

INTRODUCTION

Ricorso and Rinascita in the Twenty-First Century

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We welcome the New Year and the second decade of the twenty-first century by relaunching the *Italian American Review (IAR)*, which has been on hiatus for the past five years.¹ We at the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute have been working assiduously since Anthony Julian Tamburri's appointment as dean in 2006 to publish the journal that you now hold in your hands. Putting in place the various elements and resources needed to produce a scholarly journal such as this requires a serious commitment and an extensive time frame. We hope you are as pleased as we are with the results.

While I served as the journal's associate editor upon my arrival at the Institute in the fall of 1999, I was not fully aware of the *IAR's* history. I have taken it upon myself as the journal's new editor to review the past issues in the Institute's library so as to present a condensed history as a way of moving forward. One theme that emerged during this perusal is that the *IAR* has existed in varying states of rebirth. The journal, and to an extent, Italian American Studies, is defined by a continued engagement among a community of individuals to establish, sustain, and re-imagine a field of study.

The *IAR* began in 1951 as the official organ of the Italian Historical Society of America, a filiopietistic organization founded in 1949 by insurance salesman John N. LaCorte. No extant copies exist in the Calandra Institute's library. The Historical Society was dedicated to combating "negative stereotypes" of Italian Americans "by popularizing the lives of the many Italians who have made significant contributions to Western Civilization" ("Italian Historical Society of America, A Brief History," n.d.).² With LaCorte's death in 1991, the publication was re-established the following year at Mercy College's Verrazzano Institute (Dobbs Ferry, New York) with Volume 1, Number 1, dated April 17, 1992.³ The publisher of the bi-annual "successor journal" was the National Italian American Coordinating Association, founded in 1974 to serve a "coordinative role for the national Italian American community" (Massaro 2000, 400), and the "national board of directors" consisted of the Conference of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations. Medievalist scholar Thomas E. Vesce of Mercy College served as editor-in-chief. The journal style was that of the Modern Language Association.

The *IAR*'s early affiliation with national voluntary associations engaged in ethnic boosterism is evident in the journal's subtitle: "A Semi-annual Commentary on Italian American Achievement." Publisher Dorothy Cali-Balancio wrote in the first issue: "The publication will continue to be a voice to promote Italian American prestige, preserve its dignity, and demonstrate unity in an academic forum" (Cali-Balancio 1992, 4). In keeping with this mindset, Vesce succinctly referred to the journal's "special feature articles" on Christopher Columbus as focusing on the "condition of 'firstness'" (Vesce 1992, 1). The *IAR* published an array of articles grounded in a "great men" notion of history and culture: Cesare Beccaria, Christopher Columbus, Giovanni Da Verrazzano, and Philip Mazzei. Attention was also given to contemporary personalities in a section entitled "Profiles of Excellence" with biographic essays on actor Armand Assante, author Helen Barolini, scholar Leonard Covello, politician Geraldine Ferraro, singers Liza Minnelli and Frank Sinatra, astronaut Mario Runco, Jr., and others. In addition to book reviews, scholarly articles included "A Statistical Profile of Italians in the USA" by Lydio Tomasi, "Ethnic Issues in Psychotherapy" by Aileen Sirey, and "Italian American Studies: Struggling Toward Empowerment" by Jerome Krase. The journal also offered a place for creative writers, publishing the works of Mario Fratti and Joseph Tusiani.

With the second issue, Cali-Balancio announced "a 25% increase in volume" between Issues 1.1 and 1.2. She also solicited "your help in convincing the '*pezzi novanta*' (big chiefs) you know to subscribe for your schools and organizations" (Cali-Balancio 1993, 2). By October 1994, the publication of Issue 3.2 was delayed by "several months"; the cause was attributed to the lack of "MONEY" (Cali-Balancio 1994, 3). Funding for that issue and the previous one was provided by a subvention from New York State Senators Guy Velella and Nicholas Spano. A fund-raising campaign was initiated to underwrite the journal. With Vesce's retirement and the closing of the Verrazzano Institute in 1993, the journal was in need of a new home (Vesce 2009).

