Università degli Studi di Palermo DIPARTIMENTO CULTURE E SOCIETÀ

PM edizioni

Samuele Grassi – Cirus Rinaldi

IMMAGINARE GLI ITALO-AMERICANI: DALLA SCUOLA DI CHICAGO IN POI. INTRODUZIONE ALLA SEZIONE «CLASSICS»

http://dx.doi.org/XXXXXXXXXXXX

Abstract

This piece introduces Chiara Mazzucchelli, Anthony Julian Tamburri, and Sabrina Vellucci's essays on Italian-Americanness, and extracts from Irving L. Child and Harvey Warren Zorbaugh's sociological studies on marginality and «vice» areas in the US of the early XX century. It frames these distinctive and insightful pieces within the context of identitarian, linguistic, and cultural struggles that make up the archives of Italian migrant communities in the US.In conversation with the five pieces, this introduction aims to inquire into the practices of stigmatisation and reproduction of violence by dominant epistemological and ontological frameworks travelling beyond borders.

> The Italians in America apply the term *caffone* (literary, "simpleton") to a man of their nationality who has the least possible association with any group, has no regard for opinion, wears, for example, the same clothes during his whole stay in America, avoids all conversation, ignores his surroundings, and accumulates the sum of money he has in mind as rapidly as possible. We use the term here to designate the pure opportunist, who is unwilling to participate either in the American life or in that of his national group: "The *caffoni*, who were in Sicily mostly *villani* [serfs], are looked down upon by their own people and especially by that class of Italians who want to stay here and who feel injured whenever the Italian name is hurt. To this superior class a good name for the Italians is a requisite of their progress. The *caffoni* don't care. All they want is to make money and go back. So we often see the superior class preaching and speaking to the *caffoni* in meetings, in groups and individually, persuading them to uphold the Italian name. The *caffoni* listen, but then they shrug their shoulders and it is all over. "It does not give me any bread whether Italians have a good name in America or not. I am going back soon." (Park, Miller 1921, 103-104)

L'analisi sociale non studia *semplicemente* la realtà ma, al contempo, la *costituisce* e *produce* attraverso le sue categorizzazioni, tipizzazioni e rappresentazioni. Lo studio delle retoriche scientifiche ha permesso, in vari ambiti di ricerca, di rileggere alla luce – per esempio – dei generi e delle sessualità, delle componenti etno-razziali o di classe o dell'integrismo fisico, i diversi discorsi e i lori effetti produttivi sugli stessi oggetti osservati. Talora, l'assenza di una riflessione sul posizionamento dell'osservatore e sulla osservazione scientifica come pratica situatadetermina la permanenza di un regime discorsivo funzionale al mantenimento di privilegi all'interno del qualegruppi egemoni diventano depositari di una *norma*generale e astratta.Questo regime discorsivo si fonda sulla violenza epistemologica della parola e dello sguardo, o *gaze*, entrambi funzionali al (mis)riconoscimento di soggetti, esperienze, conoscenze, saperi e al loro assoggettamento alla logica dei dualismi esclusivi(visibile/invisibile, vivibile/dispensabile ecc.), come dimostrato da decenni di critica femminista in letteratura, nel cinema e negli studi postcoloniali (Mulvey, 1975; De Lauretis, 1984; hooks, 1992; Kaplan, 1997). Quanto più un tratto, una caratteristica o una dimensione identitaria rimangono impliciti tanto più essi hanno rilevanza egemone. Partendo da qui è importante ricordare la necessità di un punto di vista incarnato, di uno sguardo sul mondo da parte di un soggetto che, poiché anche corpo, si manifesta all'incrocio di codici multipli (Haraway, 1988).

Così come quello della teorizzazione scientifica, anche lo spazio della teorizzazione sociale è sovente occupato da un soggetto – si tratta di maschi, bianchi, di classe media, eterosessuali – che ha maggiore *potere definitorio*: si tratta del soggetto conoscitore, del produttore di conoscenza, il cui corpo non è mai portatore di segni di differenza perché è *lo* standard implicito che deve rimanere *non-detto*, *non-marcato*e, di conseguenza, già implicitamente rappresentato/rappresentabile poiché "trasparente" (si veda, ad esempio, Ferrante 2019, recensito in questo numero). Alcune identità, pertanto, occupano un regime di visibilità egemone, sono degne di essere riconosciute più di altre e possono essere riconosciute più facilmente di altre perché assumono – rinsaldando al contempo una serie di caratteristiche (tra cui il genere, la razza, la sessualità, ecc.) – carattere egemonico, si impongono come «dato per scontato», come «naturali», «normali», ascriviamo loro caratteristiche transtoriche, trascendentali, statiche. Non è un caso, infatti, che all'interno della analisi sociale gruppi marchiati come portatori di differenze siano diventati*oggetto* dello sguardo dello studioso conoscitore/controllore/moralizzatore – ora come subculture oggettivate in quanto espressione di classi sociali subalterne, ora come gruppi razzializzati e criminalizzati o, ancora, sessualizzati e deviantizzati. Una categoria identitaria svela la propria egemonia quanto più rimane implicita, generale e astratta, universalizzante, non permettendo all'osservatore di coglierne la specificità– da qui, l'urgenza di nominare il genere (maschile) di chi osserva, mettendo in luce il potenziale violento di grammatiche del dominio che si ri-producono performativamente(Singh 2017, Borghi L. 2019). Per esempio, nel momento in cui i concetti di «razza» o quello di «orientamento sessuale»o ancora quello di genere sono applicati per descrivere rispettivamente persone «non bianche», persone «non-eterosessuali» e donne, le persone bianche, eterosessuali e di genere maschile continueranno a non essere considerate in termini «razziali», «sessuali» e «di genere» e, conseguentemente, continueranno a fungere da modello egemone, da norma, da standard. Anche nel caso del discorso delle scienze sociali e umanistiche – come

vedremo dagli estratti inclusi nella sezione – le identità degli studiosi non hanno alcuna necessità di accaparrarsi la «presa di parola» dal momento che la loro posizione coincide con il punto di vista «universale»: non hanno alcun bisogno di «essere dette», non devono dare costantemente delle «spiegazioni» né hanno alcun bisogno di «dichiararsi». Non dichiararsi è, ancor più e ancor prima, un modo per confermare e riprodurre i propri privilegi di «soggetto enunciante», dove il sapere – riconosciuto, autorizzato, dominante, egemonico (e quindi già precostruito/precostituito come potere) – non fa altro che circoscrivere, stabilire e legittimare le condizioni di privilegio oscurandone al contempo la costruzione storica e socio-culturale, le cui radici affondano nel concetto stesso di modernità (razionale e razionalista). È quanto afferma Rachele Borghi nel suo recente studio sulla colonialità del sapere:

> La combinazione degli ingredienti della modernità – capitalismo, colonialismo, sapere, rapporti di dominazione – ha permesso di preparare la torta chiamata civiltà, il tutto cotto nel forno della colonialità. Il loro legante è stato il razzismo. Dal 1492, ciò che ha creato il sistema-mondo è stata l'occupazione di territori, legittimata dalla gerarchizzazione delle persone su base razziale e sull'idea che ci fosse una missione civilizzatrice (2019, 74).

