

THE LAND OF OUR RETURN

Diasporic Encounters with Italy

APRIL 23–25, 2009

Anna Sciorra of Brooklyn, New York, in Maranola, a hamlet in Formia (Lazio), 1957. Photograph by Enrico Sciorra.



JOHN D. CALANDRA ITALIAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE
Queens College/CUNY

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FOR VIRGIL'S AENEAS, Italy was "the land of our return" (in Robert Fagles' 2006 translation), the place his ancestor Dardanus left generations earlier. *The Aeneid* is thus an epic recounting of the Trojan hero's return, or *nostos*, to Italian soil. This poetic conceit offers numerous possibilities to explore the political, economic, social, and cultural impact of historical and contemporary travel and communication by Italian emigrants and their descendants to Italy.

Italian emigration was the largest movement of free labor in world history with over twenty-six million people emigrating from the 1870s to the 1970s. Italian emigrants' objective was, for the most part, to make enough money and return home. Close to half the emigrants traveling to the Americas returned to Italy between 1905 and 1920. According to historian Donna Gabaccia, "The *paese* (town) had created its diaspora, but the diaspora in turn transformed the *paese*." What was the impact of returning emigrants and their descendants on the home society?

The political dimensions of return are evident in the transnational movement of anarchists, as well as Risorgimento and later anti-fascist refugees. Religious belief and practice have long been a critical aspect of emigrant return, with remittances sent as donations pinned to the processed religious statue and post-World War II laborers visiting the hometown during the annual *fiesta*.

After World War II, Italian Americans journeyed to Italy increasingly as tourists and by the 1970s travel agencies began catering to this "ethnic roots" market. There, Italian Americans experienced the disparity between personal connections to an ancestral *paese* and the ever changing reality of the larger nation. In recent years, a growing number of descendants of Italian emigrants are reclaiming their Italian citizenship.

The imagined and actual "return" has historically been a source of creativity in all artistic genres, from comedian Eduardo "Farfariello" Migliaccio's 1917 song "Pascale e' Turnato d'all'Italia" to author Helen Barolini's 1979 novel *Umbertina*, to director Frank Ciota's 2002 film *Ciao America*.

The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute's second annual conference addresses the theme of "return" during its three-day event.

LA GALLERIA

THE POETICS OF RETURN

Chair: VINCENZO MILIONE, Calandra Institute

Poets of Return: Emanuel Carnevali and Joseph Tusiani
DANIELA GIOSEFFI, author

Nine Poems in Basilicata: A Poetry Film with John Giorno
ANTONELLO FARETTA, Noeltan Film

The Quest for Home

JOANNE TANGORRA, High/Scope Education Research Foundation

3-4:15 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM

RECLAIMING/REINVENTING

Chair: EDVIGE GIUNTA, New Jersey City University

Returning, Retaining, Reinventing the Homeland
PATRICIA D. VALENTI, University of North Carolina

An Essay on Reclaiming, Reconnecting and Giving
ROBERT DI GIULIO, Johnson State College, presented by MATTHEW DI GIULIO

"Bells to Saint Michael": A Short Story

TIZIANA RINALDI CASTRO, author

LA GALLERIA

SEEING AND PERFORMING RETURN

Chair: FRED GARDAPHÉ, Queens College, CUNY

Observing Contemporary Italy as a Semi-Insider
BLAISE TOBIA, Drexel University

Return as Artistic Performance

LULU LOLO, performance artist

4:30-5:45 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM

ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACHES TO RETURN

Chair: Anthony Julian Tamburri, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY

"*Io mi considero tambien argentina*": Returning Emigrants and
New Immigrants in Campania

LAURA E. RUBERTO, Berkeley City College

"When they all came home": The Experience of Return Migration on the Amalfi Coast
AILHLIN CLARK, Lancaster University

Between Italy and Argentina: Parents and Children's Departures and Returns
LAURA GAMBI, independent scholar

6-6:35 PM

CLOSING COMMENTS

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2009

The Poetics of Migration Houses: Return, Land, and Architecture in
Camilleri's *Maruzza Musumeci*
TERESA FIORE, California State University Long Beach/New York University

The Odyssey of Ideal: Lamerica/Litalia
NICOLETTA DELON, College of Staten Island, CUNY

11 AM–12:15 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM

RELIGION, POLITICS, COMMERCE

Chair: NANCY CARNEVALE, Montclair University

The Soul of a Stranger: Italy, America, and Italian-American Protestants
DENNIS BARONE, Saint Joseph College

Italian Merchants and Consumption during the Age of Mass Italian Migration
LIZABETH ZANONI, University of Minnesota

The Political Dimension of Return Migration
STEFANO LUCONI, University of Rome "Tor Vergata"

LA GALLERIA

METAPHORS OF RETURN

Chair: GEORGE GUIDA, New York City College of Technology, CUNY

Fumetti as a Vehicle of Return to Italy

GIL FAGIANI, The Italian American Writers Association

"We don't have enough men to dance": In Search of Our Music and Dance Roots
CELEST DIPIETROPAOLO, independent scholar

The Tenacity of Heritage: The Promise of Festival Foods and Parish Cookbooks
as a Return to Italy
SUSAN M. ROSSI-WILCOX, independent scholar

