

il Bollettino

dedicated to the history and culture of Italians in America



2020 • VOLUME 13 • NUMBER 2

Cari Amici,

Welcome to volume 13.2 of the Calandra Institute's *il Bollettino*! These past seven-plus months have been more than challenging; everything was put on hold, if not canceled, from one day to the next, literally. We have, nonetheless, continued with our research in good form. For our public events, in turn, we have had to adapt to the new medium Zoom. All our events are now being presented online. It has made us more visible to a larger audience, with some events welcoming hundreds of viewers from all over the world.

In the spirit of visual communication, we created a new Internet program entitled "Calandra Corner," a forum reserved for those more informal conversations about all things Italian American. As of this writing, we have a number of programs that will soon be available for your viewing.

We mourn the loss of three friends of the Institute. Alfredo de Palchi, Vittotia repetto, and Joseph Tusiani. All three were highly accomplished in their writing. Nonagenarians Alfredo and Joseph, especially, had reached

heights few do; they each leave an indelible mark and a wonderful legacy for future generations. Victoria's future, unfortunately, was cut short. Because she was an accomplished poet in her own right, we can only imagine what heights she would have reached given another couple of decades. They shall all be missed.

Finally, to date, we have organized two live programs on Christopher Columbus via Zoom, one on July 27, 2020, the other on October 1, 2020. You'll find more information about these events below. We plan on hosting other events on Columbus. So, be sure you subscribe to our mailing list.

We continue to enjoy support from many. As always, we are most appreciative of the unyielding support of Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez's Office of CUNY and President Frank Wu's Office at Queens College. They and their staff continue to facilitate our greater development in all aspects.

In solidarity,
Anthony Julian Tamburri
Dean and Distinguished Professor

Recent event highlights include two virtual events on Christopher Columbus:

FUORI COLLANA

FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION

Columbus on Trial

Film screening of the prologue and excerpts from the film *Columbus on Trial*, by Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno, followed by a discussion with the filmmakers and Fred Gardaphé and Leslie Wilson, moderated by Anthony Tamburri.

ROUNDTABLE

Talking Columbus

Five scholars gathered to explore the many ways the historical figure of Columbus is interpreted in contemporary society. The panel included William Connell, Fred Gardaphé, Laura Ruberto, Joseph Sciorra, and Leslie Wilson, moderated by Anthony Tamburri.

View the recordings at youtube.com/ItalicsTV

SAVE THE DATE: 2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



The Calandra Institute has rescheduled its 2020 conference for April 2021 as a virtual event, via Zoom, on multiple days throughout the month. Check the Institute website in early spring for more information.

ON THE COVER: Choreographer ANABELLA LENZU's *Pachamama: Mother World*, a dance theater work inspired by the male initiation rituals of the Selk'nam, a tribe of Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. Photograph © Todd Carroll (toddcarrrollphoto.com). Lenzu was born in Bahia Blanca, Argentina, the second generation of an Italian working-class immigrant family from Naples. Of her work *Pachamama*, Lenzu says: The performance unfolds like a prehistoric commedia dell'arte, moving away from the presentational side of dance and reconnecting with the primal impulses of art. Read an interview with Lenzu at New Women New Yorkers: www.nywomenimmigrants.org/meet-anabella-lenzu-dancer-teacher-writer-mother-immigrant/

anbellalenzu.com

MAJOR SURVEY OF ITALIAN AMERICAN EDUCATORS UNDER WAY

The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, in collaboration with the Association of Italian American Educators, will publish a study on the growth and impact of Italian American educators on American education. The Calandra Institute is seeking Italian American educators from all regions of the United States who have taught and administrated over the last seventy years, from the 1950s to the present, to participate in the study.

Today there are approximately 700,000 Italian American educators across all academic disciplines from pre-K to postsecondary education in the United States. Research using U.S. Census data from 1980 to 2017 demonstrates how the descendants of Italian immigrants recognized the value of education in order to succeed in the educational system. Since 1980 the number of Italian American educators has more than doubled, from 275,500 to 699,448 in 2017. Italian American educators represented 5.3 percent of all educators in 1980, equal to the overall Italian American population (5.3 percent) but increased to 7.3 percent of all the educators in 2017, more than 2 percentage points above the population of

Italian Americans in the United States (5.1 percent).