I classici riprodotti a partire da alcuni lavori fondativi della Scuola di Chicago (Park, Miller 1932; Zorbaugh 1929)e dallo studio psico-sociale condotto da Irving L. Child tra gli italo-americani di seconda generazione di New Haven (Connecticut) tra il 1937 e il 1938possono essere considerati come esemplificativi della modalità in cui le rappresentazioni sociali si *tipizzano* (Berger, Luckmann 1969, 82 ss.) e contribuiscono a "definire" la realtà, gli atteggiamenti sociali, il modo in cui la gente intende un certo fenomeno come problematico, determinando per esempio la produzione di eventuali interventi o immaginando che le definizioni attribuite alla realtà abbiano degli effetti sulla vita di tutti i giorni . L'immaginazione, infatti, in quanto processo sociale che filtra il pensiero e predispone al/l'azione nel mondo sociale, è momento fondante sia delle aspettative relazionali che dell'attribuzione del carattere di coseità ai fenomeni. Nel momento in cui un fenomeno acquista significato sociale ed è elaborato dalle diverse istituzioni sociali come "degno di attenzione" viene anche *immaginato* in termini culturali (Cooley 1992 [1902], 123 ss.). L'esistenza di un fenomeno e la sua rilevanza e pregnanza sociale sono acquisite nel momento in cui esso è sottoposto al vaglio di senso della società, finché non è pensato, immaginato socialmente, comunicato[1]:

> Reciprocamente, i significati immaginari sociali esistono entro e attraverso le "cose" – oggetti e individui – che li rendono presenti e li raffigurano, direttamente o indirettamente, immediatamente o mediatamente. Non possono esistere se non mediante la loro "incarnazione", la loro "inscrizione", la loro presentazione e raffigurazione entro e attraverso un reticolo di individui e oggetti cui essi "danno forma" […] individui e oggetti che esistono in generale e sono ciò che sono solo grazie a tali significati (Castoriadis1995, 251).

Ogni rappresentazione sociale implica la considerazione della sua componente immaginaria: l'immaginario sociale è da considerarsi componente fondamentale delle analisi sociologiche e vera e propria prospettiva specifica di ricerca (Durand 1993; Fourastié, Jaron 1993; Grassi2006). "[…] le immagini che le persone hanno le une delle altre sono i solidi fatti della società", afferma Charles H. Cooley e continua:

> Non intendo che la società debba essere studiata meramente attraverso l'immaginazione […] ma che l'oggetto di studio è innanzitutto un'idea immaginativa o un gruppo di idee nella mente, che dobbiamo immaginare le immaginazioni. L'intima comprensione di ogni fatto sociale risiederà nella necessità di intuire ciò che gli uomini pensano l'uno dell'altro (1992 [1902], 121-122)

1. Scrive Cooley (1992 [1902], 123 ss.) che persino una persona in carne ed ossa non è essere sociale finché non viene immaginata come tale.

Le immagini come solidi fatti socialici guidano nell'analisi dei fenomeni sociali così come essi vengono rappresentati, elaborati, processati in termini culturali: attraverso lo studio di tali relazioni si possono decodificare i significati sociali e le immagini attribuite a gruppi specifici o a categorie di individui. Henri Tajfel sostiene che

> [...] l'inclusione di un evento o oggetto in una categoria dipende dall'interpretazione che diamo della situazione stessa e ciò comporta che la realtà non sia colta "così com'è", ma venga costruita dai nostri sistemi categoriali: la produzione di categorie è influenzata dalla tradizione culturale, poiché è il sistema culturale che rende possibile l'esperienza dei singoli (1995,163).

Le rappresentazioni sociali costituiscono le risorse che gli individui e i gruppi utilizzano al fine di comprendere, classificare e prendere posizioni rispetto alla realtà sociale, costituendo specifiche modalità di organizzazione dell'esperienza e di "narrazione" al fine di rendere familiare ciò di cui difficilmente si può rendere conto: «c'è un continuo bisogno di ri-costituire il senso comune o la forma di comprensione che crea il substrato di immagini e significati senza i quali nessuna collettività può operare» (Moscovici 1989, 40). Le rappresentazioni scientifiche e le loro retoriche contribuiscono non solo a rendere disponibili presso la collettività specifiche risorse simboliche, ma permettono di *convenzionalizzare* gli oggetti sociali: «persino quando una persona o un oggetto non si conforma precisamente al modello, li forziamo ad assumere una data forma, a entrare in una data categoria, anzi a divenire identici ad altri anche a rischio di non capirli né decodificarli» (*ibidem*, 27).

All'interno delle rappresentazioni scientifiche e delle loro retoriche, impariamo a inserire e "inquadrare" attori o eventi all'interno di categorie che riteniamo adatte, categorie rispetto alle quali soggetti o eventi sono costantemente riadattati (*ibidem*, 51-52), acquistano valutazioni, nomi o etichette, diventano simboli di un modo specifico di teorizzare la società oppure assumono valore di metafora.

I classici riprodotti nella presente sezione possono essere considerati canoni della tipizzazione delle popolazioni migranti nel contesto statunitense di fine Ottocento-primi del Novecento. In particolare, essi hanno profondamente partecipato alla costruzione delle comunità italoamericane come minoranza razzializzata all'interno del discorso e della retorica delle scienze sociali e delle scienze umane, specializzata in condotte specifiche, atteggiamenti grotteschi o naturalmente criminali e portatrice di valori peculiari alla base dei conflitti culturali e normativi che hanno animato il dibattito, dai primi contributi offerti dagli studiosi della Scuola di Chicago sino a elaborazioni più recenti.

Come racconta Chiara Mazzucchelli (ri)leggendo il lavoro del sociologo Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, autore di *The Gold Coast and the Slum*(1929),verso la fine degli anni Venti del Novecento gran parte della popolazione migrante di Chicago era costituita da persone di prima e seconda generazione provenienti dalla Sicilia, in particolare dalla città di Palermo. Zorbaugh ascriveva a queste persone delle caratteristiche specifiche, tra cuil'uso di un linguaggio tipico del"vecchio mondo" e modelli di organizzazione sociale sostanzialmente incompatibili con quelli della cultura ospitante.Nell'attenta analisi della letteratura di prima, seconda e terza generazione che costituiscono il vasto patrimonio socio-culturale/socioculturale dell'immigrazione italiana negli Stati Uniti, Mazzucchelli sceglie allora di concentrarsi sulle rappresentazioni di quella che definisce *sicilianoamericanità*.L'assenza del trattino spinge a pensare che non si tratti né dell'una né (tantomeno) dell'altra, ma piuttosto di una sapiente rielaborazione culturale, storica e sociale della categoria di sicilianità che già incorpora alcuni tratti di quella (presunta) americanità dentro e contro la quale prende forma e rispetto a cui si caratterizzacome alterità presente, visibile e circostanziale di un discorso identitario rispetto a una presunta (impossibile) "americanità" originale.Scrive Mazzucchelli che, nelle opere di Jerre Mangione, Tony Ardizzone, Ben Morreale, Josephine Gattuso Hendin, Rita Ciresi, Nat Scammacca, Vincenzo Ancona, Gioia Timpanelli, Dodici Azpadu, Rachel Guido De Vries e di altre voci trattate nel suo saggio, la Sicilia «plays a special role as the source of emotional experiences and aesthetic inspiration» (*infra*), i tratti culturali dell'isola non abbandonano mai i lavori di queste/i autrici/ori, piuttostoessi si inseriscono in quel processo di «identity construction» attraverso il qual esi ricercaun'auto-definizione in termini regionali tanto per la

Sicilia come isola quanto per chi la abita, stabilendo così un ponte immaginario (per quanto segnato dalle rotte di migrazione) tra l'Italia e gli Stati Uniti.

Anthony Julian Tamburri affronta il rapporto con l'alterità vissuto dalle comunità immigrate dalla Sicilia negli Stati Uniti partendo dalla considerazione di quanto il vocabolario odierno della "tolleranza" abbia in qualche modo vanificato le promesse di "accettazione" con cui si è contraddistinto l'attivismo politico identitario dei movimenti di liberazione negli anni Sessanta e Sessanta. L'autore suggerisce che un ripensamento della "questione italo-americana" in questi termini potrebbe svolgere produttivamente il ruolo di «a reworking of an Italian/American collective imaginary on race and ethnicity» (*infra*).E prosegue:

> One of the primary steps that we in the Italian/American community need to do at this juncture is to re-visit our history. It is a record that is rich with achievements and successes. It is also a record that lists a series of sad and tragic events and episodes that have befallen our own turn-of-the-twentieth-century Italian Americans. But, it is also a record that, as the more recent cases of racial strife have demonstrated, has also proven at times to be inimical to the racial challenges that blacks have had to confront throughout the years.

La storia socio-culturale della migrazione italiana negli Stati Uniti dei primi del Novecento è il racconto complesso di processi di stratificazione e gerarchizzazione delle differenze all'incrocio delle linee del colore e della classe.

