistory/oral_hist.html

> Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account. It reflects personal opinion offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable. http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/ics_movements/italian_amer.html

These About sections frequently also sound a warning alarm with variations on the following theme: "A sense of urgency informs our work, for the stories we preserve in tape and transcript will soon be irretrievably lost" (http://www.maag.ysu.edu/oralhistory/oral_hist.html). Archivists work to acquire, process (arranging, describing, housing, etc.), and preserve these materials and to make them accessible—some only to a small circle of institutionally affiliated scholars, but others to the public at large. Unrestricted online collections may be the ultimate goal, but access and use restrictions remain the reality today. Accessible archives (whether in person or online) do not always translate into usable archives. Before any materials may be consulted, scholars must often sign disclaimers or agreements, which may impose donor restrictions and copyright limitations that mildly or severely inhibit the use of the materials. Therefore, questions of access and use of primary documents become as critical as their preservation. Otherwise, public archives are little better than dusty closets from which materials need to be "rescued"—albeit, perhaps, providing superior storage conditions. Ideally, such primary documents provide as close to a three-dimensional representation of the direct field-research experience as possible. That is, we wish to *see*, *hear*, or at least *read* the dialog between interviewer and interviewee, capturing the visible, kinetic, and aural contours modulating the testimony itself.

Digitizing collections is arguably the single most urgent matter facing archives today if they are to be relevant to our global knowledge economy, but processing collections, let alone digitizing them, is both labor intensive and costly. Scholars of Italian American studies might hope for remote, online accessibility to (and downloadability of) visual and sound materials that are intuitively arranged, well described,

and have transparent interfaces for site navigability. But modestly endowed archives with Italian-American holdings may not be equipped to handle the task of acquiring, processing, and preserving collections as well as making them available to the online public. Therefore, while thinking small and local may be a desirable feature in some areas of modern life, this does not necessarily translate to the archival economy. Indeed, good arguments can be made for donating small, local, or community-based collections to larger and better-established multimedia archives that possess the resources to process them and make them available online.

Another major issue that arises when developing or utilizing archives (digitized or not) is access. Privacy issues and the problematic boundaries between private and public in our current online ecologies require special consideration. We are becoming increasingly wary of the risks of the permanent digital fingerprints we leave in cyberspace and of the fact that the ways our personal information is used, once released, are beyond our control. As individual researchers we can plead that our goal is to contribute to knowledge by depositing and/or retrieving, interpreting, and publishing these archival materials, but we must also be concerned with the inherent dangers in our work and employ the highest ethical standards established by our professional associations. Open systems and wide accessibility to archives must be implemented carefully.

First, participants in any oral interview process must know precisely what release of their information entails. On the other hand, release forms, which severely restrict the use of materials, are counterproductive. Researchers must assure that they have carefully monitored materials to comply with the wishes of interviewees before depositing materials in an archive. Carefully edited transcripts of oral histories may be possible (suppressing sensitive material) but in their aural dimensions may prove impractical. (Another point to keep in mind in this discussion is that the lack of online archives in Italian Americana may also reflect a cultural diffidence or reluctance to transgress what many Italian Americans have traditionally considered to be the private sphere.)

Institutions use a wide range of restrictions: e.g., "This manuscript may be read, quoted and cited freely." But reproduction ("in whole or in part by any means, electronic or mechanical") is another matter, of course. Once accessibility moves beyond a physical archive (where someone must visit in person) these privacy issues become more complex. Copyright normally resides with (but is not solely the prerogative of) the institution. "Fair use" standards for quotation from interviews may be limited to no more than 1,000 words from any single oral history interview transcript (as the Bancroft Library site specifies). Individual interviews frequently have joint copyright ownership (interviewer and interviewee normally sign a joint release form), which may require additional copyright clearance. The legal-rights page of any interview will normally stipulate copyright status and any restrictions. A warning to scholars may be worded as follows: "Copyright to materials created by others may be owned by those individuals or their heirs or assigns. It is the responsibility of the researcher to identify and satisfy the holders of all copyrights" (http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/ monarch/findaids/sophiasmith/mnsss123.html). This means that, even if the archive grants permission, the researcher is obliged to search among heirs and other potential copyright owners to discover if and how they are permitted to publish the interviews or even quote from them. This is a significant deterrent to the actual use of archival

materials. Indeed, some archives are revisiting such encumbering policies to make them more reasonable and friendlier to scholars, while still protecting themselves against lawsuits from heirs and owners.

A curious example of the minefield deposited collections may present is found in the Italian Americans Project of the University of Illinois at Springfield (Brookens Library Archives and Special Collections). In an early (1972) interview/memoir with John Bucari (B850J), http://www.uis.edu/archives/projects.htm#ITALIAN, we find the following notice: This material is "RESTRICTED: Not to be used in any publication. May be read or listened to, but not quoted, cited, or published." Of course, the subject matter of the interview may have dictated such extreme restrictions: "James Bucari discusses his experiences as an Italian American: discrimination, organized crime activity in the 1920s and 30s, gambling, Italian businesses and community in the Springfield area, and being accepted into American society." One might well wonder what ultimate purpose is served by even placing such an interview in the archive at all, if its use is so severely limited.

Many institutions are digging deep into audio archives created largely during the 1970s and attempting, as much as possible, to digitize their archival materials (e.g., manuscripts, letters, photographs, diaries, ephemera—in addition to sound and visual media). But, of course, since recording technologies are in a constant state of flux, this presents the added challenge to archivists (and researchers) to stay current with format conversions and the software to handle them. The fleeting life span of rapidly changing technologies is indeed alarming, as it presents a challenge to forestalling obsolescence. Digital video recordings today are what audio cassettes were to a previous generation: affordable and easy to use. They make online uploading direct and immediate. But these too will obsolesce.

The gold standard, as far as digital oral archives are concerned, alas is not to be found within the field of Italian American studies. Were we challenged to name oral history sites to which we might aspire, two come quickly to mind. One is a "hyper" site of the University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation Institute (http://libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=58585&sid=429336), with a corpus of 52,000 video testimonies from all around the world (418 of them Italian: http://libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=58585&sid=1430011)[4] and open to the USC Network. A subset of this massive archive can be consulted at various specifically designated global access points (e.g., in the United States, in Europe, one in the Middle East, and one in Australia [http://college.usc.edu/vhi/testimoniesaroundtheworld/]). Eleven-hundred online testimonies are viewable at http://vhaonline.usc.edu/. But the complexity of this site's interface (which includes a large number of index terms and search modalities) renders its use more than a little daunting.

A more realistic model is the Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive (VOAHA) at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), which provides a highly user-friendly approach and is accessible to any and all (http://symposia.library.csulb.edu/iii/cpro/CommunityViewPage.external?lang=eng&sp=1000026&suite=def). The CSULB archive began in the 1970s with its core collection on Women's History, directed by Sherna Gluck.[5] It now consists of more than 1,000 hours of interviews with 350 very diverse narrators and covers American Indian, Chicano, Asian American, and Long Beach area history, Southeast Asian communities, labor, and women's history.

