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Italian American Review

John D. Calandra Italian American Institute

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Introduction to the Special Issue on Italian-American Foodways

ROCCO MARINACCIO AND PETER NACCARATO, GUEST EDITORS

This special issue of the *Italian American Review* on Italian-American foodways participates in work that has been a cornerstone of food studies scholarship, namely examining the role of food and foodways in shaping individual and group identities. In doing so, it joins the work of others who have engaged these questions through the specific lens of Italian and Italian-American foodways and identities. At the same time, the three articles published here both build upon and extend much of this foundational scholarship. Each article does so by looking at recent trends in food and food-related media from a historical and critical perspective. Both individually and collectively, they bring together scholarship in food studies and Italian American studies to offer provocative arguments regarding the role of foodways in shaping the real and imagined identities of Italian Americans and non-Italian Americans across the U.S. cultural landscape.

These essays examine foodways as a foundational set of practices through which Italian-American experiences and values are made manifest in American culture. The conceptual framework shared by these three articles is their investigation of “ethnic culinary capital,” a phrase that extends Naccarato and LeBesco’s (2012) concept of “culinary capital,” which they utilize “to understand how and why certain foods and food-related practices connote, and, by extension, confer status and power on those who know about and enjoy them” (3). The authors here apply this concept toward an understanding of the specific ways in which ethnic foodways serve to create and sustain ethnic identities. For individuals and communities seeking to maintain an ethnic Italian identification, food practices provide an important (perhaps essential) means of doing so. Within such communities, knowing, valuing, and replicating what one understands to be the “traditional” and “authentic” foodways (real or imagined) of one’s ancestors confer status by affirming one’s ethnic credentials. These credentials, our authors additionally assert, may be available to Italian Americans and non-Italian Americans alike, thereby revealing the ideological work performed by ethnicity in a multiethnic American culture. Annette Cozzi offers in her essay a critical analysis of her own engagement with her Italian-American heritage and its concomitant foodways, while Suzanne Cope represents a range of artisans who make claims to authenticity by means of participating in those foodways. For all of these Italian-American subjects,

the foodways that they associate with their heritage correlate powerfully to their gender, class, and generational positions. At the same time, Cope's consideration of non-Italian-American artisans who make similar claims to heritage-based authenticity demonstrates the extent to which ethnic culinary capital becomes a commodity divorced from any actual family lineage. These artisans, however, represent only the most recent iteration of such commodification, as Zachary Nowak's longer historical analysis of the reception of Italianate food in the United States makes clear. In sum, all three articles offer insight into the subtle and sometimes conflicting ways in which food and foodways serve to confer status both within and outside of Italian-American communities.

In "Now 'That's Italian': Food, Culture, and the Gendering of Italian-American Identity," Annette Cozzi uses her personal story of growing up as a second-generation Italian-American girl to investigate how both her lived experiences and television advertising served to frame and influence her ethnic and gendered identity. Remembering herself as a young girl trapped in her grandmother's kitchen and seeing a commercial for Prince Spaghetti in which Anthony runs free through the streets of Boston, Cozzi marks the beginning of a process that led her to internalize and eventually challenge prevailing ideologies of gender and ethnicity. At the heart of Cozzi's investigation is a personal and political struggle to resist the received gender roles and stereotypes of Italian Americans in general, and Italian-American women in particular, that were embedded in this and other media representations. At the same time, she reflects on what she gained and lost in doing so, teasing out the complicated relationships among gender, ethnicity, and identity. Having rejected most markers of her Italianness in favor of a more privileged "American" and a more enlightened feminist identity, Cozzi thinks through her desire to reclaim her ethnicity as she embraces food practices that she once considered unacceptable because they replicated a problematic gender hierarchy. Ultimately, Cozzi offers a sophisticated analysis that rejects not only traditional gender roles assigned to Italian-American women (and their stereotypical representations in the media) but also the romanticized nostalgia of much contemporary food writing that would seek to reinvigorate these roles in the service of an imagined postfeminist female identity.

Like Cozzi's article, Zachary Nowak's "Café au Lait to Latte: Charting the Acquisition of Culinary Capital by Italian Food in America" uses media references to Italian foods and foodways as the jumping-off point for his analysis of shifting attitudes toward Italians and Italian Americans in the United States. Offering a content analysis of representative issues of *Bon Appétit* magazine, Nowak constructs a timeline that traces the rise of

Italianate foods and foodways across the cultural landscape. In doing so, he pays particular attention to the class dynamics of this transition, noting that Italianate cuisine garnered cultural cachet for upper-class diners while simultaneously earning popularity with middle-class Americans and serving as an affordable staple for the working class. Nowak reads these shifts within the longer history of Italian immigration and the role these foodways have played in characterizing (and often stereotyping) these immigrant communities. Nowak's analysis of the shifting status of Italianate foods and foodways helps us understand not only when they "took off" in America but also how the discursive practices deployed within the food media established their rising "culinary capital."

Understanding the status of Italian-American foodways in relation to contemporary food trends also informs Suzanne Cope's *Artigiani: The Italian Roots of the Artisanal Food Movement in the United States*. With increasing consumer demand for "artisanal" foods, this contemporary culinary trend has simultaneously embraced a variety of traditionally ethnic Italian foods and foodways while romanticizing, downplaying, or outright erasing their ethnic roots, Cope argues. Positing that these foods and foodways have paved the way for the current artisanal boom, Cope brings together historical documentation and personally conducted interviews to understand this influence and to consider what is at stake when its ethnic roots are (and are not) acknowledged by contemporary food artisans. If Italian and Italian-American foodways have been absorbed across the U.S. culinary landscape, then to what extent does such assimilation erase the influence on the artisanal-food movement of the values that inform these food practices? Does the successful integration of traditionally Italian and Italian-American food practices, along with the values that inform them, into the artisanal-food movement mark the height of their achievement, the loss of their ethnic roots, or both? As Cope interviews contemporary food purveyors who have both real and adopted roots within Italian-American families and communities, she echoes Annette Cozzi's warning about romanticizing the past under the guise of honoring it.

Read collectively, the three articles that compose this special issue of the *Italian American Review* build upon foundational scholarship in both food studies and Italian American studies while extending this work in new and exciting directions. From television commercials to magazine advertisements, representations of Italianate foodways have played a crucial role in shaping or reflecting individual and group identities for Italian Americans and non-Italian Americans alike. At the same time, while ethnic Italian foods and food practices have shaped the U.S. culinary landscape for generations, these articles bring into focus how the values

that inform these practices continue to influence the most recent culinary trends. Viewing these contemporary practices in the context of the lengthy history of Italianate food in the United States discloses the extent to which historical experiences and material practices are transformed as they are represented within consumer culture and historical memory. In short, this special issue of the *Italian American Review* weaves together a consideration of the evolution of Italian-American foodways with an assessment of the present state of those food-based practices in order to establish an important bridge between past, present, and future.

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Now, “*That’s Italian*”: Food, Culture, and the Gendering of Italian-American Identity

ANNETTE COZZI

My earliest awareness of my Italian-American identity came via a commercial for Prince Spaghetti that first aired in 1969, when I was three years old, and ran for thirteen years. I was perhaps eight years old at the time and had probably seen the commercial for years, as I come from a hard-core TV watching family, but this was the first time the commercial really registered. It must have been a Sunday, for we were washing dishes in my grandma’s kitchen, and I recall that oppressively dreary next-day’s-a-school-day cloud that hangs over Sundays like a soul-sucking demon, its beating heart the relentless *tick-tick-tick* of the *60 Minutes* stopwatch. The menfolk, including my cousins Vincie and Tony, nine and seven years old, respectively, were in the living room, probably watching a Bears or Cubs game. From the open kitchen, separated from the living room only by a counter lined with a rail of doweled wooden bars that have a prison-like patina in my murky-edged memory, I watched the commercial and for the first time it just clicked. I’m not sure how I knew I was “Italian-American” instead of the only other identity I had been conscious of up until this point: that of “girl.” But I studied the ad’s young Italian prince, not much older than me, tearing through the streets of Boston, his mother leaning out the window, shrieking “Anthony!” My first impression was that grown-up Italian women were loud and fat, and I gloomily contemplated my dowdy and unglamorous future self, a fate—thanks to the inviolable masculine authority of television in those hallowed days of Walter Cronkite and Alistair Cooke—that seemed more determined and inevitable than the actual examples of my slender and fashionable mother and aunts beside me. Conscripted by the bars of the counter and with this seemingly inexorable destiny weighing heavily upon me, I realized, with no small degree of bitterness and envy, that Anthony was free, while the women slaved in an oppressively hot kitchen, their wills wilted from the humid steam of boiling pasta water and their dampened dreams. “Hey!” I said all of a sudden. “Why don’t Vincie and Tony have to do the dishes?” Thrilled by my daring, proud and empowered, I looked with bright-eyed exultation from aunt to aunt, my sisters-in-suds, excited to celebrate our sudden enlightenment and triumphant emancipation. Ha! Take *that*, Vincie and Tony! See how much you like doing the dishes for the next eight years while I play Don’t Give Up the Ship! Never has petty mutiny been quashed

so quickly, nor the seeds of future rebellion planted so deep. Their response would define me for the rest of my life; it would make me angry over the fate of girls; it would make me resentful of my heritage; it would hatch my incipient feminism. Why not? "Because they are boys." Betrayed by my own and sorely disappointed, I threw down my dish towel in disgust and spent a lifetime grumbling through dishes, the ill-gotten gains of this first stand, only to be permanently branded as lazy, a slur that no fancy Ph.D. or venerable title would ever erase.¹

If you haven't seen it, the commercial begins with Anthony's mother leaning out the window, calling her son home to dinner ("Wednesday" 1969). This echoes a familiar trope: Since the Renaissance, Italian women have been framed by thresholds, windows and doors, a way to negotiate the dilemma of representing she who should not be seen and a reminder of her proper place within walls.² In the commercial, two women are in the kitchen cooking, one of whom, presumably Anthony's aunt or an older married sister, has a young boy literally tugging her apron strings while she balances a huge bowl of food. While the mother begins the commercial shrieking, neither woman is heard from again; instead, the commercial is narrated by a male voiceover, authoritative and omnipotent, creating the impression that Italian-American women are somehow simultaneously loud and silenced. Meanwhile, the men are outside, talking and bowling bocce. Anthony negotiates the maze of sepia-toned streets, nimbly darting through an outdoor market littered with produce and imported wooden crates. He is the prince of these disorderly streets, and not only does he know his way through this bewildering neighborhood but also, the narrator informs us, he *knows*: "Anthony knows a lot about local Italian customs. And he knows a lot about Prince. Because that's a local custom too." Despite the troubling insinuation that what Italians know is confined to food and gaming on the streets, at least he is granted knowledge. But most of all, Anthony is running free. The narrator informs us, "Most days, Anthony takes his time going home." And why shouldn't he take his time? Home is clearly a stifling prison, suffocating under the dominion of female domestication. When Anthony finally deigns to go home, it is only to be fed and served, much to the delight of his grateful mother.

Over time, I became uncomfortably aware of other representations of Italian-American women on TV, all of whom were mothers, as dowdy and well-upholstered as their plastic-covered sofas, who seemingly existed to serve not just men but also boys. Take the memorable Alka-Seltzer commercial, for example ("Alka-Seltzer" 1969), in which the Italian wife silently stands beside her husband, clasping her hands and smiling blandly while he samples the spicy *meatballs-a* (named "Mama Magadini's Spicy Meat Balls,"

a name that comes very close to sounding like "Magdalene," suggesting the Catholic mother/whore dichotomy). The commercial's humor depends upon the deft—and mocking—shorthand for Italian-American identity, from silly accents to spicy "foreign" food to the silenced wife, her only volume her impressive girth. Ragú's early marketing focused on the inculcation of the Italian-American male into proper masculine behavior. In a commercial from 1972, which seems to be shot in the same claustrophobic kitchen as all the others, the male voiceover announces, "Nowadays, when a lot of food is good and expensive, it's nice to find something just plain good" ("That's Italian" 1972). This dire economic situation is perhaps implied to be the result of the ingress of women into the workforce; certainly the mother in this commercial is more professionally dressed than the other two *mammas* we've met. Ragú is "the good and hearty meal you can serve your family often, without using up your whole food budget." Yet, despite joining the workforce, it is still the mother (and her in-training daughter) who is preparing the food and serving it to the male members of the family. And it is at the dinner table that role behaviors are acquired. The young son observes and imitates his father, rolling up his sleeves, tucking his napkin into his collar. The females may appear more modern, but they are still modeling the same subservient behavior that finds pleasure in serving. "Mmm, that's Italian," says the father, poking his finger into his cheek in the Italian sign for "delicious." "Mmm, that's Italian" mimics the son, while his proud mother reaches over to pinch his well-fed, insufferable cheeks.³

This is a message I took to heart: "That's Italian!" meant serving men (and worse, mere *boys*), never leaving the house, never speaking except to shriek, growing fat, and growing old. The only positive Italian-American female I saw represented on TV was Annette Funicello (I suppose, depressingly, that by *positive* I mean *attractive*), for whom I had been named, thanks to my dad's adolescent crush (I prefer not to analyze that weirdness) and for whom I had a deep-rooted fascination. I would watch reruns of Annette on *The Mickey Mouse Club* or looking buxom in a bikini in a beach blanket after-school movie, wholesomely modeling the only other identity available to Italian-American women, that of *va-va-voom* vixen—a limiting representation in itself but infinitely preferred to the house-coated *mamma*. But I soon became aware that my *doppelgänger* had herself grown up to become the wise maternal figure in the Skippy commercials, guiding moms to the most nutritious peanut butter choice for their growing sons.⁴ Once again, I felt as if my future were marked, fated to a lifetime of serving and cooking for men. This was a destiny I was determined to thwart, but, as I found out, my very disavowal was as culturally determined as if I had spent a lifetime stirring boiling pasta in a polka-dot bikini. I realized that I was still defined

by the identity of “Italian-American girl” even as I was denying it, that my longed-for “individuality” was neither original nor self-constructed. What follows is an attempt to understand how and why I fought against and contravened the messages embedded in not only commercials such as these but also in other cultural formations, and what I gained—and what I lost—by rejecting them. My words may be contradictory, but, to paraphrase Mary Jo Bona (1999), I have found my voice and can no longer be perceived as silent (16). (Here I can almost hear my family laughing hysterically. Fine, I’ve never been exactly quiet. But what most Italian-American women haven’t had—and what I now do—is a public forum in which to be heard.)

As Louise DeSalvo and Edvige Giunta explain, “Italian American women have long questioned their place within a culture that, while it can be a source of sustenance, can also represent a patriarchal force that often diminishes and silences women” (DeSalvo and Giunta 2002, 3). The messages from this force I learned not just from my extensively extended family but also, and especially, from advertising. According to Katherine Parkin, “Convenience food advertising . . . helped perpetuate traditional gender roles in the face of modernity” (Parkin 2001, 51). Ads were particularly powerful for me because I was the daughter of an immigrant, and I studied commercials for clues about how to be not only female but also American. “Women are consumers of images as well as goods” (McFeely 2000, 2), and it was the image that I was in the market for. I learned that although cooking and serving were not restricted just to Italian women, Italian women were supposed to be particularly submissive and subservient.⁵ Parkin points out that “food advertisers promoted the belief that food preparation was a gender-specific activity and that women should cook for others to express their love. This emphasis on giving was so complete that ads rarely portray women finding gratification in eating” (Parkin 2001, 52). Certainly the Italian women I saw on television not only did not find gratification in eating but also their main gratification appeared to be in watching men eat. I was acutely aware of the “gender-coded messages that food culture contains. Cooking provides more than a meal. Food culture contains messages about how women and men are supposed to act in our society and what roles they should play” (Inness 2001b, 9). I got the message loud and clear: I was meant to subsume my desires in the satisfaction of males, to find fulfillment in the feeding of my family.

And even this questionable compensation is predicated upon being a mother. Kate Kane argues that in

food commercials [feminine] specificity is an “eternal” feminine that defines women primarily as maternal. Definition of the feminine as essentially

maternal underpins an entire edifice of female stereotypes. At base is the virgin-mother-crone (or whore) dialectic. . . . The pursuit of this false idol distracts women from confronting the injustices done in her name. This is mental alienation. (Kane 1989, 139)⁶

I rejected this virgin-mother-crone dialectic, wishing to be something else altogether, something fabulous and free, something akin to those identities available to men: bachelor-architect-spy, but with Breck hair and *Mod Squad* jeans. I wanted to be an individual who was not defined by my gender or my ethnicity.

But because we're all defined by what, how, and where we eat, my efforts to create an identity that somehow circumvented what it meant to be Italian and female (at least within the popular American culture that defined my horizon) were constantly complicated by mealtimes. We use food to celebrate inclusion and to differentiate otherness. Every nation is identified with its food—sometimes metonymically so. Whether the frog-eating French or kraut-eating Germans, through consumption "cultural differences of identity are mapped out: we eat horsemeat, they don't; they eat grasshoppers, we don't. Indeed, the very concept of 'foreign food' . . . derives from the marking-out of difference: 'foreign' food is food from abroad consumed at home, food of the Other, strange and unfamiliar" (James 2005, 374). Allison James is interested in more subtle ways of looking at global food than mere differentiation; but other scholars, such as Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton, take it as a given that

[t]o eat is to distinguish and discriminate, include and exclude. Food choices establish boundaries and borders. In the modern era this process of culinary differentiation may entail major modifications of traditional food; few people today eat exactly what their grandparents ate fifty years ago, and many of us also like to cross group boundaries to "eat the Other." (Belasco and Scranton 2002, 2)

Indeed, the cuisine of one's grandparents remains a touchstone in the definition of culinary identity; it is, however, becoming increasingly *fashionable* to eat like our grandparents. Foodies like Michael Pollan explicitly urge it, and it is an immediate and visible sign of elitism to seek out the best, the finest, peasant foods: the crustiest whole-grain bread, the cloudiest olive oil, the briniest oysters. But as a child I wanted above all to distance myself from my grandparents' traditional foods. Like many children, I had the secret fantasy that I was a foundling, an exchanged-at-birth princess living a dishwashing pauper's life; I felt particularly alienated from my grandpa's jug of homemade wine and more than usually convinced that

I should be drinking, if not champagne, then Coca-Cola—and not Coke mixed with red wine, either.

I wanted to distance myself from my “greasy wopdago” roots—to use that burning schoolyard slur—and so I rejected those foods that I saw as un-American. In so doing, I staged my battle on what had become a traditional front for second-generation Italian-American children: the dinner table. Simone Cinotto explains, “The meaning of food culture in the Italian-American family cannot be separated from the Americanization of immigrants and their children” (Cinotto 2011, 12). Similarly, Jane Ziegelman argues that “as immigrant families put down roots, [foodways] also became a source of contention between parents and their American-born children for whom Old World foods carried the stigma of foreignness” (Ziegelman 2010, xii). I wanted nothing to do with the Old World, with the foods I associated with my non-English-speaking grandparents and their hand-crocheted hats and egg-white candy. To me, the height of gastronomy was Kraft American cheese, a perfect plastic-wrapped square of literally homogenized uniformity, the bright synthetic orange of Super Orange Super Sugar Crisp (a real thing, I swear) and Tang, the bold new color of forward-looking America and intrepid astronauts. Parmesan cheese, it must be admitted, smells like dirty feet, and it would be thirty years before I would truly appreciate it. Garlic was an abomination: It was the smell of fetid tenements and the invisible fug that accompanied the worst racial slurs. Italian cookies, stuffed with figs, or heaven forbid, hard-boiled eggs, were everything a cookie was not supposed to be. And don’t get me started on cannoli cake: I would have sold my sister for a box of Duncan Hines Devil’s Food with frosting in a can, preferably of a color not found in nature. Even one of my childhood favorites, my grandma’s stuffed artichokes, symbolized everything I didn’t want to be: either a fat little rotund globe—stuffed with breadcrumbs and garlic, steaming over a hot stove—or nature’s sexiest and most forbidding vegetable—an unopened flower, thorny and thistly, hiding its secrets, strip it, suck it, scrape it with your teeth. My grandfather, who formed my preference for steak bloody rare and crusted in salt, didn’t use ketchup. No ketchup on steak! That’s as un-American as not putting it on your scrambled eggs! (Not an issue, obviously, since Italians never eat eggs for breakfast.) My grandfather’s homemade wine squatted on his oilcloth-covered table in its bulbous jug—no slender bottle, no fancy label, no Soave Bolla commercial touting its magical love powers, what was the point? Of course, now I mourn the lost opportunity to learn from my grandfather how to make sausage and grow tomatoes in an alley the size of a postage stamp, and I yearn to once again drink some of his wine that memory and nostalgia have transformed

into precious nectar (although when I wistfully asked my parents how they remembered the taste of grandpa's wine, my father responded instantly "spoiled vinegar mixed with turpentine," while my mother recalled "flat, sour, tannic-y, flavorless grape liquid with no hope of it ever getting better").

My less-contentious relationship with pasta—the emblematic food of Italian America—further illuminates the fraught complexities of my ethnic identity and its place at the table. Italians, heavily taxed back home to create a modern, unified Italy, were starving, but those who emigrated found a promised land that crystallized their national identity. In a sense, these peasant immigrants, these *contadini*, could be Italian only in America: "Plentiful, inexpensive food transformed the former regional *contadini* into Italians and their food into Italian food" (Diner 2001, 54). But this land was flowing not with milk and honey but wheat and water; and it was one food in particular that would be—and still is—identified as particularly Italian. No food "mattered as much as macaroni. A food of affluence for southern Italians, it embodied Italian food and culture for the masses in America" (Diner 2001, 55).⁷ Diner points out that pasta "did more than symbolize Italian culture. Immigrants and their children ate pasta in some form much of the time. All surveys of Italian domestic life and consumption revealed macaroni's daily presence" (Diner 2001, 55). What pasta *did* symbolize more than Italian culture is Italian-American culture. The food associated with wealth back home was now available daily in this new world and became, almost ironically, a symbol of American success: That hyphen, then, is a noodle. As most of us know, many foods associated with Italian identity, such as spaghetti and meatballs, were "utterly invented in America" (Diner 2001, 53) and in fact became the foundation upon which businesses were built. And so, it is in the hyphen that spaghetti and meatballs, pizza, and Sunday "gravy" reside. These are not the foods of my heritage, however. My mother was born in Italy and missed this crucial stage of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century immigration. As a result, the experience of Italian food for me relied less than it did for other people on the heaping plates of pasta featured in TV commercials, which, when they did appear before me on the table, seemed more "American" to me than the strange "Italian" foods—monstrous fava beans and fat-streaked prosciutto, raw sheep's milk cheese and bitter dandelion greens—more routinely served by my immigrant mother and grandparents.

To me, all their homegrown, homemade food was not just foreign, it was aggressively un-American. Hasia Diner claims that "Italian American children expressed little interest in transcending the food boundaries of their families and communities. Memoirs and other texts written by immigrants and their children never mention the temptation of eating out in

restaurants serving other than Italian foods” (Diner 2001, 80). Not only does this contradict, for example, Ziegelman’s contention that Italian-American children stigmatized Old World foods, but also it highlights the tendency of scholars to oversimplify discussions of ethnic identity by mythologizing historical narratives as *either* universal rebellion *or* the wholesale embrace of an idealized culinary tradition. As a child, I thought the pinnacle of family dining was fondue or taco night. The best restaurants, next to McDonald’s, were Sizzler or Ponderosa or anywhere that served Thousand Island dressing and French onion soup. Diner continues, “Memoirs by Italian Americans, the immigrants’ children, rhapsodized about food as a densely positive experience, often the most meaningful part of their recollections. . . . Few of the memoirists indicated any culinary restlessness or desire for greater personal freedom in what and where they ate” (Diner 2001, 81). I don’t know if I am a born malcontent or just more adventurous by nature, or if I was too shaped by my desire to “pass” as 100 percent pure American, but one of my most densely positive food recollections is the first time I had nachos at a friend’s house in the fourth grade. Diner writes that if young people “felt discomfort it was in situations where they had to consume as Italians in public places. . . . They ate different food than the others and felt discomfort at what Americans must think of them and their food. Such revelations of shame at eating Italian food were rare and limited to the public sphere” (Diner 2001, 81). I didn’t feel shame at eating Italian food so much as disdain: I didn’t like it anywhere. Italian food was old-fashioned and stodgy, but American food was modern, innovative, and fun: bright, uniform, shiny, packaged, colorful, and noisy. It snapped, crackled, and popped; rainbow-hued cellophane glittered and rustled. The popped cap, clinking ice, and effervescent pour of a bottle of Coke created symphonies of sound and could actually teach the world to sing;⁸ even the antidote for so much crackly goodness plopped, plopped, fizzed, fizzed. Why passively roast when you could shake and bake? And breakfast cereals! A cornucopia of pink marshmallow hearts and sugar-frosted frankenberries! To my mind, “real” American “Citizens of the 1970s lived completely on a diet of Fondue, Pop Rocks, and Harvey Wallbangers” (“What Kind of Food” 2008).⁹

And so, despite the fact that Italian food had gained cachet in America, I wanted nothing to do with it. Ziegelman points out how “native-born Americans, wary of foreigners and their strange eating habits, pushed aside their culinary (and other) prejudices to sample these novel foods and eventually to claim them as their own” (Ziegelman 2010, xiv). This is demonstrated by a recent Ragú commercial in which a young boy learns “why you should always knock” (“Why You Should” 2012). It is a

clever commercial, but all Italianness, faux or authentic, has been erased. The soundtrack is country and western, and a Sam Elliott soundalike, in twangiest cowboy mode, does the voiceover, his drawl so thick you could serve it on pasta, intoning, "A long day of childhood calls for America's favorite pasta sauce." That's Italian? That's Middle American!

Like the Ragú commercial, I wanted to absorb the hyphen. According to Ziegelman, "food was their [the Italians'] cultural touchstone, their way of defying the critics, of tolerating slurs and all of the other injustices. It was their way of being Italian" (Ziegelman 2010, 193). What I wanted to discover was my own way of "being American," my own way of tolerating slurs and all the other injustices. Donna Gabaccia claims, "observers in the early 1970s often argued that a woman's embrace of ethnicity prevented her from claiming individualism for herself" (Gabaccia 1994, 123). I thought I could create an original and individual identity by slipping through this hyphen and erasing my ethnicity, but as it turns out, as Gabaccia helps to illuminate, my white-washed "individuality" was as mass-produced and premolded as a cookie baked in the Keebler elves' tree. My chafing against the hyphen was not unique to me but symptomatic of the hyphen itself. In my determination to claim American individualism, I rejected my ethnicity. But in the process, I lost my uniqueness. Gabaccia contends, "Increasingly, women and men of European descent have been able to choose whether to accept the 'hyphen' of ethnic identity or not; about a third of third-generation women now call themselves simply 'American.' They can choose this identity only because their neighbors now perceive themselves as white" (Gabaccia 1994, 125). Although I am second-generation, I actively sought out this "whiteness," which my younger self correlated with short skirts, straight hair, and nice teeth. Gabaccia writes, "In the third generation, but only among those of European descent, ethnicity had become an option" (Gabaccia 1994, 127). Although ahead of the generational schedule, I chose to refuse this ethnic option. It turns out that I am hardly special:

[Immigrant daughters] did not and still do not cook, or eat, or keep house as Americanizers might have wanted. But neither do they cook, eat, or keep house as their grandmothers or their ethnic leaders hoped they would. Instead of guaranteeing the survival of ethnic community institutions or an authentic Old World culture, women, especially of the working class, transformed ethnicity into a central domestic, familial, and individual psychological phenomenon. In doing so, they left little room for either unhyphenated feminists or middle-class ethnic leaders to represent them. As one working-class ethnic woman told a female interviewer in the 1970s: "Nobody speaks for me." (Gabaccia 1994, 123)

This, then, is my chance to speak for myself. And yet—am I merely following a script? After all, my rejection of domesticity was almost predestined. According to Gabaccia, “immigrant women’s acculturation is now more often measured by their abandonment of domesticity for wage-earning than by their embrace of American domesticity. Whereas once immigrant women fell short of American standards of womanhood by failing to focus exclusively enough on their children or husband’s well-being, they now fall short if they appear to do so” (Gabaccia 1994, 123). If this is true—well, I did it! American at last! But in the process of becoming an American, I lost something integral.