L'affermazione di Tamburri sembra condurre verso quel campo di studi di recente sviluppo nell'ambito del quale la *whiteness* italiana viene sviscerata attraverso l'analisi delle costruzioni politiche e socio-culturali delle sue sfaccettature e sfumature – un tentativo polivocale di ripensare le politiche di formazione, conservazione e riproduzione della razza/etnia lungo le direttive geografiche di una nazione (l'Italia) il cui processo di unificazione porta i segni di una costruzione dell'alterità interna che ha ancora bisogno di essere raccontata. Viene in mente quanto sostiene Antonia Anna Ferrante nel suo recente lavoro, *Pelle queer maschere straight* (*infra*, Recensioni):

> Quando ormai 'fatta l'Italia bisogna dare gli italiani' il progetto viene realizzato inaugurando una nuova campagna di imprese coloniali fuori e dentro i confini della nazione ancora da fare. Lo Stato dunque esiste, segnato da confini recenti e incerti fino alla fine della Seconda guerra mondiale; tocca però immaginarsi una nazione, e lo spirito per far riconoscere una comunità come tale è, sin dai primi vagiti, nel progetto coloniale.

Se da un lato una serie di importanti e brillanti analisi hanno approfondito il modo in cui gli italiani hanno costruito il proprio "colore" e la propria "razza" – una "mediterraneità-bianca" – con effetti sia sul gruppo dominante sia su quelli marginalizzati, stigmatizzati (Giuliani, Lombardo-Diop 2013), la lettura dei classici e le "riletture" implicite ed esplicite contenuti nei saggi a commento permettono di comprendere le complessità politiche, culturali e sociali che presiedono la costruzione di *ethnic whites* specifici. Come sostiene Borghi:«La bianchezza si scurisce o si schiarisce a seconda della direzione in cui si sposta la linea del colore, verso nord o verso sud. La stessa cosa avviene per la linea del colore *interna*, che attribuisce meno valore alla bianchezza *terrona* (Acquistapace et al. 2016) o *polentona* (Baldo 2017)» (2019, 98).

La ricostruzione di Tamburri prende in esame il canone del cinemamuto statunitense dei primi del Novecento, da F.A. Dobson e Edwin Porter a D.W. Griffith rintracciando nelle opere di questi registi le origini della caratterizzazione dell'Italianità in termini di voracità sessuale e predisposizione endemica alla violenza. I *cartoons* del periodo non fanno eccezione a queste regole di rappresentazione e reificazione, accentuando la stilizzazione di corpi (di gruppi di persone in arrivo sulle coste del continente americano) e della loro "dis-umanità" – questi corpi, infatti, sono metà persone, metà animali (in genere ratti) –, e gettando le basi della (ri)produzione capitalista che ha cementato l'unione di bianchezza, familismo borghese ed eterosessualità prima delle lotte per i diritti civili[2].

2. Non soprende, quindi, prosegue Tamburri, che per quanto diverse, le figure di persone italo-americane circolanti nelle serie di successo internazionale verso gli anni Novanta (*Seinfield*, *Friends*) continuino a mancare del privilegio di appartenenza alla «WASP-dom» (*infra*).

Sulla stessa linea di pensiero di Mazzucchelli e Tamburri, ma seguendo una puntuale prospettiva di genere, Sabrina Vellucci apre il suo contributo ricordando la testimonianza della studiosa di origini italiane Linda M. Hutcheon, dalla quale si evince il desiderio di pensare in termini di "trans-etnicismo", piuttosto che di incroci di identità culturali univoche, per quanto soggette a cambiamento per effetto di commistioni, incroci e dialoghi/scontri con l'alterità (anche in questo caso, la cultura nordamericana). Nelle opere di Sandra M. Gilbert e Louise DeSalvo, sostiene Vellucci, troviamo sia la consapevolezza di essere a cavallo fra due culture, sfruttando questa posizione per guardare al mondo attraverso la lente della sovrapposizione, della problematicità e della varietà, sia anche l'urgenza di un distacco da quelle componenti che rappresentano un ostacolo a un'articolazione libera della propria soggettività – come nel caso dell'avversione nei confronti della cucina di DeSalvo, attraverso cui l'autrice riesce a dare corpo al rifiuto del tradizionale ruolo domestico che da giovane attribuiva alle donne della sua famiglia. Come dimostra Vellucci leggendo, interpretando e cogliendo gli elementi a volte contraddittori del senso di attaccamento e al contempo di rifiuto all'opera nei lavori di Gilbert e DeSalvo, la storia culturale italo-americana nella letteratura delle donne è, prima di tutto, storia di «ritorni letterari e metaforici che segnalano momenti importanti» (*infra*) all'interno della costituzione di un contro-canone letterario italiano-americano:

> Situate nello scarto tra l'America e la cultura italiana che in America si sviluppa, Gilbert e DeSalvo imparano a capire il mondo attraverso le differenze, attraverso scampoli di parole e di storie lontane ma mai dimenticate. Nel loro perenne nomadismo culturale e linguistico, trovano una dimora nella scrittura e articolano un'identità che può finalmente essere abbracciata come scelta critica, come assunzione consapevole di una visione ambivalente riconosciuta (anche) come ricchezza (*infra*).

Seguendo una prospettiva più propriamente sociologica, Ben Lawton considera quanto l'immagine del criminale nelle produzioni cinematografiche americane degli anni Trenta fosse stato associato ai siciliani (e agli italo-americani in genere) in un particolare momento storico (l'indomani del Proibizionismo) e con l'avvento del sonoro nel cinema, elemento quest'ultimo che non solo rese più visibili gli italo-americani, stereotipandoli negativamente, ma che aumentò anche l'affluenza di pubblico in sala. «Era inevitabile che, nella ricerca di soggetti per il nuovo mezzo tecnologico, il già esistente genere sui gangster venisse incluso. Il sibilare dei proiettili, l'ululare delle sirene e lo stridio dei pneumatici sembrava fatto apposta per rivitalizzare un genere che stava languendo» (2002, 89). Lo stereotipo dell'italiano vendicativo, rozzo e maldestro fu utilizzato per interessi di tipo economico, favorito dall'uso di nuove tecnologie (il sonoro) e di rappresentazioni etno-centriche del crimine e della malavita: «grazie alla "magia del cinema", gli italo-americani non solo divennero de facto negli Stati Uniti l'unica organizzazione criminale strutturata su basi etniche, ma cominciarono anche a essere percepiti come bestioni un po' zotici e buffoni completamente privi di cervello» (*ibidem*, 94), in alcuni casi è possibile considerare anche rappresentazioni xenofobe erazziste (Canadè Sautman, 2002). Secondo Margaret E. Beare, criminologa canadese, lo stesso paradigma della cospirazione (conosciutoaltresì come *alien conspiracy* o *evil empire perspective*) con i suoi limiti mette in guardia contro i pericoli derivanti da "profezie che si autoavverano" nell'analisi del crimine organizzato. Bisogna pertanto prestare particolare attenzione alle modalità attraverso le quali si definisce il crimine organizzato sia in ambito legislativo sia attraverso le principali rappresentazioni sociali del fenomeno: spesso accade che l'immagine del crimine, così come raffigurata nei media, o percepita da politici e polizia, finisca col divenire l'unica possibile definizione di ciò in cui consiste il crimine.

L'epigrafe in apertura racconta di una tipologia specifica di "italianità" sotto molti aspetti inevitabilmente "criminale": il caffone è colui che «ignores his surroundings», è l'inguaribile e sfacciato «pure opportunist […] unwilling to participate either in the American life or in that of his national group». Incapace di occupare anche solo uno degli spazi assegnati alla cittadinanza che conta, questa figura entra prepotentemente in dialogo, oggigiorno, con le pratiche di rafforzamento dei confini attraverso i quali i vari Stati (gli Stati Uniti come l'Italia) intendono difendersi dai nemici esterni e interni, che si tratti dell'Islam come entità univoca o di popolazioni immigrate e/o

richiedenti asilo che cercano di raggiungere le coste mediterranee settentrionali, pagando (a) qualunque costo, spesso con la vita.