These subject areas may be viewed in list or grid form. Access is achieved by a simple click; each subject area expands into its own collection with a description and an inventory of its digitized interviews, listed by a clickable thumbnail photograph of the interviewee. Each interview record provides: title, creator, date, subject, description, logged table of contents, and rights—but most important, the audio (no video) recordings of the oral history interviews themselves.

Current online digitization efforts around Italian-American oral (and visual) history range widely. I have attempted to provide a rough guide with samples, arranging the possibilities into five levels of digitization, levels that I feel best shape how the majority of this content is approached by scholars.

LEVEL 1. Description of collection (e.g., format, subject), with or without a finding aid or search guide, but without digitized sound recordings. Requires in-person consultation.

LEVEL 2. Full transcripts of sound recordings. Access to sound recording requires in-person consultation.

LEVEL 3. Digitization of images and written materials, or frontispiece of latter (e.g., still photographs, manuscripts, diaries, ephemera, etc.). Provides varying degrees of remote access to entire documents.

LEVEL 4. Digitized audio recording (with or without transcript). Remote online access.

LEVEL 5. Digitized video recording (with or without transcript). Remote online access.

Most Italian-American websites consulted (whether portals to archives or archives themselves) belong to Levels 1–3; there are a few examples at Level 4, while I found only a single five-minute video segment that meets the criteria for Level 5. The brightest lights in this digitized firmament are found in the online collections of only a few institutions: the Regional Oral History Office (ROHO), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; the Center for Oral History, University of Illinois; the Center for Oral History, Northern Michigan University (now defunct); Casa Italiana (Italian Cultural Center) in Chicago; and to some degree the Italian American Collection, UMedia Archive, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota—although the latter earns the highest grade for ease and attractiveness of the presentation of its materials.

However, the online environment is still in a high state of flux. For instance, since 2009, when I wrote about oral history and Italian Americans (Del Giudice 2009), some sites that had great promise have vanished (e.g., Italians in the Gold Rush and Beyond, http://www.igrb.net—due, one imagines, to the untimely demise of its director, Alessandro Trojani), while new projects have emerged, and older online sources continue to evolve and change. I cannot provide a complete tally of available online resources or attempt to evaluate exhaustively the content and recording quality of these materials; nonetheless, I can provide illustrative samples here pertinent to the five levels of digitization described above (in ascending order of digitization).

I propose to evaluate online resources by the following criteria: (1) the breadth of their collections; (2) the collections' finding aids (including whether they describe when and why materials were collected, by whom, and what publications may have resulted

from field research); (3) ease of accessibility and searchability within the interview itself; (4) metadata (in other words, information pertaining to the sound or video interview's length, date, place, log/summary; as well as biographical information of interviewees; rights to reproduction or use); and (5) the site's general attractiveness.

LEVEL 1. Many libraries and archives have holdings relating to Italian-American oral histories in a range of media from print to sound and video, yet they provide only on-site consultation, with (at best) an online description of materials, in varying degrees of detail in terms of catalog numbers and finding aids—but no digitized documents. Among the (majority of) collections held in various institutions but not digitized and/or not available online, we have, for example, minimally described collections such as those of The Ellis Island Oral History Project (third floor of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, begun in 1973 and that today holds approximately 2,000 interviews) at which one is told, "People wishing to use the complete interviews, both as recordings or on-screen transcripts, may do so by using the specially designed computer stations in this room"; Italians of Albuquerque Oral History Project, Center for Southwest Research, General Library, University of New Mexico, consisting of thirty-two interview sessions (forty hours), conducted between 1995 and 1996 with late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century immigrant families involved in politics, education, religion, and business (http://libros.unm. edu/search%C2%A0S7?/cMSS+621+BC); and the former Italian Oral History Institute Collection, Ethnomusicology Archive, University of California, Los Angeles (finding aid: http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt338nd1md/), documenting Italian folkways (festivals, concerts, and conferences) in Los Angeles.

More extensively indexed collections include: The Unknown Internment: Oral History Transcripts & Tapes, 1985–1988, created by Stephen R. Fox, and held in the Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) at the University of California, Berkeley's Bancroft Library (see Fox 1990). Of the forty-two interviews, some were transcribed, others exist only on tape (some were transferred to microform), but no online guide to the collection is available. While these materials are available for research purposes, even permission to *quote* them must be obtained from the library director. Other oral historical and folklore research projects, such as Italians in the West (1988–1993), which led to a series of programs, exhibitions, and a publication, have left a rich collection of multimedia materials behind, but none are accessible online (the finding aid alone is available: http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/eadxmlafc/eadpdfafc/2007/af007003.pdf).

Such is the case for the Italians in Milwaukee Oral History Project, 1991–1992 (http://www.uwm.edu/Libraries/arch/findaids/uwmmss53.htm)[6] and the Italian Immigrant Oral History Project, of St. Louis University of Missouri (http://www.umsl. edu/~whmc/guides/whm0511.htm). The latter's finding aid describes its collections in detail and provides an extensive narrative of its own history, as well as the where, when, and why of the interviews, listing the publication resulting from them (Mormino 1986), but it provides no transcriptions. Another example is the Ausonia Club Oral History Project, 1965–1987, housed in the Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts (http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/monarch/findaids/sophiasmith/ mnsss123.html), which records the founding and evolution of this Italian-American women's association, with five interview transcripts translated from Italian to English.

LEVEL 2. At this level, digitization begins to enter the picture in a more significant way. The Regional Oral History Office (ROHO), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Italian American Collection (http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/ics_movements/italian_amer.html) has digitized the transcripts of its Italian-American oral histories. This collection is a precious resource for information about subjects in which Italian Americans have historically been involved: winemaking, fruit growing and agriculture, chocolate making, the arts, urban development, and local history, as well as justice and law enforcement. Its contents contrast sharply with the usual and more generic "catch-all" life histories, which tend to be light on detailed and focused information and hence of limited use. This collection distinguishes itself for its highly focused and technical approach to the subject matter. Its interviews were conducted by experts in their respective fields—an ideal for the oral historian. Once one has read and agreed to terms of use, one enters the site and may access full transcripts of oral interviews (but no sound recording). Each interview is accompanied by an extensive log/table of contents, biographical information on the interviewee, an interview history, and a full transcript, in addition to news clippings, an index, as well as biographical information about the interviewer, and the names of transcribers and final typists.