In some ways, domesticity never stood a chance. As an immigrant daughter, and as a fiercely proud feminist, I was doubly determined—and doubly determined to thwart the cultural messages with which I was constantly bombarded. How could I not chafe against assumptions such as Richard Gambino’s: “In my experience college-educated Italian-American women have in fact mainly limited their break with tradition to but the two areas of attending college and pursuing careers. In my observation they continue to take quite seriously their roles as centers of households. Most of them, even the small number who are verbally critical of *la via vecchia*, continue to reflect its other critical values in their actual behavior” (Gambino 2000, 181). Considering more broadly the shifting gender roles in postwar America, Alice P. Julier contends, “Fears about the decline in the family meal are really fears about the disintegration of ‘recognizable’ gender boundaries” (Julier 2005, 169).¹⁰ I was actively invested in shattering those gender boundaries, but there is still enormous pressure on women—especially Italian-American women—to cook for their families, to cook as an act of love. The Italian-American woman has long been idealized as “both the core of the family, and hence of life, and in service to *l’ordine della famiglia*” (Gambino 2000, 161). The heart of the hearth, our role as wife and mother, according to Deborah Lupton

is to keep the household harmonious, provide emotional stability for the family and acculturate children into appropriate norms of behavior. . . . [Women] also take the major responsibility for feeding and nourishing children. . . . The “work” that is performed in the context of the family is rarely viewed as “real” work . . . but as a labour of love. (Lupton 1996, 39–40)¹¹

Yet this unpaid labor of love comes at a price. Mary Drake McFeely sees cooking as an instrument of oppression: “As ‘women’s work,’ cooking has been used—and resisted—as a tool of repression. The woman who has to provide a hot dinner for her husband and family every night is effectively

tethered to the stove and limited in how much she can accomplish in the outside world. Fulfilling her obligations to husband and family every night inhibits her ability to act in public" (McFeely 2000, 1). And, as we have seen, Italian-American women, especially as they are represented in the media, are particularly associated with the private spaces of the home.

Sherrie Inness wonders, "Who cooks dinner in most American homes? . . . Food and its preparation are strongly gender-coded as feminine. . . . The American kitchen continues to be strongly gendered as female" (Inness 2001a, 1). Although there is surely a cultural shift that is eroding this truth, in my own experience, this is patently true—despite the fact that I am the "breadwinner" and my husband is, for the moment, a stay-at-home parent (his dog-eared excuse for his inability to slice a tomato or braid a ponytail is "I never had a doll"—the best argument ever for gifting little boys everywhere with dolls immediately). I could refuse to cook, but we have a six-year-old daughter. And the truth is that not only do children need to be fed *constantly*—you can't just forget to feed them and call it a cleanse, or throw a granola bar at them and call it a meal (although who hasn't?)—but also it's hard to disregard a lifetime of cultural messages that insist that cooking equals love. I've come a long way, baby, but I also want to have it all, and that means dealing with the continuing idealization of cooking as an essential performance of my femininity. I would need to come to terms with the fact that, in the words of Laura Schenone, "food—that centerpiece of women's work—is essential to life itself, biologically, culturally, and for many people, spiritually. From the beginning of time, women have been the caretakers of our stomachs" (Schenone 2003, xii). Despite my best intentions, passages such as this raise my hackles, and not just because of the "from the beginning of time" phrasing. And yet, I have found the heart of it to be true. I really *do* bring home the bacon and fry it up in a pan, but it's hard not to resent that this is expected of me. (In his defense, my husband is a terrible "wife and mother" but he is a dreamy father.) And so, I had to make a choice: I could stew in my own resentment, or I could transform this chore into a choice. I was ready to unleash both my inner, long-repressed "Italianness" and my eternal, maternal "feminine" and become the Madonna my hips and breasts and hair had always promised.

Turns out, my Madonna is as much Madwoman in the Attic as she is Mother Earth. Schenone wants to recuperate "women's work," to reclaim and celebrate it. She rhapsodizes, "I have days in my very own kitchen when I am a high priestess of life. Steam rises up from my bubbling pots. Spices dance in their jars like spirits yearning to be set free. Garlic smells as alive as sex. I wield knives. Outside my kitchen door people clamor with hunger, and I am the only one who can make things right" (Schenone

2003, xv). Wow. Cooking is *never* like this for me. Spices don't dance in their jars; they huddle in clumps, or, if they're cumin or turmeric, boldly escape their bottles in a desperate bid to permanently dye my white tiles yellow. Garlic doesn't smell like sex; it smells like what it is: vampire repellent. Maybe it's just jealousy, but despite my high-minded vows to be a generous reader and a glorious Woman-with-a-Capital-W, a *Donna*, Schenone's ecstasies curdle my blood. Oh, the rapture: "And, through food, women have made life simply better: more delicious, more beautiful, not to mention more bearable during dark hours. Even without wanting to, women respond with their bodies to that first infant cry of tiny lips asking for milk" (Schenone 2003, xiii). Are you freaking kidding me? Tiny infant lips don't *ask* for milk; they're demanding toothless piranhas who latch on and suck you dry until your nipples are cracked and bleeding. Don't get me wrong: I grew to love breastfeeding—*eventually*, once I got past the bleeding—but this romanticizing of what it means to be both food maker and food source makes my skin crawl.

Certainly the essentializing runs deep. Schenone writes, "I sometimes feel that the act of cooking is an archetypal code in the dark parts of my brain, and if no one had ever taught me to do it, I would know how anyway, in the same way birds mysteriously find their way to the same tree year after year" (Schenone 2003, xiii). No offense, but blech. The fact is that I *have* been taught to cook, and I still feel no atavistic urge to "gather roots and herbs, kill what I needed, make a clay pit, and find a big stick for stirring" (Schenone 2003, xiii), despite the fact that this is the second time I've been told I'm hardwired to forage.¹² The oven doesn't whistle to me night after night, luring me to light its fire and perform culinary magic. To be clear, my daughter's not entirely deprived; just last night we made a lemon pie from lemons she picked from our own lemon tree. But I also realize that there is a world of difference between special-occasion cookery—spectacular desserts or the chocolate-studded Sunday pancakes so many dads specialize in—and the daily feeding and watering that is still the lot of mostly women. I sympathize with Schenone's desire to rescue such cookery from drudgery, and yet I'm not sure if exchanging the Angel of the Hearth for a Sorceress of the Stove is really much of a gain.

I understand the need to search for women's buried voices between the lines of ingredients. Somewhere between one cup of milk and a dozen eggs is a woman who milked the cow and fed those chickens and baked the cake and cleaned the kitchen, and we often must glean her story from recipes. I agree with Arlene Voski Avakian and Barbara Haber that "cooking may have provided a vehicle for women's creative expression" (Avakian and Haber 2005, 2). Certainly this is true for my own mother, who cooks to

please herself as much as to nurture others. I've also admired Nigella Lawson for admitting that she cooks because "meals need to be cooked, and children need to be looked after and I can combine the two. Clearing up even the messiest kitchen is better, in my book, than hours spent running in the park" (Lawson 2004, 238). Nigella Lawson just confessed that she is a domestic goddess because she is a "bad" mother! A "good" mother subsumes her own desires in the wants and needs of her family. A good mother doesn't cook just because she is tired of playing Make Believe and wants a moment to herself, or because she yearns to express in pie the poem she doesn't have the room of her own to write: She cooks because her family's happiness is paramount.¹³ Schenone says of *her* mother, clearly a "good" one: "A traditional role of womanhood was not what she'd had in mind for herself, and yet there she was navigating this very path. With great effort, my mother threw herself into cooking and food. She learned the Italian-American classics to please her husband and affirm his heritage. . . . And for years, she pored through cookbooks, always trying new recipes as though in endless pursuit of just the right formula that would make us a happy, healthy family" (Schenone 2003, xviii). I have no doubt that Schenone's mother is a remarkable woman who made the best of the path that she didn't choose for herself, and I admire and even feel a strong readerly love of her for it. And yet it made me sad. How many women cook to please others, to sublimate their thwarted dreams? And why is such an image, decades after contemporary feminism was supposed to have radicalized women's roles and choices, being re-inscribed so blithely?

My own mother, a fabulous cook, certainly wants to please her family, but she also appreciates the applause. She too pores over cookbooks—in the bathtub—an act that seemed senseless and impractical when I was younger, but that I now see as the escape and indulgence it really is. I realize now that feeding us well was a serendipitous bonus. My mother cooks—for herself—and generously allows us to partake of her bounty. And the truth is, I love and respect her all the more for it. She cooks not to feed her family, not because she is a martyr, but because it's an expression of her insatiable appetite for life—and in the process she showed her daughters a vision of womanhood that was lively, lavish, and loving.¹⁴ According to Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato, food culture invites consumers "to consume the subtle message embedded within . . . representations. However, food representations are not simply tools of seduction or devices for the exercise of repressive power—they are also occasions for resistance that provides opportunities for pleasure" (LeBesco and Naccarato 2008, 1). I've found great pleasure in that resistance, but I now desire to find freedom in surrender—not as a mark of defeat but as the abandonment

of restrictive definitions. I want to cook for my daughter and my husband not because I have to but because I want to. I want to be at once ethnic and individual, woman and person, American *and* Italian. I had rejected domesticity—on principle. And now that I was secure that I wouldn't be defined and restricted by it, I was ready to embrace aspects of it—for my pleasure, as well as theirs.

Thus, I reconciled the hyphen by replacing it with an ampersand. I wasn't truly proud of my heritage until I traveled to Italy when I was eighteen years old. For this *turista Americana*, Italy was a land dripping with art and beauty, from the crumbling frescos in the streets to the tanned mini-skirted legs of the girls on their Vespas, from the cappuccinos frothed with clouds of foam to the plump purple figs that seemed to burst from pure joy of being. Everybody smoked, and nobody dieted. This was an Italianness I could embrace. For me, and too many Americans, the hyphen represents the Jersey Shore, Carmela Soprano's nails, orange-skinned, patently plastic "real" housewives, and absurdly laughable Snookies. The hyphen is a punch line, and the joke is on the Guidos. This wasn't *my* heritage. All oppressed peoples have their castes, and my family was no different.¹⁵ Gabaccia explains, "Not all immigrant women were alike, of course, and . . . class, ethnicity, and time of migration shaped important variations in women's experiences. . . . A woman's starting place on the 'other side' of an international economy proved the greatest influence" (Gabaccia 1994, xii). I was always told that my mother's starting place on the other side was different; for one thing, despite having spent most of her life in Italy and not speaking a word of English, my grandmother had been born in America and had fiercely held on to her identity as an *Americana* in the village square. My grandparents immigrated because of my grandmother's determination to claim her birthright and raise her children as American. This was important to their sense of immigrant identity: They weren't starving peasants; they were dreamers. My grandmother wanted me to be an American, and I needed to become one before I could embrace all that is Italian. As a successfully assimilated American, I can finally allow myself to be ethnic.

And so, it seems fitting that I close with my nonna's recipe for stuffed artichokes, as remembered by my mother. *Carciofi*, spiky and alien, unyielding and succulent, are like my complicated relationship with my identity—beneath the many layers you will find both an off-putting bristly core and a surprising tender heart. Buttery and crumbly, steamed in olive oil and water and their own juices, they will release a garlic and Parmesan cloud when you lift the lid, the ineffable essence of Italianness that transcends hyphens and ampersands. I hope you enjoy them. One day I intend to make them.

Grandma Antonetta's Stuffed Artichokes

Ingredients

4 artichokes (buy large artichokes for stuffing)
1 lemon

Filling

1 cup seasoned Italian breadcrumbs
1 cup grated imported Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
3 finely chopped garlic cloves
⅓ cup olive oil
⅓ cup water

Directions

1. Clean artichokes: Use scissors and a sharp knife. Begin preparing an artichoke by removing the inedible outer leaves by bending back and snapping off the tough lower layers of the leaves. When you get to edible leaves, they will be green and have a whitish base. With scissors trim away the top end's prickly little leaves. Rub cut ends with lemon and set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine the breadcrumbs, Parmesan cheese, parsley, and garlic. Moisten the filling by alternately adding tablespoons of oil and water until it binds. Mix thoroughly and divide into four parts.
3. Using your hands, take a small dollop of filling, pull back a leaf, and stuff. Do not pack the stuffing. Use a light touch. Continue working from the outside in, going around the globe until all or most of the leaves are stuffed. Work inside the mixing bowl so that if the filling falls out it drops back into the bowl. Use any remaining filling to fill the cavity.
4. Choose a heavy deep pot with a tight-fitting lid so that the artichokes can fit snugly against each other when sitting upright. Pour the remaining water and olive oil along the inside of the pot. There should be about a half inch of liquid in the bottom of the pot. Moisten the tops with a sprinkle of oil, cover, and bring the pot to a boil. Once the pot begins to boil, lower the heat and continue to cook until the artichokes are tender. If you reach in and pull one of the leaves off, it should pull out easily. They should cook for at least an hour. Check to make sure that the liquid does not evaporate. Keep adding tablespoons of water to the pot. Don't worry if the leaves next to the bottom of the pot stick and darken, they will be delicious anyway. When the artichokes are done, transfer them to a serving platter and pour any juice left in the pot over them.

5. Pull off a leaf and scrape your teeth over the leaf to remove the stuffing and the soft meat of the leaf. Discard the tough rind of the leftover leaf.
6. Save the best for last. When you've eaten most of the leaves, only the heart remains. Cut away the fuzzy top of the heart and enjoy the bottom!

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Notes

1. As if to emphasize the immutability of this trait, in the middle of writing this first paragraph, my mother called to see what I was up to. I explained I was writing an article and she replied, "Since you're not working . . ."
2. See, for example, Botticelli's *Portrait of a Lady* (1470-1480): [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Alessandro_Botticelli_Portrait_of_a_Lady_\(Smeralda_Brandini\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Alessandro_Botticelli_Portrait_of_a_Lady_(Smeralda_Brandini).jpg).
3. A later Ragù commercial from the 1980s follows this pattern of male inculcation ("Ragù Spaghetti Sauce" n.d.). A male figure who could be Anthony grown up roams the city streets with his young son, explaining, "Every Sunday when I was your age, grandma sent me here for bread." As he schools his young son in the life of the streets, he is in no more of a hurry to return home than the young Anthony, pointing at a playground: "This is where I stopped for a game." Mamma, of course, is aproned to the stove, despite the fact that she now has jarred sauce at her disposal. The entire commercial is a polite conceit for the unhyphenated American audience, allowing them to simultaneously appropriate "slow-cooked" Italian food while maintaining their fast-paced modern lifestyle; the hyphenated Italian-American audience is fully aware that although their image is used to shill, they are not the intended market. (As patton303 helpfully points out in the YouTube comments, "Ain't no Italian grandma nowhere using no motherfucking Ragù." Too true, patton303. Too true.) The son compliments his mother on this dubious culinary achievement, "Still terrific, Ma!" (This commercial is particularly insulting as the grandmother is now neither liberated from the kitchen nor fulfilled by one of the few creative outlets and traditional accomplishments allowed her, that of cooking.) Wordlessly, she accepts a kiss. The young son says, "This was a great place to grow up, right Dad?" and the Dad smarms, "The best!" Yeah, I can only imagine. Dad adds the kicker: "That's Italian!"
4. One of these Skippy commercials nods toward the feminist movement: The football player that Annette Funicello is addressing turns out to be a girl. And yet because of the dynamics of the commercial, in which Annette Funicello is clearly modeling the kind of adult the girl is meant to grow up to be, we know that this gender play is indeed that: *play*.
5. For more on women's roles in the Italian-American home, see Boscia-Mulè (1999) and Gambino (2000), chapter 5.
6. Cf. Kathleen LeBesco, who discusses how this mental alienation politically disempowers women: "American women have historically been distracted from more pressing battles for political empowerment by the lure of beauty, and throughout most of the twentieth century, mainstream American beauty has been conflated with slenderness" (LeBesco 2001, 135).

7. For a brief history of "macaroni" see Reay Tannahill's *Food in History*, in which she claims, "By the eighteenth century and the days of the Grand Tour macaroni was firmly established in European mythology. Middle-class tourists of mature years might scorn it as they scorned other foreign food, but the adolescent aristocrats who were dispatched, complete with tutor and chaplain, to complete their education in the heartland of Classical civilization, were not so insular. So weary did their less-traveled contemporaries become of the young men's sketches of ruins, antique busts, 'Italian' manners and poems in praise of pasta that they nicknamed the whole breed 'Macaronis'" (Tannahill 1988, 237).
8. There's actually a Facebook page: "The noise a coke bottle makes when its opened" [sic].
9. This is Nick B.'s brilliant response on Yahoo Answers to the question of "What Kind of Food Did They Eat in the 1970s?" ("What Kind of Food" 2008).
10. Mary Drake McFeely explains, "Talent in the kitchen has long been considered an important quality in a woman, and the question, 'But can she cook?' has been a symbolic way not only of rating her domestic ability but also of putting her in her female 'place'" (McFeely 2000, 1).
11. For an examination of the role of women and the family meal in the maintenance of British identity, see Bob Ashley et al., in *Food and Cultural Studies*, which investigates the ways in which "the production of the proper meal, which in turn produces the family, is rooted in a particular sexual division of labour" and "which looks at the extent to which women are still responsible for 'feeding the family'" (Ashley et al. 2004, 129).
12. Diner also refers to Italian women as "adept foragers" (61). I've never felt the desire to pluck a dandelion to eat its leaves or forage through a dumpster for a cabbage, despite the fact that it's apparently in my blood: Ziegelman quotes from an 1883 article from the *New York Times*: "Partially decayed potatoes, onions, carrots, apples, oranges, bananas, and pineapple are the principal finds in the mess of garbage that is overhauled. The greatest prize to the garbage-searching old hag is a mess of the outside leaves of cabbage that are torn off before the odorous vegetable is displayed for sale on the stands" (Ziegelman 2010, 191).
13. For a seminal discussion on the *mala femmina* vs. *una buona femmina*, see the chapter on "La Serietà—The Ideal of Womanliness" in Richard Gambino's (2000) *Blood of My Blood*.
14. In many respects, my mother embodies the modern, successfully assimilated immigrant described by Gabaccia: "With their skills as 'people persons,' the women of the other side—now most often speaking through third world feminists and minority feminists in the United States—remind American women, and feminists among them, of some of the limits to modernity's vision. They offer alternative views, not only of female emancipation but of the meaning of a good life for all" (Gabaccia 1994, 134).
15. In *Authentic Ethnicities: The Interaction of Ideology, Gender Power, and Class in the Italian-American Experience*, Patricia Boscia-Mulè reminds us that "class, ethnicity, and gender feed into each other" (Boscia-Mulè 1999, 2). See chapter 6, "Italians vs. Italians: Intragroup Perceptions and Relations," for an in-depth examination of how the author's "first- and second-generation respondents . . . reveal their perceptions of other Italian Americans, and their assessments on the Italian ethnic group as a whole" (70).

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Café au Lait to Latte: Charting the Acquisition of Culinary Capital by Italian Food in the United States

ZACHARY NOWAK

Imagine an advertisement for an Italian cheese in the pages of the food magazine *Bon Appétit*. The ad shows a darkened shelf with old-fashioned glass containers. Instead of the more modern, Ball-jar-type screw-on metal lids, they have wire bales holding down glass lids or even corks. “Basil” and “Black Pepper” are handwritten on their labels. The large, bold headline text announces that “real Italian flavor is within reach,” while the copy below includes the phrases “authentic Italian” and “the tradition of Old Italy.” The authentic cheese readers are encouraged to buy to make their dishes taste like the old country stands next to the spices: a tall canister of Kraft 100% Grated Parmesan Cheese. The cursive script below the word “Cheese” reads “Italian type” (Kraft 1985, 150). Anyone reading *Bon Appétit* today would be quite surprised to find this advertisement among articles about farm-to-table restaurants or gourmet coffees, recipes for authentic zabaglione, and new hints for ossobuco. Italianate¹ food is very present on the pages of the magazine, but Kraft’s Parmesan is not part of that canon anymore. Why not? This article seeks to identify when and why Kraft Parmesan cheese could no longer be placed beside glass jars of dried basil in such an advertisement. In other words, it asks the question: When did Italian food go from being comfort food to status food?

In its consideration of the history of Italianate foodways in the United States, this article does not take sides in the battle over whether these foodways compose a valid cuisine or whether they are “authentic,” but rather it identifies and analyzes what I call the “takeoff moment” of the current popularity and cultural significance of Italianate cuisine. As recently as the 1980s, Italianate food had just slightly more cultural cachet than Mexican food in the United States, when a green canister of cheese from Wisconsin merited the adjective “Italian,” rucola was unknown, and coffee in hot milk was called a café au lait (Levenstein 2003; Kamp 2006). The last few decades, and especially the last twenty years, have seen a tremendous rise in the status of Italianate food. It has not only achieved a comparable status to French-inspired food as a chic cuisine, but it has also enjoyed enormous popularity among middle-class Americans.

In the post-World War II period in the United States there was a dichotomy in Italianate food: While there was widespread popular acceptance

of what might be considered “Italian-American” fare—baked ziti, spaghetti with meatballs, California-made Chianti in a flask—high-status Italianate cuisine was restricted to a relatively small number of fine Italian restaurants. Fine dining—or, more appropriately, *haute cuisine*—meant French food almost by definition (Cinotto 2013; Ferguson 2004). At some point in the recent past,² Italianate cuisine closed the gap between red-and-white checkerboard tablecloths (low brow) and red-coated waiters (high brow). The most obvious reasons for this transition—that Italianate food is inexpensive, that Italy is a popular tourist destination, that Italian food is delicious and “simple” as well as healthy—immediately run into a problem of chronology. Italianate food’s low cost has attracted American consumers at least since Prohibition, as will be discussed below. Italy has been a popular destination for American tourists since they began participating in the Grand Tour in the early 1800s; while the protagonist of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* dreams of Italy in a novel set in the mid-1950s, it was René Verdon whom the Kennedys hired for the White House in 1960, not an Italian chef. As Harvey Levenstein observed, this helped put French cuisine at the “pinnacle of status” (Levenstein 2003, 140). Similarly, many of the most popular Italian dishes have been around in some form or another for a century if not longer, and Ancel and Margaret Keys’s book promoting the so-called “Mediterranean diet” was published in 1959. Why then was Italianate cuisine able to acquire culinary cachet—not only with the upper crust but also with a broad swath of upper-middle America—only so late in its developmental history?

Former *Esquire* food-and-wine correspondent John Mariani acknowledged this culinary victory in his 2011 best-seller *How Italian Food Conquered the World*, but Mariani was ultimately unable to point to the historical moment when Italianate food began to rival French-inspired food or to explain why (Mariani 2011). The present investigation determines the chronological takeoff point of Italianate food and suggests a conjuncture of historical variables responsible for this takeoff. Crucial to this investigation is the fact that this conjuncture was not invisible and subtle but instead quite evident, a result of the rising “culinary capital” of Italianate food. Naccarato and LeBesco, in coining this phrase, provide us with a conceptual framework to investigate “how and why certain foods and food-related practices connote and, by extension, confer status and power on those who know about and enjoy them” (Naccarato and LeBesco 2012, 3). The rising power of Italianate food to endow its consumers with culinary capital meant that it would be conspicuously advertised and discussed. As this article will show, there is not a simple, linear relationship between an increase in representations of Italianate food and the distinction (*a là*

Bourdieu) that it embodied. Discourse about Italianate food did not simply create this culinary power: The rise in Italianate food's culinary capital was a complex interaction among Americans' historical understandings of Italianate cuisine's place in the U.S. culinary hierarchy, advertising by food corporations and Italian government-sponsored boards as well as food writers' and publishers' perceptions of consumer desire.

In order to explore this thesis, this article is divided into two sections. The first section traces the historical process by which Italian food was both transplanted to the United States and reinvented there. It discusses both the real and imagined conditions in which this happened, as well as the ways in which this food (and the Italian immigrants who brought it to America) was incorporated in the American cultural and culinary landscape. In this section I'll discuss the effects of American abundance on the many cuisines brought along as part of the meager baggage of Italian peasant emigrants. I'll then follow Italianate food from the disdain it met with from Anglo-Americans, their grudging acceptance of it in the 1920s and 1930s, and its incorporation as a somewhat homogenized part of the post-World War II foodscape. This first section also discusses Italianate food's status vis-à-vis the dominant French-inspired cuisine; that discussion provides the framework for the second section in which I analyze a representative sample of *Bon Appétit* issues from the last forty years. Pierre Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) explained how elites attempt to reinforce class boundaries with naturalized standards of taste; the danger for elites is that their fine tastes can be imitated by the middle class, erasing the class lines.³ *Bon Appétit*, then, is the ideal archive to explore: Less elitist than its cuisine publication *Gourmet*, *Bon Appétit* was the vehicle for writers and advertisers to reach the part of the American middle class that aspired to attain the culinary markers of upper-class grace. An evaluation of the advertising rhetoric, culinary discourse, and the visual culture of this important middle-class culinary publication makes clear that there was indeed a rising popularity and then a distinct "takeoff moment" where Italianate food overtook its French-inspired rival cuisine and distanced itself from its older, red-and-white checked self.

The Historical Context of Italianate Food in the United States

In order to understand the evolution in the status of Italianate food that is evident in the *Bon Appétit* advertisements discussed in the second part of this article, it is important to trace the process by which it arrived in the United States. Unlike other "ethnic" cuisines now popular in the United States (e.g., Thai, Ethiopian), Italianate food has been present and

widespread geographically for more than a century but has had until the last two or three decades a rather low status. Important then to the present discussion is this cuisine's arrival and development in America. Previous research has discussed the historical factors in Italy that set the stage for the creation of a new cuisine in North America (Diner 2001) as well as its evolution in the last 125 years (Levenstein 2003; Albala 2012). A persistent theme in discussions of Italianate food in the United States is the debate about what is "authentic" or "real" Italian cuisine. In other words, the question has been whether a suite of ingredients, processes, and dishes was simply transplanted to the New World from the Italian peninsula or represented a new cuisine entirely, with little to do with peasant fare in the Old World. Despite the seeming logic of poor southerners bringing their tradition of pasta, salami, and good white bread, the reality is quite different. Italian immigrants of the late nineteenth century were by and large very poor. They were those who had the least to lose and the most to gain emigrating from impoverished agricultural areas. Their daily fare in Italy had been anything but pasta, cuts of salami, and what we now think of as "Italian bread" (Diner 2001; Levenstein 2003). Indeed, as David Gentilcore points out, the canonical dish of spaghetti with tomato sauce was still a relative novelty for Italian peasants (Gentilcore 2010, 102). The so-called *cucina povera* (poor people's or peasant food) was not the healthy, hearty meal a farmer was happy to come home to after a hard day in the fields, but rather a fare based on monotony and malnutrition that historians connect to deficiency diseases and concomitant short life expectancies (Riley 2007, 149). Pasta in nineteenth-century Italy was far from being a national food: Indeed, it was still an expensive one, out of reach of the poorest laborers for most of the week. If pasta was an occasional food, the meatballs (and meat in general) were even more rare. Hasia Diner, in her important work on emigrants and their food, describes how Italy's poor were effectively vegetarians for most of the year, except Christmas and saints' days (Diner 2001).