In 1996, the *IAR* found that home at the Calandra Institute, with then director Joseph Scelsa serving as publisher and Vincenzo Milione serving as editor. According to Scelsa's preface "Reintroducing *The Italian American Review*," the publication became part of the Institute's "new and expanded mission" (Scelsa 1996, n.p.) in keeping with its designation as a university-wide research institute.⁴ A number of changes to the journal became apparent: a redesigned logo, the establishment of an editorial board, and use of the American Psychological Association as the house style. The new subtitle now identified the *IAR* as "A Social Science

Journal of the Italian American Experience.” From that moment, the *IAR* ceased publishing panegyric articles and creative work. Issues 5.1 and 5.2 consisted of the proceedings from the Calandra Institute’s 1995 conference “Italian-American Studies: The State of the Field and New Directions for Development.”

By the fourth issue, 6.2 (1997–1998), the editorship had passed to Philip Cannistraro, who had been appointed the Distinguished Professor of Italian American Studies at Queens College in 1995. Cannistraro expanded the intellectual rigor of the publication, announcing in the “Notes to Contributors” that the *IAR* was now a peer-reviewed journal. In addition, he revamped the editorial board with an extensive list of scholars from academic institutions beyond the City University of New York, including Italian historians working on emigration issues. Cannistraro quickly established his editorial imprimatur by publishing a number of essays by fellow historians, many of whom explored the varied forms of Italian-American politics from anarchism to communism, from fascism to antifascism. He conceptualized a special issue (8.1) on the Italian-American radical press.

Cannistraro was diagnosed with cancer in 2001 and consequently passed away four years later. During that time, he continued to serve as the journal’s editor but, understandably, not always in the same capacity. As a result the journal floundered, with spotty copy editing and issues being published months, even years, late. The last issue, 9.2, while dated Fall/Winter 2002 was actually printed in 2006. The previous year, the Calandra Institute’s acting executive director Peter Vellon sought to revive the journal, appointing historian Nunzio Pernicone of Drexel University as its new editor. In an open letter announcing this initiative, Pernicone wrote that the *IAR* “has languished in a state of crisis for the last several years because of inadequate funding and the prolonged illness of its editor” (Pernicone n.d., n.p.). Pernicone offered a new scholarly publication entitled *The Journal of Italian American Studies*. Unfortunately, this new chapter in Italian American Studies was quickly sabotaged by several vocal Italian-American individuals within the City University of New York and outside of the academy whose larger agenda was to undermine Vellon’s leadership of the Institute; as a result, the publication never saw the light of day.

Dean Tamburri’s appointment signaled a fresh and welcomed beginning at the Institute. He immediately listed the journal’s resurrection as part of his priorities and planned to offer the *IAR*’s editorship to the soon-to-be-appointed Distinguished Professor of Italian American Studies. When Fred Gardaphé was named the new Distinguished Professor in 2008,

Tamburri deemed it inappropriate that a literary scholar serve as the editor of a social science journal. Tamburri named me the *IAR*'s editor because of my social science training as a folklorist and my decade-long association with the journal. (In addition to acting as the associate editor, I served as the guest editor of a special issue, 8.2, on Italian-American folklore.) In addition, he hired several dynamic new staff members whose duties also include working on the *IAR*: Lisa Cicchetti serves as the production manager, providing the journal's bold cover design and handsome layout; and Rosangela Briscese is the invaluable managing editor who has been involved in every step of the process in reviving the *IAR*.

Although we have done away with a subtitle, the primary focus of the current *IAR* remains the social sciences. In keeping with my interdisciplinary training as a scholar of expressive culture, I have expanded the journal's purview to include research on topics relating to the humanities such as film, visual arts, and music, as seen in Joseph Cosco's article on Woody Guthrie's recording *Ballads of Sacco & Vanzetti*. The revamped (and smaller) editorial board reflects this new direction, as does the adaptation of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. We have decided to maintain the journal's standing policy of not publishing literary criticism and creative work. We believe the fellow publications, *VIA* and *Italian Americana*, meet the existing needs for literary production and analysis within the field of Italian American Studies.