Bibliografia

Albano, V. (2003), *La mafia nel cinema siciliano. Da In Nome della legge a Placido Rizzotto*, Mandria, Barbieri.

Beare, M. (2000), *Facts from fiction-Tactics and strategies of addressing organized crime and organized criminals*, paper presentato al Canadian Police College Seminar Series: "Perspective on organized crime in Canada", 21 giugno.

Berger, P.L, Luckmann, T. (1997), *La realtà come costruzione sociale* (1966), Il Mulino, Bologna.

Borghi, L. (2019), *Perfomatività del dominio: una introduzione*, paper presentato al convegno "Performatività del dominio: narrazioni di movimenti, pratiche, corpi", Firenze, 27-29 settembre, http://www.ilgiardinodeiciliegi.firenze.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Borghi-liana.pdf.

Borghi, R. (2019), *Decolonialità e privilegio. Pratiche femministe e critica al sistema-mondo*. Milano, Meltemi.

Canadé Sautman, F. (2002), *Ombre grigie, toni neri. Gli italo-americani, razza e razzismo nel cinema americano*, in A. Camaiti Hostert, A.J. Tamburri (a cura di), *Scene italoamericane*, Luca Sassella editore, Roma, pp. 13-40.

Castoriadis, C. (1995), *L'istituzione immaginaria della società (parte seconda)* (1975), Bollati Boringhieri, Torino.

Child, I.L. (1943), *Italian or American? The Second Generation in Conflict*, New York, Russel & Russell.

Cooley, C.H. (1992), *Human nature and social order* (1902), con introduzione di P. Rieff, premessa di G.H. Mead, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick & London.

De Lauretis, T. (1984), *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics*, Cinema, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Ferrante, A.A. (2019), *Pelle queer maschere straight: il regime di visibilità omonormativo oltre la televisione*, Milano, Mimesis.

Haraway, D., (1988), *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectives*, in «Feminist Studies», vol. 14, pp. 575-599.

hooks, b. (1992), *Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators*, in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston, South End Press, pp. 115-131.

Kaplan, E.A. (1997), *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze*, New York, Routledge.

Lawton, B. (1995), *What is Italianamerican Cinema*, in «Voices in Italian Americana», vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 27-51.

Lawton, B. (2002), *La mafia e il cinema. Perché "italo-americano" diventa sinonimo di crimina organizzato*, in A. Camaiti Hostert, A.J. Tamburri (a cura di), *Scene italoamericane*, Roma, Luca Sassella editore, pp. 79-104.

Mulvey, L. (1975), *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, in «Screen», vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 6-18.

Park R.E, Miller H.A. (1921), *The Caffone*, in *Old World Traits Transplanted*, New York & London, Hapers & Brothers Publishers, pp. 101-4.

Pezzini, I. (1997), *La figura del criminale nella letteratura, nel cinema e in televisione*, in L. Violante (a cura di), *Storia d'Italia. Annali 12. La criminalità*, Einaudi, Torino.

Singh, J. (2017), *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements*, Durham & London, Duke University Press.

Tajfel, H. (1995), *Gruppi umani e categorie sociali* (1981), Il Mulino, Bologna.

Zorbaugh, H.W. (1929), *The Gold Coast and the Slum. A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side*, Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press.

Robert E. Park – Herbert A. Miller
THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY[3]

The community comprised of a number of families is the simplest form which society has assumed in the universal struggle against death. All the primary human needs can be satisfied in the community. Polish peasant communities, before 1860, lived as practically self-sufficient groups. They knew by report that there was a great world, and they had some relations with it, through Jews and manor owners; they had a priest and the religious-magical traditions of Christendom. But practically the extent of their world was the "*okolica*," "the neighborhood round about," and their definition of this was, "as far as a man is talked about." Their life was culturally poor, and they showed no tendency either to progress or to retrograde, but *they lived*. The peasant did not know he was a Pole; he even denied it. The lord was a Pole; he was a peasant. We have records showing that members of other immigrant groups realize first in America that they are members of a nationality: "I had never realized I was an Albanian until my brother came from America in 1909. He belonged to an Albanian society over here."[4]

The immigrants here tend to reproduce spontaneously the home community and to live in it. Letters show that they frequently reply to inquiries from home for a description of America, "I have not yet been able to see America." There are immigrants on the lower East Side of New York who have been here for twenty years and have never been up town. Even the intellectual immigrants feel painfully the failure to meet cultivated Americans. (See document 33, p. 46.)

THE CAFFONE[5]

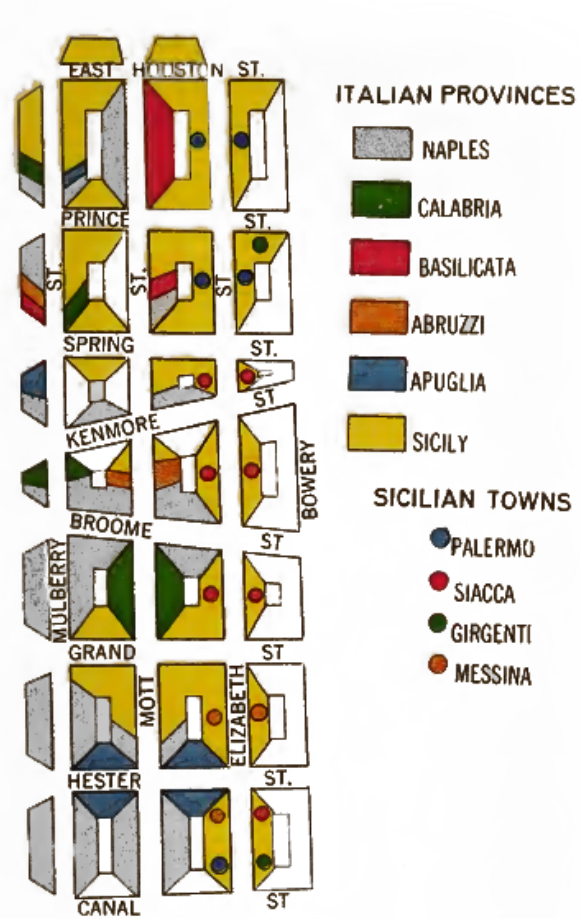
The Italians in America apply the term *caffone* (literary, "simpleton") to a man of their nationality who has the least possible association with any group, has no regard for opinion, wears, for example, the same clothes during his whole stay in America, avoids all conversation, ignores his surroundings, and accumulates the sum of money he has in mind as rapidly as possible. We use the term here to designate the pure opportunist, who is unwilling to participate either in the American life or in that of his national group:

82. The *caffoni*, who were in Sicily mostly *villani* [serfs], are looked down upon by their own people and especially by that class of Italians who want to stay here and who feel injured whenever the Italian name is hurt. To this superior class a good name for the Italians is a requisite of their progress. The *caffoni* don't care. All they want is to make money and go back. So we often see the superior class preaching and speaking to the *caffoni* in meetings, in groups and individually, persuading them to uphold the Italian name. The *caffoni* listen, but then they shrug their shoulders and it is all over. "It does not give me any bread whether Italians have a good name in America or not. I am going back soon."[6]

3. Estratto da Robert E. Park – Herbert A. Miller, *Old world traits transplanted*, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York & London, 1921, pp. 145-159.
4. Menas Laukas, *Life History*, recorded by Winifred Rauschenbusch (manuscript).
5. Estratto da Robert E. Park – Herbert A. Miller, *Old world traits transplanted*, Hapers & Brothers Publishers, New York & London, 1921, pp. 103-104.
6. Gaspare Cusumano, *Study of the Cinisi Colony in New York City* (manuscript).

THE ITALIANS

Among the more important immigrant groups the Italians show perhaps the strongest *wish* to remain in solitary communities. They settle here by villages and even by streets, neighbors in Italy tending to become neighbors here. Map 3 shows the concentration of immigrants from different Italian provinces and Sicilian towns in a section of lower New York.