But while the *braccianti* and *contadini* (the poor rural farm workers) who left Italy had only rarely eaten pasta, salami, and white bread, they had certainly seen and desired them. As Diner says, "All over the peninsula, the poor made the food, saw it, knew how to assess its quality, but could only eat what those in power allotted" (Diner 2001, 34). The Italian poor's culinary dreams were to be fulfilled, however, in the United States. America was no paradise, but the relative food abundance and higher wages allowed immigrants to realize some of their dreams. Italian immigrants could now enjoy foods that had been limited to the upper-middle and upper classes in the old country: Pastas, cheeses, olive oil, beer, and

all kinds of meat (both cured and fresh) graced immigrant tables. The very abundance and relative inexpensiveness of these foods, however, created the first adaption of these “dreams realized,” the *carnificazione* or “meatization” of dishes. Meat, once enjoyed only a few times a year, could now be eaten frequently and added to any plate (Diner 2001, 102). One of the best examples is the dish we see our two diners ordering in the film *Big Night*: that classic of Italian-American cuisine, spaghetti with meatballs (Tucci and Scott 1996).

It was not only the abundance in the American culinary environment that shaped Italianate food; the homogenization of the Italian emigrant communities themselves left its mark as well. Even today we recognize that the term “Italian cuisine” is something of a misnomer: Though there are some dishes that are now truly “national,” Italianate cuisine in the United States is a composite of many smaller regional and even municipal cuisines, as well as culinary novelties created here (Zanger 2013, 348, and *passim*; Diner 2001). This was, of course, even more the case 120 years ago. Immigrants who arrived in the United States had their own culinary dreams—that special dish prepared for each saint’s day, a certain pasta shape, a special dessert. With the passage of time, these distinct dishes and traditions were blended and amalgamated into Italian cuisine in the United States.

Despite its revolution and consolidation in the United States, Italianate food in the late nineteenth and well into the twentieth century had a status similar to that of its producers. As Levenstein points out, while earlier Italians had been skilled laborers from the north, “as the deluge of unskilled and poverty-stricken immigrants from the Mezzogiorno struck America’s cities, Italy no longer merely connoted Renaissance palaces and happy gondoliers to the native-born mind” (Levenstein 2002, 77). As “Italy” became associated with crowded tenements, manual laborers, and crime, the status of “Italian food” sank accordingly. As William Grimes commented in *Appetite City*, “French cuisine arrived in New York with its credentials in order. Italian cooking was another matter. [. . .] Italians were automatically described in the press as dark, dirty, and dangerous” (Grimes 2009, 96). Drawing on the records of the benevolent associations that attempted to “help” new immigrants in New York, Levenstein shows in painful detail how aid workers tried unsuccessfully to convince Italians to give up their cuisine. Some Italian food products such as semiwild greens and pasta were associated by Americans with poverty. Conversely, olive oil and imported Parmesan cheese were costly items and were looked down on by these aid workers as a luxury that the Italians should forgo. These items, now fundamental elements of Italianate cuisine, then represented

the wrong food for those seeking to acquire culinary capital as a means of satisfying their middle-class pretensions.

Advances in nutrition research accorded grudging approval, if not wholesale approbation, to Italian food. The discovery of micronutrients and their presence in fruits and vegetables raised the culinary value of Italianate cuisine. This led to the shifting of the liminal space between American and Italian food cultures: The meeting point between the two moved from the grocery store to the Italian restaurant (Levenstein 2002, 87). Sicilian and Neapolitan and Piedmontese restaurant owners offered “Italian” dishes that wouldn’t offend the sensibilities of their customers: As Franco La Cecla has pointed out, ethnic restaurants are a sort of compromise between both parties (La Cecla 2007, 59–60). The diners are theoretically looking for “authenticity,” though certain characteristic ingredients or even successions of dishes would appear too strange. Thus, the restaurant owner must provide something halfway between “authentic” and “familiar.” An example of this compromise might be a tomato sauce without any garlic in it, or perhaps with sugar, coming closer to the familiar ketchup that American diners already knew. Thus, Americans’ expectations took the culinary “rough edges” off of Italianate cuisine, moving it further toward indigenous, less threatening (and, one could say, more bland) American palates.⁴ Thus, the appearance of Italian restaurants led to greater homogenization of what was considered Italian but did not improve the associations with Italian food products. Italian wine was still “Dago red” rather than wines distinguished by the names of regions.

A big push toward the public’s acceptance of Italianate cooking came in the 1920s and 1930s with two events that pushed regular Americans into closer contact with both Italian immigrants and their food. The national prohibition on alcohol created an economic incentive for surreptitiously making and serving alcohol. Italian Americans, who had been making their own wine in urban contexts for decades and who often were proprietors of restaurants, were extremely well-placed to capitalize on Prohibition. Their speakeasies were not simply bars but restaurants as well, and it was here that the average American got to know Italianate cooking (Okrent 2010, 208). While Prohibition created a more widespread familiarity with Italianate food, the Great Depression provided an economic reason to eat it. The economic downturn and widespread unemployment made pasta (and meatballs made out of inexpensive ground beef) a cheap alternative to more traditional meat-based American meals. Cheese was a viable alternative to meat for animal proteins, and the vegetable- and fruit-filled diet of Italian immigrants was popularized by nutritionists eager to help Americans maintain a balanced diet in the face of poverty (Levenstein

2002, 84–85, 87–88). It's important to note that the cuisine that more and more Americans were being introduced to in the interwar and immediate post-World War II period had already been evolving for over forty years: What was presented to them as Italian food had already been adapting to American tastes for a long time. American diners, like those in *Big Night*, were blissfully unaware of this, though. They saw the food they ate (spaghetti with meatballs, veal parmesan, chicken cacciatore) as Italian food, not as the product of cultural adaptation.

Big Night, set in the 1950s, portrays a middle America just beginning to become interested in foreign food. As Levenstein points out in *Paradox of Plenty*, this was less a result of GIs returning with a taste for pizza, Rogenbrot, or couscous, but rather the rise of mass media (Levenstein 2003). For several decades after World War II, Italianate cuisine enjoyed a quiet popularity based on a perceived relationship between price and value: inexpensive food that tasted good. At some point in the waning twentieth century, this perception changed: Italianate food acquired value not only because of its price-taste value but also because of its value to those eager to acquire culinary capital. Simone Cinotto explains that Italian restaurants were able “to provide a safe, comfortable space where non-Italian middle-class Americans could enjoy Italian customs and culture, to share in the experience of ‘being Italian’” (Cinotto 2013, 181). In this way, Italianate food conquered the middle ground between popular and elite, earning the reputation of a simple yet sophisticated cuisine that a large swath of the American middle class enjoys today. These aspiring culinary sophisticates, eager to impress their friends, had to not only consume the food itself but also acquire intimate knowledge of it. This explosion of interest is clearly visible in *Bon Appétit's* pages.

Italianate Takeoff: The Latte Edges Out the Café au Lait

The preceding historical review has identified two processes in the evolution of Italianate food's appeal to Americans. The first was long and quite slow, the incorporation of Italianate food into the panoply of American ethnic foods—a place at the table, but certainly not at the head. In the last decades of the twentieth century, however, incorporation became lionization. Instead of being one of the options for an inexpensive but vaguely exotic meal out, Italianate cuisine acquired an enormous amount of culinary capital as it emerged as a cuisine embraced by American sophisticates while still enjoying popularity with the less culinarily aspirational mainstream diner.

As was shown in the first section, Italianate food was widely known in the United States for a long time prior to its takeoff. Italianate food

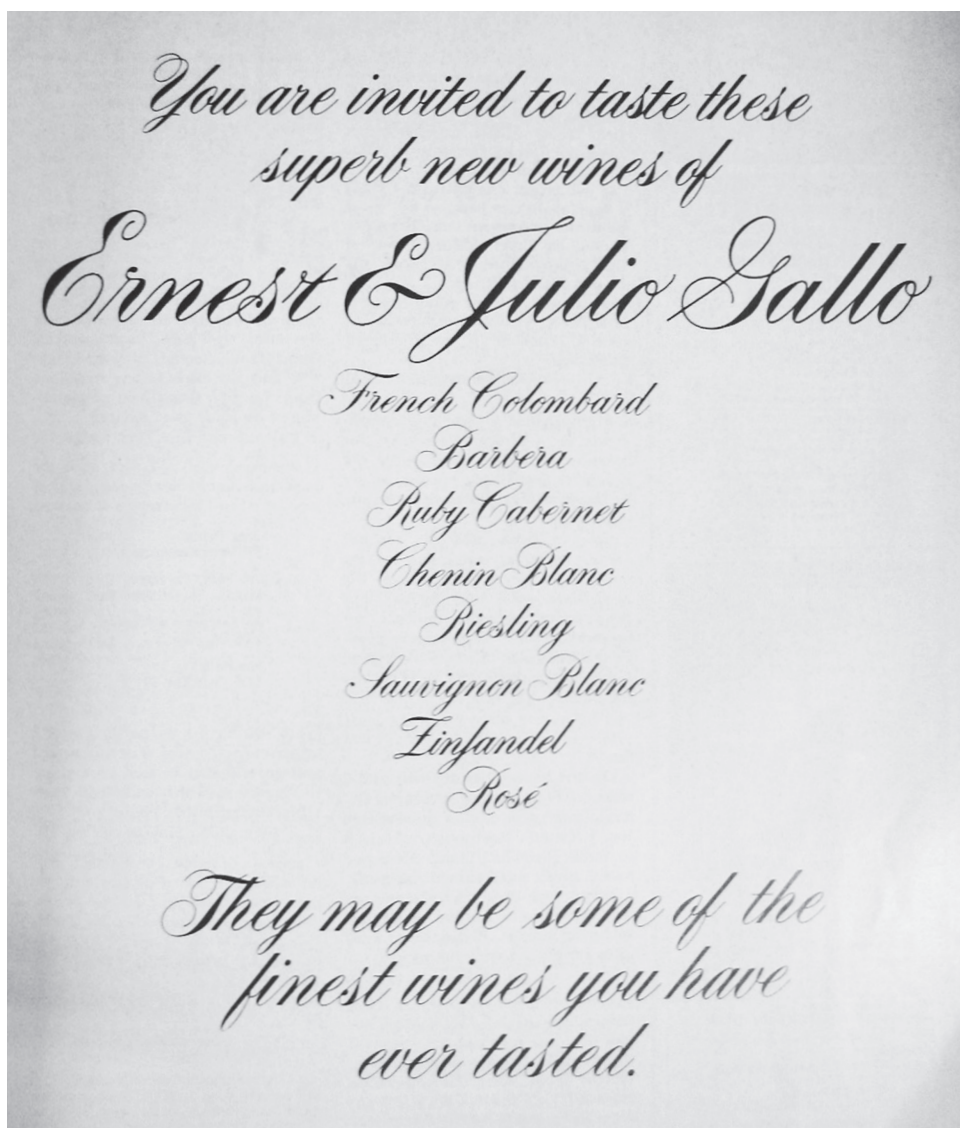
occupied a low-return niche and had scattered production. From the 1880s until sometime in recent decades, Italianate food in the United States was discount food without much culinary capital. In other words, while some Americans might have turned to pizza or baked ziti for an inexpensive meal out, there was no conception in the broader middle class that eating Italianate food allowed the consumer to accrue status. If French-inspired cuisine was analogous to going to the opera, Italianate food was listening to FM radio. At some point, however, Italianate food acquired enough culinary capital to initiate a chain reaction: It was suddenly “in,” not simply a patch on the fabric of the American culinary quilt. Like the need for steam engines creating more demand for coal, which in turn created yet more demand for steam engines to drain mines, the relationship became auto-catalytic: Interest in Italianate food created the demand. The dramatic increase in demand for it—and its rise from family restaurant to bistro and top-chef fare—created a correspondingly wide increase in distribution. Italian wines began occupying more spaces on wine lists, Starbucks adopted the term “barista” for its coffee preparers, and Pizza Hut began offering a pizza called “Prosciutto e Rucola.” Advertisers sought effective channels to connect with consumers, and monthly culinary magazines that discussed current trends were an ideal choice. While all Americans are now intuitively aware of this dramatic increase, it has yet to be isolated chronologically.

To investigate Italianate food popularity in middle-class America, the second part of this study offers a content analysis of *Bon Appétit*. This culinary magazine was launched in 1956, though it discussed only wine until 1970. Even a qualitative examination of the content and the advertisements in the magazine over the decades—wine and hotels in exotic locations, but also Kraft cheese, Grey Poupon, and Kahlua—suggests that it is aimed at a mixed audience. The magazine currently claims that it has a monthly print reach of over 6.5 million people, and its readers’ median household income is \$86,000 (compared to a U.S. median of around \$50,000), and 46 percent of them graduated from college, compared to the U.S. median of 30 percent (*Bon Appétit* 2012). In their book about distinction in the food world, Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann include *Bon Appétit* in their list of the three leading epicurean magazines, which, they write, “have to walk the line between presenting themselves as culinary authorities, and providing an accessible, chummy, more populist approach to food culture that resonates with a broader readership” (Johnston and Baumann 2010, 45). This broader readership includes not just the culinary elite but also a significant portion of the middle and upper-middle class in the United States.

The present research used an analysis of the January and June issues of *Bon Appétit*, every five years from 1970 up to 2010.⁵ What is immediately striking in the earlier years of this sample is the dominant place in the culinary discourse of French-inspired cuisine. Priscilla Ferguson has discussed the reasons for this hegemonic position (Ferguson 2004), and the story of Julia Childs's popularity over the last sixty years is only a symbol of that. That French-inspired was the "in" cuisine for middle-brow American food culture is obvious from its appearance in recipes, full-article coverage, references to chefs' preparation, and in the advertisements in the earlier years of this sample. The editor's note of the first issue of the magazine that covers both food and wine (January 1970) offers the reader a passport to culinary adventure, asserting that "the wonderful world of food and drink with all the international excitement and adventure is as close as your kitchen." Despite this internationalist tone—even including the exhortation to use the phrase "international dishes" instead of "foreign food" ("Welcome . . ." 1970, 1)—the emphasis placed on French-inspired food is pronounced. One of the main articles (and the only one that deals with wine) is about the new Bordeaux vintage chart; in an aside, the author also mentions how everyone has a favorite Italian restaurant "with checkered tablecloths" (Rubin 1970a, 12). The June issue of the same year underlines the low prestige of Italianate food in the United States, mentioning that only 4 percent of Italian wine is exported, and "to many, Italian wine was nothing but Chianti" (Rubin 1970b, 12). The relative positions that French-inspired and Italianate cuisines occupy in the American culinary hierarchy are also clear in a strangely dissonant example from the last page of the June issue: In a column titled "Bon Café," there is a mention of an Italian soprano who runs a New York restaurant called "Chez Vito" (35). The first acknowledgement of French-inspired supremacy is the name of the column; the fact that an Italian soprano would find it necessary to use French in the name of her restaurant only underlines this. The name of the (perhaps fictive) chef is Italian, but while the reader is left to guess about the provenance of the food, the nod to the mid-century restaurant-naming customs (Chez Vito as opposed to Da Vito or Trattoria Vito) is a signal to the discerning customer that despite the owner's background, the cuisine available might include French-inspired items.

The situation five years later is much the same. An article called "Gifts of Good Taste from California Wineries" is dominated by French varietal names (Rubin 1974, 14-19), as is an advertisement for Ernest and Julio Gallo wines (Gallo and Gallo 1974, 35).

In the June/July 1975 issue there is a list of "Restaurants of Good Taste": Of the forty-three U.S. restaurants named, sixteen have obviously French



Advertisement for Ernest and Julio Gallo wines in the December 1974 issue of Bon Appétit.

names, while there are only two restaurants whose names are Italian. The implications of the percentages are clear: Italianate food, while worth mentioning in a magazine dedicated to “international dishes,” does not possess enough cultural capital to be a selling point for a restaurant. Italian food is mentioned in an advertisement but only to suggest that Pillsbury dough be used to make “Crafty Crescent Lasagne” (Pillsbury 1975, 32). While the text is simply a recipe for the lasagna, the ad assumes that an Italian recipe’s ingredients are flexible to the point of being fungible—indeed the copy above the photograph asserts that this is “Another way to

bake with Pillsbury fresh dough.” Far from being a culinary language with its own grammar, Italian food is flexible enough to be made with improvised ingredients. While inviting the advertisement’s intended viewer to engage with Italianate food, the ad does not inspire an awe of that cuisine’s immutability or a respect for imagined authenticity that is evident today. That French-inspired food is not so flexible is clear from an advertisement for a publication called *The Wine Reporter*. Playing on readers’ fears of insufficient knowledge, the ad suggests the publication will “help you avoid embarrassment” because it will “tell you which bottles to avoid, which petit châteaux (there are so many of them) are mediocre and overpriced, and which American varietal wines have character” (*The Wine Reporter* 1975, 35). The offer of “expert knowledge” to cut a good figure in front of friends is explicitly linked to French wines. Another example from the previous issue (April/May 1975) of the clear link between French-inspired food and its culinary capital is an article titled “A Black Tie Dinner.” The feature describes an annual black-tie dinner hosted by CBS engineer Steve Nelson and his wife. Nelson himself writes the article, making occasional references to choices his wife made in preparing the meal, and to the guests (a wine and cheese store owner, a former PBS broadcaster, a computer expert, a CBS news announcer, an engineer, and a former Prentice-Hall editor). The menu includes six wines, of which one is a port and one a Madeira; the other four are all French. The dishes on the menu are all generically English (e.g., creamed spinach, pineapple sherbet) or French-inspired: Vintage Tomato Bouillon, Shrimp St. Jacques, Potato Vert Gallant, and even Green Salad with French Dressing (Nelson 1975, 59). Even if *Bon Appétit* readers could not afford to recreate a dinner like this, with an eighty-year-old Madeira, they internalize the message that a dinner among the American elite must have a heavily French-inspired menu to be considered prestigious.

In addition to being perceived as too lowbrow for the aspirational middle-class diner, in this period some Italian restaurants are seen as inaccessible to them, as evidenced by an advertisement in the January 1980 issue. It indicates that a restaurant called Ristorante Chianti is open for business for the distinguishing gourmand, but the entire ad (from name to invitation to opening hours) is entirely in Italian (Ristorante Chianti 1980, 8B). That this ad is largely illegible to *Bon Appétit*’s readership flatters those few who can decode it, but it simultaneously places the restaurant (and its cuisine) beyond the reach of a broad swath of the magazine’s audience.⁶ Though the appearance in the advertising at the end of the magazine of more Italian names is at first surprising, a closer examination shows some degree of “piggybacking.” While there are five with Italian names

(compared to six restaurants with obviously French names), one of the restaurants proposes “French and Italian cuisine,” while another advertises “French and Northern Italian cuisine.” This curious distinction—today almost completely absent from discourse about Italianate cuisine—is perhaps a remnant of the U.S. immigration categories, which separated northern and southern Italians into two “races” (Cinotto 2012, 187–193).

The issues of *Bon Appétit* from the 1980s show a hesitant opening to Italianate food, an example of which can be found in an ad from the Italian Wine Promotion Center. The ad (in the June 1980 issue) features a husband and wife—Max and Fran Weitzenhoffer—in the art gallery that they own. Max looks confident, standing behind and over his wife, whose face wears an almost questioning expression. Despite their apparent co-ownership of the gallery, the copy makes it clear that Fran has a second shift as a cook at their home: “My wife Fran cooks wiener schnitzel and sauerbraten like a Rhine maiden. But some of our best wines are Italian.” All of the text is written in Max’s voice, and while it attempts to connect the enjoyment of Italian wine to the appreciation of fine art, it fails to challenge not only gender roles about food preparation but also the reputation of French food. While Max refers to a meal without wine as “a frame without a painting,” the framing of the article does not set up a challenge to French-inspired food or wine, preferring to use the *non sequitur* of pairing Italian wine with Germanic food. The large text over the picture—“Some of our best wines are Italian”—is obviously an attempt to convince a skeptical public (Italian Wine Promotion Center 1980, 60).

Contrast this advertisement to that issue’s cover story about “America’s greatest restaurant,” which begins just two pages after the plaintive assertion about Italian wines. The restaurant, Le Français, is run by Chef Jean Banchet, who explains that “it’s quite simple, I want to serve the very best. We have a good reputation and I want to keep that and my quality” (Harris 1980b, 62). Neither the copy written by article author Diane Harris nor Chef Banchet in his quotations makes explicit that links to French-inspired food guarantee the reputation, and with it the culinary capital, that the restaurant can transmit to its diners. That link is simply an unspoken assumption made clear through the training of the chef (in Vienne at La Pyramide), the names of the recipes (almost exclusively French), and even the reliance on ingredients and preparations like Périgord truffles and *glace*.

Some of the gender assumptions that are clearly subtly associated with Italianate food also contributed, in the 1970s and 1980s, to its lack of culinary capital. An example of this is a June 1980 news item about an Italian woman married to an American who reveals that she’s written a cookbook of American cuisine because “my husband and son don’t like

"Some of our best wines are Italian."

Max and Fran Weitzenhoffer, Gimpel & Weitzenhoffer Art Gallery, N.Y.C.



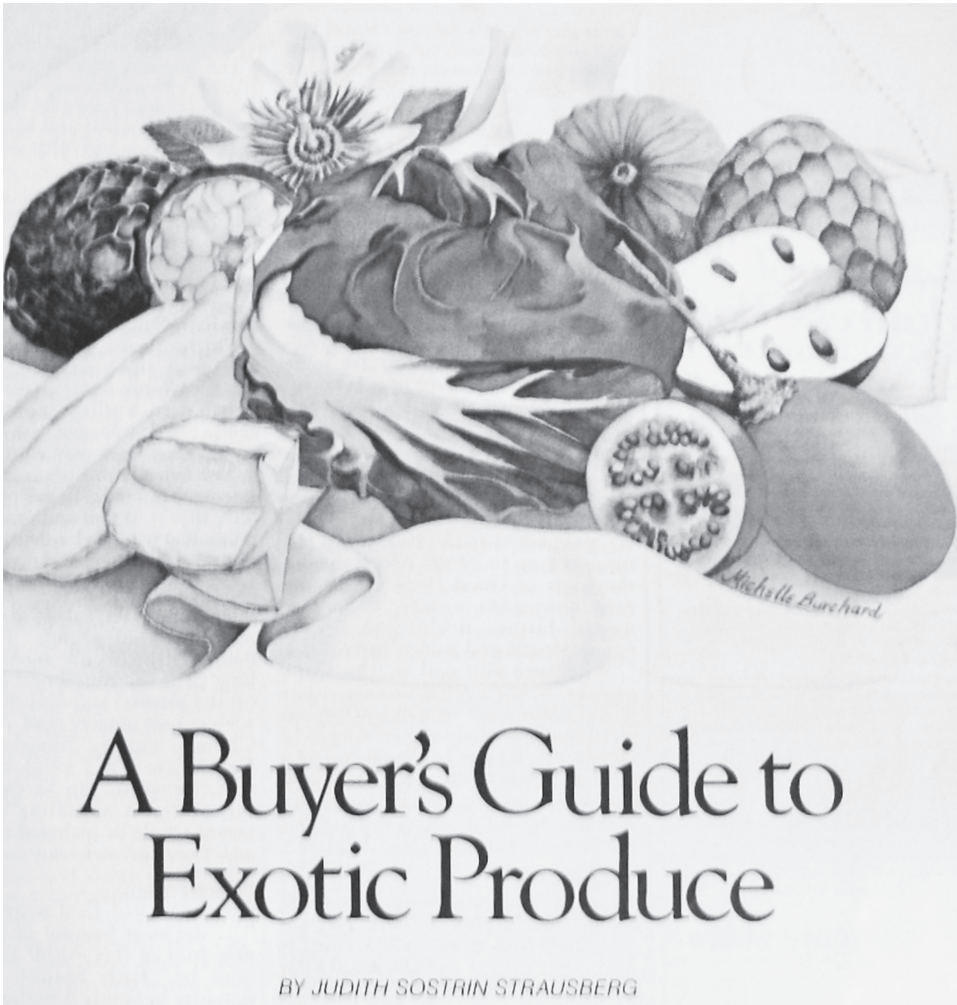
"My wife Fran cooks wiener schnitzel and sauerbraten like a Rhine maiden. But some of our best wines are Italian.

wines. Last week we drank a vintage red and a sparkling white wine that were masterpieces"

Advertisement from the Italian Wine Promotion Center in the June 1980 issue of Bon Appétit.

any other [Italian dishes], other than spaghetti" ("Book Talk" 1980, 19). The low value that Italianate food had at the time is clear in this example: In addition to the reputation of budget rather than refined food, Italianate food also had the stigma of being a readily accessible food vocabulary (domestic food, prepared by women) that did not require professional training (restaurant food, prepared by male chefs). This is in stark contrast to the culinary capital that celebrity chef Giada De Laurentiis has acquired in the last ten years, mainly by sharing a culinary repertoire based not on professional training but rather precisely on food traditions that are seemingly gendered, supposedly passed down to Giada through her female ancestors. Indeed, De Laurentiis downplays her professional credentials and cultivates her culinary inheritance from her family, cooking in a domestic kitchen for friends and family on her show (Naccarato and LeBesco 2012, 54–55). Contrast De Laurentiis's culinary biography with that of former Chez Panisse chef Jeremiah Tower as told in an article that appeared in the June 1980 issue of *Bon Appétit*. The article includes a number of Tower's recipes, four of which have French names (Harris, 1980a, 90–91). Tower does refer to domestic, female-gendered experiences, having been introduced to "good eating" by, among others, "his spirited aunt who was a superb cook, and his mother," but he underlines that "it was not until I was in college that I really started cooking" (Harris 1980a, 91). These maternal, domestic influences were a starting point, but the article states that "to achieve just the right balance of tastes, textures, and colors, Tower often makes small changes in familiar recipes" (Harris 1980a, 91–92). These are not the recipes he learned at home but rather variations on classic French dishes developed by male chefs—Tower refers to two giants of French cuisine, Georges Auguste Escoffier and Guillaume Tirel (known as "Taillevent"), explicitly.

In January 1985, *Bon Appétit* does mention a "rustic Italian dinner for eight" and gives recipes, but after the recipe for gelato, it provides the reader with a translation for that word: "Italian ice cream" (Field, 1985a, 82–88). That Italian ingredients are still unfamiliar to American readers is obvious too from the article titled "A Buyer's Guide to Exotic Produce." The guide explains both arugula and radicchio, two Italian ingredients that are commonplace today (Strausberg 1985). The June 1985 issue includes the Kraft ad mentioned above, dominated by a green Parmesan cheese canister with the words "Real Italian Flavor" written underneath (Kraft 1985, 150). While humorous to the present-day reader, the advertisement makes two assumptions about Italian food. The first is that an association with Italy is a selling point even with the demographic in question. The second assumption is that the reader will be unfamiliar with European



A Buyer's Guide to Exotic Produce

BY JUDITH SOSTRIN STRAUSBERG

An article in the January 1985 issue of Bon Appétit.