The Youngstown State University Oral History Collection, another example of Level 2 digitization, began in 1974 (http://jupiter.ysu.edu/search/dItalian+Americans+--+Ohio/ditalian+americans+ohio/1,6,12,B/limit?L=&B=&M=t&NAME=A&VALUE=&W=&Ya=&Yb=) and includes personal narratives on Italian-American culture, digitized transcripts of seven oral history interviews (one dated 1977, and six from 1988), which can also be downloaded as pdf documents. Interview transcripts are accompanied by basic information: administrative details (library/archive location, call number, status: i.e., circulating/noncirculating, whether dissertation related), Library of Congress subject heading, series, notes, additional authors, OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) number, interview length (in minutes or leaves), and physical description; and information pertaining to its subject matter and contents (e.g., project title "Immigrants of Ellis Island Project," "Italian Americans," or "Italian Immigration"), interview summaries, and recording details (e.g., names of interviewer, interviewee, date).

LEVEL 3. Digitization of written materials and still images (e.g., photographs, sheet music, documents, etc.). The Italian American Collection, UMedia Archive, University of Minnesota (Immigration History Research Center) provides the most extensive collection of online Italian-American images (approximately 350) covering a variety of subjects, as well as several document genres ranging from newsletters, diaries, letters, official documents and certificates, ephemera, as well as photographs—all attractively displayed. The collection provides immediate access, easily navigated, to a variety of subjects, such as: dinners, folk costumes, "fiestas" (sic), Columbus Day parades, public events, charities, family life, family photographs, labor, groceries, strikes, banquets, sheet music, diaries, bulletins and newsletters, associations and officers (http://umedia.lib.umn.edu/taxonomy/term/705).

LEVEL 4. A user-friendly, intuitively arranged collection of 150 digitized sound recordings of oral interviews with immigrants may be found in the Center for Oral History, Northern

Michigan University (now defunct) (http://www.nmu.edu/archives/node/103), approximately eighty of them with Italian Americans (http://archives.nmu.edu/oral_history/italian.html). Simply click on a name and the sound recording plays. This is an example of a thoroughly documented and digested collection, with index terms as well as historical context. These interviews were conducted between 1982 and 1985, with the financial aid of the Paisano Club of Upper Michigan,[7] Northern Michigan University, and the Michigan Council for the Humanities, and the project was directed by Russell M. Magnaghi. The researchers visited every Italian-American community in Upper Michigan, neighboring Wisconsin, and Ontario, listing communities in great detail, county by county, and thereafter more specifically: for example, St. Mary's Church in Calumet, the Ford Plant in Kingsford, and the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Co. Additionally, the site provides a useful history of the project itself and the principal players involved: Monsignor David Spelgatti, who encouraged and aided it for twenty years; Greta Swenson, the catalyst who got the project started in 1982; as well as the names of its many interviewers, all of whom are noted in the collection description; researchers who first cataloged and edited the tapes; whether transcripts are available; and an index of the subjects and places discussed in the interviews. Further detailed information is provided that covers the donation history and the number of copies made and where they are housed: e.g., the Michigan Collection in the Bentley Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and at the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul. (Copies are made for diverse physical sites to avoid destruction by any catastrophe, which is standard policy for national archives, such as the Library of Congress.) The website lists publications based on its interview collection (e.g., Magnaghi 1987).

Besides interview descriptions that are browsable by place, name, and date, an overview is offered in "Content Notes," which describes the purpose of the collection and its focus of interest:

> The tapes in this collection give insight into the kinds of lives various Italian immigrants to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan led both before they arrived and after they arrived. Among other things, the tapes also give insight into the way these immigrants made a living and into their social activities, their religious ideas and practices, their political views and behavior, their views of America and of the "old world," their relations with other ethnic and American groups, and the kind of people they have become.

What is most interesting is the thorough index of subjects covered. A sampling: Trip to America, Church Dinners and Parties, First Impression of America, Priests (Italian), Immigration via Canada, Bingo (Church), Work in the Mines, Games Italians Played, Conditions in the Mines, Occupations of Italian Immigrants, Wages, Sending Money to Italy, Houses, Prejudice against Italians, Housing (Company), Discrimination against Italians, Wine Making, Living Conditions, and Bootlegging.[8]

The Italians in Chicago—Oral History Project 1979–1981 (the list of interviews, made by Daniel E. Niemiec in 2005 as an aid to genealogists, may be found at http://www.rootsweb.com/~itappcnc/pipcnita.htm) was based at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, History Department, and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Its collection of cassette tapes and transcripts is located at the

Florence Rosselli Library (currently directed by Dominic Candeloro) at the Italian Cultural Center in Stone Park, Illinois. Those 113 interviews of multigenerational Italian Americans (arranged by neighborhood, with numbers more or less divided equally among them) have now been digitized, along with "a somewhat random list of archival materials"[9] (https://sites.google.com/site/chicagoitalianarchives/home/italians-in-chicago-oral-history-project). It also calls attention to the issue of the cost of providing this service for a general public and suggests a voluntary donation of $10 for each download. These sound recordings, easily accessed, cannot be streamed online, however, but must be downloaded to your computer (logged transcripts are readable online). The collection description provides each interviewee's name, year of birth, town of origin, and neighborhood. Each entry is followed by information regarding the availability of the sound recording and its transcript. (The genealogical finding aid created by Niemiec offers more information including birth name, date of death, Italian province and region of provenance, as well as mother's and father's names.)

LEVEL 5. In this short section of Italian-American digitized video recordings of interviews, we find a grand total of 4:40 minutes (recorded by Sonia Cancian), which ironically records a woman reading a letter from the World War II era and speaking about her correspondence practices and history during that time—thereby providing a suggestive interface between written and spoken word. This interview is found in the UMedia Archive of the University of Minnesota (Immigration History Research Center), Italian American Collection (http://umedia.lib.umn.edu/taxonomy/term/688).[10] It does make clear the ways a "complete" video recording event (in this instance with both interviewer and interviewee on camera) provides a richness that cannot be matched by transcript or mere sound recording. It also offers the opportunity to examine interviewing techniques and rapport between interviewer and interviewee, their gesture and speech modalities, as well as a way to appreciate the visual medium itself as a mode of historic narrative and documentation. Most of this collection, however, consists of digitized photographs (see Level 3) rather than video recordings.

It should be noted that other sorts of sites, not covered here, might also prove useful to oral historians or to those interested in visual first-person testimonies. Among those that are potentially useful are the videotaped interviews of journalists who contribute to the visual archives of a growing number of Italian-American online news sources (e.g., i-Italy in New York [http://www.i-italy.org/]; *Panoram Italia Magazine* in Canada [http://www.panoramitalia.com/en/]; and *L'Italo-Americano* [http://www.italoamericano.com/], which is the oldest continuous Italian-language news source published in the United States; it has only recently transitioned to the digital world). Although such news "archives" are proprietary and a journalist does not normally make an entire recording public, a limited number of clips from their materials (in other words, the edited news items themselves) are directly available on-site. YouTube, of course, is also a rich source of visual material and may also provide limited forms of oral history on diverse topics. Each of these resources has its own specific interviewing techniques, methodologies, and parameters for access and use.