Map 3. — Bowery Colony of Italians Showing Settlements According to Native Provinces and Towns

The colony, from the village of Cinisi, Sicily, in the vicinity of East Sixty-ninth Street and Avenue A, New York, may be taken as typical. There are more than 200 families at this point, and there are other groups from Cinisi in Brooklyn, Harlem, and on Bleecker Street. (See Map 10, p. 242.)

102. The colony is held together by the force of custom. People do exactly as they did in Cinisi. If some one varies, he or she will be criticized. If many vary — then that will become the custom. It is by the group, collectively, that they progress. They do not wish the members of the colony to improve their economic conditions or to withdraw. If a woman is able to buy a fine dress, they say: "Look at that *villana* [serf]! In the old country she used to carry baskets of tomatoes on her head and now she carries a hat on it." "Gee! look at the daughter of so and so. In Cinisi she worked in the field and sunburnt her black. Here she dares to carry a parasol.

"So strong is this influence that people hesitate to wear anything except what was customary in Cinisi. Everywhere there is fear of being "*sparlata*"— talked badly of. A woman bought a pair of silk stockings and the neighbors

talked so much about her that her husband ordered her to take them off… To dress poorly is criticized and to dress sportily is criticized. In this way one had to conform or be ostracized.

A number of families moved from the central group of Brooklyn. There they have combined and rent a whole two-story house. They are living better than those in the other groups and I often hear the East Sixty-ninth Street people say: "Look at those *paesani* in Brooklyn. When they were here they were in financial straits. One of them had to flee from the criticism here. He did not have the money to pay his moving van and crowded all his furniture into a small one-horse wagon. He even put his wife on to save car fare. He left a pile of debts and now he dares come around here with a horse and buggy.

"If a wife is spied by another Cinisaro talking to a man who is known as a stranger—that is, who is not a relative—she is gossiped about: she has the latent willingness to become a prostitute. They say: "So and so's wife was talking with an American. Eh! She has the capacity to do wrong.

"Nothing in the American women surprises them. They have already made an unfavorable judgment. My mother, for instance, was about to say that my wife, who is an American, was an exception to the rule, but when my wife went to Central Park with the baby she said, "They are all alike.

"The colony has no newspapers, except one woman who is known as the "*Giornale di Sicilia*," or the "Journal of Sicily." She carries the news and spreads it as soon as said. She has now gone to Italy and the one who takes her place is a gossiper who is known as a "*too-too*"—referring to the "tooting" of a town-crier's horn. She is, moreover, malicious, and gives a version of a story calculated to produce ridicule. She not only talks about the breakers of customs, but about those who are financially low. To be financially low is looked down upon, and the *Giornale di Sicilia* warns people to look out for such and such a person, as he may ask for a loan. To be willing to lend means that one has accumulated money and thus the secret of the lender is out. So this is the reason they refuse to lend to one another and if one is down and out he would rather get money from a Jew than from a *paesano*. So deceptive are they as to their financial standing (partly through fear of blackmail) that it is customary to figure out a Cinisarian's fortune not by what he says, but by how many sons and daughters are working.

Now and then some Cinisarian takes his chances in the business world. He writes to his relatives in Cinisi, has oil, wine, and figs, lemons, nuts, etc., sent to him, and then he goes from house to house. He does not enter in a business way, but goes to visit some family, talks about Cinisi, then informs them that he has received some produce from the home town. And sure enough, the people will say, "You will let us get some, eh?"

"Of course. Tell your relatives. I can get all you want."

In this way the business man makes his sales. He progresses until he gets a place opened and then come his worries. He must forever show that he is poor, that he is barely making a living, for fear of some attempt to extort money from him.

Not many men of the Cinisi group are in business in New York, the reason being that one Cinisarian will not compete with another in the same line of business.

The central group is closely united and there is little possibility that they will adopt any customs of the neighboring peoples, who are mostly Irish and Bohemians. The Irishwomen are considered wives of drunkards and, as all of the husband's salary goes to the bartender, the wives are believed to earn a living in prostituting themselves. The Bohemians are libertines; the girls are free; and, moreover, Bohemians and Hungarians are looked upon as bastard peoples.

In the Cinisi colony there are no political parties. The group has not been interested in citizenship. Of 250, one or two were citizens before the war and now all those who returned from the war are also citizens. These young men sell their votes for favors. The average Cinisaro, like all foreigners, has the opinion that a vote means $5. The Cinisaro knows of corruption at home. In Cinisi there is very much of it. Money is raised to build a water system for Cinisi year after year, and it gets away without a water system coming in exchange. The Cinisi group are more interested in Cinisarian politics than in American. They talk of the parties of the artisans, of the gentlemen, of the *villani*, of the hunters, in Cinisi.

Most of the Cinisari in the Sixty-ninth Street group intend to return to Sicily. The town of Cinisi is forever in their minds: "I wonder if I can get back in time for the next crop?"—"I hope I can get back in time for the festa"—" I hope I can reach Cinisi in time to get a full stomach of Indian figs," etc. They receive mail keeping them informed as to the most minute details, and about all the gossip that goes on in Cinisi in addition; they keep the home town informed as to what is going on here. They write home of people here who have transgressed some custom: "So-and-so married an American girl. The American girls are libertines. The boy is very disobedient." "So-and-so who failed to succeed at college in Palermo, is here. He has married a stranger"— that is, an Italian of another town. In this way they blacken a man's name in Cinisi, so that a bad reputation awaits him on his return. The reputation given them in Cinisi by report from here means much to them, because they expect to return.

Whole families have the date fixed. Those who express openly their intention of remaining here are the young Americanized men.

When the festival of Santa Fara, the patron saint of Cinisi, was planned (partly as a reproduction of the home custom, partly as an expression of gratitude to Santa Fara for the miracle of ending the war), there was some opposition on the ground that all funds should be sent to Cinisi for the festival there. The festival was held (April 26 and 27, 1919), but was so disappointing that it is said to have increased the desire to return to Cinisi and see the original.[7]

103. Until 1914 the Sicilian colony in Chicago was an absolutely foreign community. The immigrants were mostly from villages near Palermo, though nearly all of the Sicilian provinces are represented. The most important of the village groups are those from Alta Villa Milicia, Bagheria Vicari, Cimmina, Termini-Imarezi, Monreali, and the city of Palermo. These groups retained their identity, living together as far as possible, intermarrying and celebrating the traditional feasts. Immigrants who settled in Louisiana came up to join their village colony. Those who had been leaders in Sicily retained their power here and, having greater force and intelligence, made contracts with local politicians, police officials, labor agents, and real estate dealers, and became the go-betweens for their colony and the outside-world labor agents.

Women continued to live as they had in Sicily, never leaving their homes except to make ceremonial visits or to attend mass. The presence of several garment factories in the district made it possible for them to earn by doing finishing at home. In later years hundreds of women went into the garment factories to work, some taking the street cars out of the district; but they went to and from work in groups, their shawls carefully wrapped about them.

In the entire district there was no food for sale that was not distinctly foreign; it was impossible to buy butter, American cheese, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, green corn, etc., but in season artichokes, cactus fruit (*fichi d'India*), pomegranates, cocozella, and various herbs and greens never sold in other parts of town were plentiful. There were no bookstores. Italian newspapers had a limited circulation, and the Chicago daily papers were sold at only two transfer points on the edge of the district. There were no evidences of taste in dress or house decoration. This group seemed to have had no folk music, but took great pleasure in band concerts when spirited marches and melodies from Verdi's operas were played. There was no educational standard; the older people were almost all illiterate; they accepted this as natural and explained it by saying, "We are *contadini*, and our heads are too thick to learn letters." Some of the younger ones had had a little elementary training, but with very few exceptions no one in the colony had gone beyond the "*quarto elementario*." Few had seen military service or learned trades except, of course, the tailors, barbers, and shoemakers. One heard of an occasional cabinet maker, harness maker, solderer, carpenter, or mason, but none followed his trade here, as the training did not fit him to American methods. Many who had worked in the orchards in Sicily found their way to South Water Street and worked as truckers and fruit packers and, becoming familiar with the way produce was handled, started their friends out as fruit and vegetable peddlers,

7. Gaspare Cusumano, *Siudy of the Colony of Cinisi in New York City* (manuscript).

thus establishing a wholesale business for themselves. Most of the men, however, were sent by their leaders to the railroads and building contractors as laborers…

Individually, Sicilians seem to vary as much in their manner and ideals as Americans, but as a group they have certain very marked characteristics— reserve, suspicion, susceptibility to gossip, timidity, and the desire to "*fa figura.*" Intense family pride, however, is the outstanding characteristic, and as the family unit not only includes those related by blood, but those related by ritual bonds as well (the *commare* and *compare*), and as intermarriage in the village groups is a common practice, this family pride becomes really a clan pride.

The extent to which family loyalty goes is almost beyond belief; no matter how disgraced or how disgraceful a member may be, he is never cast off, the unsuccessful are assisted, the selfish are indulged, the erratic patiently born with. Old age is respected and babies are objects of adoration. The self-respect of a man can be gauged by the number of his children, and the women seem to accept the yearly bearing of a child as a privilege. Both children and adults seem satisfied with the social opportunities offered within the family itself. The births, baptisms, chrisms, betrothals, marriages, and deaths furnish the occasion for ceremonial visits and festivities. Traditional religious forms and superstitions are observed on these occasions, but the church and the priest seem adjuncts rather than the center of the various rites.

The leaders of the village groups organize brotherhoods for the purpose of perpetuating the feast of the patron saint and to arrange the elaborate funerals with which they honor the dead. The societies meet each month, collect dues, have endless and excited discussions over the petty business that is transacted, with, however, most serious regard for rules of order. Some of the *fratellanza* have women's auxiliaries, but they are directed entirely by the men, and the women seem to have no voice in the conduct of affairs; they pay dues and march in the processions. The annual feast is the great event of the year, exceeded in importance by Easter only. The group responsible for a feast put up posters announcing the day and the program, and through committees arrange for all of the details of the celebration; electric-light festoons are strung across the streets, concessions for street booths are sold, bands are hired, band stands are erected, and the church is paid for a special mass and for the services of the priest who leads the procession. The whole community participates to some extent, but those from the village whose patron is being honored make the most elaborate preparation in their homes… Those who have been ill or suffered physical injury during the year buy wax figures of the part that was affected—legs, hands, breasts, etc., to carry in procession; others carry long candles with ribbon streamers to which money is affixed by a member of the brotherhood who rides on the shrine and exhorts the crowds to make their offering. The shrine is lowered to the street every hundred feet or so and little children are undressed, their clothes left as an offering, and they are lifted to kiss the lips of the saint. Sometimes a blind or lame child is carried about on the shrine in the hope of a miraculous cure. The climax is the flight of the angels. The shrine is set in the middle of the street in front of the church, and two children, dressed as angels and bearing armfuls of flowers, are lowered by strong ropes so that they are suspended just over the figure of the saint, where they sway while chanting a long prayer.

The offerings made during the most important of these feasts amount to from four to six thousand dollars. This money goes into the treasury of the *fratellanza* and is used for the expense incurred by the *festa* and for the death benefit. There are those who say that tribute is paid to certain individuals as well.

These feasts are not approved by the priest, and people say that trouble is started by the jealousy aroused when one village tries to outdo the other. It certainly is true that at these *festas* there is often a shooting.

The position of women in the Sicilian homes in this district is hard to define. The general impression is that women are slaves to their husbands, but this is far from true except in the cases of very ignorant and primitive types. The head of the family takes the responsibility of protecting the women and girls very seriously, and for this reason women have little life outside their homes. It is a mark of good breeding for a man to show "*la gelosia*" regarding his wife and daughters, and it would be a sign of disrespect to them if he did not guard them carefully. Within the home, however, the wife directs the household and it is not unusual for her to take the lead in family affairs, such as the expenditure of money, plans for the children, or the choice of friends.

© S.IJSPC vol. 1 Issue 1, pp. X-XX

When a girl reaches the age of twelve her freedom comes to an end; she is considered old enough to put away childish things. Until she is married she is not supposed to have any interest outside her home except school or work, and with these two exceptions she is not supposed to be out of her mother's sight. A family that fails to observe this rule is subject to criticism.

A marriage is arranged by the parents as soon as a suitable young man of their village presents himself. The girl is not consulted and often does not even know whom she is to marry until the matter is all settled. After a girl is promised her fiancé must be consulted before she can go out, and she never appears in public without her mother or father in attendance. It has become the custom to have a civil ceremony performed shortly after the betrothal. This does not constitute a marriage and often it is several months or even a year or two before the actual marriage takes place. Meanwhile the engaged couple meet only in the presence of their parents or attend various family ceremonies together, always suitably chaperoned.

Sometimes a girl is coveted by a man considered undesirable by her parents, or by one who did not know her before she was engaged. In such a case the man may try to force his attentions on her in the hope of attracting her in spite of her parents or her promise. If she does not respond and will not elope voluntarily, it is not unusual for him to try to take her by force, either carrying her off himself or getting his friends to kidnap her and bring her to some secret place. When a girl becomes engaged her family is on the lookout for just such occurrences, and if they have any suspicion that she is being pursued she is kept a prisoner until she is safely married. If the man is known he is dealt with in no uncertain way—told to stop or take the consequences.

If a girl permits herself to be kidnaped the affair is usually ended with the blessings of all concerned, though the jilted one sometimes makes it necessary for the couple to move to another part of town, at least until he consoles himself with another wife. If a girl is carried away entirely against her will there may be bloodshed as a result.

Not all kidnappings occur in this way; often impatient men, tiring of the long and ceremonious period of betrothal and failing to persuade the fiancée to elope, try to carry her away. A well-bred girl will put up a good fight to escape, and if she succeeds the engagement is broken; but if she is forced to submit the family accept the situation and all is forgiven. There are, of course, many voluntary elopements by young people who are attracted by one another and who, because of family differences, could never get the consent of their parents.

Seduction is an almost unheard-of thing among the foreign people and in the few instances where a girl has been wronged it has meant certain death to her betrayer. Not long ago a man seduced a young girl and left town when he discovered that she was pregnant. Her family moved from the district and after a few months the man. Piazza, returned. The girl's brothers met him and seemed friendly, so he agreed to visit their new home. Shots were heard by neighbors, and when the police arrived they found Piazza and the girl's oldest brother dead. The bodies were seated on opposite sides of the table and it is supposed that both drew and fired their revolvers simultaneously.

During the last four years there has been a great change, the colony is slowly disintegrating, old customs are giving way. Contacts with the outside world, through work and school, have given boys and girls a vision of freedom and new opportunity. They are going to night schools and making their friends outside the old circle. They are out of patience with the petty interests and quarrels of the older group and refuse to have their lives ordered by their parents, whom they know to be ignorant and inexperienced. Families are not being broken up, the deep affections still persist, and though the old folks have misgivings, in their indulgent way they are letting the new generation take the lead and are proud of their progressive sons and daughters. Young married couples are making their homes north of the old district, within easy reach of their parents, but away from the old associations. Evidences of refinement are seen in their homes and in their manner, and their children are dressed and fed according to most modern standards.[8]

8. Marie Leavitt, *Report on the Sicilian Colony in Chicago* (manuscript).

It appears from these statements: (1) that the Sicilian heritages are so different from the American that the members of this group feel no original interest in participating in American life; (2) that this difference is accepted in America as a natural fact, somewhat as an outlying herd of animals would be accepted and tolerated or exploited, without thought of its social incorporation; (3) that this solitary group is almost as inaccessible to superior individuals of its own nationality who might be its leaders as to American influence (see document 82, p. 104); and (4) that, nevertheless, the mass begins to dissolve and change, owing to informal contacts with American life, made especially by the younger generation, and certainly largely through the public school, which is the one point at which contact is formal and inevitable.

Harvey W. Zorbaugh
LITTLE HELL[9]

West of the rumble and roar of the elevated, bounded on the south by "Smoky Hollow" and on the west by the river, notorious Goose Island, and a brick and steel barrier of railroad and industry, looking toward the German slums to the north, lies that tract known variously to the police, the newspapers, and the world at large as Tenement Town, Little Sicily, and Little Hell. Standing on sinister "Death Corner,"[10] in the heart of Little Hell, one can see, beyond the elevated structure and less than a mile to the east, the fashionable Drake Hotel and the tall apartments of Streeterville; while less than a mile to the south loom the Wrigley Tower and the broken skyline of the Loop. Yet Little Hell, or Little Sicily, is a world to itself. Dirty and narrow streets, alleys piled with refuse and alive with dogs and rats, goats hitched to carts, bleak tenements, the smoke of industry hanging in a haze, the market along the curb, foreign names on shops, and foreign faces on the streets, the dissonant cry of the huckster and peddler, the clanging and rattling of railroads and the elevated, the pealing of the bells of the great Catholic churches, the music of marching bands and the crackling of fireworks on feast days, the occasional dull boom of a bomb or the bark of a revolver, the shouts of children at play in the street, a strange staccato speech, the taste of soot, and the smell of gas from the huge "gas house" by the river, whose belching flames make the skies lurid at night and long ago earned for the district the name Little Hell – on every hand one is met by sights and sounds and smells that are peculiar to this area, that are "foreign" and of the slum.

Two generations ago this district was an Irish shantytown called Kilgubbin. A generation ago it was almost equally Irish and Swedish. Then the "dark people" began to come. At first they came slowly, meeting no little resistance.

> I interview Pastor ___, of Chicago's largest Swedish church, at the corner of Elm and Sedgewick., to learn why he opposes the intention of the Lincoln Park Commission to put a playground there. "This is our neighborhood, a Swedish neighborhood," he explains. "The dark people have come in farther south in the ward. If a playground is put in our neighborhood we fear these people will come with their children to live in our neighborhood… "
>
> The Sicilian girls, timid and shy, come to Seward Park. They run to an empty swing. Two Swedish girls jump in, pushing them away. "Get out! Dagoes! Dagoes! You can't play here!" It is the same at the sandpiles and the "shoots." It is the same on the beaches. After the playground has been opened several months I pass one day and see a colored girl at the gate. She is talking earnestly to the Sicilians. "Sure you can go in. You got as much right to dem swings as anybody. I'm gwine in right now and show you – you come along." They follow Mattie, the colored girl, who seizes the first empty swing in spite of protesting pushes from Swedish girls. The Sicilians look scared and defiant, but they get into a swing. Their Americanization has begun…
>
> The boys fight over the playground, too, but mostly outside. These fights are only partly for Seward Park; they are chiefly nationality gang-fights. The Swedish and Irish always win against the Sicilians. Even an onslaught led by a Sicilian boy on a horse ended in a rout for the Sicilians…[11]

But the Sicilians pushed slowly into the district. Industry was demanding cheap labor. Sicilians came in great numbers, especially in 1903-4, the tremendous Italian immigration year. In this river district of the Near North Side they found cheap living quarters. It was the old story of a competition of standards of living, colored some-

9. Estratto da Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, *The Goald Coast and the slum. A sociological study of Chicago's Near North Side*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1929, pp. 159-181.
10. The corner of Oak and Cambridge streets, at the very steps of the church of St. Philip Benizi.
11. Document 36: "The Dark People Come.'!

what by national antagonisms. The Irish and Swedish, more prosperous, moved out of the district and northward. And by 1910 Kilgubbin and Swede Town had become Little Sicily.[12]

Little Sicily this district has remained. It now has a population of about 15,000 Italians of the first and second generations. Save for a few Genoese in the south of the district, this population is almost solidly Sicilian.[13] The heart of the colony lies in the area from Sedgwick Street west to the river, and from Chicago Avenue north to Division, though there is a considerable movement of the more well to- do north among the Germans along Cleveland, Clybourn, and Blackhawk streets, and even north of North Avenue.

OLD-WORLD TRAITS

Little Hell is an area of first settlement, an area into which immigrants have come directly from Europe, bringing with them their Old World tongue, and dress, and customs–persistent and divergent social patterns that condition the Sicilian's participation in American life.

"We are *contadini*." This phrase from the lips of the immigrant Sicilian is most revealing as to his social attitudes. The Chicago Sicilians have come largely from the villages and open country of Sicily, where they were poor, illiterate peasants, held down by the *gabelloti* or landlords in a state little better than serfdom. Generations of this condition have led them to look upon this status as fixed, and as the horizon of their ambitions. Why should *contadini*send their children to schools to bother their heads with letters? And besides, in Sicily the boys go to work in the fields at fourteen. Why should they not go to work here? The peasant attitudes and devices that sufficed for the primitive agriculture of Sicily, moreover, are utterly inadequate to adjust the Sicilian to the laboring conditions of the industrial city.

The spirit of *campanilismo*, of loyalty to *paesani*, is another trait of the Sicilian significant for his attempts to adjust to city life. The Sicilian peasants' interests are literally limited by the skyline. His only interests are the local interests of his village. The man from even the adjoining town is a foreigner. The government is a vague something that collects taxes. The spirit of *campanilismo*, of dwelling under one's own church tower, of jealous loyalty to *Paesani*, to his fellow villagers, circumscribes the Sicilian's social, religious, and business life. Social control in the village is largely in terms of gossip; one must not be *sparlata* –spoken badly of. The old men, too, occupy a respected and influential position in the life of the family and the village.

But the family is the center of the Sicilian's life and interests. The Sicilian's virtues are domestic virtues. The events of his life center about the birth, christening, marriage, and death of members of his family. The man is head of the house, and exacts obedience from his wife and children. He even has a say in the affairs of his grown-up sons and grandchildren; it is a custom with force of law that the first child be named for the paternal grandfather or grandmother. The family becomes almost a clan. Even the godfather and godmother are looked upon as blood relations. The interests of the family take precedence over those of the village. Its honor is jealously guarded, and upheld by feuds that endure for generations. Within the family the status of each member is fixed. The women and

12. Documents 37, 38, 39, and 40. In 1910, according to the United States census, there was in the Twenty-second Ward a population of 65,231 persons. Of these, 18,639 were Italian, and 14,709 German. The Germans formed a distinct colony between Division and Center streets: and the district in question, from Division Street south, had become almost solidly Sicilian. There were in 1910 but 1,716 Irish and 4,313 Swedish persons left in the entire ward. The Sicilian population has declined since 1910, with the general decline in population of the district as industry has moved in and as the Negroes have come in.

13. How solidly Sicilian the population is, is revealed by a study of six blocks in the heart of the district. The schedules yield the following figures:

United States	43	Jewish	10
U.S. Colored	100	Polish	95
German	54	Swedish.	90
Greek	5	Swiss	4
Irish	40	Russian (Jew)	5
Italian (Sicilian)	2, 300		

daughters are carefully protected and much secluded. The young girl is kept in the home until her marriage. The marriage and dowry are arranged by the parents. Grief over a death in the family is genuine and violent. But the funeral must have the proper degree of pomp to maintain the family's status in the community.

The attitude of the peasant toward the church is interesting. He is nominally Roman Catholic. A vein of superstition holds him to the church, but not to the point where it clashes with his own interests. His attitude toward the saints is proprietous and patronizing rather than reverent. His support of the church is part of his spirit of *campanilismo*. For generations he has been part of a community which centered about the parish church. He knows the advantages that may come from standing in with the church and the priest, who in Sicily is often a peasant like himself. While he harbors a skepticism as to the power of his local madonna, and has no illusions as to her, he would violently resent her being held up as a fraud by any other village. He goes little to church, yet there lurks in his mind the ghost of a fear that things might turn out, after all, to be as the priest pretends. The peasant woman, however, is very close to the church. It has been for generation~ the church of her family. Its colors, lights, miracles, and relics are an escape from her everyday life. It serves as a social meeting place for herself and her friends. The priest often acquires consider· able power over the women, and every devout mother hopes to see one of her sons enter the priesthood. And yet the priest or friar is often enough jeered at. As in the time of Boccaccio, he is still the subject of jokes with double meaning.