Protected Denomination of Origin classifications and therefore will not dismiss the assertion of the cheese's authenticity. On page 17 an ad for a wine importer has six labels, of which only one, a Barolo, is Italian (Kobrand Corporation 1985, 17). Another article mentions "a trip that would fulfill just about anyone's idea of a dream vacation": a voyage on a barge through the canals of northern France (Handle 1985, 23). There is a long article titled "A Bountiful Mediterranean Buffet," though there is no mention at all of the Mediterranean diet (Field 1985b, 88-97). Finally, we find an advertisement for a book called *How to Read and Speak a French Menu and Wine List* (Allen Publishing Corporation 1985, 144B). The discursive premise of these food advertisements and editorial content is clear: In 1985 the way to eat prestige was to eat mostly French.

The relative space devoted to French-inspired cuisine vis-à-vis Italianate, as well as the unspoken assumptions that frame both articles and advertisements, makes it clear that in the period surveyed (1970–1990), the culinary dreams of the aspiring middle-class American cook and diner are in French. That French-inspired cuisine was a model to be consumed (at restaurants) and imitated (in one's own home) is just as obvious from these ads and articles as is today's enthusiasm for Italianate food. French dominance was, however, ephemeral. The Italianate challenge to French-inspired culinary hegemony in America is evident in 1990 and in full swing by 1995. While many of the new generation of chefs profiled on page 30 of the January 1990 issue have French training, a lengthy article on Chef Jasper White reveals a shift away from this (Kaplan 1990, 84–87). White says that while he “was immersed in and impressed by French classical cooking,” he and his fellow chefs had to chart a new path (Kaplan 1990, 87). The writer states, “While Jasper rebelled against the European hegemony, he forged his own style by going back to the basics . . . the things he had learned from his [Italian] grandmother” (Kaplan 1990, 87). This article subtly marks the shift in the acquisition of culinary capital by the reader of *Bon Appétit*: whereas in the earlier period surveyed, status could be acquired through knowledge of classic French recipes and famous wines, now a more personal, traditional, and (perhaps most importantly) nonprofessional cuisine is gaining ground. In addition, while cooking that was gendered female (e.g., the Italian-born cookbook writer in 1985) was once placed in a lower position in the culinary hierarchy, White specifically connects his cooking with not only an Italian tradition but also with his Italian grandmother. In his interview, White underlines the fact that he has left the school-taught techniques behind to reconnect with a simpler, much more personal cuisine. This strategy to become a successful chef is based on the national and gender shift in culinary capital.

The rising tide of Italianate food status is also evident in the “Best Bets” for the wine lover: of the twenty listed, nine are French and seven are Italian, though all those in the premium “For the Cellar” subcategory are still French (“Best Bets” 1990, 32). While these references clearly show an increase in the popularity and elevated status of Italianate food in the readership and in top chefs, an advertisement from the pasta company Contadina is a more subtle indication of the same. It shows a dish of tomato-sauce-covered pasta, and the bold statement is “Contadina Fresh: The first ravioli for adults.” The copy explains that Contadina's new product “doesn't look or taste anything like the mushy kidstuff that has been around forever” (Contadina 1990, 30). The implication is that pasta (like Chef Boy-Ar-Dee) has graduated from being a meal for children to

being something that middle-class readers can consider for dinner. While there are some subtle references to a higher standard of quality in the copy (a reference to “imported cheeses” and “fine meats”), the idea that Contadina’s product is worthy of a fine European restaurant is cleverly placed just at the edges of the frame. The plate of ravioli occupies much of the center; around it we see a tablecloth, cloth napkin, a crust of bread, and (most tellingly) bottled water. The implication here is that eating Contadina is not making lasagna from freezer dough, but rather like going to a restaurant in Italy, an association that is more appealing to the women to whom preparation may still be left. The Contadina ad is still referencing the older conception of food with a high culinary value (professionally prepared by mainly male chefs), rather than drawing on the newer, female-gendered positive associations that Jasper White expressed.

That Italianate cuisine (albeit in its updated American interpretation) has extended its reach from the working class to the aspirational middle class and upper class is more apparent in the June 1990 issue, though there are still some ingredients that require advertising or editorial copy to explain. This issue has the first advertisement for olive oil in the sample examined. What is striking about this article is how it suggests (both in the text and visually) that with Bertolli, you can “eat well, live long, and be happy.” The first two are obvious benefits of olive oil, a product that will become the avatar of Italianate cuisine; though still not explicitly referring to it as part of the Mediterranean diet, the copy explains the links of olive oil to lower cholesterol levels. The main photograph is the centerpiece of the advertisement’s appeal: In it a seated older man raises a glass to a younger man who appears to be his son, the son’s wife and child, and an older woman. The copy is almost redundant: “When three or more generations gather for dinner, it is a heartwarming experience, indeed. And when you bring a meal prepared with Bertolli olive oil [. . .] you’re helping everyone eat well, live long, and be happy” (Bertolli 1990, 33). Bertolli is selling not only health and good taste but also access to a family dinner, very much a part of the middle-class collective imagination. Again, while the patriarch is at the center of the advertisement, the association is with the family and by extension with food traditionally prepared by the women.

This is followed by an ad placed by the Italian Government Travel Office that makes reference to the country’s art and architecture and then explains to the reader that “one of the greatest art forms in Italy is food” (Italian Government Travel Office 1990, 39). Italianate food, then, is not the equivalent of the hot dog but rather a higher form of active aesthetic appreciation—the ad is not subtle about this, beginning with the words “I always hear about Italian good taste. I wanted to taste it” (39). The

idea of “good taste” as a skill to be developed, not something intuitive in everyone, is quite old. Italian food historian Massimo Montanari describes how the Italian urban elite in the seventeenth century used this concept—taste as something *learned*, knowledge not to be shared with everyone—to distance themselves from the rich elements of the peasantry (Montanari 2010). This idea of good taste as something that is acquired reinforces the central assumptions of the advertisement, the magazine itself, and the larger culinary context: Choosing Italian food is a demonstration of good taste, and *Bon Appétit*’s mission is to instruct readers on how to be more knowledgeable about it. The public demonstration of this knowledge—ordering Italian wines, buying Italian cheeses for the dinner parties that are so often featured in the magazine’s pages—will bring esteem to consumers of Italianate food.

These are followed by the first full article on pasta in the sample analyzed (a longer-than-average four pages), followed directly by two full-page ads for pasta (from Borden and Contadina). Despite the increased attention given to them, it is clear that the reader is still not familiar with dishes that are today well-known: A recipe for risotto, for instance, places that word in quotation marks (“Wild mushroom . . .”, 1990, 56). Contrast this reference in June 1990 to a reference to the same dish in the January 1995 issue: “Risotto: This classic Italian rice dish went mainstream in 1994” (Birnbaum 1995, 48). The “Editor’s Choice” for the January 1995 issue is pizza, and one of the ten hot trends for the past year is “Mediterranean cooking.” “Yes, we know a Mediterranean meal has been spotlighted in this feature every January for three years now,” the editors explain, “It is clearly one hot trend that just won’t cool down” (Kidd and Kaplan 1995, 36). While every cuisine can be thought of as being in a state of constant evolution, the change in the 1990s was clearly less the actual change of ingredients and more within the perception of the prestige with which they could endow a consumer.

The culinary capital of Italianate cuisine was complemented by “dietary capital” as well. Naccarato and LeBesco (2012) have investigated the links between culinary capital and a “hierarchy that privileges certain food and food practices over others” (88). Another event that highlights this link and may have catalyzed the “Italian[ate] revolution” was the now-famous *60 Minutes* report in 1991. The piece reported on new research that seemed to explain the apparent paradox of the high French consumption of dietary saturated fats but low cardiovascular rates. The story suggested that moderate consumption of red wine was responsible (Safer, 1991). Cornell University researchers soon claimed to have identified a naturally occurring substance in red wine that allowed the French to

eat so much saturated animal fat and not have high cholesterol (Siemann and Creasy 1992). The reports led to a great deal of interest in red wine and in healthier diets. A year later, in 1993, Harvard University (along with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization) sponsored a conference titled “1993 International Conference on the Diets of the Mediterranean.” The conference had a much wider impact than most academic conferences and led to a cookbook (Jenkins 1994) and a great deal of interest in popular food writing on the so-called Mediterranean diet. This combination of foods—little red meat; some fish, legumes, olive oil, and cheese; and moderate amounts of wine—was billed as the “traditional” diet of Mediterranean peasants and had been linked by some researchers to lowered rates of coronary disease (Keys and Keys 1959). While there is considerable debate about the historicity of the diet—that is, whether or not “Mediterranean” peasants ate this combination of foods—there is no debate about the impact of the popularization of the Mediterranean diet (Crotty 1998; Nestle 2000). Italianate food benefited doubly from these findings: Its culinary capital rose because of its association with health (one marker of elite status, and an aspiration for the middle class) and the relative cost of some of the foods needed to recreate the diet in the United States. Legumes are inexpensive, but imitating a Mediterranean diet by drinking wine and eating olive oil every day put this cuisine outside of the mainstream.

Had these findings been published in the 1980s, they might have solidified the place of French-inspired cooking, but their post-1990 emergence reinforced the growing popularity of Italianate cuisine. Not only could consumers of mozzarella di bufala, Apulian olive oil, and Sangiovese wine demonstrate their membership in a small but growing club of elite connoisseurs, they could also improve their health. Although not the focus of this article, the health advantages of the Italianate diet might be yet another, more subtle class distinction. As Kathleen LeBesco points out, “fatness” (to some extent marked as the opposite of “healthiness” in the United States) marks the individual “not of the dominant social class” (LeBesco 2004, 58–59). However health fits into the causation, the chronological conjuncture changed Italianate food from a trend to a stable part of American middle-class culinary aspirations. Italianate food was normalized in the early 1990s because the trends for organic, local, and authentic foods that food writers have both chronicled and fueled (Pollan 2006; Kamp 2006) led the American middle class to take Italianate cuisine as the organic-local-peasant-traditional-Mediterranean-authentic food avatar. The Slow Food movement, which went international in 1989, was perhaps perfectly timed to connect Italian food with “real food.” In addition, as

Simone Cinotto has suggested, “financially secure third generation Italian-Americans interested in ‘rediscovering their roots’ ” may have helped with the initial demand for a higher-end version of Italianate food (Cinotto 2013, 214). This food leapt into the gap and, while not totally eclipsing French-inspired cuisine, captured a larger share of the attention devoted to cuisine in magazines like *Bon Appétit*.

The two issues of *Bon Appétit* examined for the year 2000 show Italianate food firmly entrenched as the object of desire and the means of acquiring culinary capital for the aspiring middle class. While the Mediterranean diet is not in the January issue’s list of top food trends, we can assume that it and its avatar—Italianate food—have been so thoroughly accepted as to not merit being labeled a trend anymore. Proof of this is the advertisement for Grana Padano cheese: The copy reads “Grana Padano: The cheese Italians keep (mostly) to themselves” (Consorzio Grana Padano 2000, 169). This text suggests that the reader is in the know if he or she chooses Grana Padano; the assumptions about what the average reader knows about Italian cheese are vastly different than the 1985 Kraft advertisement that suggests the green canister contains cheese with “real Italian flavor.” That French *fromage* too is now feeling the culinary challenge of Italian *formaggio* is clear in an article about a cheese store in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The name of the store is Formaggio Kitchen, the only cheese mentioned explicitly is Pecorino Romano, and one of the two restaurants named is called the Rialto (the other is The Blue Room) (“Shopping” 2000, 22). The use of Italian words in names is significant: Whereas in 1970 an Italian restaurant could be named *Chez Vito*, now food-related businesses signal their attachment to the dominant culinary trend using Italian names.

That Italianate cuisine has superseded or at least equaled the status of French-inspired cuisine is even clearer in the June 2000 issue of *Bon Appétit*. An article about where noted “foodies” (the first appearance of this term in the sample) go to shop has more references to Italianate food than any other ethnic cuisine, despite the fact that only enough space is given for each expert to make a few recommendations. One of those polled, a cookbook author, talks about a shop with Ferrero chocolates from Italy and sandwiches named after Fellini films (and mentions arugula as an ingredient). This salad green is now used without any quotation marks, a far cry from its appearance in the January 1985 “A Buyer’s Guide to Exotic Produce” (Strausberg 1985). Another foodie (a cooking-school owner) eats roast chicken at Gira Polli; a food critic waxes poetic about the best importer of Parmesan cheese; a chef-owner talks about Sicilian pizza just like “my granduncle used to make it”; an executive chef mentions a place to get a great focaccia sandwich; a vineyard owner describes a store

that sells “freshly milled polenta flour.” A seventh expert (of eleven total) says, “I go to Wally’s for all of my wine—especially Italian, since I have become an Italophile” (Fairchild 2000, 36–37). The appeals to status here are clear. The preferences expressed are not merely “person on the street” nor are they advertisements, rendering Italy and Italianate foods as the objects of desire of food experts, and thereby making these judgments even more likely to inspire imitation. In contrast to the famous French-inspired restaurants mentioned in the earlier part of the sample, the acquisition of culinary capital is now linked to finding the off-beat food suppliers that only “foodies” know about. Discussing foodies, Johnston and Baumann (2010) suggest that the core characteristic of a foodie is being on the cutting edge of a trend: Once it filters down and goes mainstream, the trend loses the culinary capital once available to avant-garde foodies.

Another important detail about the survey of the foodies in the issue mentioned above is gender: Of the eleven experts, four men are listed as chefs, while there are only two female chefs. The other three women on the panel are either cookbook writers or involved in cooking schools as owners or teachers. The title of *chef* seems still to imply a male and perhaps with it masculine authority. Counterposed to male authority, however, is female legitimacy, and while there is only a reference to a granduncle above, the increasingly female-gendered anecdotes (e.g., Jasper White above referring to his grandmother, Giada De Laurentiis and her mother) connect status in cuisine not to professionalization of preparation but rather to a “lived,” often matrilineal authenticity. While Johnston and Baumann assert that “food can be made significant when it resides in the domain of men . . . [and] the realm of everyday eating and sustenance has been linked with the private, seemingly less important world of women” (Johnston and Baumann 2010, 32), these examples show an inversion of the gendered locus of culinary capital toward the female realm, seen to be more authentic. Andrew Potter framed the shifts in food trends in the first decade of the twenty-first century as being the result of what he calls the “competitive and highly lucrative world of conspicuous authenticity” (Potter 2011, 126). As a result, much French-inspired food, the product of highly formalized training in notoriously hyper-masculine settings, lacked culinary capital in a 1990s world focused on finding something “real” in everyday life.

The fraught nature of these shifting trends is evident in an ad for the Olive Garden, which makes its first appearance in the sample in this same issue. In the search for authenticity, the Olive Garden’s self-fashioning as an “authentic Italian” entity exposes both the constructed nature and ambiguous signification of its corporate identity. The ad shows a plate of mussels labeled *Mussels di Napoli*; while still unsure of its potential clients’

ability to understand the word *cozze* (mussels), the Olive Garden tries to capture the cachet that a regional dish might offer. The dish is not simply one with Italian ingredients, but rather one that is specific to a place, and only customers in the know—i.e., those who can decipher “di Napoli”—will enjoy it. In addition, while the advertising copy does not specifically use gendered language, the slogan at the bottom, “When you’re here, you’re family,” is a subtle appeal to the rising culinary capital of a female, even matrilineal, culinary authenticity. Yet the chain’s investment in the historical pre-eminence of the male chef and the corresponding esteem placed in professional education is illuminated by its oft-advertised program of “training” in Italy. Ironically, this training program has become the focus of the most vigorous critique of the Olive Garden’s claims to authenticity. A 2011 exposé by a former Olive Garden chef-manager inspired considerable scorn for the chain, and one blogger’s response confirmed that its marketing efforts had, even beforehand, failed to secure its reputation for authenticity among any but the most naïve diners: “Seriously, if there’s anyone out there who thinks the Olive Garden really serves authentic Italian cooking, then boy have we got a trash bag full of authentic Louis Vuitton purses to sell you” (quoted in Friedman 2011). Worth underlining is that the problem with the Olive Garden is not that the food tastes bad, but rather the perception that those making—and marketing—it remain primarily invested in professional (read: male) training rather than drawing on authentic (read: female) traditions. This is quite a dramatic reversal in the locus of distinction and one that pointedly queries what is held to be the performance of chef skills as opposed to the more esteemed embodiment of a culinary heritage. The implication is clear: While the Olive Garden might continue to be a viable destination for the truly uninitiated diner looking to ape the culinary sophistication of his or her foodie betters, no self-respecting Italianate food enthusiast could acquire culinary capital by consuming the Olive Garden’s inauthentic food.

For the rest of the sample (2005 and 2010), the references to Italianate food—in recipes given, advertisements, and articles—become so frequent as not to be worth mentioning individually. The zero-sum game of advertisements and copy space allocated to French-inspired vis-à-vis Italianate cooking has, in the forty years of *Bon Appétit* issues surveyed, shifted decidedly toward the latter. The premise of this research has been that this shift has been driven by changing perceptions of the culinary capital of Italianate food. Originally a hybrid of many regional cuisines, reinterpreted by poor emigrants who suddenly had access to abundant food, Italianate cuisine gradually became more acceptable to the American mainstream. The primary drivers of this acceptance were material necessity (an inexpensive

cuisine in economically depressed times) as well as a forced acquaintance that turned into appreciation—if not love—during Prohibition. In the post-World War II decades in the United States, Italianate cuisine was a familiar standby but never enjoyed the cachet of French-inspired cuisine. In Naccarato and LeBesco's (2012) words, certain foods and food-related practices conferred status and power, and these were those that could lay claim to French provenance, however tenuous.

The pages of *Bon Appétit* reflect this French hegemony in the earlier part of the sample examined. The magazine was able to sell its not-too-snobby, not-too-plebian style to a relatively broad readership in the middle and upper-middle class. This style demanded a blend of articles that were essentially new variations on old favorites as well as the cutting edge of food fashion. This combination of the traditional and the trendy was reflected too in the advertising: Ads for Pillsbury dough and Kraft cheese coexisted with those for fine wines and expensive culinary tourism. A close read of both the copy and the advertising—looking for articles and ads that promise *Bon Appétit* readers the products they needed to acquire culinary capital—allows us to establish an ultimately dynamic hierarchy of culinary capital for French-inspired vis-à-vis Italianate cuisine. Early on in the sample (in the 1970s and 1980s), French-inspired food is consistently linked to products or discourse that is flagged as “high quality,” “the best,” “black tie,” or simply elite. Whether the example is French names dominating lists of wine importers' products, restaurants with “Chez” in their names, or celebrity chefs underlining their French training or sharing their French recipes, France is the key to establishing culinary capital. Italianate food, while certainly present in both articles and advertisements, is clearly marked as less prestigious and less desirable in the early part of the sample. French-inspired food sits on plates on white tablecloths; Italian-inspired food has red-and-white checks in the background. While middle-class Americans have, as Simone Cinotto calls it, wanted to “feel Italian” through consuming Italianate food, this performance was not intended to garner culinary capital. Italianate food was also repeatedly linked to a domestic, female-gendered tradition rather than the professional, male-gendered world of French chefs. This linkage, in decades where culinary capital had to be acquired in the formal settings of culinary academies and in long apprenticeships under primarily male authorities, did little to help the status of Italianate food.

At some point in the late 1980s and early 1990s (and certainly by 1995), this situation had changed dramatically. The space given to French-inspired foods and beverages had shrunk, and Italianate foods were both explicitly labeled “hot” or “trendy” and were beginning to be normalized as popular

with food authorities. While causality is difficult to establish even with this better chronological localization of the Italianate takeoff—the health craze around the so-called Mediterranean diet seems to have reinforced Italianate food’s climb, not started it—the effects of the takeoff are clear in *Bon Appétit*’s pages.⁷ This shift in the culinary capital of Italianate food is also contemporaneous with (and perhaps partly attributable too) a revaluation of female-gendered foodways. Standing in stark contrast to earlier examples in the sample, many of the articles about celebrity chefs, reviews of restaurants, and food advertisements seek to use the familial, female-gendered Italianate tradition (real or imagined) as a marker of culinary capital. The authenticity of the *cucina povera*, ostensibly handed down from mother to daughter orally, provides its consumers with a prestige no longer afforded to professional training.

While most previous research has contributed to a better understanding of the creation and evolution of Italianate foods, this article has sought to historicize its current overwhelming popularity. Having established the early 1990s as the moment of *il takeoff*, more research is now necessary to further refine the chronology. This could involve triangulation with cookbook titles, Google Ngram research, or statistical analysis of restaurants in old phone books.⁸ This data may make analyses of causality clearer and may even reveal a weakening in the popularity of Italianate food in the past few years vis-à-vis new food trends such as organic and local.

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Notes

1. In order to avoid debates about whether food prepared in the United States can be considered authentically French or Italian, this article will refer to this food as “Italianate” and “French-inspired” throughout.
2. The vagueness of the periodization is the reason for this article, which seeks to answer the question of when in the recent past Italianate cuisine overtook its French counterpart in the United States.
3. For an instance of how even packaging of the lowly potato chip can be marked for class-appropriate consumption, see Freedman and Jurafsky (2011). For a broader discussion of middle-class culinary aspiration, see chapter 4 in Andrew Potter (2011).
4. For a further discussion of garlic as a negative signifier for Italians in the United States, as well as the object of culinary objections in contemporary Italy, see Rocco Marinaccio (2012).

5. The magazine was and remains a monthly publication. When the January and June issues were unavailable, the December issue from the year before or the July issue from the same year were substituted, respectively.
6. Ironically, those who could actually read the ad would be unimpressed: The short Italian text is replete with errors.
7. It is perhaps not idle speculation that had it been founded in 1990, the magazine might have been called *Buon Appetito*.
8. For an example of this last technique in establishing chronology and causality, see Alan Nash (2009).

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The Italian Roots of the Artisanal Food Movement in the United States

SUZANNE COPE

As a young girl in rural Western New York, I knew little of the world outside of my immediate family. I assumed all extended families gathered on Sundays, that everyone had a Nani who had red sauce bubbling on the stove *and* a pot roast in the oven. I believed that wine was made in basements, next to the peach brandy; cheese and bread and sausages were made by men in various shops who spoke the same melodic but unintelligible language as my grandparents. Nani often tasked me with picking the ripest tomatoes from the garden out back, and as I grew older, and my social calendar filled, I knew better than to miss Sunday dinner with my extended family. I later learned that while my experience was far from universal, it was also relatively common among Americans of Italian descent. I also learned of the often difficult history that came with this food culture: The acts of food preservation sprang from financial necessity as well as a connection to heritage, and the focus on foodways as community building helped my ancestors connect with other immigrants when the larger American society was less than welcoming. Out of this varied and difficult history, contemporary Italian-American foodways have come to be perceived as rooted in the traditional preparation and preservation of quality ingredients, with food playing a fundamental role in the maintenance of a shared ethnic identity. After I recount the evolution of this perception of Italian-American foodways, I will then delineate its profound influence on the contemporary artisanal food movement, as evidenced by numerous interviews I conducted with small-business owners and self-proclaimed food artisans.

In the last decade, the preoccupation with high-quality, handmade food has grown within the larger American food culture, with an increased interest in food made or preserved using traditional methods like canning as well as small-batch cheese making and a growing appreciation for the same heritage-based, do-it-yourself ethos with which I was brought up. The consumer demand for these artisanal foods at retail outlets has been on a steep rise in the past few years, with the Specialty Food Association finding that more than 41 percent of specialty-food retailers noted an increase in sales of over 20 percent (Aragon 2012, 1), while 14 percent of consumers specifically sought out “artisan” foods at retail locations in 2013 (Sloan 2013). Furthermore, since the start of the new millennium, specialty-food makers

have grown exponentially as the availability of and demand for traditionally produced “artisanal” products has increased. This meteoric growth has its roots in a greater consciousness about quality in sourcing ingredients and in a desire to reclaim (or adopt) traditional methods of food preparation and preservation, whether by practicing these methods themselves or by connecting to them through the purchase of goods from artisanal producers who claim a connection to an “authentic” past (Cope 2014).

The idea of authenticity is fraught, however, and is widely open to interpretation by both the artisan and the consumer. Many artisans cite the goal of replicating both authentic processes and end products with their efforts. However, scholar Jennifer Jordan (2010) found varying interpretations of authenticity when dealing with edibles, including a modern “combination of pragmatism and aesthetics,” which might, she noted, “override” strictest adherence to historic practices (13). Indeed, the dire economic and social realities of Italian immigrants in their home country and then in America that greatly influenced these foodways are often forgotten as contemporary foodies seek out authentic culinary experiences without taking into account the conditions in which earlier generations of Italian Americans produced, distributed, and consumed food. Thus, “the past” that today’s artisanal consumers and producers are connecting with is one that is constructed through the uncertain processes of “material and collective memory” (12) as traditional products and practices are re-imagined and re-interpreted for modern consumers. Thus, Simone Cinotto (2013) defines the construction of authenticity within the Italian-American community as “skillfully juxtaposing elements from different cultural contexts . . . to articulate an original and ultimately appealing ethnic narrative . . . signif[y]ing abundance, artistry, and tradition” (181). In short, whether or not the food is *actually* representative of authentic preservation or preparation methods, it should *feel* as if it were.

As many Americans are becoming newly interested in producing and consuming artisanal food—often citing a desire for higher-quality foods and for connection with their heritage or a chosen identity through foodways perceived (accurately or, sometimes, less so) as “traditional”¹—they increasingly engage with values embedded in long-standing narratives around Italianate foodways. There is, in fact, a strong influence of these generations-old foodways upon today’s artisanal food boom, as can be seen in the ways in which they are proliferated by contemporary artisanal producers citing Italianate foodways as an inspiration for their work. In short, these foodways—and, essentially, the narratives that have been constructed around them—have had an indelible effect on today’s American food culture.

Putting Artisanal into Context

Centuries ago, the term *artisanal* was used to refer primarily to non-food-related goods and skills, and evidence of an artisan class can be traced back to ancient Egypt, where workers specialized in jewelry making, carpentry, sculpting, among other activities. During the fourteenth century, when artisan guilds were created to help organize and maintain standards of workers whose livelihood and status depended on their specialized skills, the Western societal role of artisans was elevated beyond that of a slave or laborer and considered more akin to that of an artist. The artisan guilds of the Middle Ages, prevalent throughout what is now Italy, included bakers and butchers, as well as experts in other food- and non-food-related skills. Many of these workers continued to be a vital part of Western society well into the modern age. In 1955, in fact, Italy became one of the first countries in the world to define its artisanal foods according to characteristics and production methods, both protecting and commodifying aspects of their culinary heritage² and further reinforcing the connection between artisanal food and Italianate culture.

In the United States, however, there is not yet any standardized regulation over use of the term *artisan* or *artisanal*. Nonetheless, the common understanding of artisanal food, also sometimes called “craft” food, is one that assumes the food is prepared using traditional methods and is primarily handmade, its quality “depend[ing] on the judgment, dexterity, and care which the master exercises as he works” (Pye 2010, 342). In addition, consumers also typically expect that the product is made with higher-quality raw ingredients and with minimal additives—or as close to the original, pre-industrialized authentic version as possible. These products increasingly have value beyond mere nutrition, or even quality, a value that lies in the narrative of how they were produced. With today’s artisanal foods “quality is not there to be discovered: those attributes which define things are made explicit, even superadded, in the course of the marketing process” (Marilyn Strathern, quoted in Paxson 2010, 45). Artisanal marketing typically draws upon narratives illustrating the connection of the artisan to a perceived authentic past, through family ties to production or tradition or special knowledge of preparation or preservation techniques. Thus, consumers perceive the value of these artisanal products differently than their mass-produced equivalent, both because of the inherent difference between the handcrafted and mass-produced product as well as because of the story behind the product itself. Yet while the use of narrative in marketing artisanal foods may be seen as a somewhat contemporary idea, this prizing of the story behind the product itself has long been important to the Italian-American community, expressing

“cultural continuity” with their ethnic origins as well as “hybridity and/or assimilation” within American culture (Oyanger 2009, 329). In fact, Italian Americans of the early twentieth century spent significantly more money on food than other ethnic groups “as an investment in, and an expression of love for, the local community” through the purchase of food that represented this emerging Italian-American food culture (Cinotto 2013, 73). And this food was prized not only for its nourishment or taste but also because of who made it, where it was made, or the memories or emotions associated with it.

Furthermore, while there has been much focus on the new entrepreneurs who are entering the market as self-identified artisanal³ food purveyors, the prevalence of food artisans and handmade specialty-food products in Italian-American culture has been apparent for generations, although for reasons that may differ from the contemporary narrative surrounding both Italian-American and artisanal food production. Cinotto (2013) cites three reasons why food became such a defining cultural characteristic for Italian Americans:

first, the power of food to create and support family and community in a world of cultural and material stress; second, the importance of the food trade in the Italian immigrant economy; and, third, the symbolic value of food in the self-representations that helped Italians understand who they were and whom they aspired to be. (3)

Thus, while Italian Americans were not the only ethnic group to whom food was a defining feature during the peak years of European immigration in late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century America, they were a group to whom food was of particular importance, and their utilization of food to both create and elevate their place within American culture at this time—and with continuing influence—has few parallels.

Artisanal Food and the Value of Its Production Methods

The immigrating Italians of this time were primarily rural peasants from Southern Italy who were displaced into an urban setting in which their culture of “work and ethics . . . [was] in conflict with . . . a mercantile civilization where the products of culture [were] viewed as goods of exchange with their own market value” (Branzi 2010, 579). In other words, they moved from a rural culture where physical labor was valued and in demand to work the landscape to a place where the end product was what mattered. This traditional culture that valued not only the produced good but also the effort and value system inherent in its production was

thereby transported to the Italian neighborhoods in urban centers. Within this marketplace, immigrants transformed the abundant raw ingredients of their new home with a peasant's eye toward creating products that worked within their own value system, one in which these edible artisanal products (including mozzarella, ricotta, sausage, and cured meats among other handmade goods) could be seen as commodities with value beyond their edibility, functioning "not only as a form of payment for labour, but as the social glue that bound community members to one another" (Poe 2001, 133). Initially, within the insular Italian-American community, these products were transformed into symbols of the immigrants' connection to their homeland and their heritage, retaining their "special symbolic value in the making of Italian-American identity because of the assumption that they arrived intact from an Old World preindustrial, premodern past" (Cinotto 2013, 106). Later, as Italianate cuisine became more accepted and, eventually, sought after by those of Italian- and non-Italian descent alike, these same products became symbols of the cultural capital Italianate identity was gaining in the United States. Thus, it was foods identified as Italianate that could be seen as representing Gans's "symbolic ethnicity"—authentic and representative foods that became the identifying elements of dispersing Italian-American communities, who could sustain their connection to their ethnic heritage through portable, edible, or other "visible" symbols (DeAngelis and Anderson 2005, 48; Gans 1979, 1). But even as the consumer base shifted away from immigrants seeking connection with the prototypically artisanal foodways of their own ethnic traditions to non-Italian-American consumers, Italianate foodways have maintained their "superadded" value because of their connections to these traditions, which have become increasingly prized within the contemporary artisanal market culture.

Community and Identity in Emerging Italian-American Foodways

While Italian immigrants were not unique in using foodways as a means to sustain a connection with their heritage, one reason that the Italianate food traditions have retained such narrative power is that many immigrating Italians at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries believed that their stay would be temporary (Brown 2007, 3). This, along with the discrimination that Italians faced, led to Italian immigrant communities being particularly insular and relatively resistant to Americanization. Eventually, only 20–30 percent of these immigrants returned to Italy permanently—some remaining in the United States by choice and others because of financial inability to leave (Mintz and McNeil

2013). As fewer Italians returned to their homeland, urban “Little Italies” became neighborhoods with prominent cultural identities, and their emerging food culture became a “unifying force” that retained a strong flavor from traditional foodways that were combined with America’s relative *abbondanza* of edibles (Poe 2001, 131). For these immigrants in their new, often dire, social and economic situation, “food establishe[d] a sense of self . . . social status, and . . . economic standing” (DeAngelis and Anderson 2005, 54) that helped them “nurture a self-sufficient cultural identity” (Cinotto 2013, 74) in the United States. As immigrants adapted to the different foods available to them, and as communities of Italians from various regions were brought together in close urban quarters through immigration, the resulting Italian-American foodways coalesced into a more unified tradition that grew out of disparate regional cultures and “play[ed] a considerable role in the formation of communities and in shaping the identities of those who lived in them” (Diner 2003, 54).

Given the continuing importance of food as a means to express ethnic identity, community, and collective memory within Italian-American culture, the increasing number of food artisans and eateries established in these Little Italies became a key component of daily lives within these communities (Poe 2001, 131). New York City was home to the largest Italian immigrant population by the start of the twentieth century, and to fulfill the demands of this growing population, Italian entrepreneurs opened grocery stores, *latterie* (dairy stores), and other specialty shops such as butcher shops and bakeries. Alleva Dairy, the first Italian cheese shop in New York City’s Little Italy, opened in 1892 and offered, among other items, mozzarella made from cow’s milk, as opposed to the traditional but unavailable milk of water buffaloes. Thus, what was called *fior di latte* in Italy became known by Americans simply as mozzarella—just one example of the adaptation of authentic Italian food within the emergent Italian-American cuisine. The rise of Italian-American artisanal food culture began with these small dairies, butcher shops, and groceries, which offered familiar foods from the Italian peninsula, influenced by flavors and techniques from their homeland but integrating American ingredients and tastes. These were often foods that urban Italian immigrants were hard-pressed to make themselves due to lack of time, space, money, ingredients, or interest. Thus, this emerging food culture “untangled [Italian Americans’] sense of self from a fixed, inherited notion of identity and refashioned it into new, translocal forms . . . as they remembered the past, coped with the present, and imagined the future” (Cinotto 2013, 76).

By 1938 there were more than 10,000 Italian grocers in the country, many of whom offered house-made cured meats, fresh cheese, bread,

and other items (Mariani 2011, 35). The presence of Italian grocers was of particular note, as their numbers began to peak at the same time as supermarket culture took hold across America. Chain stores offering a large selection of foods, including many mass-produced versions of artisanal goods, became the dominant influence upon American food retailing in the 1920s. Yet Italian neighborhoods—primarily urban and in the Northeast at this time—were mostly immune to this trend for a few more decades, helping to further ingrain Italian-American artisans within the increasingly diversifying neighborhoods' foodways. Further, these neighborhood inhabitants tended to be particularly loyal to local stores and artisans, as a reporter in 1940 noted that Italian neighborhoods in Philadelphia “get the larger part of [Italian-American] family budgets,” while “the lack of any chain stores was a striking feature” of urban Italian-American communities like South Philadelphia as late as 1947 (Luconi 2002, 154). Thus, Italian-American artisans were in an environment that was more resistant to the sale of mass-produced foods, establishing stores and customer bases that were supportive even as the Italian-American neighborhoods began diversifying. In the ensuing decades, these food products began to “shift from geographically based definitions of group identity, toward . . . portable symbols of ethnic unity” (Poe 2001, 132), and both the products and the value systems spread with the decentralization of Italian Americans.

These symbols of Italian-American identity became more widely accepted and even sought out by non-Italian Americans by the mid-twentieth century due to stark cultural shifts. Italian immigrants had at one time been seen as dirty, uneducated, and diseased, but by mid-century, Italianate culture—for various reasons, including increased international travel and new immigrant populations to marginalize—was viewed as romantic and sophisticated, with sensuous food and abundant wine.⁴ Its broader acceptance was apparent as well through the growing desire for foods such as pasta and pizza and the popularity of movies that featured Italian locations or Italian-American performers, further romanticizing and packaging Italianate culture for Americans of all backgrounds. Yet it was not just popular culture that was helping to write the emerging narrative of Italian-American culture. Cinotto (2013) notes that “Italian American producers of Italian food did not limit their enterprises to the formation of an exclusive ‘Italian American community of taste’ but rather created innovative communication strategies to exploit the connection between American modernity and progressive capitalism and the production of ‘traditional’ foodstuffs” (105). Not only did the broader American culture become more accepting of Italian-American culture, but it was Italian-American entrepreneurs who helped to construct this identity

through careful management of all aspects of specialty goods' production, packaging, and sale. This helped to create an Italian-American identity or brand, rooted in a set of perceptions of Italian-American foodways that both consumers and producers are responding to today.

Other cultural influences also elevated the status of Italianate foodways in America, including increased air travel that allowed more Americans to experience traditional Italian culture, the counterculture movement in the 1960s that emphasized a connection to the land and handmade food production, and Chef Alice Waters's popularization of "California cuisine" in the early 1970s. The latter sparked a renewed appreciation for fresh foods rather than pre-packaged, for quality over mass-produced ingredients, and for a traditional and seasonal approach to dining—elements of the narrative that had been constructed around Italianate foodways for decades. Furthermore, the Italian-based Slow Food movement in the 1980s, birthed in response to the encroaching American fast-food culture in founder Carlo Petrini's homeland, became a tool to re-emphasize Italianate cuisine as the antithesis of mass production. While the Slow Food movement was initially aimed specifically at preserving Italian food traditions, it quickly grew to encompass foodways from around the world that supported fresh, local ingredients, artisanal production and preservation methods, and humane and environmentally sustainable farming practices, expanding in fewer than thirty years to number more than 800 chapters in 132 countries. Initially "embraced by media as a typically romantic Italian response" (Mariani 2011, 208) to the industrialization of their foodways, Slow Food supporters gradually attracted global interest in the Italianate ideal of relaxed enjoyment of traditionally prepared foods. Thus, as the Slow Food ethos expanded, these idealized Italianate values of sourcing ingredients, preparing food, and eating well helped equate Italianate food with purity, simplicity, authenticity, and tradition.

Yet despite these rumblings of interest in handmade, fresh foods, artisans in many neighborhoods continued to go out of business at an alarming rate, and mass-produced and prepackaged food (including Italian-American staples like pasta and mozzarella) became widely popular. However, while the trend in white ethnic neighborhoods during the late twentieth century was dispersal out of urban areas, "the picture was 'different' for Italian neighborhoods, which continued as a visible feature of the urban landscape" (Krase 2006, 89). The Italian-American artisans who remained, or who learned their craft from family members, became even more firmly entrenched symbols of their foodways, sometimes with customers traveling from miles away to purchase traditional (or, increasingly, artisanal) versions of cheese, cured meat, bread, or other items. It was

becoming increasingly apparent that in addition to red sauce and pasta, the foodways that were embraced by the younger generations, including an appreciation of artisan-made items such as cheese and *salumi*, not simply reflected an honoring of the past but also created “a *contemporary* system of interests and values” (Williams, quoted in Poe 2001, 145) that could be expressed through the production and/or consumption of specific products. Yet these values were not shared only by Italian Americans, but by people who were increasingly concerned with reversing the industrialization of the larger food culture, with preserving traditions of many cultures, and with a return to a simpler way of life (Belasco 2006).

The Place of Food Artisans in Contemporary American Foodways

Today, cities around the United States have seen a striking increase in farmers markets and open-air food stalls with produce and prepared goods sourced from nearby farms or made by urban-based artisans, demonstrating a literal return to some of the characteristics of the Italian-American foodscape of the early twentieth century. In fact, Cinotto’s (2013) description of the urban Italian immigrant of almost a century ago sounds like a scene from modern-day Brooklyn: The produce seller, aware of his customers’ “obsession for freshness, yelled, ‘*Roba della mia farma*’ (stuff from my farm)” while “in the city, fruits, vegetables, and herbs were grown in any available plot, in backyards, on rooftops and on . . . fire escapes” (129). And while the Slow Food movement and its accompanying values have grown to become inclusive of traditional foodways around the world, Italianate food is perceived as the prototypical traditional food of this movement, coming as it does from a culture that particularly prizes its food traditions.

This cultural shift toward authenticity was apparent in a small but influential portion of American consumers through the first decade of the new millennium. As the first rumblings of the recession were being felt, so continued a rise in family gardens, preserving, and artisanal food production, as evidenced by the dramatic increase in cheese makers, whose numbers doubled since 2000 (Paxson 2010, 36). This interest in artisanal edibles grew alongside the interest in locally sourced food. In fact, since the U.S. Department of Agriculture began publishing the national directory of farmers markets in 1994, the number of farmers markets had more than quadrupled nationally by 2012 (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2012). With these new markets came new customers interested in local produce and products made from ingredients and by people they felt adhered to their same values of authenticity, quality ingredients, and connection to their

sourcing. In addition, these markets provided a literal marketplace where small and startup businesses could sell their products and gain customers relatively easily and for a relatively low startup cost. Also, people looking to cut costs started to grow their own food, with sales of seeds spiking in 2007. The National Gardening Association noted that more than 43 million households grew their own food in 2009, an increase of 19 percent from the year before (Sanburn 2011). Now not only were more households harvesting their own produce and, presumably, looking for ways to preserve their bounty, but also more people were searching for work. This led to more people trying traditional preserving and preparation methods in their home; a greater cultural interest in homemade, local, and high-quality food products (Muller 2010); and an increased number of people starting food-based businesses (Casserly 2012). In doing so, many of them, like the artisans discussed below, looked either to their Italian heritage for inspiration or to the Italianate foodways they, as non-Italian Americans, felt represented the worldview of simplicity, quality, and seasonality that they wanted to embrace.

The Italian-American artisanal shops that survived into the twentieth century did so, in part, by catering to “‘Saturday Italians’—the ‘prospering overweight sons of leaner immigrant fathers’” (Roberts 2011) who were rarely from the neighborhood anymore but who would visit weekly or monthly. These longtime family businesses, which began as primarily artisanal producers of foods like fresh cheeses, became increasingly diversified but still recognized the benefits of authenticity in selling artisanal goods, both theirs as well as items imported from Italy. These entrepreneurs were at the forefront of those constructing the “brand” of Italianate food within American food culture, initially to connect immigrants to “an idealized rural past and its artisanal traditions” (Cinotto 2013, 175) and later, as Italian-American food became entrenched in and desirable to the “cosmopolitan middle class,” to attract “‘foodies’ bent on accumulating cultural capital by consuming what was then understood as authentic Italian food” (178). Furthermore, this rise in the cultural capital of Italian-American food allowed artisans to charge higher prices for their products. This was often a necessity, since formerly impoverished neighborhoods such as Little Italy in the Lower East Side of Manhattan were now highly desirable and had steep rent increases. But higher prices were also a sign of the cultural recognition that these products were becoming increasingly rare and had transformed from everyday staples in a working-class diet to specialty goods accessible primarily to those with access and income. While Italianate food culture was not the only one whose foods were gaining cultural cachet in this emerging American foodie culture, it was among the

most visible, particularly in the urban centers where the modern artisanal movement first took hold.

Modern Italian-American Artisans and Their Connection to an Authentic Past

Italian-American food artisans have often been seen as representatives of the broader Italianate culture for the past century, as they both maintain and revise core values associated with that culture. The following case studies document the ways in which these entrepreneurial artisans continue to reference the past while helping to create a modern Italian-American identity through their own stated and implicit connections to their Italianate heritage. Fifth-generation store owner Lou DiPalo of Enoteca Di Palo reflects this contemporary consumer and producer interest in the conventional narratives of authentic Italian-American foodways. He spoke of a recent change in how he operates his cheese-making and Italian specialty shop, which has been in business in Little Italy in Manhattan for over a century: “We decided to take our business and go backwards—focus on the way our grandparents and great-grand-parents ran their operation: family-oriented, hands-on customer relations” (Roberts 2011). Cheese maker Mark Federico also expresses this connection with the perceived values of his grandparents, who ran a grocery. He strives to return to what he describes as the “old-fashioned,” handmade, “simple” values of previous generations, saying, “When I grew up in the stores with my grandparents, it’s what we did growing up” (Federico 2013). The stated influence of values learned from previous generations of Italian-American entrepreneurs demonstrates the incorporation of these artisans’ heritage within their modern business model, one that aligns with the larger perception of Italianate foodways within the broader American culture. Unsurprisingly, Federico’s adaptations of his grandparents’ foodways transcend the challenges of the immigrant experience in which they originated: What for his ancestors was “not only . . . a strategy for saving money” but also a means to “imbue simple foods with an identity that spoke of the whole experience of migration, and of the remaking of home in an American city” (Cinotto 2013, 130) becomes for Federico a set of production and marketing practices that brands his business as “Italian.”

This adaptation of the business practices and products of previous generations is evident also in the experience of Albert Capone of Capone’s Foods in Somerville, Massachusetts—a shop that sells homemade pasta, prepared foods, and fresh cheeses, as well as a variety of imported Italian foods and domestic cheeses and meats. He said that he could rely upon

selling a specific amount of Polly-O mass-produced mozzarella in various seasons until he noticed a change a few years ago. He discovered that a new cheese maker was selling fresh mozzarella at the farmer's market a block away. It was the moment when Capone, who is of Italian descent, realized that his customers were willing to spend more on freshly made artisanal cheese for similar reasons that they purchased his homemade pasta rather than the mass-produced varieties. He had watched his father make fresh cheeses when he was young and thus was connected to the process and aware of its superior taste and texture. He experimented with recipes to come up with his own unique method and began selling fresh mozzarella as well. While he was inspired directly by his family history of cheese making, it wasn't until this resurgent interest in artisanal foods that he realized the contemporary value placed upon products that were perceived as authentic. Within the context of this emergent artisanal culture, fresh mozzarella acquired its "superadded value" beyond that of mass-produced Polly-O; instead of merely being a means of nourishment or a recipe's ingredient, it had become a direct reflection of Capone's heritage, gaining "culturally specific meanings and symbolic value" among both Italian Americans and the growing foodie culture, having been "linked to an ideal, aestheticized pre-modern past" (Terrio 2010, 257). Despite the often impoverished and socially difficult reality in which many Italian-American food purveyors originally began their businesses, the evolution in status of the Italian-American "brand" over the past more than fifty years allows contemporary artisans and entrepreneurs to exploit an idealized past as they paint a nostalgic picture of the traditions and practices that inspired what are now perceived to be specialty products. To contemporary consumers, Albert Capone—with his clearly ethnic name, his dark-haired daughters working behind the cheese counter, and a shop that features a selection of imported Italian goods and shop-made Italianate artisanal goods—becomes an example of an entrepreneur using his ethnic culinary capital to establish himself as an authentic artisan, able to command higher prices both for the quality of his goods as well as for the implicit narrative behind their creation (Capone 2013).

The new cheese maker at the farmers market a few blocks from Albert Capone's shop was Lourdes Smith. Her great-grandfather and grandfather were both cheese makers in Hoboken, New Jersey, starting in 1913, and, like Capone, she cites her own Italian-American heritage as an influence in starting her business, Fiore di Nonno, utilizing her mother as her "family memory" to add authenticity to her work ("Lourdes Smith" 2014). On her website, Smith tells the story of how she asked a man who had been trained by her grandfather to teach her his methods and then found "the

love of re-creating her history, in the legend of her grandfather, and in the passion for making mozzarella the best way she knows how" ("Our Story" 2014). Through her marketing copy she romanticizes the process of cheese making—which was often done in hot and cramped conditions and was quite likely one of the only jobs available to her great-grandfather three generations ago—for a new consumer base that elevates a product made through artisanal methods and infuses it with additional cultural value. This value is added through the story of the artisan, the importance placed upon her handmade production methods, as well as her connection to heritage. In fact, this narrative behind Fiore di Nonno commands more space in profiles of Smith than descriptions of the cheese itself, implying that what consumers need to know is that the product is steeped in tradition and thereby worthy of its price tag. Thus, we see both Capone and Smith (re)-branding their food businesses as artisanal because of the elevated status Italianate food has achieved through the aforementioned societal changes over the last fifty years.

It is not a coincidence that cheese was one of the first food categories to see a marked rise in new artisanal production. First, cheese is one of the only products that had a stated, although unenforced, definition of artisanal production, described by the American Cheese Society (2011) as indicating that such "cheese is produced primarily by hand, in small batches, with particular attention paid to the tradition of the cheese maker's art, and thus using as little mechanization as possible in the production of the cheese." This gives some standardization and institutional credibility to the added value of cheese made by artisans. Furthermore, cheese is a product with a large consumer base—its consumption has been rising steadily in the United States for more than forty years, with over 33 pounds on average per person eaten annually. Of this, nearly half are Italian varieties, with 14.8 pounds per person (Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board 2013). Mozzarella alone accounts for 11.43 pounds per year per person, or one-third of all domestic production—making it the most eaten single variety of cheese (International Dairy Foods Association 2013), with much of that used to top pizza, one of the most popular Italianate dishes in the United States. This further shows the shifting perception of Italian-American foods; cheeses like mozzarella were once made by and sold almost exclusively within Italian-American neighborhoods to consumers of Italian heritage. However, since the latter half of the twentieth century, such products began to be mass-produced and widely popular with Americans of diverse backgrounds, demonstrating the increasing accessibility and acceptance of once-artisanal ethnic products into mainstream American foodways. Because of the growing ubiquity of Italian-American

food, contemporary artisanal products can be marketed as higher-quality versions of items with which consumers are already familiar. This makes it easier for these products to be sold at small shops or farmers markets, particularly when they can be further marketed using a narrative that frames the artisan as an Italian-American, multigenerational cheese maker who is returning to his or her roots. Such framing adds authenticity and, thus, value to the end product.

Artisans and the Perceived Values of Italian-American Foodways

Yet while these artisans use their personal family narratives to superadd value to their products through claims of authenticity, there are other artisans whose culinary capital comes not from generational culinary experience or collective memory but rather from an inherited value system to which they stake their own claims to authenticity. Narragansett Creamery owner Mark Federico cites his Italian-American heritage as inspiring his business, even though his Italian grandparents were not cheese makers. His paternal grandfather owned a fruit market, and his maternal grandparents made wine and cheese and other items at home, using quality ingredients to make traditional products for the family's consumption. He emphasizes the importance that Italian Americans placed upon food and its connection to family and community as his influence when he decided to change careers from accounting to cheese making in a desire to work with his hands and "make some cheese [that's] basic, pure. No stabilizers, preservatives. It's just natural." He cites his grandparents' Italian-American heritage as inspiring his "love of food" as well as his "passion" for locally sourced ingredients and the "simplicity of the product itself," a position that simultaneously reflects many of the increasingly fashionable values behind the modern Slow Food movement as it obscures some of the social and economic realities that shaped his grandparents' foodways. "Certainly my background helps me," Federico said, as he reflected on how his grandparents' hand-crafted foods inspired him to switch careers to artisanal food making. He sees his identity as an Italian American as an impetus for his interest in producing artisanal cheese, even as he notes that the processes were learned from sources outside of this tradition. For Federico, then, the perceived values of his heritage—of appreciating simple, handmade, authentic food—were his inspiration for making fresh mozzarella, ricotta, and other cheeses, even if his artisanal knowledge was not passed down from family (Federico 2013). As a result, Federico exhibits his own interpretation of "cultural continuity" that further reinforces the contemporary brand of Italian-American foodways.

Like Federico, Robert Schaefer, owner and chef at Divine Brine pickles, makes similar claims about the influence of his Italian-American heritage on his approach to making artisanal pickles. He said that Italian food is the “cuisine of my passion,” and even though his Italian-American mother didn’t pickle, his recipes were “definitely inspired by her” in both their Italianate seasonings and in the simplicity of his methodology. While he makes some products that are not traditionally Italian, he also produces Italianate items such as *caponata* (a Sicilian eggplant salad). More broadly, he cites his Italian-American heritage as an influence upon his business as a whole, reflecting his learned love of food that is made by hand, from quality, mostly local, ingredients. His business began when he made pickles from an abundance of cucumbers in a desire to eliminate waste while also connecting with friends and family; his pickles initially provided an opportunity to share his *abbondanza* with loved ones. However, his business narrative also reflects an idealized past that ignores the reality of scarcity that required his ancestors to pickle and preserve their food and that placed significant limitations on the products they were able to procure. Like Capone and Smith, Schaefer also recognized the greater value consumers placed upon these artisanal goods. He explained, “The recession brought about people making an effort to get back to their own methods and . . . there’s a real appreciation for someone putting in quality ingredients and energy” (Schaefer 2013). While these characteristics are not purely Italianate, Schaefer, like the other food artisans I interviewed, equates them with the ethos driven by the Slow Food movement and inspired by conventional narratives of Italian-American foodways. Thus, Schaefer reflects Italian-American scholar Donna Gabaccia’s (1998) notion that the mere acts of enjoying “food and cooking are powerful expressions of our ties to the past and our current identity” (5). Consequently, these artisans are also using food to help define *their* “current identit[ies]” that may or may not spring from an idealized past (Gabaccia 1998, 5). Theodora Patrona (2012) follows Louise DeSalvo in asserting that “food [is used] to tell old stories in new ways and also to tell stories that have never been told before” (184). This is reflected in the habit of today’s food artisans of creating contemporary narratives that connect them to a perceived or re-imagined Italian-American experience.

Adopting an Italian-American Identity

The artisans interviewed for this article speak of their products and their broader value systems as emerging directly from an Italian-American heritage, in essence vouching for the authenticity that helps to give their

products additional value for many contemporary consumers. This assertion of an authentic narrative within the artisanal marketplace is tied to products made “[in] limited quantities, using traditional methods and/or materials” that “*evoke* uninterrupted continuity with the past” (Terrio 2010, 258, italics added)—even if the product itself is made from methods or materials that were learned or sourced without an explicit and material connection to previous generations. Thus, it would follow that those who cannot claim an Italian-American heritage could also create their own narrative that evokes this engagement with a past with which they identify, even if they cannot claim a direct familial relation to it.

Such self-identification with Italianate culture and food values for those who cannot claim explicit Italian heritage is apparent in many forms, from the foodie who buys Smith’s fresh mozzarella at the farmers market to the tourist who visits Eataly in Manhattan. Yet it is also becoming increasingly evident in the growing number of Italianate foods being made by artisans of many backgrounds who also assert a connection to the culture through their work and the values it reflects. Kathy Eckhart, owner of La Quercia cured meats, spoke directly about the influence of perceived Italianate foodways on her business. Her approach to making salumi comes from a desire to “use really good ingredients,” the importance of “crafting [the food] by hand,” and her dedication to a “traditional style of living.” “Everyone loves Italian food,” she said in reference to her decision to start an Italian-influenced food business even though she is not of Italian descent. Many people “appreciate the genius of really great, fresh ingredients simply prepared,” she continued, implying once again that these qualities are inherently associated with Italianate foodways. Eckhart was influenced specifically by Italian tradition when she and her husband spent time living in Parma, Italy, which she says is where she became passionate about the values of freshness and simplicity that these foodways represent in the contemporary marketplace. But in some ways she is also similar to the Italian immigrant generations before her, striving to combine that tradition with her American existence. She makes the point that she is using domestic heritage breeds to make her prosciutto and is treating the meat with the same care and attention to tradition that she learned in Parma but with American ingredients and for an (admittedly privileged) American consumer (Eckhart 2013). Thus, her cured meats are reflective of the continuing evolution of Italian-American foodways. And while she is practicing the traditionally Italian art of making prosciutto and other forms of salumi, she is also using food as a connection to her imagined Italianate self. This “voluntary ethnicity” is a chosen one, based upon shared values, preferences, and perceived identity (Krase 2004, 27).

However, Eckhart's articulation of her Italianate self is not wholly dissimilar from that of Robert Schaefer, who is only partially of Italian descent, or Mark Federico, whose grandparents were both Italian American: All are defined by the Italianate narrative that evokes a love of food made with care and quality ingredients, often at home or from an artisan using traditional methods. Contextualizing themselves within this narrative, these artisans, in the words of Ferraro (2005), are able to "feel Italian" within American culture: "Over time the nation at large has absorbed the overall effect—its feeling for Italianness—to conceptualize and symbolize and deploy . . . archetypically Italian experiences and qualities" (207). While contemporary producers of artisanal food (and, ultimately, their customers) may not necessarily be expressing their actual Italian heritage, by sourcing suitable raw ingredients and employing traditional methods of production, they are using the food they make and consume to construct an identity that is grounded in a conventional Italianate food narrative.

Food as a symbol of identity may be common across many cultures, yet the commitment to quality ingredients, traditional preparation methods, and the rootedness of foodways within the performance of ethnic identity has much in common with the dominant narrative of Italian-American foodways. At the same time, the rising popularity of such artisanal practices and the ability of artisanal products to fetch top dollar from consumers seeking to use their culinary practices to affirm their own middle-class identities has led to a re-fashioning of Italianate foodways and the narratives that accompany them. As new food artisans validate their craft by connecting themselves to real and imagined narratives of the Italian immigrant experience, they participate in a process that sometimes replaces a history marked by starvation, discrimination, and struggle with a romanticized tale of *abbodanza*. Thus, ironically, as artisanal production methods and the values that inform them continue to grow in popularity, the role of earlier generations of Italian Americans in shaping those values is often obfuscated at the same time as it is celebrated. While Italian Americans have certainly not cornered the market on the love of good food or the characteristics associated with artisanal methods of production, the foundational and complex connections between their traditional foodways and the contemporary artisanal movement need to be understood through the dual frames of Italian immigrant history and the constructed narratives of Italianate food culture that continue to emerge from it.

Notes

1. The Institute of Food Technologists (Ift.org), The Specialty Food Association (Specialtyfood.com), and other food retail organizations have reported on the rise of “homemade,” “artisan,” and various ethnic cuisines and consumers’ perceptions of these food categories, while numerous artisan statements and culture articles speak to these specific reasons for connecting traditional foodways and identity.
2. Since 1963 Italy has had nationally supported *Denominazione di Origine* food-labeling distinctions, which require that the product be produced within specific regions and by defined methods and standards.
3. The term *artisanal* has been increasingly used to market foods such as potato chips and fast-food sandwiches that are clearly mass-produced or otherwise untrue to the original intent of the term. That this is being embraced as a common marketing term with cachet to the public indicates the extent to which the definition of the term is understood and accepted, even if it does not have an enforceable definition among the food community.
4. Ferraro (2005), Mariani (2011), and Cinotto (2013) are among the scholars who note the equation of Italianate food with romance, sophistication, and physical—namely edible and potable—pleasures.

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Book Reviews

Sabato Rodia's Towers in Watts: Art, Migrations, Development.

Edited by Luisa Del Giudice.

New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.

496 pages.

As the tide of material culture studies flows toward the analysis of objects in motion rather than objects in place, the concepts of co-creation and re-creation are increasingly vital. The social life of an object is not told through a single story but many stories stitched together across periods and places. How different people and environments alter an object (and vice versa) as it moves through the world prompts scholars to debate questions of authorship, ownership, authority, authenticity, and identity. With each move, an object gains fuller dimensionality as it gathers new interpretations. But how are we to evaluate material culture that cannot move? How can we study houses, monuments, or place-based artwork? *Sabato Rodia's Towers in Watts: Art, Migrations, Development* confronts this question with an original answer: If you cannot follow the object, follow the makers.

In this richly contextualized collection of essays about Italian-American artist Sabato Rodia (1879–1965) and the public art installation he constructed in Los Angeles over three decades (*Nuestro Pueblo*, or the Watts Towers), Luisa Del Giudice and more than twenty contributors examine the individuals and communities that have engaged Rodia's artwork over time, each one making and remaking it through new use and interpretation. Parallel to examining an object in motion, examining people in motion around an object produces a collection of meanings through both individual purposes and shared needs. Using migration (of people) as a lens through which to understand the towers in Watts, this deeply layered case study investigates the roles of creativity and community in the contexts of dislocation, relocation, and the journey in between.

Drawn from papers presented at two international conferences (Genova in 2009 and Los Angeles in 2010), this volume's twenty essays carry forward the themes of art and migration in Sabato Rodia's life and work through thoughtful reflection and scholarly analysis. The list of contributors includes an ethnologist, anthropologist, architectural historian, ethnographer, folklorist, oral historian, artist, former building contractor, community activist, filmmaker, journalist, civic arts administrator, curator, as well as heritage and conservation specialists and scholars of English, Italian studies, and public policy. This list is impressive in its interdisciplinary and professional variety, illustrating how Rodia's artwork moves, figuratively if not literally, between the sectors of service, scholarship, and national and international relevance.

With the concept of migration as their common thread (editor Del Giudice notes the strange absence of attention to this theme in previous studies of the towers), the essays are divided into three sections. Part I, consisting of eleven essays, is titled "Situating Sabato Rodia and the Watts Towers: Art Movements, Cultural Contexts, and Migrations." Five essays comprise Part II, titled "The Watts Towers Contested: Conservation, Guardianship, and Cultural Heritage." And Part III, "The Watts Towers and Community Development," is made up of four pieces. To understand the towers in

greater cultural and historical perspective than has ever been available before, contributors emphasize the significance of Rodia's early life in Southern Italy and his later experience as an immigrant worker in the United States. They contextualize Rodia's life experience and artwork within the broad literary and artistic movements of his time, within and beyond his geographies. Italo Calvino is a source of numerous comparisons across the essays—for example, offering poetic comparisons with which to analyze Rodia's aesthetics. The authors probe how the physical, social, and cultural environments of his homes in Italy and the United States, and significantly of his journey between them, influenced his artistic intention and style. They confront a number of complex questions: Are Rodia's aesthetics Italian American or Italian, and how could we know? What of the regional variety within each of those categories? How can one discern which identity is being expressed in Rodia's artwork—individual, collective, or both? What narrative is being told—one of migration or settlement? The authors impress upon readers the value of engaging multiple perspectives on the artist's life experience and work in the consideration of such questions in order to gain a full appreciation of the reach and impact of his work.

Beyond Rodia's own relationship to his towers, the relationships of local community members and international stakeholders are examined also through oral history interviews and reports of community projects developed around the towers. These studies reveal how, even long after Rodia's death, his artwork continues to evolve through its firm place in the literal and imaginary landscapes of those who relate to it, near and far. This more recent history of the towers raises new questions about conservation, such as the ways in which time, climate, and political powers have threatened their security. It necessarily also opens up the issues of tangible and intangible heritage construction and preservation and how such sites can be instruments of power, peace, and change. With its ongoing contested history and identity, the towers are an expression of individual artistry and collective entanglement—objects of agency and advocacy.

A palimpsest of narratives, this multivocal study is characterized by a range of writing styles from creative to scholarly, all accessible and with distinct perspectives. Although the brief chapters can stand alone, authors frequently reference fellow contributors' work in the volume, which creates a feeling of dialog and helps thread together the many pieces. Each possessing her or his own professional background, however, the authors also contextualize Rodia's work with illuminating comparisons from their own fields, providing a multiplicity of lenses through which to view the case. The first entry in Part III is a transcription of a panel discussion from the conference in Los Angeles. Featuring African-American artists from the surrounding Watts area who are connected to Rodia and his towers, this conversation offers first-person accounts of personal experiences working with Rodia and on the towers. As close as the reader feels to the power of the towers through this direct dialog, other essays allow readers to step back and consider them from afar, contextualizing them with the popular *Festa dei Gigli* in Nola, Italy, that features its own famous towers. The numerous interpretations, writing styles, historical contexts, and disciplinary approaches gathered together make this volume an invaluable example of the rich meaning that can be produced through a multivocal, multilayered analysis of a single object. Beyond the essays, four appendices of primary sources allow readers to absorb the direct words of Rodia and his collaborators in a most final and intimate way.

Evoking recent ethnographic approaches in vernacular architecture studies that draw upon multiple narratives about a structure or site to interpret its meaning and use, this book presents more than twenty-five different and distinctively useful perspectives on Rodia's Towers in Watts. This volume is a tremendous contribution to a great number of fields that examine Italian-American and Italian history, aesthetics, folklore, immigration, sociology, art, vernacular architecture, cultural geography, community development, and heritage. Scholarly and popular audiences alike will find these essays compelling, recognizing that although some objects in the world must remain in place, the people who create them and the stories that re-create them circulate widely, and with purpose.

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The Italians Who Built Toronto: Italian Workers and Contractors in the City's Housebuilding Industry, 1950–1980.

By Stefano Agnoletto.

New York: Peter Lang, 2014.

360 pages.

Those who have spent some time living in Toronto, the home of one of Canada's largest Italian communities, will have likely heard some variation of the following joke: "Why do Italo-Canadians drive like they own the road? Because they built most of them." Stefano Agnoletto's fascinating and timely new study, *The Italians Who Built Toronto: Italian Workers and Contractors in the City's Housebuilding Industry, 1950–1980*, lends scholarly rigor to popular lore about Italian Canadians and their contributions to the transformation of Toronto by their building of houses and roads. Through his careful analysis of primary sources in Canadian and Italian archives as well as of a broad range of secondary sources, Agnoletto charts the contribution of those (mainly Southern) Italian immigrants to Canada who took up jobs in Toronto's housebuilding industry during key decades of the city's growth. In fact, during the thirty years covered by Agnoletto's study, Toronto's population grew from just over 1 million to nearly 3 million. During these very same decades, Toronto experienced significant social, economic, and cultural transformations thanks also to a wave of immigration from many countries that laid the basis of its cosmopolitan and multicultural identity.

Agnoletto is a young economic historian who has benefited by distance from his native Italy's academic milieu to produce a study that is useful to many disciplines including my own, architectural history. Published in Craig Phelan's series *Trade Unions Past, Present and Future*, *The Italians Who Built Toronto*, Agnoletto's first major book, adds to the extensive scholarship on various aspects of Canadian migration. By conducting his research primarily outside Italy, where scholarship on the mass migration of Italy's rural poor to the Americas, Australia, and Europe has yet to be conducted in depth, Agnoletto asserts both his independence from Italy and his

willingness to take a role in shaping the future of migration history. Perhaps the reluctance of many Italian scholars to engage with the topic can be traced to the stigma associated with the nation's subaltern class, who left the country in waves during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as well as during the years following World War II. Recent attempts in Italy have been made to reverse this stigma, including the establishment of the Museo Nazionale dell'Emigrazione Italiana (National Museum of Italian Immigration) in Rome in 2007.

By focusing on the architectural type of the house and the importance of the concept of dwelling, Agnoletto has produced a remarkable migration history that allows us to better understand the way Toronto's built environment was shaped over the decades by Italian immigrants whose flexibility and survival skills led them to shed their former roles as rural workers and become the new urban proletariat (bricklayers, laborers, carpenters, plasterers, and cement finishers). Agnoletto's study also points out that the Italian-Canadian community, though largely made up of workers, also produced a number of entrepreneurs who assumed leadership roles within the housebuilding industry.

Agnoletto's study unfolds through eight carefully written and researched chapters. Chapter 1 identifies the literature and methodologies that form the groundwork for the author's research on

the cultural and structural factors that affected the processes of both urban proletarianization and economic specialization as well as the unionization and entrepreneurship of migrant groups. In particular, the focus of the book on the experience of Italian immigration to post-WWII Toronto as a transition from different social identities to others (class and /or ethnic identities) locates this research in the wider literature on the characteristics and dynamics of Western capitalism in the twentieth century. (8)

In chapter 2, Agnoletto maps the social, economic, and cultural differences among ethnic groups in Toronto, illuminating the places held by Italian migrants. Chapter 3 charts the rise and consolidation of the Italian community in Toronto. Chapter 4 analyzes issues of class and gender. Chapter 5 lends greater specificity to details of homebuilding. Chapters 6 and 7 address the role of unionization and strikes in shaping the community's relations with the rest of Toronto. The final chapter expands the debate to within a broader North American context.

While adding to the considerable scholarship on different aspects of Canadian migration history, Agnoletto is one of the first to address the impact of migrant labor on the nation's built environment. Given this distinctive contribution, it is disappointing that the author did not at least attempt to address some of the ways in which Italian labor visually and materially shaped "high" domestic architecture in Canada. For example, did certain patterns of bricklaying imported from Italy change the ways in which Canadian architects understood and deployed bricks in their designs? Did Italian construction techniques seep into the Canadian building industry? Although Agnoletto does not claim any particular expertise in architectural history, he might have considered adding an additional layer to an already intriguing study by including images of the housebuilding industry that he so carefully analyzes from the point of view of labor history. For example, images of Italian construction workers on site

breaking for lunch and enjoying traditional foods would have added a layer of visual history to an already intriguing story.

Agnoletto's passionate embrace of his subject does not weaken the rigor of his analysis, but neither is it dull; he transforms demographic, economic, social, and political data gleaned from a wide variety of sources into a highly engaging narrative. Even readers who have little knowledge of migration history and who are associated with very different fields of inquiry will find this to be an eminently readable study. Perhaps publishers in Italy will take notice and advocate for the publication of an Italian translation in the near future.

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Italiani nel Queens: L'integrazione di una comunità urbana.

By Giuseppe Fortuna.

Roma: Carocci Editore. 2013.

158 pages.

Giuseppe Fortuna's *Italiani nel Queens: L'integrazione di una comunità urbana* (Italians in Queens: The integration of an urban community) is the story of the Italian-American community in the neighborhoods of Ozone Park, Astoria, and Floral Park in the New York City borough of Queens. Fortuna's main goal is that of analyzing the assimilation and integration of Italian immigrants in the United States through a study of the social structure of these three historically Italian-American settlements and a microanalysis of personal and family behavior within these communities in change (25).

The book begins with a brief review of sociological approaches to assimilation and multiculturalism that clearly positions the work as a descriptive account of some salient social, political, and cultural features of a particular group (40). It then presents an overview of Italian immigration to New York (chapter 1) and some descriptive data on the Italian-American community in Queens (chapter 2). The core of the book discusses the rise and fall within these Queens neighborhoods of Italian-American *isole culturali* (cultural islands), defined as a smaller community that provides immigrants with a sense of security and familiarity, a type of home outside of home that can "attenuare nell'immigrato il senso di isolamento" (weaken the sense of isolation suffered by immigrants, 102).[1] Fortuna approaches the topic from a sociopolitical perspective (chapter 3), from the point of view of the labor market (chapter 4), and from within family structures (chapter 5). Overall, he argues that these cultural islands are becoming less and less common and all but irrelevant thanks to a new generation of young immigrants who move "con disinvoltura da una nazione a un'altra, sentendosi a casa ovunque" (from one nation to the next with confidence, feeling at home anywhere, 57). Furthermore, since recent Italian—and Western European—immigration to the United States is increasingly selective, favoring the highly qualified, mobile, and specialized, in the long run, these cultural islands may not be able to survive.

Methodologically, the book offers an interesting combination of a straightforward presentation of descriptive quantitative data, drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau, and a complex participant observation that stretched through many—possibly even forty or more—years. Fortuna utilizes the census data to create localized demographic profiles of the communities included in his study with little or no additional analysis or manipulation. However, the use of narrative in conjunction with very specific descriptive data is effective and informative. Consequently, even though there is no novel or particularly interesting contribution from a quantitative point of view, his work will still be of interest for those studying the Italian-American community in Queens. The participatory observation data, on the other hand, are extremely interesting. They were collected over time via the author's interactions with members of the community. Being an Italian American in Queens himself, Fortuna possesses knowledge of the area and its residents that, together with the trust he was able to garner, are the most valuable aspects of his methodological approach.

The book's intellectual contribution can be summarized in three main categories. First, as a case study of a specific ethnic/ancestry group in a particular place, it provides a wealth of detailed community information. Second, it attempts to generalize from the case study to the larger story of immigration in the contemporary United States. Third, it aims to generalize from its analysis of personal traits in a particular case to a broader study of assimilation and integration.

As a case study of three strongly ethnic communities, Fortuna's book will appeal to anyone interested in Queens, in New York City, and in Italian-American communities. While his statistical analysis is solid if not overly sophisticated, his firsthand, personal knowledge of the neighborhoods at the center of his study, together with the historical range of time during which his data were collected, make his work unique.

The book is most successful as a generalized analysis of recent immigration to the United States. In fact, the most striking passages of the book are those focused on the changes between the working-class immigrants who arrived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (including those who came after World War II) and the college-educated, skilled immigrants who have come to the United States in the past twenty-five years. For instance, the idea that new immigrants, like those he studies in Queens, will adapt to broader, more general American values and ultimately embrace their ethnicity only as a symbolic tool (102) adds to the long story of assimilation of ethnic groups within U.S. society. Fortuna argues that this assimilation can be sped up or delayed according to each individual's work environment (125) and to the type of family that one belongs to (132–138). Ultimately, he suggests that the newest wave of Italian migration, made up of skilled workers and students who moved to the United States singly—as opposed to with their families—to work in non-Italian environments (140) will exponentially reduce the time required to achieve full assimilation. *Italiani nel Queens* is an interesting work that deserves the attention of anyone studying immigration and immigrant communities around the world.

—RODRIGO PRAINO
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The Friulian Language: Identity, Migration, Culture.

Edited by Rosa Mucignat.

Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

197 pages.

This collection of essays has its origin in a conference, "The Friulian Language and Its Contexts," held in 2012 at the then Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies at the University of London. The papers at the conference were given in Italian and have been translated into English for this publication. The exceptions are the introduction ("Friuli: A Small Homeland in the Age of Transnationalism") and the essay "Language and Time in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Il sogno di una cosa*," both written in English by editor Rosa Mucignat.

The book is the first comprehensive study in English of Friulian, a Romance language of the Rhaeto-Romance family. Friulian is spoken in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region of northeastern Italy by more than 400,000 people and by an additional 200,000 Friulian emigrants in the rest of the world. The Friulian language was mentioned in written texts as early as 1150, has been used for literary purposes since the fourteenth century, and acquired official minority-language status in Italy in 1999. Geographically and politically remote, Friuli remained isolated for much of its history and developed a unique language that sustained a distinctive identity and culture.

This multidisciplinary volume gathers the work of ten contributors and is divided into four sections: "History and Status," "Language and Culture," "Migration," and "Literature."

The book opens with an essay by Fulvio Salimbeni, "History, Language and Society in Friuli (Thirty Years Later)," which revisits his book *Storia, lingua e società in Friuli*, co-authored with Giuseppe Francescato in 1976. The essay offers an overview of the major transformations in the social and economic life of Friuli, from pre-Roman Celtic cultures and the age of the patriarchs of Aquileia to the Risorgimento. Throughout his essay—which also recounts the peak years of Friulian migration (1881–1914), the two world wars, and the catastrophic earthquake of 1976—Salimbeni reconstructs "key moments of linguistic and cultural history, with a special eye to the exchanges with the German and Slavic worlds" (xv). Such a sociolinguistic approach is also characteristic of the essays in the section devoted to language and culture, in my opinion the most interesting of the whole collection.

This second section opens with Paola Benincà's study of Friulian linguistics, which offers an "interpretation of the linguistic peculiarities of Friulian and its significance for the understanding of the development of the Romance system as a whole" (xvi). Even though Friuli found itself at the intersection of the Romance, Germanic, and Slavic linguistic families, it was able "to preserve its physiognomy and resist linguistic influences from outside" (31) and "remained internally united without being isolated" (32). Benincà provides examples of phonological, morphological, and syntactical phenomena that "shed a light on other Romance varieties where the same phenomena have left but disconnected and insufficient traces" (xvi), for example, Provençal, Catalan, Lombard, and Piedmontese.

Carla Marcato's essay "The Friulian Lexicon" focuses on, and puts into historical perspective, certain uniquely Friulian words, such as the salutation *mandi*, which

“derives from the reduction of the formula corresponding to the Italian *mi raccomando*” (54). Her fascinating study highlights diatopic variations—“between the Eastern area and Carnia on the one hand, and the western area on the other” (55)—and lexical stratification, especially Celtic and Latin. The Friulian vocabulary also contains Venetian, German, and Slavic words, all of which testify to the long and complicated history of the region.

Next, Fabiana Fusco addresses “the issue of how the female figure is represented in Friulian lexicography” (67), specifically in the dictionaries *Nuovo Pirona* and *Grant Dizionari Bilengâl*. “The images of women as they appear on the pages,” according to Fusco, “are often one-dimensional” (81) and “defined as helpless, apt only for care work, but also seductive, evil and objects of sexual fetishism” (85).

Also devoted to sociolinguistic aspects of Friulian, and opening the section “Migration,” is Franco Finco’s “Friulian Migration to Latin America: Linguistic Reflexes.” In what seems to me the book’s most valuable study, Finco analyzes the linguistic phenomena that characterized the migration of Friulians to Argentina and Brazil from 1877 until the 1960s: “linguistic mixing, hybridization, a convergence towards shared expressive systems, the adoption of varieties, or total assimilation in the new language” (92). In communities formed by groups of immigrants speaking different dialects, usually one variety prevailed over the others. The so-called *taliàn* (or *vêneto brasileiro*), of Venetian origin, was usually spoken in the southern Brazilian states of Paraná, Santa Caterina, and Rio Grande do Sul, but Friulian was also spoken in Rio Grande do Sul’s Nova Udine settlement. A well-documented example of the prestige of Friulian outside Friuli can be found in Colonia Caroya (founded in 1878), in the Argentinian province of Córdoba. Despite the

widespread stigmatization of the linguistic habits of the *gringos*, that is, European migrants who were not native speakers of Spanish [. . .], the live usage of Friulian in Colonia Caroya endured [. . .] to such an extent, that many people of non-Friulian origin (Venetians, Lombards) or native Spanish speakers learnt Friulian out of necessity, particularly in the workplace and in social relationships. (96)

Drawing on interviews with Friulian migrants collected in 2007 in Argentina by Sofia Solayne Noboa, Finco concludes that their Friulian is peppered with Spanish expressions and discourse markers such as *tambien* or *bueno*; that their lexicon is interspersed with or replaced by loan words from Spanish (for example, *çàucis* (green beans), Friulian *uàinis*, from the Spanish *chauchas*); and that adaptations of Hispanicisms to Friulian lexical structures are not infrequent. Furthermore, there are “very interesting semantic loans from Spanish, with mutations or the addition of meanings” (97); for example, *pòpul* means not only “people” but “town, village” (Friulian *pàis*, *vîle*), based on the Spanish *pueblo*. Finco concludes by pointing out another aspect of Friulian emigration to Latin America: “Often, those who returned spoke a ‘strange’ Friulian compared to that spoken in Friuli, [. . .] as if their language had become frozen at the time of their emigration or of that of their parents” (98).

Also interesting are Rienzo Pellegrini’s observations on recent Friulian poetry in the final section of the book, where he examines poems by Siro Angeli (“L’âga dal Tajamènt”), Amedeo Giacomini (“Tiliment”), and Novella Cantarutti (“La Grava”)

that “allow us to come into contact [. . .] with poetic writing in Friulian and with the kind of Friulian that finds its way into writing” (171). Pellegrini provides a brief chronology of Friulian poetry, focusing on crucial books such as Pietro Zorutti’s *Strollic*, Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Poesie a Casarsa*, Giuseppe Marchetti’s *Dov’è la mia patria*, and Leonardo Zannier’s *Libers . . . di scugnî lâ*. He highlights two divergent approaches to Friulian: Pasolini’s “notion of dialect as an exclusively poetic language and that of Friulian as a fully functioning language” (173) and Novella Cantarutti’s view that Friulian, despite being “a jealously protected idiolect” (184), is nevertheless capable of maintaining “a firm connection with a specific and sharply focused social and geographical setting” (185).

The remaining essays are, in my opinion, less successful because they deal with subjects that are not germane to a collection whose stated purpose is “to provide English-speaking readers with an in-depth and up-to-date account of the language and culture of Friuli from antiquity to the present” (xiv). Rosa Mucignat’s study of Pasolini’s novel *Il sogno di una cosa* is brilliant, but the fact remains that the novel is in standard Italian, not Friulian. Then there are the two essays on Friulian mosaic workers in London and Canada, written, respectively, by Javier P. Grossutti and Olga Zorzi Pugliese. While these success stories will make Friulian readers proud, they provide little insight into Friulian migration history. Grossutti himself admits that “London and the rest of Great Britain [. . .] have never been the most popular destinations for Friulian migrants” (103), while Pugliese concedes that the tenacity with which Friulians “have tried to keep their traditions alive [. . .] in Canada” is less well demonstrated by the “approximately two hundred mosaic art works” they created than by the “continuing presence of associations such as the *Fameis furlanis* (Friulian Families) and the *Fogolârs furlans* (Friulian Hearts) throughout the country” (122). An essay on these associations would, I think, have been more suitable. Finally, there is an extremely detailed essay by William Cisilino about the laws for the protection of the Friulian language; it will tell you more than you ever wanted to know about this arid subject.

Despite these criticisms, *The Friulian Language* deserves to be read, particularly by those interested in sociolinguistics, Romance languages, and dialectology. It has the merit of introducing to the English-speaking world a language and a culture that deserve to be better known, and its multidisciplinary approach, though not without faults, will stand as a model for other studies devoted to minority languages.

—TIBERIO SNAIDERO

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La meglio Italia: Le mobilità italiane nel XXI secolo.
 Maddalena Tirabassi and Alvise del Pra'.
 Turin: Centro Altreitalie/aAccademia University Press, 2014.
 225 pages.

Over the past two decades it has become customary to talk about the swift transformation of Italy from a country of emigration to one of immigration: Italy is now, to use a common Anglophone label, a destination country. Yet, as the volume by Maddalena Tirabassi and Alvise del Pra' amply demonstrates, Italians never stopped migrating, and the number of those moving abroad is, if anything, increasing, especially since the start of the global economic crisis in 2007–2009. Complex and often contrasting rhetorics conspire to make this contemporary migration partly invisible, or at least to mask the true extent and nature of the phenomenon. On the one hand, the media's focus on immigration—whether expressed in alarmist, often racist, tones or through the paternalistic approach, which tells Italians to remember how “we used to be migrants too”—has led to a continuing blindness toward outgoing flows. On the other hand, phrases such as *la fuga dei cervelli* (brain drain) have directed public attention toward specific areas and groups of Italian migrants, effectively limiting our understanding of the overall picture. The combination of statistical data, detailed questionnaire answers, and interviews collected by the Centro Altreitalie and presented in *La meglio Italia* (The best of Italy) is an excellent antidote to rhetorical gestures of all kinds. The picture that emerges from the volume is extremely complex and does not easily translate into simple formulas or trends. What the two authors call the *nuove mobilità italiane* (new Italian mobilities, 3) take many forms and have multiple causes, and their routes lead to multiple destinations. Italy's “glomigrants”—a neologism modeled on the adjective “glocal,” that is, simultaneously global and local (viii)—are usually skilled in languages (some can genuinely be called multilingual), often have previous experiences of life abroad, and in most cases are prepared to move more than once, in a process of fluid migration (188). They occupy different places on the social scale and have variable, though often high, levels of education: The interviewees range from academics to chefs, from entrepreneurs to lobbyists, from volunteers to jazz musicians. Some are bitter about having to leave Italy, others see mobility as a natural progression of their personal trajectory, but almost all seem to share at least one motivation for their decision to migrate: a desire to improve their quality of life. Even that common desire, however, translates into different expectations. For some it marks the hope for greater job opportunities, a release from a perceived future of permanent *precarietà* (precariousness), and the presence of a level field based on a meritocratic system. For others it is a matter of civil rights and equal opportunities, whether these relate to gender, sexuality, or ethnicity.

This new culture of mobility presents both points of contact and distinctive traits if compared with previous waves of Italian emigration. The map of today's flows leads to old as well as new destinations—Germany, China, the Americas, Africa—but the global span of Italian emigration remains a constant. Migrants continue to form complex networks abroad while also maintaining their links to Italy. Yet the channels through which those connections are built now include new media, from Skype to Facebook to blogs, while for many people cheaper travel means more frequent

movement, including periodic visits to the peninsula. This, together with changes in job markets and border controls, also means that traditional ways of keeping tabs on the number of migrants and their movements, such as national statistics and the Anagrafe Italiani Residenti all'Estero (AIRE), or registry of Italians abroad, are less effective than ever. The affective dimension of migration, on the other hand, remains a constant: While many have partners who are not Italian (81), family ties remain powerful and frequently appear in the interviews as the key reason for contemplating a possible return (188). Some of those interviewed, however, feel that going back to Italy would amount to an admission of failure, a forced retreat into a reality from which emigration had seemed to offer a way out (137–138).

There are also some surprises, or at least less predictable results, to be found among the data. One is the generally high sense of integration new Italian migrants report feeling in their host countries. Another is the ease with which many of them embrace multiple identities (regional, national, European, global, or cosmopolitan). In one of the most interesting interviews, reproduced at some length in the volume, a young Chinese-Italian woman goes so far as to refute entirely the relevance of the “identity question,” flatly refusing to choose between her two possible “homes” (174–176). Other interviewees consciously and effectively undermine much used labels, such as the infamous *fuga dei cervelli* (brain drain), talking instead about a *fuga di individui* (escape of individual workers, 140) or even about *risorse in fuga* (the consequent drain of human resources, 189).

For all the complexity and dynamism of today’s migration phenomena, the picture that emerges from the rich, diverse data collected in the volume is definitely that of a growing sense of *italianità internazionale* (international Italianism, 107). Equally strong, however, is the sense that what is missing is a correspondingly international Italy. While many Italians are ready to take risks by moving across the globe, Italy is not proving to be a similarly attractive prospect, not just for returning migrants but also for foreigners looking for opportunities. The net migration balance for qualified workers remains negative, as does the balance between university students and researchers who leave or enter Italy (22). Whether real or perceived, it is this inability of contemporary Italy to present itself as a possible home for old as well as new Italians that constitutes the single most negative aspect of the picture painted in *La meglio Italia*. For many, even among the country’s most recent emigrants, Italy has already become a place of the heart or perhaps a tourist destination: a nation where they can still imagine living but not working and, crucially, not building a life for themselves.

—LOREDANA POLEZZI
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Film Reviews

The Italian Americans.

By John Maggio.

WETA Washington, D.C., and Ark Media, 2015.

240 minutes. DVD format, color.

In documentary, realism joins together objective representations of the historical world and rhetorical overttness to convey an argument about the world.

Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality*

What happens when popular fiction is consumed as ethnic fact? How have we gotten to know Italian Americans? These questions lie at the heart of this documentary and are posed in the opening scenes, which alternate between cinematic representations and personal accounts of Italian ethnicity. Film and self-narration produce two ways of knowing, often dramatically at odds with each other. On the one hand, cinematic images entrench this ethnicity as a series of stereotypes in the national imagination. Ethnicity is seen as a fixed way of looking and behaving, as a singular truth: The “nonwhite” phenotype, the authoritative father, the *mafioso* image. The first-person narratives in the film, however, question the various stereotypes head on, showing that Hollywood films create a reality for ethnicity that real Italian Americans do not recognize as their own. Self-representation corrects public misrecognition. Ethnographic testimonies contest, for instance, the poisonous association of Italian Americans with criminality. Taken together, they establish Italian America as a diverse social field, projecting ethnicity as a plurality of truths. If the underworld is not alien to all Italian Americans, to cite a pertinent example, it is certainly alien to a great many of them.

Broadcast nationally on PBS and narrated by Italian-American actor Stanley Tucci, *The Italian Americans* is a two-part, four-episode documentary. Each episode focuses on a particular period in Italian-American history, captured in the respective titles: “*La Famiglia* (1890–1910),” “*Becoming American* (1910–1930),” “*Loyal Americans* (1930–1945),” and “*The American Dream* (1945–today).” Given that the “power of [cinematic] myth has overshadowed the real history of Italian Americans,” as Tucci narrates, the documentary is preoccupied with the reality of ethnicity. Author Laurie Fabiano, an interviewee in the documentary, confirms that “a great deal of Italian-American culture today has been created by the media; what is considered Italian American is that small slice of Italian-American life that has been blown out of proportion and made into a caricature, and what’s real is getting lost.” The documentary sets out then to reclaim historical truth in the interest of undermining the haunting specter of the myth. Filmic fictions, in our collective imagination, must yield to historical facts. Real history must dispel popular fantasy.

This explains why the documentary places a premium on the authority of objective evidence. In fact, the commitment to realism drives the argument of the film, guides its epistemology, and informs its narrative mode. The politics and the poetics of ethnicity mesh with the factual content and realist style to produce a compelling account of visual historiography.

As such, the claim to realism requires that the documentary cast an inclusive historical net to reclaim forgotten pasts and recuperate family immigration stories for collective remembering (experiences of immigrants, both anonymous and eponymous; Italian leadership in the Lawrence textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912; Italian immigrant anarchism; the restrictions placed on Italian Americans as enemy aliens in World War II) and also to revisit highly publicized historical events (the criminalization of Sacco and Vanzetti).

This historical perspective is particularly comprehensive in the first two episodes, which deliver multifaceted understandings of Italian Americans: the significance of the immigrant family and its close-knit insularity; the early-twentieth-century appeal of political radicalism; bootlegging in the era of prohibition; the emergence of the underworld; Americanization; and Mussolini's early magnetism for a large part of the community. The documentary takes us to specific locales (e.g., Di Palo Fine Foods in Manhattan's Little Italy; the Italian-American community in Roseto, Pennsylvania; Our Lady of Mount Carmel in East Harlem; and the Italian fishing community in the San Francisco Bay area) to situate concrete historical events and consequently deliver visually rich micro-ethnohistories. It brings into circulation an impressive array of archival evidence including films, home movies, letters, photographs, songs, sound recordings, commercials, newspapers, official statements, interviews, congressional hearings, and political speeches, all marshaled as objective evidence to ground the reality of the narrated history.

The argument of capturing real ethnicity by the camera relies on a distinct claim to truth, namely the operation of a natural bond between image and its historical referent. This cataloging of visual evidence organizes the telling of *The Italian Americans* and asserts its truth value. The narrative strategy follows this consistent edited sequence: Interviewee testimonies perform an embodied knowledge of personal and family history. These personal accounts point to the authority of lived-in experience, albeit textured, as I will explain, with elements of subjectivity. They often create a constellation of statements from various interviewees that reiterate a historical truth. To underwrite the objectivity of the testimonies, the film cuts from personal narrative to corresponding historical images and recorded sounds; it often simultaneously cuts from the interviewee's voice to the narrator's voice-over, or to the authoritative perspective of experts (mostly scholars and authors, as identified by the documentary). The juxtaposition of personal recollections with historical footage establishes the veracity of oral history.

The poetics of aligning word, image, and reality repeats itself cyclically throughout the narrative, providing it with its distinct rhythm. This realist convention is most evident, in fact, when the film departs from it. When it comes to featuring historical events where the criminality of Italians is a matter of allegation, the film opts for a visibly staged *mise-en-scène* to underlie the artifice of the reconstruction. Nonrealist reenactments of the 1890 assassination of Police Chief David Hennessy in New Orleans and the 1919 anarchist bombing of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's home in Washington, D.C.—both incidents where Italians were the reputed perpetrators—fall within this category. The factuality of history is contrasted with the fiction of national mythologies demonizing Italians.

In addition to establishing the objectivity of personal accounts, to further the project of realism, the documentary also harnesses the subjectivity of the interviewees.

More than once the camera captures individuals deeply moved in remembering immigrant dislocation and exploitation. Writer Gay Talese, for instance, chokes up, overwhelmed by the story of his grandfather's premature death, a result of unsanitary labor conditions. Laurie Fabiano barely contains her anger when she narrates the abusive circumstances leading to immigrant miners' deaths, which included that of her own great-grandfather: "These men were used like, you know, like animals. They were sent to do things that . . . really in our day and age we wouldn't have an animal do." Similarly, historian Thomas Kessner displays empathy for Fiorello La Guardia's experience of outsiderhood. Lido Cantarutti's testimony echoes the feelings of his father's shock and disbelief over Italian Americans being branded enemy aliens at home while their sons were fighting for the United States abroad. And the narrator's defiant tone underlines this account of imposed assimilation and the concomitant devaluation of immigrant ways: "Italian Americans would not be told how to practice their faith." Contemporary Italian-American voices ripple with emotions in recollecting the immigrant past.

Instead of working against the film's stated objectivity, this emotional display offers realistic evidence that advances several of the film's aims. For one, psychological realism demonstrates the engagement of the interviewees with the immigrant past, in this manner bolstering the claim that ethnicity matters in contemporary Italian-American lives. What is more, affective bonds with family and ethnic history lay open the interviewees' subjective worlds—their values and feelings—humanizing Italian Americans. If stereotypes objectify ethnicity, subjectivity humanizes it. Subjectivity so expressed could be recognized as commonality beyond the ethnic collective. Anger over exploitation, family loss, unjust treatment, as well as over the way discrimination can damage and limit one's potential, all register a structure of feeling that opens up the space for empathetic identification for viewers from all walks of life. The documentary dismantles ethnic stereotypes via at least two interrelated routes: the humanization of these "American ethnics," and the fostering of compassionate intersubjectivity among the viewers.

But any claim to realist representation must confront the fact that historical complexity cannot be captured as a totality. The aim to real representation exists in tension with the consciousness of the partiality of its delivery. *The Italian Americans* is not an exception to this predicament. The "enormous diversity" of Italian America, mentioned yet not charted in the narrative, represents the excess of reality that the documentary cannot possibly accommodate in its telling. If this impossibility is inevitable, one must reflect on which realities are privileged, which are excluded, and the reason informing this editorial decision.

An attentive and critical viewer is likely to register this obvious observation: As the narration nears the recent past, the documentary weakens its commitment to inclusive history. One reason for this partiality has to do with the scope of the film's argument: The aim to topple the Mafia stereotype overrides the interest in capturing a wider range of Italian-American realities. Instead of comprehensive representation, the documentary adopts a particular narrative strategy, turning its gaze on ethnic achievement. Though the scale of Italian-American success has been immense, the argument posits, stigmatization has been instrumental in curbing this ethnicity's potential. While pervasive and deadly in the past—resulting in mob cold-blooded

killing and lynching, as well as limiting the careers of artists (like Rodolfo Valentino) and their political and social influences (as in the case of Frank Sinatra)—it perniciously lingers to affect the near present. In the aftermath of World War II, fear of discrimination, for instance, drove many young people to cultural inwardness and away from university studies. Prejudice stymied Mario Cuomo's early career in law, and the prospect of Mafia stigmatization kept him from running for the U.S. presidency. As Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia puts it, this association was "the thing that hung around [Italian Americans'] neck." Still, the documentary emphasizes that despite the limitations on socioeconomic mobility imposed by prejudice, the success of Italian Americans has been impressive. Lifting the stigma, a political project to which the film contributes, will only propel Italian Americans to even fuller heights of distinction.

The strategy to combat negative mythologies, then, is to attach a positive image to the targeted collective, a dialectic that disciplines a great many identity narratives of European Americans. The dominant society renders an ethnicity inferior or dangerous, and in doing so it dictates the terms of subsequent ethnic self-representation. I bring attention to this dialectic in *The Italian Americans* in order to illuminate a certain containment of Italian ethnicity in the telling. Take, for instance, the 1989 racially motivated mob killing of an African-American teen in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, at the time a predominantly Italian-American working-class neighborhood. The documentary revisits this much-publicized incident and explains it obliquely as a reflection of an isolated, cloistered community. But this perspective localizes racism, and in so doing it neglects a much wider historical issue. It exhibits a reticence to probe beyond this isolated incident and venture into larger controversies of Italian Americans negotiating the privileges of whiteness often against people of color. Engagement with this turbulent history would have directed attention to highly charged interracial tensions and animosities, issues that academic Italian American studies have amply documented. Yet these realities on camera would have tempered ethnic self-celebration. In turn, their absence from the camera's record of empirical evidence illustrates the rhetorical dimension at work in the documentary's claim to realism, namely the selective hiding of unsettling historical truths.

The historiographical tradition of writing the biographies of leaders whose rhetorical charisma, socioeconomic power, or civic vision inspired and directed the collective is an integral component of the documentary; but again, there are striking absences. The documentary explores the fascinating lives of Italian-American men such as Amadeo Giannini, founder of the Bank of Italy in San Francisco; Arturo Giovannitti, poet and charismatic public speaker; Fiorello H. La Guardia, New York City mayor; and Mario Cuomo, New York State governor. The film does acknowledge women politicians too, such as the rise of Geraldine Ferraro to U.S. vice presidential candidate, but it otherwise largely ignores the leadership and activism of Italian-American women.

It is lamentable that biographies of women activists are conspicuously missing. Stories of Italian-American women leaders, through the lens of second-wave feminism, for instance, could have produced insights into how gender, class, and ethnic oppression shaped lives. Any discussion of how women negotiated the criminalization of ethnicity is absent, even though women are at the center of this discourse as reproductive

citizens, mothers, sisters, lovers, companions, or wives. Inattention to this history starkly underlines the masculine bias of the narrative, also present in the exclusively male third-voice narration.

A powerfully persuasive convention in documentary, realism is the preferred mode of historical narration for television networks and commands institutional power. This is not the space to propose an alternative, poststructuralist visual historiography. It is necessary, however, to not only identify the limitations of this realist documentation, as I have done herein, but also to discuss its implications in the wider terrain of race discourse in the United States. In structuring the telling of history around the theme of struggle and success, *The Italian Americans* embeds itself within politicized *topoi* of European American historiography. No doubt hard work, perseverance, sacrifice, and discrimination make for an indelible component of the Italian-American experience. But the telling of this story has been manipulated politically when toil and determination are cast as the sole causes propelling European Americans to the middle class and into the heart of the American Dream. This explanation certainly fuels ethnic pride. But it circulates by implication an ideology that misrepresents race-based poverty. Following the bootstrap account of socioeconomic mobility, the poor have only themselves and their culture to blame for their failure to rise. Empirical scholarship exposes facts that the narrative of self-propelled success displaces from plain view. Historically, institutional racism facilitated the mobility of European Americans while it posited all sorts of obstacles to African Americans. The narrative of struggle and success operates as a *white ethnic* narrative in that it feeds displaced analogies between European Americans and African Americans to extol the former as hard working and stigmatize the latter as dysfunctional. The irony is apparent. Setting out to depose the myth of Italian-American criminality, the documentary implicitly circulates another, the myth of European Americans as a cultural exemplar. Determined to protect an ethnicity, it tacitly harms impoverished people of color.

Can we imagine identity narratives beyond ethnic celebrationism? Several threads in the documentary may offer routes for further reflection. Italian Americans have a history of positioning themselves at the forefront of combating labor injustices. Those who cross boundaries, often at great personal risk, on behalf of the disenfranchised gain distinction. In addition, central to the Italian-American experience is the deep recognition of the psychic and social cost of discrimination. The documentary highlights yet another thread, namely the value Italian Americans place on the erudite and eloquent spokesperson capable of illuminating issues for the public. "Mario Cuomo was a hero to me. He thought deeply about things and spoke eloquently," author Maria Laurino notes admiringly. The fluent poise of an array of interviewees in the film further performs this value too.

The conclusion brings about an additional thread, this time connected with the future of Italian Americans. It registers anxiety over the effects of assimilation, as individualism works against family bonds and community, resulting in a "decay of social cohesion," the price of suburban assimilation. Ongoing travels to Italy demonstrate that the longing to reconnect with family, heritage, history, and culture animates Italian-American lives. How to preserve Italian-American identity in the United States? The documentary closes on a somber, poignant note, using the desire to reclaim

a fuller understanding of ethnicity as an antidote to assimilation. It features the value of the performative arts, specifically opera, as a significant venue in this ethnicity's revitalization; but in its eagerness to dismiss the media image of the mob, it skirts the question of Italian-American accomplishments in the creative visual and literary arts that also contribute toward this reclamation project.

Combined together, these aforementioned threads interweave into a history—some aspects of it rooted in the immigrant experience, others developed through Americanization—that speaks to ethnic concerns as it simultaneously points to issues beyond ethnicity. Such a reading of the Italian-American story would join questions of cultural preservation to a historical consciousness of the effects of exploitation and discrimination on vulnerable groups. It brings into conversation the particularity of ethnic identity and the universality of injustice. What if knowledgeable and charismatic public speakers narrate Italian-American identity in a manner that brings together a concern with particular ethnic interests and the interests of stigmatized collectives? Or that articulates a politics not only of ethnicity but also of interracial solidarity? Such narratives will no doubt require the speaking of certain unpleasant truths in the interest of more genuine historical knowledge. Italian-American scholarship has already ventured into this territory. Poets and writers practice this ethos too. What is more, their voices often offer otherwise unexplored venues for the making of new Italian-American identities. Will a critical mass of journalists, filmmakers, and popular writers be willing to take on the challenge? Their collaboration with scholars and artists to articulate to the public this historical consciousness and visions of the future is yet another frontier for Italian-American cultural production to cross, most likely touching upon controversial issues. But for this very reason it remains an integral component of ethnic historiography and public scholarship.

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Hope: Le nuove migrazioni.
 By Alex Kroke and Gianluca Vassallo.
 A VXX Films Production, 2013.
 75 minutes. DVD format, color.

In a rhythmic stream of entrancing images, New York City's lights in extreme soft focus—as seen from inside a moving taxi—transition to quick successive shots of anonymous individuals and groups of people in domestic spaces partially obscured by the verticals and horizontals of windows, doors, and stairwells. These images, in turn,

transition to shots of San Teodoro (Olbia Tempio province), Sardinia, gliding by from a moving vehicle and then flow into slow-motion shots of New York City's subway passengers moving toward unknown destinations. Portraying the fluidity of identity formation in a postmodern world, this documentary, *Hope: Le nuove migrazioni* (Hope: the new migrations), effortlessly draws the viewer along the tide of nine individual Sardinians' stories that form a multidimensional narrative about the mythical city of New York—that place seen by many U.S. citizens (themselves “foreigners” in the Big Apple) as “una frittura d'Europa, un ketchup abbondante. Heinz 57, naturalmente” (a fried medley of all things European, a big glob of ketchup. Heinz 57, of course!), in director Gianluca Vassallo's words. Through the voices of immigrants themselves, we hear about the difficulties they faced upon arrival and their first impressions of the city—dizzying, electrifying, numbing, stimulating, terrifying, and at times strangely and comfortingly familiar. As the narrative flows, we also learn the many reasons these emigrants left the island of Sardinia—a place recalled simultaneously as comfortable, protective, stagnant, suffocating, cozy, and predictable—and we begin to understand their view of Italy from New York City, the determination to stay and to continue becoming/revealing oneself more fully here. The security of knowing and being known in Cagliari, which, according to Luca Fadda, owner (with Giorgia Zedda) of the Epistrophy Cafè, gives its residents time to solidify precisely their own existence, is counterpointed by a new sense of security in anonymity in New York City. Davide Marogiu, a ballet dancer in the all-male Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, and Irene Salis, jazz composer and singer, make the following observations about losing and becoming themselves in New York City.

Marogiu: In una città così grande, la solitudine è anche una cosa positiva perché ti puoi perdere in questo mare di persone, di gente, di palazzi, di strade, di macchine, di taxi dove hai un sacco di tempo per diventare te stesso.

In such a big city, feeling alone can be a positive thing because you can lose yourself in this sea of persons, people, buildings, streets, cars, taxis, where you have a whole lot of time to become yourself.

Salis: Mi sentivo una stella nell'universo, completamente persa, ma non in senso negativo, mi sono sentita molto piccola, ma parte del tutto.

I felt like a star in the universe, totally lost, but not in a bad way. I felt very small, but a part of everything.

This absence of a fixed self is echoed in the constant movement from one camera to another during the interviews, hinting at the multifaceted nature of human personality and meta-cinematically drawing the viewer's attention to the impossibility of fixing identity in one moment, in one interview, in one film.

And yet the viewer feels he or she gets a real glimpse of who the subjects of the film are. Directors Alex Kroke and Gianluca Vassallo use skillful questions to draw out the somewhat reticent interviewees, despite the perception that Sardinians (according to one of the interviewees, heart surgeon Giovanni Ciuffo) are more accustomed to listening than to speaking in order to learn from their environment.

The filmmakers tease out the essence of their subjects' lives, cutting from interview footage to slick black-and-white stills that fix particularly characteristic expressions of the interviewees at work, at home, and in the streets. Viewers sense Alessandro Solinas's pent-up emotions as he produces and describes the sentimental value of the small artisanal knife called a *fogarizzu*, which he gently places back in his suit jacket, or Irene Salis's struggle to express the need to distance herself from her mother's admirable but oppressive grin-and-bear-it (even if you're dying) philosophy. We chuckle along with medical researcher Valentina D'Escamard who laughingly recounts her fear following the attacks of September 11, 2001, that terrorists might poison the city's water. One senses the enormous effort by Nicola Paganelli to find, grab onto, and reconstruct the pieces of his life after the end of a relationship with a woman who was "la mia spinta a volare" (what pushed me to fly), his primary reason for leaving Sardinia.

Unlike the thousands of African migrants who, in recent decades, embark on desperate and often tragic Mediterranean crossings for what should represent a more stable life, none of the Sardinians featured here left their island out of dire necessity. Instead, expressing what Giovanni Ciuffo describes as the islander's typical openness to realities beyond his or her environment, they were inspired to leave by others' experiences or else they recognized a fleeting opportunity. In either case, the impetus was to attempt to realize themselves professionally or to create something new elsewhere and thus to break free from a system, a family, a city, or in essence an entire country that in some ways seems impervious to changing global currents. In the words of Luca Fadda: Italy "si sta adagiando su quello che si è costruito in duemila anni. Non si può vivere sul Colosseo, bisogna creare un altro Colosseo" (Italy is resting on what was created over 2,000 years, but you can't live on the Colosseum, you have to build another Colosseum).

All of these emigrants exhibit remarkable determination to pursue a deeper knowledge of themselves and to find new creative stimuli (seemingly more available to them outside of Italy) with which to realize their dreams. Feeling betrayed not by Cagliari so much as by an Italian system that does not readily support change, Solinas expresses pride both in the intellectual formation he received in Italy and in the fact that neither he nor his father had to ask favors of anyone in order for him to get ahead. Meanwhile, Irene Salis laments the fact that living in New York City has made her less spontaneous, more diplomatic, more aware of the time-is-money philosophy. Artist Giorgio Casu, who chose to move to a more vibrant artistic milieu, maintains that Sardinia taught him to "rispettare se stessi, rispetto per gli altri, l'esigenza di mantenere la propria dignità . . . come se fosse mantenerla davanti alla propria terra" (respect oneself, have respect for others, the need to preserve one's own dignity as if it means preserving the very dignity of one's homeland).

These immigrants sense that human contact and relationships are different, more fleeting, in the fast-paced global city of New York. And at the same time, each camera shot of the city's many international residents seems to represent a new hope and a new opportunity—in fact, the film concludes with the stream-of-consciousness voiceover: "Ogni finestra è un'esistenza, ogni esistenza è un sogno" (every window represents a life, every life represents a dream). It is both a poignant reflection about a life left behind and a hopeful opening toward a new identity in a global context.

This beautifully executed film would be a most welcome addition to cultural-studies courses and/or research projects that focus on issues of identity and diaspora, especially with respect to this new era of Italian emigration.

—MARISA S. TRUBIANO
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Notes

1. The film is not subtitled, and all translations from the Italian are my own.

Finding the Mother Lode: Italian Immigrants in California.

By Gianfranco Norelli and Suma Kurien.

EURUS Productions, 2013.

104 minutes. DVD format, color.

Gianfranco Norelli and Suma Kurien's film *Finding the Mother Lode: Italian Immigrants in California* successfully documents the complexity of the Italian immigrant experience in California and the many contributions Italian Americans have made to the state's regional economies and individual communities. The overarching theme of the film is the distinctiveness of Italian immigration and settlement in California as compared to other Italian-American communities in the United States. The film presents California as an immigrant destination and a land of opportunity to be shaped by newcomers who have the right combination of skills to support their upward mobility. Locations in California—pioneer towns, farmsteads, ethnic neighborhoods—as well as major historical events figure prominently in the filmmakers' portrayal of this immigrant experience. In fact, the film is organized around seven place-specific case studies or chapters, each exploring various cultural, economic, and social contexts of Italian immigrant life in the state. The film roughly follows a historical sequence that begins in California's actual Mother Lode, an alignment more than 100 miles long of gold deposits and the primary focus of hard-rock mining in the Sierra Nevada—a place where skills and practices from Italy including stone masonry, farming, and shop keeping allowed these immigrants to advance quickly in the gold fields and establish early entry into the service sector of rapidly growing towns of the Gold Rush economy. Notably, the film explores in detail the complex reality of women's roles maintaining family life while making significant contributions to the foundation of successful businesses. For example, Italian-American women played key roles in running businesses such as boarding houses, and they are featured in the documentary as skillful entrepreneurs of commercial ventures in addition to managing the family finances.

As the film progresses, community vignettes chronicle the impact of Italian immigrants in a variety of contexts and environments, including the emerging metropolitan center of San Francisco, Sonoma County's vineyards and nascent wine industry, truck farming and wholesaling in the San Joaquin Valley, fishing and cannery work in

Monterey, and Italian communities in San Diego and Los Angeles. The viewer learns about the importance of chain migration, residential concentration, and the phenomenon of *campanilismo* that reinforced provincial loyalties and the development of niche entrepreneurial activities like fishing and scavenging. In some cases, national events such as the Volstead Act (which implemented Prohibition in 1919) led Northern Italian viticulturists, who continued making wine for sacramental purposes and family consumption, to eventually be listed among the primary vintners in California's emerging wine trade. Today, many of the remaining Italian wineries are unpretentious in their appearance and product; wineries like Foppiano, Martinelli, and Martini & Prati were originally established alongside family residences and therefore exhibit the characteristics of a small-scale, family-run operation.