There are multimedia projects that integrate oral historical materials, for example, Italian American History and Heritage interviews, 2001–2004, with sixty-two interviews conducted by students in Italian language on the subjects of heritage, traditions,

customs, and immigration of families with Italian roots at http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/digital/pshistory/psoralhist.html. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has also conducted oral histories (http://www.hsp.org/default.aspx?id=677), some clips and related materials from which have been integrated into projects such as PhilaPlace,[11] an interactive virtual guide to Philadelphia, highlighting people, sites, and stories (http://www.philaplace.org/).

Although there are many archives containing collections of sound and video recordings of interviews with Italian Americans, very little of this data is accessible online. As a result, unless scholars can personally visit these sites, much material remains unused, as if buried. If we wish to grow the field of Italian American studies, especially as it relates to first-person testimonies capable of enriching the cultural and historic narrative, it is urgent that this situation change—and quickly.

Both the academy and the general public have a significant stake in this enterprise. If nonacademic Italian-American associations were to actively assist in making oral histories accessible by dedicating their energies and financial resources to making even a small portion of these immense combined collections available online, we could accomplish this task. The familiar voices they might hear, the possibility of seeing and hearing themselves and people like themselves, might even prompt further oral history projects, thereby documenting new and evolving Italian Americans and their many communities. This approach would surely give younger Italian Americans—versed and immersed in visual media—an additional and critical measure of historic self-understanding.

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## Notes

1. See, for example, Del Giudice (2009), which represents selected essays from the 2005 "Speaking Memory: Oral History, Oral Culture and Italians in America" conference of the American Italian Historical Association (AIHA, now the Italian American Studies Association) held in Los Angeles. It was the first AIHA annual conference to be devoted explicitly to the topic of oral history and oral culture. My introduction to the volume treating the what, why, and where of oral historical research in the context of Italian American studies also offered bibliographic references and online resources, identifying archives that housed (and sometimes processed) oral historical materials documenting the Italian-American experience.

2. An example can be seen in the interview (transcript) of Michele De Maio, in the "Oral History of Medicine" project, University of New Mexico (http://hscdm.unm.edu/hslic/oralhist/PDF/DeMaioOH.pdf).

3. The partnership is made up of the following constituent members: Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) National Leadership project with the collaboration of the Michigan State University Digital Humanities Center; the American Folklife Center (AFC/LOC), the Library of Congress; the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH); the American Folklore Society (AFS); the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries; and the Oral History Association.

4. As the page about this portion of the project states: "In Italy, the USC Shoah Foundation conducted 418 video testimonies between September 1997 and June 2000, using 43 inter-viewers in 48 locations. These interviews comprise 403 Jewish survivors, 10 rescuers, three Roma survivors, one political prisoner, and one war crimes trial participant. However, these are only a part of the full collection of Italian testimonies [. . .] 488 inter-views with people born in Italy, in 63 different cities—Rome especially (155, or 32%), and also notably Rhodes, Milan, Turin, Trieste, Florence, Genoa, and Fiume. From a broader perspective, there are over 3,800 interviewees who discuss their experiences in Italy before, during, and after World War II. Moreover, if we include their experiences in the zones of Italian military occupation, then this number rises to more than 5,000." An excellent overview of Italians and the Shoah is contributed by Prof. Giovanni Contini Bonacossi (Università degli studi di Roma La Sapienza), one of three people to index the USC Shoah Foundation's Italian-language testimonies.

5. From the project website: "These interviews were initiated in 1972 as part of the Feminist History Research Project (FHRP), a community-based project co-founded by Sherna Berger Gluck and Ann Forfreedom at the Westside Women's Center in Los Angeles."

6. This URL is outdated. The current URL as of this printing is http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/wiarchives.uw-mil-uwmmss0053.

7. It is heartening to see clubs and associations involved in funding research of this sort (cf. Ausonia Club), that is, activities with more lasting results than the social hour or dinner dance—however necessary those social activities may also be.

8. The complete list includes the following additional items: World War I, Bands (Musical), War Service, Boarding Houses, Italy (Fighting for it), Picnics, Holidays and Festivals, Boarders (Renters), English (Learning it), Family Characteristics, Weddings, Bringing Family to America, Businesses (Italian), Lodges (Italian), Political Activities, Dukes of Abruzzi, Cornish Miners (views of them), Christopher Columbus, Italy (Life there), Sons of Italy, Italy (Returning to it), Name Changes, Italian Organizations, American Citizenship, Entertainment, Schools for Italians, Crime and Violence, Churches (Italian), Ku Klux Klan, Religious Education (Italian), Social Life, Senior Citizens Home, Depression, WPA, Parades (Italians), Sausage Making, Church, Religious Activities, Cheese Making, Church Music, Bread Making (Italian), Diets, Bacala [sic] Making, Funerals, Doctors, Hospitals, Women (Italian), Upper Peninsula Attractions, Suicides (Italian), Honors (Italian Americans), Money Lending, Clubs (Italian Americans), Songs (Italian), Italian American Federation, Naturalization, Healings, Trapping Animals, Lore (Italian American), Mixing with Non-Italians, and Landlookers.

9. See, for instance, the 1933 Telephone Directory of Italians in Chicago, Santa Maria Addolorata 1953 Souvenir Book, and news columns (e.g., *Fra Noi* columnists' archives, such as Maurice Marcello's "Chicago Paesani" columns from the 1960s), as well as various YouTube videos, lectures, and other publications.

10. Further, this video represents the most recent digitized item I could find online (September 20, 2011). Sonia Cancian, a Montreal-based scholar, is affiliated with the IHRC "Digitizing Immigrant Letters" project.

11. For a review of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's online exhibit Italian-American Traditions: Family and Community, see Saverino (2012).

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# Exhibition Reviews

Strangers in a Strange Land: A History of Italian-Language
American Imprints, 1830–1945.
Curated by James J. Periconi.
The Grolier Club, New York, New York.
September 20–November 3, 2012.

Strangers in a Strange Land illuminated the little-known field of Italian-language publishing in the United States. The exhibition included nearly 150 books, pamphlets, broadsides, prints, photographs, and other documents from the collection of James J. Periconi. Periconi is a co-author (with Fred Gardaphé) of *Bibliography of the Italian American Book* (2000), a member of the Grolier Club, and himself a third-generation Italian American. Although the earliest item (a book of poetry by Mozart's librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, who later moved to the United States) dated from 1830, the exhibition focused on the period from the 1880s to the 1940s, an era of mass emigration from Italy. Strangers in a Strange Land, its title referencing John Higham's study of nativism and the immigrant experience, questioned the narrative of assimilation, showing that a vibrant, eclectic, and influential Italian-language publishing industry and reading culture flourished throughout the United States during this period. Few people are aware that there were literally thousands of Italian-language publishers in the United States up to the 1970s, although after World War II their output increasingly included English sections and ultimately was abandoned by a new generation not conversant in Italian.