The increase in Italian American educators throughout the United States is more geographically diverse than the overall Italian American population. The number of educators from preschool to postsecondary increased significantly, especially among women. Italian American educators held a larger proficiency in the Italian language than the general Italian American population.

The Calandra Institute invites all Italian American educators to participate in this study. If you also have a written description of your experience, you may forward it for possible inclusion. In addition, if you know an educator who should be included, forward this information to them with your recommendation for their participation in the survey. Respondents can directly submit survey responses online at: <http://calandrainstitute.org/educator-survey/>. The case studies will highlight the obstacles and successes of individual educators. For further information contact principal investigator Vincenzo Milione at 212-642-2094 or email vincenzo.milione@qc.cuny.edu.

ITALICS: TELEVISION FOR THE ITALIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

ITALICS

The August *Italics* program highlighted author B.G. Firmani discussing her grandfather Marino Auriti, creator in the 1950s of the Encyclopedic Palace of the World. Auriti created a model of a 136-story building to be built in Washington D.C., which would stand seven hundred meters tall and take up over sixteen square city blocks. The architectural model and fantastical miniature was later acquired by the Museum of American Folk Art and traveled to the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. The international art exhibition, *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*, drew inspiration from Auriti's model of the utopian dream, an imaginary museum that was meant to house all worldly knowledge.



Maria and Marino Auriti with the Encyclopedic Palace of the World.



Italics premieres the second Tuesday of each month at 9:30 pm and is rebroadcast the following Wednesday at 10:30 am and 3:30 pm, Saturday at 7:30 am, and Sunday at 6:30 pm on CUNY TV Channels 25.3, 75, 77, and 30, in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx.

Italics can be viewed on demand at



cuny.tv/show/italics



@ItalicsTV



youtube.com/ItalicsTV

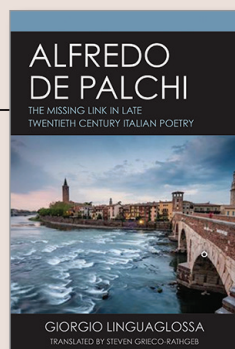
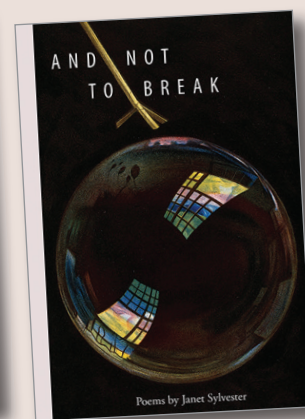
THE CALANDRA INSTITUTE ALSO HOSTS A VIDEO PLATFORM, **CALANDRA TV**, TO COMPLEMENT THE REGULAR *ITALICS* TELEVISION PROGRAM ON CUNY TV.

In association with Bordighera Press, the Lauria/Frasca Poetry Prize launched three years ago to promote the literature of the Italian diaspora and to foster greater engagement within our communities and beyond. In October, they announced their 2020 winner: *Elixir*, by Janine Certo. The selection was made by distinguished judge Maria Terrone, who found the manuscript to be “lyrical, intelligent, high-quality poetry.” *Elixir* was also the winner of the 2020 New American Poetry Prize, selected by Corey Van Landingham, and will be co-published with New American Press, an independent literary publisher committed to bringing readers the best in contemporary fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and translations from across the United States and around the world.

Janine Certo is the author of the poetry collection *In the Corner of the Living*, first runner-up for the 2017 Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award (Main Street Rag, 2017), as well as the scholarly book *Children Writing Poems: Poetic Voices in and out of School* (Routledge 2018). Her poems have appeared in a variety of journals, including *The Rumpus*, *Gastronomica*, and *New Ohio*

Review, and have been nominated for The Pushcart Prize and earned second prize in the 2020 Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry, judged by Kaveh Akbar.