In short, the film suggests that California gave Italian immigrants options that were not available to their counterparts on the East Coast, including early entry into the building trades and commercial fishing, the ability to make small deposits and obtain loans from Italian-owned banks, as well as to purchase land with climate and soil characteristics that were similar to their homeland. The film deftly portrays how Italian Americans succeeded because their skills were so well-suited to California's emerging economies. Moreover, the film argues that they arrived at an opportune time, facing less discrimination than other groups in comparison to whom they were seen as white by the host culture. It also balances these many immigrant success stories with those of struggle. For instance, Italian entrepreneurs exploited their fellow countrymen and countrywomen with low wages and poor working conditions in fields and factories alike. The film also addresses the rise of Fascism and the classification of Italians as enemy aliens during World War II, as well as the stigma these developments placed on individual Italians and their culture.

Nowhere is the notion of Italians "finding" the Mother Lode stronger than in California's agricultural sector. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Italian immigrants became important contributors to the state's emerging agricultural economy. Many immigrants were peasants in their homeland, and their knowledge and expertise were well-adapted to the familiar environments they encountered in the San Joaquin Valley. Their arrival coincided with a wave of anti-Asian legislation directed at Chinese immigrants. As a result, exclusionary laws created a labor vacuum in the region, and farm operators turned to recent arrivals such as Italian Americans to fill the void. By 1900, Italian-American settlement grew from two initial core areas, centered in the Sierra Nevada and San Francisco Bay area, to a secondary zone of valley districts including San Joaquin County. Their early arrival, ability to purchase land, and the ready supply of laborers resulted in many Italian Americans becoming market gardeners and truck farmers. With this foundation, many went on to distinguish themselves in commercialized agriculture and food processing throughout California's Great Central Valley. Whereas the film focuses mainly on Stockton, the Italian contribution is in fact much more widespread and diverse, encompassing most of the San Joaquin Valley and the southern Sacramento Valley. For instance, the film makes no mention of the world's largest family-owned winery, E & J Gallo, located in the San Joaquin Valley; given its stature, this is an unfortunate omission.

Finding the Mother Lode explores well-tilled California Italian history in new ways, especially in its novel approach to story telling, which examines how Italians shaped California while simultaneously speaking to the larger immigration narratives. The film covers lesser-known topics including the role of immigrant women and how immigrant communities change through time. Interviews with descendants of early pioneering families along with those of Sicilian fisherman lend authenticity to the film and help to link the historical narrative to the experiences of ordinary people in the contemporary moment. A criticism: Because the film addresses multiple themes in several different locations and situations, the viewer experiences small interruptions and abrupt transitions in the narrative. These breaks in the narrative are typically interspersed with comments from scholars that serve to clarify the contextual information needed to weave together the different stories being presented. Other minor criticisms include the use of captions that are sometimes unreadable against a landscape's background or that flash by too rapidly for viewing. As a geographer, I appreciate the use of California maps as the film transitions from one community to another; maps of Northern Italy, in addition to those provided of Sicily, would have been welcomed, as would the inclusion of animated maps to reinforce the linkages and similarities between Italy and California.

Geographers and historians alike have remarked on California's exceptionalism and its regional distinctiveness. *Finding the Mother Lode* offers an original and much-needed contribution to the exploration of the Italian diaspora that continues to lie at the center of contemporary debates among scholars. The film has much to offer researchers interested in issues related to Italian migration, settlement, and transnationalism. Likewise, regional specialists who study North America and the American West will find the documentary a welcome contribution. The film will find a wide audience among scholars of immigration and cultural and ethnic studies in addition to those interested in California more generally.

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Bella Vita: Famiglia, Tradizione, e Surf.

By Jason Baffa.

Haymaker Projects, 2013.

82 minutes. DVD format, color.

Chris Del Moro is not your stereotypical Italian-American man. Pop culture, as we know, tends to define this image—from *Goodfellas* to *The Sopranos* to *The Real Housewives of New Jersey* and *Jersey Shore*—with materialistic, amoral, ever-lively characters utterly given over to their own degraded appetites. The hero of surf filmmaker Jason Baffa's 2013 *Bella Vita*, Del Moro looks far more the part of the classic Southern California surfer—lean, tan, with long, bleach-blond hair. He uses the term *gratitude* a lot. The

film deploys the now-iconic surf-doc format, following Del Moro as he heads back to Tuscany to, in his words, reconnect with “what makes me, me.”

So, the film partakes of both the classic surf film structure of the search for waves and the just as frequently documented story of the cosmopolitan’s quest for his or her authentic roots. But *Bella Vita* adds a new twist to the surf movie trope *and* to the story of Italian Americans in the United States and links the mellow vibe of surf culture to the slower, more down-to-earth, more traditional pace of life in coastal Italy in a way that visually articulates the very close, and generally unexamined, connections between life and culture on the Pacific and the Mediterranean coasts. In the process, American audiences get a rich and compelling new image of what it means to connect with the so-called old country.

Shortly after the film’s opening exposition, we find Chris—whose Italian father and American mother split up in his infancy—reconnecting with the Tuscan family that raised him during his childhood summers in Italy. The images resonate precisely with the American fantasy of what life in Italy is like—loving friends and a multigenerational family, picking grapes on a vineyard as they smile and laugh while they work. People kiss, they lounge around, they crush grapes with their feet. And at the end of the day, in that warm Tuscan light, everyone sits around an outdoor table, drinking wine, enjoying the communal feast, in an image of life so infused with pleasure and connection that it can really best be described with the Freudian idea of the most primitive level of our unconscious, inhabited by memories of pure gratification and oneness with the world—Freud calls it “oceanic.”

On the level of more literally oceanic images, the film, like all the thousands of surf documentaries made since the genre emerged in early 1960s high school auditoriums, delivers. The surfing sequences of Del Moro—who is, though the film doesn’t explicitly mention it, a very accomplished and renowned surfer—evoke the longboarding “soul surfer” type, a consistent hippie archetype within surf culture that opposes the aggressive “shredding” of competitive, more macho surfing. Good waves are few and far between in Tuscany, the film tells us, but when they are good, we see some world-class surf footage. When the sea is flat, which is more typical, Del Moro and friends take it in classic chill surfer style, saying things like: “The surf isn’t great, but the dinner table is really going off”; “You just gotta forget everything you know about chasing swell everywhere else, and just go with the flow;” and “Good surf is rare in Tuscany so you are incredibly grateful when it does come.”

The Mediterranean culture has mellowed even the mellow surfers, who are so relaxed that they do not even mind the lack of waves. Del Moro says, “When there’s no surf you just forget it and do other things,” over images of the friends laughing, shopping at a mom-and-pop market and chatting with the proprietors, eating, diving, swimming, and knee paddling through a river cave. Surf movies tend to depict a mode of living in the moment that is fully present, yielding to and riding on what the world throws your way. *Bella Vita* makes the case that Italian culture—and not just Italian surf culture, the very small history and rituals of which the film reverently recounts—rides the wave of life in a similar style. In fact, the phrase *bella vita* not only means a beautiful or good life but also connotes a particularly relaxed, even a little bit lazy, life.

The connections between surf culture and Italian culture continue throughout the film. One of Del Moro’s close friends, California-educated surfing vintner Piergiorgio

Castellani, understands weather patterns as perhaps only grape farmers and surfers do. As he shows the group a dirt wall of seashell fossils on his vineyard, and explains how it is the memory of the sea from thousands of years ago, present in the minerality of the dirt, that makes it so perfect for making wine, Del Moro reflects on “a link between wine culture and surf culture.”

The viewer sees Italian culture in the rosiest possible light. The Italians are eminently hospitable, sharing waves and everything else; Del Moro and his friends, other equally well-known surfers he has brought with him, keep referring to the “aloha” of Italy in a nod to the open, hospitable Hawaiian roots of hippie surf culture. The male friendships are unabashedly loving in that Italian-dudes-kiss-on-the-cheek way: Del Moro first met his “brothers”—the “unofficial mayor” of Marina di Pisa, Nico Pinzauti, and the aforementioned Castellani—surfing a classic Southern California break when they had come to the United States for college, and the film lingers on their embraces and the deeply admiring things they say about one another. And the community is paramount: One of Del Moro’s friends, U.S. surfer Lauren Hill, says, “We have our roots in Europe, even Italy, but here they’ve maintained what we’ve lost . . . community, just spending time with people.” Professional surfer Dave Rastovich, happily along for the ride, puts it thus: “In Australia and America, it’s all about what we can achieve and do in the world, but Chris has always really valued his family and his family of friends, and now I see that this comes from his Italian roots.”

Of course, the tribal ethic of surfers, the sense of community that infuses the subculture, is rooted far more in the shared activity of sitting on the beach and floating in the water than it is in traditional Italy, and the idea that there might be some suffocating downsides to the close community never comes up. (One of these downsides, the dominance of men, certainly seems to be mirrored both in Italian surf culture and in the film itself, which shows only men surfing.) But it’s the indie ethic of small-scale craftsmanship central to traditional Italian culture that is highlighted most clearly as homologous with surf culture, and here is where what might be seen as the film’s sentimentality really revs up. What is certain, though, is that *Bella Vita* is, like so many other surf films, ultimately about how antithetical surfing is to the regime of work under capitalism. And just as in so many other surfing images, it’s the traditional, precapitalist past that is depicted as holding the answer to an alienated present of meaningless work and wasteful consumerism.

Surf innovators in Italy have the same do-it-yourself culture as those in Hawaii and California did (and still do)—they shape their own boards based on the particularities of the waves they ride. Throughout surf culture, board shapers are master craftsmen in a traditional, even precapitalist, way. And this link—between a relaxed, more human pace of life, craft, and art—is ultimately the film’s main cultural analysis. This key section of the movie moves seamlessly between the work of shapers and other Italian craftsmen—the winemaker; an organic, biodynamic farmer; a knife forger, a viola maker, a boat designer (and rowing champion); a marble sculptor. The links are clear: Marco Rizzo, a local board shaper, says, “The beauty of this job, besides that it connects me to surfing and the sea, is that it lets me express what is in Italy’s DNA: craftsmanship,” and that we must “see the surfboard not as a daily use product or as an industrial product but as a piece of art.”

The labor (and environmental) politics of surfing emerge as an ethic of care, of craft, of presence, of real value. The elderly viola maker, Roberto Ceccarelli, gives explicit voice to the Marxian theory of value: “An object has value because there is the work of a person in it,” and this is echoed by Italy’s first surf pro, the teenage Leonardo Fioravanti, who says, “Everyone has to be inspired by their work, that’s why everything is so good in Italy . . . because they just love what they do.” Del Moro agrees: “They’re not aiming to get rich, they are just taking pride in making a good product.” When, toward the film’s close, we see Del Moro (also, unbeknownst to many viewers, a well-known California artist and environmentalist) painting a huge whale mural, sounding Zen-like and smiling as he works in the pouring rain—and, in an even more public form of public art, inviting local schoolchildren to help—it all comes together. Global surf culture has generally been characterized by an artistic sensibility—surf art is its own massive genre—and by a focus on public goods. Surfers fight for free and public access to beaches and against the neoliberal forces of privatization, which, the film doesn’t discuss, relentlessly threaten the beaches of the Mediterranean today. Still, whether it’s focusing on art, craft, family, friendship, wine, great food, a relaxed and pleasant pace of life and work, or the sea itself, the film’s values are clear, as is its contention that the surf ethic and the Mediterranean culture are one and the same.

But it is important to note one major difference between *Bella Vita* and the more traditional cosmopolitan-in-search-of-old-country-authenticity narrative. The film does not represent Italy as static, essentialist, a quasi-Orientalist fantasy past for Americans to dip into, be renewed by, and leave. Although the film is certainly made by and for Americans, Italian culture is portrayed as moving and alive, just as so-called traditional culture actually was. We do not have to see a lifestyle centered around pleasure and robust living as just a thing of the past, the film seems to say. It portrays Italian culture, and Italian surf culture, as having *both* a history and a future, as well as a very vibrant present. The smiling, sun-kissed surf Buddha figure of Chris Del Moro, surfing with his “rad,” very happening crowd in Italy, paint a different picture of what the Italian-American relationship to traditional Italian culture can be. What is portrayed as traditional—art, community, pleasure, leisure, an attentive relationship to nature, waves and otherwise, and, most of all, a human pace of life and work—need not be understood as locked in the past. In this film, it is oceanic—alive and creative, and, like surf culture itself, an enduring and vital source of the *Bella Vita*.

—KRISTIN LAWLER

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Exhibition Reviews

*Passion Produces Excellence:
Commemorating Italian Experiences in Tulare County.*

Curated by Amy King.

Tulare County Farm Labor and Agriculture Museum, Visalia, California.

October 26, 2014–August 14, 2015.

The driving historical narratives of California's San Joaquin Valley are the stories of the Dust Bowl migrants fleeing the Midwest and of the labor movement led by César Chávez. These legacies are exemplified by the music of Merle Haggard, the photos of Dorothea Lange, and the outcomes of the Delano Grape Strike and Boycott. Historians have extensively explored the importance of the Dust Bowl migrants and Hispanic laborers in creating the San Joaquin Valley. Less researched is the role other groups have played in the formation of the modern San Joaquin region. The goal of the Tulare County Farm Labor and Agriculture Museum is to focus on how various cultural groups contributed to agriculture in the valley through the ongoing series *Many Languages, One Dream: The People Who Shaped Tulare County Agriculture*. The current exhibit, *Passion Produces Excellence: Commemorating Italian Experiences in Tulare County*, focuses on Tulare County Italian Americans.

Although some Italians immigrated to California before and during the Gold Rush, most arrived after 1880. They were pulled to California through the encouragement of family and friends who had migrated and by agricultural labor opportunities for southern Europeans made possible by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (which limited migration of Chinese laborers to the United States). According to the University of California Berkeley's Bancroft Library website Italian Americans in California, northern Italians were also pushed to California by overpopulation in Italy and by increasing French control over the European wine industry (Bancroft Library 2007). The Italian immigrants who came to California originated from both the northern regions, such as Liguria, as well as southern regions like Sicily, and once there they maintained their regional identities. While the Sicilian migrants settled along the Monterey and San Francisco coast and dominated the fishing industry, many northern Italians bought property in California's Central Valley. In Tulare County they became important grape, almond, walnut, and dairy farmers. Unlike East Coast Italian Americans, many California Italian Americans entered the middle class through success in agriculture (Bancroft Library 2007). In the past century, Tulare has become one of the most important agricultural counties in the United States. According to the 2012 Agricultural Census, Tulare County ranked second in the United States in terms of sales, after neighboring Fresno County (USDA 2014).

The Tulare County Farm Labor and Agriculture Museum is associated with the Tulare County Museum. A collaborative effort of the Tulare Historical Society, the county of Tulare, and the Tulare Office of Education, it was established with funding from the California Cultural and Historic Endowment, a state agency. The museum is housed in a modern, energy-efficient building modeled after a red barn and is located on the edge of the farming community of Visalia, in an area dominated by walnut

orchards. Unlike many agricultural museums that focus on technological innovations (i.e., tractors), this museum explores the cultural groups that developed the agricultural region. The museum has selected sixteen ethnic groups to document in its *Many Languages, One Dream* series, including Filipino Americans, Portuguese Americans, Japanese Americans, Native Americans, and Italian Americans, hosting rotating exhibits on each one. Currently, the museum is focusing on the contributions of Tulare County Italian Americans.

The exhibit was developed with the support of the local Italian-American community. San Joaquin Valley Italians, like those who settled in other regions of the United States, developed a pan-Italian identity. In Tulare County they formed the Roma Lodge No. 1573 of the Order of Sons of Italy in America. Under the curation of Amy King, with help from Roma Lodge historian Carole Burner, local families and the lodge contributed personal and community artifacts. The exhibit was divided into a series of display cases and groupings of larger objects based on subject with text boxes and photos posted on the walls. Some of the text boxes highlighted quotes from Tulare Italian farmers interviewed for the exhibit; others contained contextual information about Italians and Italian Americans in California and the United States. Cases focused on various aspects of Tulare Italian life. In a similar manner to other Italian-American exhibits reviewed previously in this journal, the first few cases featured personal food and kitchen tools, such as a ravioli rolling pin and cheese graters, which signified the importance of Italian foodways to the community.

However, the strength of this exhibit was its focus on the agricultural success of Tulare's Italian Americans. Interspersed in the foodways-themed cases were local agricultural products, such as olive oil and wine. These displays included evidence of increasing leadership by some Tulare Italian Americans in the agricultural community, including a fair ribbon, a dairy catalog, and commemorative wine glasses. Enlargements of newspaper articles mounted on poster board highlighted the accomplishment of one local farmer, Ben Curti. The variety of disparate farming equipment on display, including a John Deere corn planter, a plow, a wine vase, and dairy milking equipment, was contributed by area farmers and highlighted the diversity of Tulare's Italian-American agriculture.

Other cases displayed artifacts that represented the nonagricultural aspects of Italian-American life in Tulare County. Two cases focused on the local Roma Lodge and included items such as a lodge banner, club officer jewelry, a copy of the 1926 bylaws, and a ballot box. Another case focused on military service with photographs and an album labeled "Tulare County War Album." Most were World War II-era photos; however, the Loliva family contributed a *Guerra per l'Unita d'Italia* Medal 1915-1918 and a photo from World War I. A few photos and text boxes showed the cultural contributions of the Catholic Church and the Bank of Visalia, later bought by the Bank of Italy. However, more information exploring the effects of World War I, World War II, the church, and the bank on the agricultural community would have provided a fuller depiction of the community at the time.

In association with the Tulare Office of Education, the museum developed a twelve-minute documentary video for the exhibit. The documentary consists of a series of interviews with Italian-American farmers discussing the migration of their families from Italy, marriages, the continuation of family traditions such as holiday

meals and extended family dinners, and each family's agricultural endeavors, as well as footage of fruit orchards and dairy tours. The documentary is a noteworthy addition to the oral and visual history of the region and can stand alone from the exhibit (Tulare County Office of Education 2014).

This exhibit is an important contribution to the growing acknowledgment of the diversity of people and forces in San Joaquin Valley agriculture, since there has been very little written about the significance of Italian immigrants and their descendants in San Joaquin Valley. Hopefully, it will inspire future studies on the role of Italian Americans and other cultural groups in the rise of San Joaquin Valley agriculture. The exhibit ran through August 14, 2015, after which the museum transitioned to highlight another cultural group—Dutch Americans. In several years, after the other sixteen cultural groups are exhibited, the curator said, the museum may once again focus on Tulare Italian Americans.

—PEGGY HAUSELT
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Primo Angeli: A Retrospective.
 Curated by Mary Serventi Steiner.
 Museo Italo Americano, San Francisco, California.
 December 5, 2014–May 31, 2015.

It could be argued that San Francisco is the city with the richest Italian-American history in the American West. Far from the traditional European immigrant flow, Italians nonetheless established an early foothold there and never let go. By the mid-1800s Italian Jesuits had founded missions, schools, and colleges. Other Italian immigrants pioneered California winemaking and commercial fishing. "Little Italy" communities still remain in Fisherman's Wharf and Telegraph Hill; the predominantly Italian-American neighborhood of North Beach was home to the influential Beat movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The exhibition *Primo Angeli: A Retrospective* highlights not only a prominent San Francisco Italian American, but by virtue of its venue it also honors the impact of Italian Americans on this crucible of creativity.



The exhibition Primo Angeli: A Retrospective. Photographs by Lincoln Cushing.

Primo Angeli is the son of working-class Italian immigrant parents who had settled in southern Illinois. Wending westward after design school, he made it to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1959 and never looked back. He soon built a successful practice specializing in corporate branding, advertising, and packaging. Angeli sold his firm in 1999 and lived in his ancestral homeland of Umbria for ten years, returning

to San Francisco to partner with the local firm of Primo Angeli-Stapley Hildebrand. This exhibition reviews his life's work. The exhibit was designed and curated by Museo Italo Americano staff under the careful watch of Angeli, who offered thoughtful feedback and guidance. Angeli's alma mater Southern Illinois University exhibited a retrospective in 2012; the Museo's version reused several of the posters but was able to offer more content and a different exhibition design.

The Museo Italo Americano is housed at Fort Mason Center, a former military complex at the edge of San Francisco Bay. On the hill above the site stands a gorgeous statue by another San Francisco Italian-American artist, Beniamino "Benny" Bufano (1890–1970). I felt that his granite-with-mosaic-inlay work "Madonna Protects the Children of the World" served well to introduce the Italian cultural treasures below.

The exhibition occupies several rooms and features approximately fifty-six items on the walls with additional pieces staged in vitrines. A screen displays a slideshow with photos, provided by Angeli, of his personal and professional life, but without captions many of the images are stripped of meaning—it would be useful to know where or when a photo was shot and who the subjects might be. The video's dulcet "Ave Maria" soundtrack drifts through the display spaces, adding an Italian layer to the exhibition.

Angeli's list of corporate clients was extensive and impressive and included giants such as DHL, Coca-Cola, the U.S. Olympic Committee, Guinness, and Xerox, among others. The Robert Mondavi Winery, Levi Strauss, Molinari & Sons, and Boudin Bakery numbered among his local clients. The large, well-lit displays confirm Angeli's mastery of crisp, clean design and creative typography. His skill and background in printmaking are evident in the way he neatly treats colors, shapes, and spaces in his work. But there is more to Angeli than just another sleek corporate brander, and that is revealed in some of the selected pieces and their stories. Here is where Angeli's caption titles elevate the discourse.

Near the front of the exhibition is a poster Angeli designed for the successful 1967 mayoral campaign of Italian-American native son and Democratic politician Joseph Alioto. The small, horizontal poster simply consists of the giant word "JOE" (the tiny words "Vote for" are almost invisible) rendered in the distinctive floral and psychedelic coloration and style that mid-1960s San Francisco brought to the world; a tiny photograph of the candidate graces a design frill in one of the letters. The fine type at the bottom reads: "Joseph L. Alioto For Mayor: For Fair Taxes, Better Housing, Safety In The Streets For All Races, Transportation Coordination, Training And Jobs For All, For You. Joe Alioto For Mayor." Just as Shepard Fairey's 2008 "Hope" poster made a difference in Barack Obama's election, in this reviewer's opinion this unusual campaign poster surely was helpful to Alioto's successful campaign.

Two other 1969 pieces are paired by Angeli and get called out with a signed exhibition caption. "Aquarius" announces the opening of the San Francisco musical production of *Hair*, and the second poster offers a somber commentary on the term "the silent majority," coined in a speech by President Richard M. Nixon. Of the video display in the exhibition Angeli notes, "After all these years, I am still emotionally taken at seeing these two poignant visual statements together . . . as one dissolves over the other, it becomes a before-and-after portrayal of young adults with so much life and carefree joy caught during a terrible time." "The Silent Majority" is perhaps Angeli's

most political piece, and he comments in the wall text that the image “portrayed the reality of war and was a touchstone for all sides for or against the war.”

There is more to the story of this poster, made during a fervent period when the quality and the quantity of powerful antiwar art were beginning to peak. Angeli’s poster is based on a photograph of military tombstones taken by artistic collaborator Lars Speyer, who died in 2007 (and to whom Angeli dedicated this exhibition). Although credited as having been shot at the “Colma military cemetery,” this is an error. That small city has many private cemeteries but no military ones. The photo was most likely taken at Golden Gate National Cemetery in nearby San Bruno, south of San Francisco.

In 1969 two huge antiwar marches in San Francisco took place on April 6 and November 20. The speech in which Richard Nixon most publicly used the term “silent majority” was given November 3, 1969, and firsthand accounts of the November 20 demonstration recall copies of Angeli’s poster being distributed and displayed. A subsequent poster, based on the same photo but bearing the bold headline “No Christmas as Usual” and with a wreath on the foremost tombstone, was produced by the national organization New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. That meant that Angeli’s original poster ended up in the hands of someone responsible for the Mobilization poster by mid-December. That was tight timing, by pre-Internet standards, but such things happened. Posters went viral before “viral” existed.

Among Angeli’s cultural community was the well-known local Beat poet and playwright Michael McClure. A framed poem is accompanied by the charming caption explaining that McClure had written it as payment for a newspaper ad Angeli had produced for McClure’s controversial play “The Beard.” The quoted material in the caption is taken from the poem itself: “It was written on a plain sheet of paper, with all the essential stuff, not a wasted stroke. I thanked him, went to my studio, and framed it. That was in 1965. Now, looking back at the poem, written in lead pencil on off-white paper, I can fully appreciate the way in which he has brought in a whole gas tank of ‘alchemical motions’ that is truly ‘outlined by neon’ in the color of his poetry.”

Other posters reveal Angeli’s political and artistic iconoclasm. “The Death of Columbus” is a sarcastic riposte to a design project that ran into enormous sensitivity challenges. Angeli agreed to design, pro bono, an official commemorative poster for the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s arrival in the Americas. After criticism from various communities about such a controversial celebration, the poster project was severely scaled back. A frustrated Angeli produced his own poster, with a teary Columbus and the headline “Born 1492–Killed 1992.” The poster’s surrounding text begins: “Here lies an Italian sailor, stripped as some would have him, with image drawn and quartered by divided persons.” During the 1992 quincentennial, social-justice groups and indigenous-rights organizations all over the United States took the opportunity to critique the conventional “Columbus narrative” and reframe it as one of occupation, genocide, and imperialism. One poster’s slogan was “Columbus: Liar, Slaver, Murderer, Thief,” another boasted of “The Vengeance of Montezuma,” and a third “Wanted: Christopher Columbus [for] Grand Theft, Genocide, Racism, Initiating the Destruction of a Culture, Rape, Torture, and Maiming of the Indigenous People and Instigator of the Big Lie.” The quincentennial’s reactive message became “500 years of resistance.” Of the scores

of posters made about Columbus's negative role in the conquest of the Americas, Angeli's is one of the very few honoring it.

Primo Angeli is truly an icon of graphic design in a community known for outstanding graphics. There is no published catalog, although reproductions of most of the display items as well as Angeli's books are available at the museum store.

—LINCOLN CUSHING
Independent Scholar

Contributors

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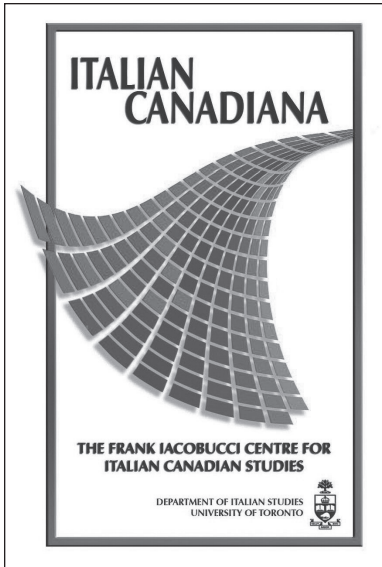
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EDITOR:
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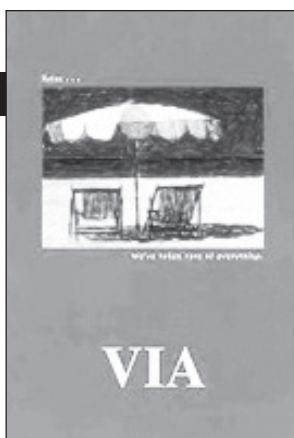
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