Through this exhibition, the curator convincingly demonstrated the thesis that Italian-language publishing was often of high literary quality, cross-disciplinary and transnational, and competently executed, even though it did not produce many fine examples of the book arts. The network of bookstores and publishers of this period created common linguistic and cultural spaces and facilitated exchanges between Italians living in Italy and those living both temporarily and permanently in the United States. Although Periconi acknowledges in the exhibition catalog that illiteracy rates were as high as 53 percent among Italian immigrants, he points out that as many as 2.35 million were literate in Italian and cites recent studies demonstrating the existence of an Italian-American reading culture and heavy use of public libraries by Italian Americans learning and reading in both English and Italian. These findings cast further doubt on stereotypes of Italian-American immigrants as an undifferentiated working-class cohort with little interest in education or Italian language and culture.

In its focus on inexpensively printed ethnic publishing, this exhibition was somewhat of a departure for the Grolier Club, the oldest and largest society for bibliophiles in the country. Founded in 1884, the club took as its mission promoting the art and history of the book through its publications, research library, and exhibitions. The two galleries host eight exhibitions a year, mainly of rare books, examples of the book arts, prints, and photographs. Strangers in a Strange Land was located in the smaller, second-floor members gallery, which consists of a hallway with two large wall-mounted exhibition cases and a sitting room, where wall and tabletop vitrines are interspersed with bookcases showcasing the club's fine collections of bindings

and miniature books. This gallery, as opposed to the larger, more formal ground-floor gallery, is where club members are given the opportunity to display their collections.

Upon entering the gallery, visitors encountered an introductory text panel and a visually compelling poster—unfortunately not available for purchase—advertising the exhibition. After this opening, the exhibition did not follow a clear linear viewing trajectory; rather, items grouped by type of material and theme. Sections included historical and biographical works; writings on Italian Americans from the perspective of Italy; poetry, fiction, and drama; Italian- and English-language study aids; photographs and documents from Italian-language publishing houses and bookstores; and, most notably, political writing of all types, with a focus on the anarchist, socialist, syndicalist, and antifascist movements of the first four decades of the twentieth century.

All the exhibition cases were densely crammed with books and pamphlets, sometimes leaving little space for item captions. These small captions for individual items and larger explanatory labels were well written and filled with informative detail, although they were too numerous and sometimes too long to read comfortably. Although most of the items displayed were small and text-heavy, a few objects stood out, including a large limited-edition mimeograph of Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poem *The Old Italians Dying* (1976); a rare first edition of caricatures drawn by the Neapolitan tenor Enrico Caruso; and a highly colored bilingual lithograph, *Uncle Sam Is Ready to Bury the Chief of the Barbarians/Uncle Sam è pronto a seppellire il capo dei barbari*, published by the Italian Book Company in 1918.

The largest section of the exhibition was the display in the hallway gallery of radical political publications. This section featured both writings by important figures such as anarchists Luigi Galleani and Carlo Tresca and socialist Arturo Giovannitti, as well as publications by small local groups ranging from San Francisco to Boston to Detroit. Italian Americans participated enthusiastically in the vibrant political debates of the early twentieth century that were waged in Italian-language newspapers like the Galleanist *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* and Carlo Tresca's *Il Martello* and in bookstores such as the Libreria Sociologica in Paterson, New Jersey. Right-wing publications including the monarchist (and later fascist) *Il Caroccio* and *Il Grido della Stirpe*, which became the pro-fascist periodical with the largest circulation—30,000 readers at its height in the mid to late 1920s—are also represented.

Italian-language newspapers also actively sought works by women. The exhibition included several examples such as *Due conferenze: Chi siamo e che cosa vogliamo—patria e religione* (Two lectures: Who we are and what we want—homeland and religion), by Virgilia D'Andrea (1890–1933), a poet, political radical, advocate of free love, and partner of anarcho-syndicalist Armando Borghi. Newspapers and bookstores often had publishing arms, creating a wealth of inexpensively produced pamphlet literature, which has now become rare and physically fragile. Some of the newspapers and pamphlets featured striking cover art by Fort Velona, known for his antifascist cartoons: Several of the exhibition's examples were from *L'Asino*, the anticlerical newspaper published initially in Italy and later in New York and called by a priest "the most infidel, anarchical, and lascivious paper" (as quoted in the catalog, p. 105).

Despite the modest scale of the exhibition, the Grolier Club published a limited-edition, beautifully printed and illustrated catalog, *Strangers in a Strange Land: A Catalogue of an Exhibition on the History of Italian-Language American Imprints (1830–1945)* (New York:

The Grolier Club, 2012). In addition to Periconi's useful introduction, the catalog includes three essays by scholars of Italian-American literature and culture (Martino Marazzi, Francesco Durante, and Robert Viscusi), a detailed listing of exhibition objects that reproduces Periconi's captions along with some of the images, an excellent bibliography, and an index. The catalog, a beautiful object in itself, constitutes a valuable resource on Italian-American publishing and literary culture.

James Periconi has done a great service in acquiring, preserving, and cataloging this material, which deserves to be better known. He notes that little of it is available in English, although the upcoming translation and publication by the Fordham University Press of the second volume of Francesco Durante's *Italoamericana* will help to rectify this omission. The exhibition of James Periconi's collection at the Grolier Club and the publication of the catalog under its imprint attest to the importance and increasing recognition of the contribution of Italian Americans to the American cultural narrative.

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From Italy to America.
Curated by Kathleen Motes Bennewitz and Christopher Shields.
Greenwich Historical Society, Greenwich, Connecticut.
March 1–June 30, 2013.

Ask a few people in the New York City metropolitan region to describe the demographic realities of Greenwich, Connecticut, and they will probably characterize the Fairfield County town bordering the New York State line and Long Island Sound as a bastion of old money and white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture. The exhibition From Italy to America, at the Greenwich Historical Society (March 1 through June 30, 2013), did much to dispel that stereotype. Departing from the exhibition format that one might expect from a historical society in Fairfield County, this show did not rehash the story of Greenwich's early-twentieth-century "back country" mansions or the wealthy New York City industrialists who financed them. Rather, From Italy to America chronicled the rarely told history of generations of Italian immigrants and their descendants whose muscle and sweat built and maintained those mansions, people who took other backbreaking, low-paying jobs and at the same time created thriving pockets of Italian-American ethnicity within Greenwich's borders.

The fundamental strength of this excellent, small exhibition lay in the clarity of its organization. Cogent, informative wall text surveyed the migration of Italians to the United States, citing historical sources at the national, regional, state, city, and even neighborhood levels. For example, visitors to the exhibition learned that 117 Italians called Greenwich home in 1868; a mere decade later that number had ballooned almost eightfold. The Italian-American presence in Connecticut endures: The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2011 that Connecticut boasts the highest percentage of residents with Italian heritage in the nation. Statistics and other facts provided the necessary

historical context for the exhibition. On the other hand, the fascinating range of artifacts and ephemera loaned by Greenwich's Italian-American community brought the exhibition's story to life. An abundance of passports and other documents chronicled the history of migration, naturalization, and assimilation, and yet mundane objects imbued the exhibition with the textures and rhythms of the immigrants' lives and offered both a tangible glimpse of their realities and fodder for the sensitive viewer's imagination.