I am committed to an ethical professionalism as the journal's editor. That is why you will not see essays by members of the editorial office or editorial board in these pages or read reviews of books penned by those members.⁵ Reviews of books, films, and websites (we hope to include exhibitions in the future) will be written by scholars familiar with the subject matter but not personally affiliated with the authors or creators of the respective works. This professional standard is already proving to be a challenge given the relatively small community working in Italian American Studies. The journal has expanded its pool of reviewers beyond those scholars working primarily in Italian American Studies to reflect the growing recognition of the field and its import for other areas of study. We are deeply committed to the blind review process, and Rosangela Briscese and I have gone to great lengths to assure fair and balanced readings of submitted essays that have been deemed suitable by members of the editorial office. We are all indebted to those scholars who have provided thoughtful and constructive reviews of essays submitted to date as a service to the field.⁶

We are particularly grateful to two scholars who have volunteered to serve as review editors: historian Nancy Carnevale for books, and cultural

studies scholar Laura Ruberto for film and digital media. This is a first for the journal, in which individuals outside the supporting institute offer their services to the field, a fact that attests to the growing collegiality within Italian American Studies and the high regard the Calandra Institute has achieved of late.

It may strike some as odd to be relaunching a print publication in our digital age. We are investigating how to provide the journal online either through entities like JSTOR or the Calandra Institute's website. On-demand publishing allows us to control the quantity of copies produced thus eliminating overstock, a problem that has plagued the Institute since taking on the journal fifteen years ago.

We invite you to subscribe to the journal and contribute financially to its success. In keeping with the spirit of cultural philanthropy, we wish to thank the American Society of the Italian Legions of Merit and its then president, New York Supreme Court Justice Dominic R. Massaro, for providing a grant in 2006 to assist in the journal's relaunch.

Italian American Studies continues to develop as we consider new perspectives and directions in our understanding of Italian-American history and culture. Areas of study such as race, gender, and trans-nationalism, among others, help us to not only reexamine past narratives with fresh eyes but also to consider previously ignored and unexplored topics. The flag-waving triumphalism of the white ethnic revival that emerged during the 1970s is a suitable subject for study, but it is not the basis for rigorous and sustained scholarship. In this regard, we find ourselves in a new round of reflection and re-evaluation, a *ricorso*, to use eighteenth-century philosopher Giambattista Vico's term, toward an ever-evolving state of becoming.⁷ It is my hope that the new *Italian American Review* will serve our collective aspirations for continued and fruitful study of Italian Americans as an arena for intellectual discourse.

Notes

1. As a result of this considerable interruption, we have decided to number this issue of *IAR* Volume 1, Number 1 (as opposed to resuming the journal's numbering system, which would have made this issue 10.1) at the recommendation of several librarians on best practices for periodical numbering.
2. See also "Brooklyn Academy of Music Program and Magazine" (1949) and Sorrentino (2000, 330–1).
3. The Calandra Institute's library is missing Issues 3.1 and 4.2.
4. See Scelsa (1997, 289–306) and Massaro (1997, 45–55).
5. I am pleased to list here the most recent contributions to Italian American Studies by members of our editorial board and editorial office: Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early*

American Cinema: Race, Landscape, and the Picturesque (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Nancy Carnevale, *A New Language, A New World: Italian Immigrants in the United States, 1890–1945* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Simone Cinotto, *Terra soffice uva nera: Viti vinicoltori piemontesi in California prima e dopo il Proibizionismo* (Turin: Otto, 2008); Donna Gabaccia (co-editor with Loretta Baldassar), *Intimacy and Italian Migration: Gender and Domestic Lives in a Mobile World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); Fred Gardaphé, *Importato dall'Italia e altre storie* (New York: Idea Publications, 2009); Jennifer Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880–1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Laura E. Ruberto, *Gramsci, Migration, and the Representation of Women's Work in Italy and the U.S.* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010); Joseph Sciorra (editor), *Italian Folk: Vernacular Culture in Italian-American Lives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011); Sciorra and Anthony Julian Tamburri (co-edited with Giuliana Muscio and Giovanni Spagnoletti), *Mediated Ethnicity: New Italian-American Cinema* (New York: John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, 2010); and Tamburri, *Una semiotica dell'etnicità. Nuove segnalature per la scrittura italiano/americana* (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2010).

6. Scholars have begun to question peer review, raising concerns about partiality, academic cliques, and the protracted process required to prepare an essay for publication. Some journals are using the Internet to make the review process more transparent and expeditious. See Myers (2009, B4) and Cohen (2010, A1, A3).
7. I am not using the term *ricorso* to apply Vico's three stages of humanity to my history of the IAR or my understanding of Italian American Studies, nor to suggest that we are experiencing either growth or decay, but merely to acknowledge that we are at a moment in our scholarly work that calls for reflection and a re-examination as we move forward. See Gardaphé (1996) for a historization of Italian-American literature using Vico's theories.

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