The inaugural prize was awarded to Matthew Cariello and his collection *Talk*. Distinguished judge Peter Covino described the collection as “a lyrical conversation with the self, the everyday, and the natural world.” And last year’s winner was Janet Sylvester for *And Not to Break*, noted by Peter Covino for its “riveting cautionary tale about heartbreak, disaffection, and visceral family dysfunction.”



SOON TO BE PUBLISHED

Alfredo de Palchi: The Missing Link in Late Twentieth-Century Italian Poetry, the critical monograph by Giorgio Linguaglossa, will be published in early 2021 by Fairleigh Dickinson University Press as a title in the Italian Series edited by Anthony Julian Tamburri. The original Italian-language essay *La poesia di Alfredo de Palchi, quando la biografia diventa mito* was published in 2017 by Edizioni Progetta Cultura.

THE ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS AWARDS TWO ITALIAN AMERICAN POETS LAUREATE

The Academy of American Poets has selected Maria Lisella as a 2020 Poet Laureate Fellow. The twenty-three fellows each receive \$50,000 for a combined total of \$1.15 million.

The awards are given to honor poets of literary merit appointed to serve in civic positions and to enable them to undertake meaningful projects that engage their fellow residents with poetry, helping to address issues important to their communities.

Last year, Grace Cavalieri, the author of more than forty books of poetry and plays, including *What The Psychic Said* (Goss183 2020) and *Other Voices, Other Lives* (Alan Squire Publishing 2017). *What The Psychic Said* won a \$75,000 grant to produce a podcast series, “The Poet and the Poem,” featuring Maryland poets.

Lisella will spend the fellowship hosting a curated series of readings and writing workshops for senior citizens in Queens at various cultural venues. The readings will feature senior poets and the series will culminate in public readings throughout the borough.

Twice nominated for the Pushcart Poetry Prize, Lisella has authored *Thieves in the Family* (NYQ Books 2014) and two chapbooks, *Amore on Hope Street* (Finishing Line Press 2009) and *Two Naked Feet* (Poets Wear Prada 2009). As a journalist, she contributes to *The Jerusalem Post*, *USA Today*, and the bilingual *La Voce di New York*. She holds degrees from Queensborough Community College, Queens College, and NYU-Polytechnic Institute.

For more information: <https://poets.org/poet/maria-lisella>

From Rural Miseria to Urban Repression: Environmental Injustice and Eco-Nostalgia in Italian American History and Literature, by Sienna Hopkins

Ecocriticism can be divided into two chronological waves: The first addresses the effects of culture on nature and vice versa; the second has a more scientific approach, focusing its attention on better ecological practices. What both movements lack, however, is adequate attention to the concept of environmental injustice, particularly in regards to minority populations and their resulting environmental immiseration. This paper seeks to contribute an Italian American perspective to this small field of discourse. History depicting those living in Italy in the late nineteenth century tends to portray nature as an indomitable tyrant who forces the poor to seek survival in the Americas. Upon arrival, however, urbanity assumes the role of villainous protagonist, while nature becomes increasingly seen as restorative and reminiscent of the homeland, to the point that backyard gardens and nostalgia for Italy's beauty become an integral part of Italian American identities, idealizing the nature that once pushed its habitants away. The main texts explored in this study are Edmondo De Amici's *On Blue Water*, Louise de Salvo's *Crazy in the Kitchen*, the memoir *Rosa: The Life of an Italian Immigrant*, Pietro di Donato's *Christ in Concrete*, Mario Puzo's *Fortunate Pilgrim*, the letters of Nicola Sacco, and Jerre Mangione's memoir *Mount Allegro*. This paper touches upon various theories in Ecocriticism, specifically those of Lawrence Buell, expanding upon his theory of environmental injustice, which states that for the poor, both city and country are merciless arbiters of fate.

NEW ITALIAN AMERICAN REVIEW EDITOR

The *Italian American Review* announces David Aliano as editor of the journal for the period 2021 through 2023. Aliano teaches in the departments of Modern Languages and Literatures and History at the College of Mount Saint Vincent in New York City. He received his PhD in history from the CUNY Graduate Center in 2008 with a research focus on modern Italy, Italian migration, and Italian fascism and anti-fascism. Aliano has published widely on diasporic identities and the transnational intersections of culture and politics in Italy, Latin America, and the United States. He was the managing editor of the previous version of the *Italian American Review*, from 2001–2005, and served for eight years as an associate editor of the *Ethnic Studies Review*, the peer-reviewed multidisciplinary journal of the Association for Ethnic Studies, of which he is currently the editor in chief.

The Amanda Knox Trials and the Perception of Italy in the American Media, by Francesca Borriore

This essay examines the persistence of the myth of Italy as a country divided between religious morality and political corruption, and it critically explores this narrative through the analysis of two popular televised and literary true-crime adaptations: the documentary *Amanda Knox A Netflix Documentary* (2016), directed by Rod Blackhurst and Brian McGinn and produced and broadcasted by Netflix; and best-selling nonfiction book *Angel Face: Sex, Murder, and the Inside Story of Student Killer Amanda Knox* (2010), by American reporter Barbie Nadeau. As two of the most recent and balanced accounts of the murder of Meredith Kercher, *Amanda Knox* and *Angel Face* are particularly relevant to my argument about the ongoing importance of this case in the Italian American imaginary. Despite their claim of faithfulness to the events, Blackhurst's and McGinn's *Amanda Knox* includes two promotional trailers titled "victim" and "monster," respectively, which exemplify the polarization of public opinion about the controversial figure of Amanda Knox. Ultimately, both texts offer a victimized image of the white, middle-class American Knox.

In the background of these texts, the Italian cultural landscape—a gothic site of beauty, mystery, and corruption—functions as a character to justify the construction of Knox's innocence, as she eventually emerges as the real victim. In my exploration into the case, I conducted a series of interviews with the prosecutor involved in the trials, Giuliano Mignini, excerpts of which are included in the essay.

ANTHONY JULIAN TAMBURRI

STAFF NEWS

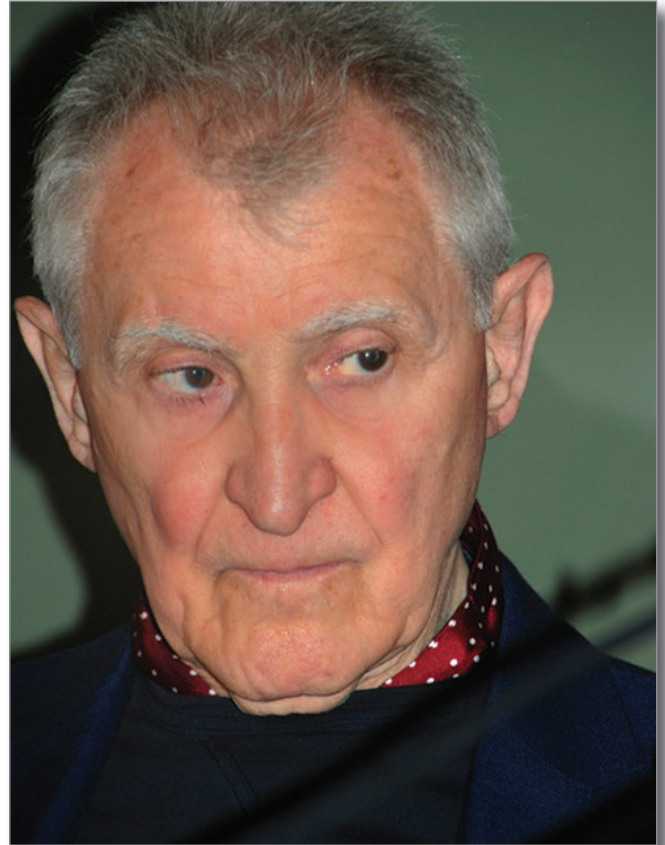
recently published the following essays: "La letteratura 'italofona' negli Stati Uniti," *Geocultura. Annuario della Società Dante Alighieri* (2019): 357–369; "Food as Delineator in *Dinner Rush*: A Semiotic of Generational Difference among "Italians" in America," *E|C Rivista On-line dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Semiotici* (2019), <http://www.ec-aiss.it>. 1–14; "Segni e significabilità del cinema italiano/americano: code-switching in *Dinner Rush*, *Big Night* e *Mean Streets*" in Vito Zaggarro, ed. *Mirroring Myths*. Rome: Rome Tre Press 2019. 175–184; "Aldo Palazzeschi and the Transgression of Humor" in Katia Pansa and Nicholas Grosso, eds. *The Manifestos of Aldo Palazzeschi*. New York: Bordighera Press 2019. 111–127; "Gli americani italiani in televisione" in Maddalena Tirabassi, ed. *Storia degli Italoamericani*. Milan: Le Monnier 2019. 553–566.

AD MEMORIUM

ALFREDO DE PALCHI 1926–2020

Alfredo de Palchi, of New York City, died at age ninety-three of leukemia on August 6, 2020. He is survived by his devoted wife, Rita Di Pace, and their loving daughter, Luce. As a poet, translator, editor, publisher, and philanthropist, he was the single most important figure in the effort to spread awareness of modern Italian poetry to an American audience. Born in 1926 in Verona, Italy, he was for many years a resident of New York, where he was a constant presence at literary and artistic events. He published many volumes of his own striking and forceful poetry over a career of more than six decades. He was a co-founder of the esteemed literary journal *Chelsea*, serving at various times in its fifty-year history as publisher and editor-in-chief as it presented the work of many of the most important modern American writers. He was founder, editor, and publisher of Chelsea Editions, which over the past quarter century issued more than forty volumes of poetry translated from modern Italian authors. He established and administered the Raiziss-de Palchi Charitable Foundation, which provided vital funding for countless publications, conferences, and translators. He will be fondly remembered by scores of friends for his artistry, his generosity, his booming laughter, and his unabashed enjoyment of life.

—MICHAEL PALMA



VITTORIA REPETTO 1951–2020

Beloved poet Vittoria Repetto died on March 10, 2020. The daughter of immigrant Italian parents, from Liguria on her father's side and Lombardy on her mother's side, Vittoria described herself as “a native downtown guinea dyke butch who grew up in the Greenwich Village”; yet she defied labels.

Poet Maria Gillan noted Vittoria's ability to transcend physical limitations: “I love the way she walked with a cane and an umbrella and said she didn't really have a problem. I love the way she struggled to cross the street in New York City



and the way she took the bus even though it was difficult for her. I miss Vittoria's feisty, angry, indomitable spirit. I love the way she kept going even when everybody else would've just said 'I can't do it anymore.' May she be pain-free wherever she is now.” Author Joanna Clapps Herman recalls: “She was gutsy about reading her poetry out loud even with

her speech impediment as a result of her partial deafness. Brava Vittoria!”

Vittoria initiated literary communities that welcomed well-published authors to read side by side with emerging writers, a testimony to her belief in democratic literary forums and her sense of community. She served as vice president of the Italian American Writers Association (IAWA) series and edited its monthly newsletter from 1992 to 2014; she hosted the women's and trans' poets jam and open mic at Bluestockings Bookstore 1999-2018. That she was running a women/trans reading series twenty years ago was nothing short of remarkable.

As Julia Lisella, poet, scholar, and co-curator of IAWA Boston, observed: “She was tough and abrasive, but her actions were generous. Everyone had a voice in her series. I thought she was a great emcee.”

In 2006, Guernica Editions published her first full-length poetry book, *Not Just a Personal Ad*. Of that collection, poet and reviewer Rigoberto Gonzalez wrote in a Lambda Book Report column, “Poems of intense sensibility and gorgeous imagery are a rarity these days; but this book of verse by a distinctly working-class, distinctly lesbian, and distinctly Italian American voice is a must for all readers of good poetry.”

Visit her blog: vittoriarepetto.wordpress.com/about/.

—MARIA LISELLA

JOSEPH TUSIANI 1924–2020

While Joseph Tusiani was in his ninety-sixth year when he left us, it was nevertheless a very sad occasion for many who knew and collaborated with him. In his death, we lose a treasure of a man and a wonderful human being.

Joseph came to the United States in 1947 on what was to be a temporary visit. Instead, he remained and became, over the more than seven decades he spent in New York, the polymath that he was. Poet first and foremost, prose writer, essayist, translator, Joseph was the true scholar and intellectual.

I first met Joseph Tusiani in 1987, in Chicago, Illinois, at the American Historical Italian Association's (now IASA) annual conference. I was in the hotel lobby bidding a good night to Felix and Selma Stefanile, when Fred Gardaphé invited me to the conference's hotel suite, where, as he said most enthusiastically, Giose Rimanelli and Joseph Tusiani were "holding court." Well, it was a fateful evening for sure. I was mesmerized by the two of them, each of whose work becoming, not too many years later, the respective subject matter of essays of mine.

I distinctly remember an elegance to Joseph's attire and, more significant, a decorous manner of thought and articulation not often seen. He had, as well, this wonderful baritone voice that captured the attention of all present. That elegance and demeanor were among Joseph's many trademarks; and he delivered whatever he had to say in an equally enthralling style.

This was Joseph in all of his grandeur. Whether in public situations, or at conferences and events of other matters, Joseph was always an elegant presence. Not to mention his nonpareil erudition of classical antiquity, Italian literature and culture, and, of course, the history and culture of the United States, inclusive of Italian Americana.

Joseph's own personal and cultural experiences are documented in his three-volume autobiography (*Joseph Tusiani. La parola difficile. Autobiografia di un italo-americano* [Fasano: Schena Editore 1988]; *La parola nuova. Autobiografia di un italo-americano* [Fasano: Schena Editore 1991]; *La parola antica. Autobiografia di un italo-americano* [Fasano: Schena Editore 1992]), later condensed into one volume (*In una casa un'altra casa trovo. Autobiografia di un poeta di due terre* [Milan: Bompiani, 2016]). I heard so many of the events recounted therein from Joseph himself. He spoke in detail and with much glee of meeting the candidate John F. Kennedy and his subsequent visit to the White House. He spoke on occasion with much nostalgia and appreciation of his friendship with Frances Winwar, his longtime mentor who, at one point early in their friendship, told him to stick more with the Americans and not the Italian Americans; she felt they would stifle his cultural life. Joseph, as we know in retrospect, was most aptly

able to negotiate these two worlds, the English-speaking world and the Italian world. It was indeed Frances Winwar who, unbeknownst to Joseph, had submitted his long poem "The Return" for the 1956 Greenwood Poetry Prize of the Poetry Society of England, the first "American" to win the award; he won it nine years after emigrating from Italy to the United States.

The "one-man industry" that he was, as the late Felix Stefanile described him, Joseph was vice president of the Poetry Society of America and director of the Catholic Poetry Society of America. Joseph was also professor of Italian for many years at Lehman College of the City University of New York.

Through his work as translator, he introduced many poets to the English-speaking world: Machiavelli, Tasso, Pulci, Boccaccio, Pascoli, and Leopardi are just some of the Italian writers he translated over the years. It was, in turn, his translations of Michelangelo's poetry that earned him a visit to President Kennedy's White House. That collection will be reissued in the University of Toronto Press's Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library Series.

Joseph's reach was extensive and impactful. In addition to his loving family (Michael, Bea, and their children), Joseph leaves behind a plethora of friends and former students whose lives were influenced to various degrees by his mentoring, friendship, and kindness. I feel privileged to have been among those to whom he opened his home, and along with the many things I shall remember and miss, there is also the Centerbe we would share during our conversations.

Once we are free of this terrible morass of the novel coronavirus, we shall commemorate Joseph in the manner he so deserves. The new University of Toronto Press publication of his translations of Michelangelo will be the perfect reason for so doing.

—ANTHONY JULIAN TAMBURRI



Italian American Review

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JOHN D. CALANDRA ITALIAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE

The *Italian American Review* features scholarly articles about Italian American history and culture, as well as other aspects of the Italian diaspora. The journal embraces a wide range of professional concerns and theoretical orientations in the social sciences and cultural studies. The *Italian American Review* publishes book, film, and digital media reviews and is currently accepting article submissions.

For more information, go to calandrainstitute.org. Under the publications menu, click on *Italian American Review*.



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