Foodways play a defining role in any culture. Upon entering the exhibition one encountered a display of culinary supplies: a rod for the shaping of fusilli pasta, a meat grinder, a ricotta sieve (a simple yet beautiful thing, its wire mesh fastened to a tambourine-like wooden frame). These objects helped to keep a culture alive in a new land. Gazing upon the utensils one easily conjured the delightful aromas of Italian-American home cooking and the steamy heat of ricotta making. Like the kitchen tools, other objects deemed worthy of inclusion in the show by members of the local Italian-American community and the organizers of the exhibition emphasized the theme of labor. Hard work, thrift, and resourcefulness characterize just about any immigrant group trying to "make it" in the United States; seeing Francesco Benvenuto's shoulder strap for carrying coal drove these values home. By 1920 Benvenuto resided in Greenwich. In order to heat J. Kennedy Tod's thirty-seven-room mansion, "Innis Arden," Benvenuto delivered sacks of coal from Maher Brothers on Steamboat Road. The still sturdy looking canvas strap with steel eyelets set into leather ends hinted at the crushing weight borne by its owner. Post–World War II immigrants also took physically demanding jobs. The design of landscaper Elia Di Stefano's edging tool, little more than a blade set into a wooden handle parallel to and opposite the cutting edge, revealed that the user must perform his task on his hands and knees. Moving reminders of an acceptance of humility for the promise of a better life, all these tools reified Italian-American labor in Greenwich.

Although the paucity of precious objects in the exhibition may have revealed the dire economic straits of many of the immigrants, two pieces of jewelry shed light on early-twentieth-century Italian marital customs. The exhibition included a gold necklace made in Italy and given by the groom's mother to Francesca De Buona on the occasion of her wedding in 1926 to Pietro Covello; the visitor learned that such a gift was customary. Elegant in its simplicity, a gold, oval-shaped bracelet marked the engagement of Angelo Forte to his bride-to-be Angelina Cofone prior to the couple's 1914 wedding.

Much to their credit, the exhibition's organizers, guest curator Kathleen Motes Bennewitz and archivist Christopher Shields, did not wince at the personal aspects of community and familial separation due to economic deprivation. Two photographs—one recording an emigrant leaving his Italian homeland and the other depicting those remaining in Italy—provided fascinating narratives. In a photo shot in 1955 on the day of his departure from Italy and blown up as an exhibition poster board, Michael Smeriglio stands in the doorway of a home, a fedora perched on his head, his shirt-sleeves unbuttoned, and his jacket draped over his shoulders. He cuts a jaunty, almost courtly figure as he pauses in a *contrapposto* stance ostensibly aloof to the commotion on the street in front of him, the result of his leave-taking. On their heads women in the foreground carry suitcases bound with rope. Close examination reveals a woman at the bottom right of the picture who presses a handkerchief to her eyes. This heart-rending detail provides an emotional and compositional foil to the figure of Smeriglio, who stands detached, spatially and affectively, above the hubbub in the street. One wonders

to what extent the emigrant's self-conscious posture and his fashionable travel clothes function to prop up a flagging spirit and to dispel his own apprehensions about his voyage and the radical shift it represents in the trajectory of his life. A photo taken around 1915 depicts Rose Bria D'Andrea and her two-year-old son, Michael D'Andrea. Descendants of the D'Andrea family relate that Rose sent the picture to her husband, Dominick D'Andrea, who had left Italy and was living in a boarding house in the Cos Cob section of Greenwich. A hole at the top of the photo reveals that Dominick had tacked up the photo in his rented room so that he could gaze at the faces of his wife and the son who was growing up without knowing his father.

Stories offered by Greenwich's Italian Americans attested to the high level of community involvement in the making of From Italy to America. In the months leading up to the show, the Greenwich Historical Society held five "discovery days" at several locations in the town; 200 community members brought 800 objects to be considered for inclusion in the exhibition. Members of the Italian-American community also contributed oral histories, presented at the exhibition in a series of video segments produced by the video biography company TimeStories. Despite some choppy editing and one glaring mistranslation (*Regno d'Italia* rendered as "Reign of Italy" instead of "Kingdom of Italy"), the participants' stories were engaging and included, as did the entire exhibition, the tales of the immigrants of the Great Migration of 1880 to 1920 told by their descendants as well as the stories told directly by living post–World War II immigrants. In a simple yet effective instance of the ongoing dialog between the Historical Society and the Italian-American community, the organizers of the exhibition requested that visitors "help us map what you remember." Visitors had the opportunity to record their recollections in a notebook and place pushpins on "The Memory Map," a blowup of a 1931 zoning map of Greenwich, to indicate "where a family lived or an Italian-owned business once stood, or still does, what it catered to, and what years it was in operation." According to Historical Society curator and exhibitions coordinator Karen Frederick, the community involvement with all the aforementioned initiatives was "amazing."

The Greenwich-centered exhibition shared space with From Italy to America: The Photographs of Anthony Riccio, a small exhibition originally organized by and mounted last year at the Bellarmine Museum of Art, Fairfield University, Fairfield, Connecticut. Riccio's oeuvre spans decades, and the visitor marvels at the photographer's ability to seek out and record in the 1970s an Italy that was vanishing before his eyes. The photograph of a bride and groom making their way through the narrow pathway of an Italian town provides one of the best examples of Riccio's nostalgic documentary style. Riccio's photos of the elderly people with whom he worked in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Boston's historically Italian North End suggest the photographer's race with time to record these old folks' faces and stories before it was too late. The latest group of Riccio's pieces in the show brings the spectator to the brink of the twenty-first century. One sensed that for the Italian-American sitters from New Haven, Connecticut, who populate this set of images, ethnicity was vestigial. The inclusion of a photo featuring U.S. Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro made the spectator realize that Riccio charts with his lens a variation on his theme, one that might be described as "from Italian to American," for in this final group of images, assimilation nears completion.

From Italy to America provided a dynamic new model for historic house-museum exhibitions: Interpretation of the past might eschew the hackneyed formula of

middle-aged docents in "colonial" dresses churning butter and cooking on the open hearth. The exhibition demonstrated that a vivid recounting of the past should emphasize the connections among national, regional, and local histories. Moreover, the Greenwich Historical Society's refusal to adhere to the old myth of a local monoculture liberated it to explore the plurality of cultures in the town. Treating Greenwich's Italian-American community as collaborators rather than subjects, the Historical Society engendered a remarkable degree of local interest, support, and participation. Moreover, thanks to the efforts of the apparently indefatigable Greenwich Town Ambassador-at-Large Bea Crumbine, From Italy to America served as the catalyst for sister-city affiliations between Greenwich and both Morra De Sanctis (Avellino province, Campania) and Rose (Cosenza province, Calabria ), the towns to which so many members of Greenwich's Italian-American community trace their roots. This exhibition offered an excellent model for art historians, folklorists, town historians, and museum professionals. The organizers of From Italy to America clearly rejected the notion of the local house-museum as a repository of defunct things; rather, thorough research, community buy-in, and skillful selection of what to include enabled fragments of material culture to tell their tales of alienation, struggle, and joy. From Italy to America allowed the values embedded in its objects to sing; as visitors, we acknowledge the enduring impact of those values upon the present.