12:15–1:30 PM

Lunch on your own

1:30–2:45 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM

MEMORY AND IMAGINING HOME

Chair: PAOLO GIORDANO, University of Central Florida

Memory, Nostalgia, Geography: Looking at the Homeland from a Distance
PATRIZIA LA TRECCHIA, University of Florida

Imagining the Home Country: Intersecting Memories of Class,
Generation, and Gender
CHRISTA WIRTH, Harvard University

Le Piemontesi in Argentina between Memories and Visits Home
MADDALENA TIRABASSI, Centro Altreitalie

THE LAND OF OUR RETURN

DIASPORIC ENCOUNTERS WITH ITALY

APRIL 23–25, 2009

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2009

6:30–8:30 PM

WELCOME AND RECEPTION

ANTHONY JULIAN TAMBURRI

John D. Calandra Italian American Institute
Queens College, CUNY

JAMES MUYSKENS
Queens College, CUNY

FRANCESCO MARIA TALÒ
Consulate General of Italy in New York

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2009

9–9:30 AM

Coffee and Pastries

9:30–10:45 AM

ITALIAN/AMERICAN/JEWISH/ISRAELI

Chair: DAWN ESPOSITO, St. John's University

Comparative Experiences from Different Parts of the Diaspora I
CRISTINA BETTIN, Ben Gurion University

Comparative Experiences from Different Parts of the Diaspora II
MARIA MAZZIOTTI GILLAN, Binghamton University, SUNY

You Want to be Americano?

ROBERT ZWEIG, Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY

11 AM–12:15 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM

ROUTES OF RETURN

Chair: DONNA CHIRICO, York College, CUNY

"Took a Bird to the Boot": Hip Wop and the Digital Diasporic Consciousness
JOSEPH SCIORRA, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY

No Longer Innocents Abroad: Ethnic Tourism's Influence on American Leisure Travel
MARIA LISELLA, journalist

Fuori in Italia: A Gay Grandson Encounters la madrepatria
GEORGE DE STEFANO, author

LA GALLERIA

LANGUAGE OF RETURN

Chair: MARIA ENRICO, Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY

Returning with Standard Italian and the Question of Italian Linguistic Diversity
CHRISTINA TORTORA, College of Staten Island, CUNY

Study Abroad Programs: Language and Identity as an Experience of Return
ELISABETTA CONVENTO and LAURA LENCI

Writing on Water: The Non-existing Language of an Italian-American
Would-be Intellectual
PETER CARRAVETTA, Stony Brook University

12:15–1:30 PM

Lunch on your own

1:30–2:45 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM

RETURN MIGRATION AND THE NEW POLITICS OF BELONGING IN ITALY

Chair: CHRISTINE GAMBINO, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY

Governing Diasporas: The Italian Case
GUIDO TINTORI, FIERI, and FRANCESCO RAGAZZI, Science Po

FILM: *Merica* (2007)
FEDERICO FERRONE, MICHELE MANZOLINI, and FRANCESCO RAGAZZI, directors

FILM: *Orizzonti e Frontiere* (2007)
ERNESTO MORALES, director

LA GALLERIA

THE TEXTUALITY OF NO RETURN

Chair: Anthony Julian Tamburri, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY

Forms of Return as a Process of Creativity
VINCENZO PASCALE, Rutgers University

On the Impossibility of Return
PAOLO GIORDANO, University of Central Florida

Immigrant versus Emigrazione: A Tale of Laceration in
Tommaso Bordonaro's *La spartenza*
GIULIA GUARNIERI, Bronx Community College, CUNY

3–4:15 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM

RE/CLAIMING ITALIAN/EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

Chair: ROBERT VISCUSI, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Why Italian Americans Should and Must Reclaim Italian Citizenship
KAREN TINTORI, author, and LAWRENCE S. KATZ, attorney

Just Visiting: Issues Arising from Reclaiming Italian Citizenship
LINDSAY A. CURCIO, attorney

LA GALLERIA

CANADIAN VOICES

Chair: Joseph Sciorra, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY

The Disappearing Sicily
MARIA FRANCESCA LODICO, author

On Leave Takings and Monuments
DARLENE MADOTT, author

Of Death and the Immigrant: A Journey
MICHAEL MIROLLA, author

4:30–5:45 PM

CONFERENCE ROOM

ABSENCE AND THE EMOTIONS OF SEPARATION ACROSS TIME AND DISTANCE

Chair: DONNA GABACCIA, University of Minnesota

Longing for Kin and Country: Family, Nostalgia, and Nation through
the Practices and Processes of Long Distance Caregiving
LORETTA BALDASSAR, University of Western Australia

When the Letter was the Only Tie to their Love: Exploring the
Connections between Longings, Separation, and Imagination in
Postwar Italian Migration to Canada
SONIA CANCIAN, University of Minnesota

Bridging Emotional Distance through Television: The Montreal's
Teledomenica Experience
BRUNO RAMIREZ, University of Montreal

Longing, Loss and Love among Rural Italian Migrants at Home
and Abroad, 1880–1920
LINDA REEDER, University of Missouri

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2009**9–9:30 AM**

Coffee and Pastries

9:30–10:45 AM**TEXTUAL RETURNS: CELLULOID AND PAPER**

Chair: MARY JO BONA, Stony Brook University, SUNY

Italian-American Persephone in a Sicilian Setting: Susan Caperna Lloyd's
No Pictures in My Grave (1992)
THEODORA PATRONA, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki