

an almost precognitive level? Neither of these aspects can be accounted for within the narrow frame of the “ephemeral” or the “strategic.”

Beyond having to tease out how the analysis fits the data, the reader will have an additional challenge related to the extremely poor editing of the book. Here the fault lies not so much with the author as with the press. Particularly because Ferraiuolo is not a native English speaker, the press should have given the copy editor a firm mandate to tighten up the manuscript. Instead, the book is riddled with errors, such as word omissions, sentence omissions within English translations, and numerous misspellings, including three in a single sentence. The text is also wordy, with long block quotations—some from field notes and interviews, others from historical documents—that should have been reduced in length and used more selectively. This sloppiness is frustrating for the reader and makes it less likely that the book can be assigned in the classroom.

Despite these shortcomings, the book is a contribution to the anthropological literature on ethnic identity and festive practices. In particular, scholars of Italian-American life will be interested in Ferraiuolo’s findings and the novel ways he proposes of thinking about the relationship between lived experience and ethnic subjectivity.

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*The Imagined Immigrant: Images of Italian Emigration to the United States between 1890 and 1924.*

By Ilaria Serra.

Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009.

313 pages.

In *The Imagined Immigrant*, Ilaria Serra undertakes the ambitious task of exploring the turn-of-the-century Italian *imago migrationis*, what she calls that “complex knot of collective representations, how the immigrant is seen, and self-representations, how the immigrant sees himself” (9). Serra contends quite rightly that the imagined immigrant, though invisible and impalpable, is absolutely real and “walks alongside the real immigrant in flesh and rags” (9). Her goal is to trace a “history of mentality” and to “listen to these protagonists of history to discover their full humanity” (10). In large measure, this worthwhile book succeeds in that endeavor.

The protagonists of this history are the first- and second-generation Italian immigrants of the Great Migration. Serra tells their stories through diverse sources, including newspapers, films, letters, autobiographies, and interviews. These materials, Serra argues, trace an arc in the Italian immigrant story. The *New York Times* concentrates on the assimilationist trends in American reactions to immigration, while the first films start developing the stereotypes that define the immigrants for years. The interviews speak of life in Italy, the departure, and American experiences that lead to eventual integration, even as the letters “linger on the pain of distance and the more or

less pungent memories of home." Finally, as Serra says, "the autobiographies dive into the realm of self-representation after the facts" (32).

Serra begins with a comparative analysis of representations of Italian immigrants in the *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle* from 1890 to 1910. She also refers to *La stella degli emigranti*, a magazine for Italian immigrants founded in Calabria in 1904. Not surprisingly, the differences between the two newspapers' treatment of Italian immigrants "could not be more different, almost proportional with their distance on the map" (38). In 1910, New York City had the largest concentration of Italians in the country, with nearly a quarter of a million, while San Francisco's Italian colony, although the fifth largest in the country, numbered only 17,000. Clearly, those numbers might significantly impact the two newspapers' coverage of the Italian community. Yet, Serra pays little attention to that possibility and to other potentially important influences on the coverage, including the demographics of the two cities and their Italian communities and any political/ideological slant the newspapers might have had. Serra makes the case that the *New York Times* pushed a predominantly "Anglo-conformity" assimilationist point of view, while the *Chronicle* placed less stress on assimilation and in one article even expressed regret that Americanization tended to separate immigrant children from their parents. Looked at more closely, however, the differences in the two newspapers' response to Italian immigrants appear less pronounced. Ultimately, Serra finds in each newspaper what one might expect to find in most decent-sized American journals of this period, a hodgepodge of conflicting images of Italians as ignorant, dirty, violent, and criminal, but also as hardworking, family-oriented, and picturesque.

Turning to cinema, Serra continues to find disparate representations of Italians. The author rightly notes that film is a particularly rich field of inquiry because the Age of Migration ran concurrently with the development of the motion picture and the movie camera's search for new subjects. Chapter 2, "Cinema Casts the Immigrant," effectively examines five early films, four of which were produced by Thomas Edison's company and filmed by the talented cameraman Edwin Porter. Beginning with *The Black Hand* (1906) and ending with *The Italian* (1914), the latter by Thomas Ince and Reginald Barker, Serra finds a dramatic representational change over that short period: "The spotlight moves from the three criminals who seem to represent the entire Italian community to an honest Italian who can be blinded by wrath but remains innocent" (109). Serra also includes a rather cursory discussion of D.W. Griffith's films that dealt very dramatically with Italian characters during this same period, a topic that appears to be worth more attention.

It is in the letters, autobiographies, and interviews that the first- and second-generation Italian immigrants speak for and represent themselves. And it is here, Serra points out, that these subjective selves reveal "the spiritual baggage of the immigrant, the so-called *bagaglio di ritorno*" (133), those ties that bind even as the myth of America beckons.