—JOSEPH J. INGUANTI
  *Southern Connecticut State University*

Italians in the Santa Clara Valley.
Curated by Ken Borelli and Nancy Morreale.
Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, San Jose State University, San Jose, California.
April 9–June 30, 2013.

When people think of the Italian-American past, most do not conjure up pictures of families who were earning a living in a blossom-filled valley that reminded them of their homeland. Rather, they think of urban laborers in New York City, Boston, or Chicago, of coal-miners in Pennsylvania, of fictional easterners such as the Corleone family, Tony Soprano, Rocky Balboa, Tony Manero, and other depictions of Italian Americans, portraits that have become part of U.S. culture, but ones that represent only part of the story. Italians who migrated to California, for example, had a much different set of experiences. And the Santa Clara Valley in California—now Silicon Valley—is exhibit A in making this case because the sons and daughters of Italy played a crucial role in the local horticulture there, horticulture that led to the region's being, for a time, the world's largest center of fruit growing and processing. Therefore, an exhibition featuring these immigrants and their descendants was welcome indeed. Lovingly mounted by volunteers from the Italian American Heritage Foundation in San Jose, this presentation of their community encompassed a wide range of topics, including the local agriculture, the all-important fruit industry, and entrepreneurial activity more generally.

Italians began to come to the Santa Clara Valley in the late nineteenth century. By 1930 about 20 percent of the population of San Jose, the largest city in the valley, with nearly 60,000 residents, was first- or second-generation Italian American. Though they worked in a variety of occupations, these immigrants were primarily concentrated in horticulture and fruit processing. And what a unique environment for this industry the region constituted: With fertile alluvial soil and a favorable climate, the valley was home to more than 100,000 acres of fruit orchards at its height. Stone fruits, such as prunes, apricots, and cherries, were the main crops, and connoisseurs around the country deemed the valley's produce to be especially choice. To this environment Italian immigrants brought fruit-growing skills and a willingness to work hard. Men worked in the orchards, women worked in the canneries—there were nearly 40 canneries at the peak of production in the 1950s—and children participated, too, though usually not at the expense of schoolwork, since the labor was seasonal. Some families owned enough land to grow fruit commercially, even if on a small scale, and a few became owners of the canneries themselves.

This history and more was illuminated in this exhibition. The late John de Vincenzi, a professor of art at San Jose State University, tirelessly collected photographs to document the community's past, and the curators were able to draw upon them and use material from other sources. Visitors learned about recreational activities, ethnic clubs, religious life, economic sustenance, residential patterns, and even a country-music performer from San Jose, Giuseppe "Shorty Joe" Quartuccio.

But it could be argued that the most important Italian American we met was one who was not an immigrant: Amadeo Pietro Giannini, who was born in San Jose in 1870. Starting out as a produce broker in the valley, he did so well that he was able to found the Bank of Italy (which would become the Bank of America) in San Francisco in 1904. The bank's first branch was in San Jose, where it extended credit to immigrant growers and other residents. Indeed, one can still talk to San Joseans of Italian descent who have family stories of what Giannini did to support their families in times of duress. Seeing Giannini's photograph displayed not far from those of Italian-American-owned canneries offers a likely explanation of who might have provided the credit to launch some of the ventures.

Particularly noteworthy was the tale of immigrants from Trabia, in the Palermo district of Sicily. So many Trabians came to San Jose that in 1958 there were only 5,000 Trabians in the Sicilian town, but 8,000 people of Trabian descent in San Jose, the source for this startling claim being a clipping from a San Jose newspaper that the curators located. Hence, this Sicilian town sent more of its inhabitants to the valley than any other single municipality. Today, if one attends a function at the Italian American Heritage Foundation, it is easy to strike up a conversation with a Trabian descendant. There is still a Trabia Club, as well as an active Sons of Sicily organization.

Perhaps the most striking display dealt with the Arberesh, Albanian-speaking immigrants from southern Italy. The curators did an excellent job of finding visuals to illustrate the history of a people who fled Albania many centuries ago, escaping from the Turks, and found refuge along the Adriatic coast in such provinces as Abruzzo, Calabria, and (those who came to the valley) Sicily. Over the intervening time, the Arberesh have been able to hold on to many aspects of their distinct culture. (My grandmother came from Chieuti, an Albanian-speaking village in Puglia, though her family emigrated to Pennsylvania and not to California.)

There was, however, one significant gap in an otherwise excellent exhibition, and that was the failure to mention the cannery union that came into being in the 1930s. The cannery workforce, the largest in the valley at the time, was substantially Italian American, and so was the leadership of the union. While that decade is known for the worker militancy that made the growth of unions possible—when coupled with New Deal legislation—such unions were typically organized in male-dominant industries. In the Santa Clara Valley, on the other hand, the workforce was largely female, as well as being immigrant and seasonal, and therefore the achievement was truly remarkable. Moreover, it helps explain the relative well-being of the community because thousands of people improved their lot at this time.

Today high-tech campuses have replaced the orchards and the canneries as "the Valley of Heart's Delight" has morphed into Silicon Valley. The percentage of people of Italian descent has shrunk owing to the vast population growth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Indeed, San Jose is now the tenth-largest city in the country, transformed by the in-migration of Mexican Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Chinese Americans, Indian Americans, and Filipino Americans, among others, who have been attracted by the economic prosperity that the region has typically enjoyed. But the earlier immigration from southern Europe also transformed the valley, and this exhibition showed us how.

—GLENNA MATTHEWS
    *Independent Scholar*

Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Times:
Italian Canadian Experiences during World War II.
Curated by Alison Kenzie.
The Italian Canadian Historical Centre, Ottawa, Ontario.
February 18–April 27, 2013.

Canada entered World War II with a series of declarations of war—first on Germany (1939), then on Italy (1940), and finally on Japan (1941). With each declaration, Canada's restrictive War Measures Act was brought to bear upon the community of its own citizens whose heritage allegedly allied them with the new enemy. Canadian residents of German, Italian, and Japanese origins were stigmatized as collective threats to Canada's war effort. With few grounds other than ethnic identity, the government took "pre-emptive action" against each group. The 20,000 Japanese Canadians who lived within 100 miles of the coast of British Columbia were relocated to camps in the inland wilderness or to farms in other provinces to work as laborers: Their goods and property were confiscated and sold off. There were 600,000 German Canadians and 100,000 Italian Canadians across Canada: Some 66,000 of the former and 31,000 of the latter who had become citizens since 1922 were designated "enemy aliens," restricted in their right of assembly (no more than five persons on any occasion), and forced to report regularly to the police. Finally, some 850 German-Canadian and 600 Italian-

Canadian men deemed particularly dangerous were taken from homes and families and interned in camps in rural Ontario and Alberta.

For German Canadians, this kind of treatment was an old story: They had suffered similar disgrace during World War I (anti-German feeling in Canada was such that in 1916 the town of Berlin, Ontario, changed its name to the more patriotic sounding Kitchener, after the British field marshal). For Italian Canadians, their collective punishment came as a blow. In the years leading up to the war, there had been no hint that Mussolini or fascism or the community itself might be viewed with official disapproval or alarm. All of a sudden, in 1940, they were the enemy.

The experience still rankles. It cast a shadow of ignominy over an entire generation, and worse, few non-Italian Canadians today are even aware that it happened. In 1988, Japanese Canadians received a parliamentary apology and financial compensation for their losses; Italian Canadians received an unofficial apology from Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, which the community regarded as insufficient.

But the times and parties in power have changed. The federal government recently made funding available to Italian-Canadian community organizations and cultural centers to produce memorials, books, and exhibitions that document and enhance public awareness of the Italian-Canadian experience during World War II.

The logo of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, a federal department established in 1994, thus figured prominently in the handsome traveling exhibition Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Times: Italian Canadian Experiences during World War II. The exhibition, produced by the Columbus Centre of Toronto, was the first fruit of a federally sponsored project that sent Columbus Centre researchers to record interviews with former internees and their descendants and solicited family photographs, letters, and other documents and objects relating to their experience. Selected materials were featured in this inviting, mostly two-dimensional panel show curated by Alison Kenzie and designed by Eric Pellerin.

The show, which debuted in early 2013 at the Italian Canadian Historical Centre, Ottawa, Ontario, occupied just a couple of hundred square feet, fitting snugly into the Centre's rotunda. There were some twenty panels, framed in warm, dark-stained wood, reminiscent of furniture bought at an Eaton's or Simpson's department store, circa 1940. There were color backdrops meant to evoke kitchen linoleum and living-room wallpaper, a war-era calendar with a picture of the Virgin Mary, and graphic panels here and there depicting stylized shelves of crockery and storage jars. The domestic-décor concept went a bit far sometimes (a life-size wooden cake-and-candles prop was extraneous), but the overall effect was homey and welcoming. There were photos aplenty—of families, grandmothers and grandfathers, children, young men in uniform, shots of men in the camps in shorts and shirts (or shirtless), guard towers and barbed wire, tomato baskets, and a doctor's bag—a veritable community picture album.

The panel text was spare and well written: These were words you actually wanted to read from start to finish as you stood before them, and you could. There were representative quotes from the archival interviews (presented in colored cursive script) and excellent explication (in black typeface) in both English and French. The storyline succinctly covered the territory—Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's call to arms against both Italy and Italian Canadians; what the arrests looked and felt like; who was interned and on what charges (some accusations were brought by vindictive

neighbors, others trumped up by law officers wanting to clear their streets of petty criminals); the effects on those left behind—a small northern community that lost its only doctor; mothers and children, suddenly without a breadwinner, quitting home or school to work; the irony of young men, whose fathers were interned, called up to join the Canadian forces; the paranoid destruction by wives and mothers of any evidence in the home, however innocent, that might lead to further harassment; the experience of men in the camps—varying from deprivation to vacation-like leisure (some said they ate better and came home healthier than if they'd stayed at home); the silence and depression of many who returned.

The exhibition was replete with the kind of vignettes only personal narratives can offer. An artist was arrested for having included Mussolini in his church mural: His wife obtained his release by producing the original sketches with no image of Mussolini in them—the priest had pressured the artist into inserting *Il Duce* post facto. More than once in the testimonies, the Catholic Church was condemned for offering little more than sermons to aid the bereft families: It was the United Church of Canada, apparently, that came through with actual food, clothing, and help with rent money.

Excellent as the text panels were, the audio-video portion fell short—not in quality but in delivery. It was relegated to a single, press-the-button video kiosk where the stories were identified by title and number: You raised the sound wand to your ear, pressed a numbered button, heard a story, and saw the video on the screen. One could browse stories, but the kiosk could accommodate only one visitor at a time who had to stand while the stories played. It was awkward and could be uncomfortable for some. Moreover, the A/V numbers referred back to quotes that were printed on the text panels. Presumably, the experience was supposed to be: Read the quote, see the number, and head over to the kiosk to hear the full story. This could hardly work elegantly—or perhaps even at all. It is a pity because the testimonies were a vital component of the witness-bearing function of the show. One looks forward to the not-far-off day when even the lowest-budget, install-anywhere exhibition will be able to deliver A/V content to a visitor's cell phone as he or she stands in front of a panel.

Nevertheless, these text panels did their work very well. And by a happy turn of events, they were also supplemented at this installation by copies of a publication, available free of charge, which accompanied a recent exhibition on the same topic in a different city. This full-color, forty-four-page booklet by Joyce Pillarella, *Remembering the Internment: Italian-Canadians during World War II Montreal*, perfectly complemented the exhibition. One hopes it will also be offered to visitors at other venues.

Both exhibition and booklet brought the moral of the Italian-Canadian World War II experience forward to the present day, posing questions about civil liberty, democracy, and group stigmatization in modern Canadian society. But they shed their brightest light on the past: They bore eloquent witness for the Italian-Canadian community as to what happened, and they effectively, if my own case is typical, made outsiders aware of its sad experience on the home front just a few generations ago.

The exhibition is scheduled to appear in museums and community centers across Canada through 2016.

—I. SHELDON POSEN
   *Canadian Museum of Civilization*

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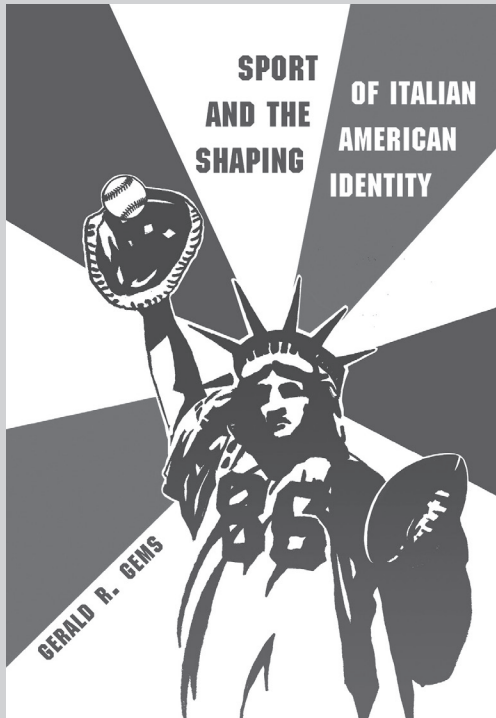  Italian American Review Subscriptions
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