

The influential group of young Roman nuclear physicists led by Enrico Fermi, known as the “ragazzi di via Panisperna” also disbanded: Fermi (who won the Nobel Prize in 1938), Bruno Rossi, Emilio Segrè (also a Nobelist), and Eugenio Fubini emigrated to the United States. Fubini went on to be appointed U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense in 1963. Mario Salvadori and Roberto Fano and his brother Ugo Fano were among the other scientists and scholars forced to leave. Using their stories, Pontecorboli points out the difficulties in settling in to a new place, in the process of becoming integrated, and in rebuilding their careers.

Pontecorboli identifies broad characteristics of this migration of Jewish intellectuals: Entire families left, and men and women were equally represented. These migrants were typically older than those who left earlier, and they tended to settle quickly in urban centers.

The author pays careful attention to the women who fled, some of whom arrived in the United States unmarried or unaccompanied. One was Gina Castelnuovo, a biologist and daughter of mathematician Guido Castelnuovo. Pontecorboli notes that women, whether as wives, daughters, or certainly colleagues, demonstrated a greater capacity than men for adaptation and learning in a new society.

Pontecorboli has written an original and informative book. One of the merits of *America nuova terra promessa* is the coverage of the immediate aftermath of the war, a difficult phase for those refugees and their families who decided to return to Italy and participate in postwar reconstruction, just as much as it was for those who remained in the United States and needed to deal with the challenges of displacement and discrimination.

—ALESSANDRA GISSI
University of Naples “L’Orientale”

Farms, Factories, and Families: Italian American Women of Connecticut.

By Anthony Riccio.

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014.

422 pages.

In an effort to capture the range of experiences of a group that has been relatively ignored—Italian American women workers—Anthony Riccio traversed the state of Connecticut over a period of six years. During that time, he interviewed more than 165 working- and lower-middle-class Italian American women, affording them the opportunity to share accounts of their own lives in their own words. Many of the stories collected by Riccio trace the trajectory of these women’s experiences from the time of emigration from Southern Italy across three generations in the United States. Their accounts capture lives not only as women during these times but as Italian American immigrant and working women. For many of Riccio’s subjects, this was an important and defining distinction.

The book is comprised of fifteen loosely organized chapters. Some chapters chronicle life in Italy prior to emigration, others the journey to the United States, and then the making of a new life in Connecticut. Still other chapters use the women's stories to trace Italian American domestic worlds—marriage, birth, and child rearing; family and generational life; as well as public spheres of education, work, and careers, including farming, manufacturing (most notably in the garment industry), and small—usually family—businesses. Women's lives in unions, in politics, and as activists are also depicted.

From these accounts emerge recurring themes from the women's lives in both private and public realms. They include the notions of sacrifice and selflessness, change and tradition, pride and determination, family values and family conflicts, personal ambition and communal obligation, and sociability and the larger world. The Italian American women interviewed by Riccio often displayed such virtues while facing overt discrimination and sexism outside the home and local community, as well as poverty and limited resources within. In more than 400 pages, Riccio presents story after story, excerpt after excerpt, of what daily life was like for these women and their families. Many of the women go into great detail as they recall their lives, and their stories often elicit a range of emotions in the reader. On several occasions, I found myself laughing at a humorous saying in Italian dialect, enraged by an injustice, or saddened by a particularly poignant account of a death—sometimes within a single page.

Riccio certainly is to be lauded for his efforts to capture and preserve these heretofore largely ignored accounts. However, his book, like so much oral history, can frustrate readers seeking to make full sense of the material presented to them. Riccio provides relatively brief introductions—mostly setting the historical context—to each section of the book and offers even less critical and analytical interpretation of the greater significance of his interviewees' stories. While the accounts are detailed, rich, and vivid on their own, they might have had even more force had Riccio found a way to step back and critically examine *why* they are so appealing and *what* exactly they tell us about the human condition. In the case of oral histories, why should or do we care about these accounts? How generalizable are these women's experiences? And if they are not generalizable, what are the factors and variables that make these accounts so unique to this particular ethnic group and gender? Even if it never was Riccio's intention to offer such critical analysis and interpretation, he is to be lauded for gathering these accounts and providing future researchers and scholars the first-person narratives with which to further theorize and philosophize about the human condition—or at least the condition of the twentieth-century Italian American immigrant woman. This, then, is the greatest contribution of this collection.

—JOHN R. MITRANO

Central Connecticut State University