Serra found a limited but interesting sample of letters, written between 1919 and 1933, that express extreme versions of the Italian immigrant experience. Giuseppe Piombo's three letters speak of a good life in California, while the seventeen letters of Enrico Bartolotti attest to bitter times in Chicago. "Piombo and Bartolotti are united only in this *hope*, glorious for Piombo, strained for Bartolotti," Serra writes. "It increases day by day for Giuseppe Piombo, whose life in America is generous, and it is held

tight by Enrico Bartolotti, who swallows bitter tears" (155). One short letter written by a woman, Carmela Cascone of Brooklyn, to her sister in Italy in 1930 testifies to the enduring myth of the American Dream so central to the immigrant mentality.

Serra finds a fuller and more nuanced representation of the immigrant experience in the four autobiographies she examines. However, despite their diverse experiences, the protagonists – a farmer, laborer, communist miner, and stonemason – are united by their sense of double foreignness, of being foreigners both in their chosen land and in the land they left behind. As Serra shows, all four write not only to rescue their lives from oblivion but also in an effort to synthesize their experiences and their fragmented identities into a somewhat coherent whole.

This process also manifests itself in the twenty-eight interviews of second-generation immigrants culled from a collection at the Ellis Island Museum. Conducted in the mid-1980s, the interviews admittedly show a "curious homogenization of memory" and are marked by other problems typical of after-the-fact oral history. So, despite the disillusionment and hardships that often marked these journeys, there is a sense that the fabled land of America had indeed rewarded these immigrants with an American Dream. However, the conflicted self is still vividly expressed, and for many of these second-generation immigrants, loyalty remains divided between America and Italy, what one man calls the "two mothers" between whom he cannot choose, but must love equally (247).

Ilaria Serra has pulled together a fascinating array of sources and begun the task of examining in some detail what she calls the "reality" of the imagined immigrant during the Great Migration. Although Serra's analysis might have gone further in places, *The Imagined Immigrant* does valuable work in revealing the complexity and diversity of the immigrant experience. Building on this productive, interdisciplinary approach, Serra and other researchers can further explore these rich materials to more fully recreate the immigrants' mental world.

Unfortunately, Serra's otherwise fine work is compromised by lax editing and proofreading. The text is marred by grammatical and mechanical problems and sloppy errors such as referring to the copper-and-steel Statue of Liberty as a "cold marble effigy" (215). However, readers who persevere will be rewarded with a detailed picture of the conflicting ways in which the immigrants imagined themselves and in turn were imagined by others.

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*The Sopranos.*

By Dana Polan.

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.

232 pages.

Dana Polan's *The Sopranos* is a considered study of the television series as a screen and marketing phenomenon. To this end, Polan aims to "describe and analyze those specific and even unique features of the series that both fostered intense audience involvement in its original unfolding . . . and . . . contributed to the series' extended role in a vaster media landscape" (1). The author invokes, among other things, critical theory, semiotics, new media and media economy scholarship, and postmodernism. As a case study of the modern media environment, with its focus on synergy and the extension of media product across the expanse of the controlling conglomerate's subsidiaries, as well as into the popular culture of its audience(s), *The Sopranos* is a thoughtful and intensive tour de force. Polan, professor of Cinema Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, in addition to numerous contributions to various media study volumes, has in the past focused on American cinema and its cultural and economic moorings. Particularly effective was his analysis of Hollywood's role in the generation of meaning (and patriotism) during World War II, *Power and Paranoia: History, Narrative, and the American Cinema, 1940-1950* (Columbia University Press, 1990). Until the establishment of television as the medium of choice for Americans in the 1950s, film was unrivaled as a window on, and reflection of, American culture; in fact, as Polan demonstrated, it was a potent generator of culture. With *The Sopranos*, Polan transposes his obvious erudition to the "new" dominant medium of television, specifically cable, with the series serving as a case study for discussion of the modern, conglomerate-dominated environment.

The book is presented in two parts. Part I focuses upon the evolution of the Home Box Office (HBO) series, from conception through the final episode. Particularly informative and valuable is the discussion of creator David Chase's efforts to play with and often foil audience expectations. The program consistently manifested his awareness of not only the filmic gangster genre at its source but also his proclivity for assimilating European modes of narrative in contrast to the Hollywood paradigm of storytelling. This was on display in the final nonending of the series, wherein menace permeates but is never resolved. Taking place in a diner, where the show's main characters, Tony, Carmela, and family, meet to enjoy a meal, much of the audience undoubtedly was reminded of *The Godfather*, wherein Michael Corleone "does in" the corrupt police captain and the interloping mobster, "The Turk" Sollozzo, over a meal at a "safe" restaurant. In *The Sopranos* the end seems to be coming from every direction as various patrons appear to pose a threat—but if the end ever comes, it is in the mind of the viewer for Chase abruptly ends the series. Of course, those familiar with the series know that it abounds with images and storylines that are reminiscent of Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* film. Coppola, in fact, has stated publicly that the series was essentially nothing more than an updating of the universe he created. This is an area that might have been explored in greater depth by the author. This omission, perhaps, is logically excusable based on Polan's focus on the production and marketing aspects of the series.