Truth-telling is not counted among the virtues in Sicily. It has been remarked that there are liars, expert liars, and Sicilians. The Sicilian's attitude is well expressed in the proverb *Laverità si dici a lu confissuri* (one tells the truth to his confessor). The truth is a distressing curb to the vivid Sicilian imagination. Moreover, hospitality is counted among the greatest virtues; the host never distresses a guest or friend; and the truth is so frequently unpleasant.

Gambling is the great national Sicilian pastime. Lotto banks are as frequent as wine and tobacco shops. Government lotteries are patronized even by the very poor, who thus squander most of their small earnings. Gambling contributes to the devastating poverty so characteristic of Sicilian life. If you ask a Sicilian in New York or Chicago, Why did you come to America? the answer is always the same, "We came for bread." Begging is a well-nigh universal practice seemingly attended by no disgrace. One is accosted every hour in the day, "*Eccelenza, morto di fame*" (Kind sir, I am dying of hunger).

The *Mafia* is another significant Sicilian tradition. It has its roots in the long history of political oppressions and is purely political in nature. But its pattern of swift, violent, and secret vengeance has become a part of Sicilian life. The characteristic Sicilian attitudes of reserve and suspicion are bound up with it.

The net result of these Sicilian patterns is the "individualism" which is the Sicilian's outstanding characteristic from the point of view of the American community.[14]

THE COLONY

From the various towns of western Sicily they have come, settling down again with their kin and towns people here, until the colony is a mosaic of Sicilian towns. Larrabee Street is a little Altavilla; the people along Cambridge have come from Alimena and Chiusa Sclafani; the people on Townsend from Bagheria; and the people on Milton from Sambuca-Zabut.[15] The entire colony has been settled in like fashion.

The colony centers about the church of St. Philip Benizi, and Jenner School, which is jealously spoken of as "our school."[16] It has appropriated a "movie," which it has rechristened the "Garlic Opera House." West Division Street,

14. Document 41: "Sicilian Traits," by Helen A. Day, head resident of Eli Bates House, a social settlement in Little Sicily, who lived for a number of years in Sicily. (See Monroe, *The Spell of Sicily*; Rose, *The Italians in America*; and Park and Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted*, for similar descriptions of Sicilian traits.)

15. Document 41.

16. By an almost imperceptible pressure the Italians are forcing the Negro children out of Jenner school. See Document 41.

the colony's principal street, is lined with Italian businesses and shops: numerous grocery stores and markets, florist shops, the Sicilian pharmacy, undertaking establishments, cobblers' shops, macaroni factories, cheap restaurants, pool rooms and soft drink parlors which are the lounging places of the second generation, and the barber shops which have replaced the saloon as the center of gossip for the older people. On the corner of Elm and Larrabee is a curb market. Along Oak Street are numerous stalls where fruit, vegetables, coal and wood, and oysters on the half-shell are sold. The shingles of the doctor and midwife are frequently seen. The vicinity of Oak and Townsend is the center of the colony's population. Many of the influential Sicilians live along Sedgewick however, the colony's eastern boundary and more prosperous and fashionable street.

Because of its isolated situation, due to poor transportation and the barrier of river and industry, Little Hell remained until the war relatively untouched by American custom, a transplantation of Sicilian village life into the heart of a hurrying American city.

Until 1914 the Sicilian colony in Chicago was an absolutely foreign community. The immigrants were mostly from villages near Palermo, though nearly all the Sicilian provinces are represented. The most important of the village groups are those from Alta Villa, Milicia, Bagheria Vicari, Cimmina, Termini-Imarezi, Monreali, and the city of Palermo. These groups retained their identity, living together as far as possible, intermarrying, and celebrating the traditional feasts. Immigrants who settled in Louisiana came up to join their village colony. Those who had been leaders in Sicily retained their power here and, having greater force and intelligence, made contracts with local politicians, police officials, labor agents, and real estate dealers, and became the go-betweens for their colony and the outside-world labor agents.

Women continued to live as they had in Sicily, never leaving their homes except to make ceremonial visits or to attend mass. The presence of several garment factories in the district made it possible for them to earn by doing finishing at home. In later years hundreds of women went into the garment factories to work, some taking the street cars out of the district; but they went to and from work in groups, their shawls carefully wrapped about them. In· the entire district there was no food for sale that was not distinctly foreign; it was impossible to buy butter, American cheese, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, green corn, etc., but in season artichokes, cactus fruit (*fichi d'India*), pomegranates, cocozella, and various herbs and greens never sold in other parts of town were plentiful. There were no bookstores. Italian newspapers had a limited circulation, and the Chicago daily papers were sold at only two transfer points on the edge of the district. There were no evidences of taste in dress or house decoration. This group seemed to have had no folk music, but took great pleasure in band concerts when spirited marches and melodies from Verdi's operas were played. There was no educational standard; the older people were almost all illiterate; they accepted this as natural, and explained it by saying, "We are *contadini*, and our heads are too thick to learn letters." Some of the younger ones had had a little elementary training, but with very few exceptions no one in the colony had gone beyond the *quarto elementario*. Few had seen military service or learned trades, except, of course, the tailors, barbers, and shoemakers. One heard of an occasional cabinet maker, harness maker, solderer, carpenter, or mason, but none followed his trade here, as the training did not fit him to American methods. Many who had worked in the orchards in Sicily found their way to South Water Street and worked as truckers and fruit packers, and, becoming familiar with the way produce was handled, started their friends out as fruit and vegetable peddlers, thus establishing a wholesale business for themselves. Most of the men, however, were sent by their leaders to the railroads and building contractors as laborers…

Individually, Sicilians seem to vary as much in their manner and ideals as Americans, but as a group they have certain very marked characteristics: reserve, suspicion, susceptibility to gossip, timidity, and the desire to *fa figura*. Intense family pride, however, is the outstanding characteristic, and as the family unit not only includes those related by blood, but those related by ritual bonds as well (the *commare* and *compare*), and as intermarriage in the village groups is a common practice, this family pride becomes really a clan pride.

The extent to which family loyalty goes is almost beyond belief; no matter how disgraced or how disgraceful a member may be, he is never cast off; the unsuccessful are assisted; the selfish are indulged; the erratic patiently borne with. Old age is respected, and babies are objects of adoration. The self-respect of a man can be gauged by the number of his children, and the women seem to accept the yearly bearing of a child as a privilege. Both children and adults seem satisfied with the social opportunities offered within the family itself. The births, baptisms, christenings, betrothals, marriages, and deaths furnish the occasion for ceremonial visits and festivities. Traditional religious forms and superstitions are observed on these occasions, but the church and the priest seem adjuncts rather than the center of the various rites.

The leaders of the village groups organize brotherhoods for the purpose of perpetuating the feast of the patron saint and to arrange the elaborate funerals with which they honor the dead. The societies meet each month, collect dues, have endless and excited discussions over the petty business that is transacted, with, however, most serious regard for rules of order. Some of the *fratellanza* have women's auxiliaries, but they are directed entirely by the men, and the women seem to have no voice in the conduct of affairs; they pay dues and march in the processions. The annual feast is the great event of the year, exceeded in importance by Easter only. The group responsible for a feast put up posters announcing the day and the program, and through committees arrange for all the details of the celebration; electric-light festoons are strung across the streets, concessions for street booths are sold, bands are hired, band stands are erected, and the church is paid for a special mass and for the services of the priest who leads the procession. The whole community participates to some extent, but those from the village whose patron is being honored make the most elaborate preparation in their homes… Those who have been ill or suffered physical injury during the year buy wax figures of the part that was affected – legs, hands, breast, etc. – to carry in procession; others carry long candles with ribbon streamers to which money is affixed by a member of the brotherhood who rides on the shrine and exhorts the crowds to make their offering. The shrine is lowered to the street every hundred feet or so, and little children are undressed, their clothes left as an offering, and they are lifted to kiss the lips of the saint. Sometimes a blind or lame child is carried about on the shrine in the hope of a miraculous cure. The climax is the flight of the angels. The shrine is set in the middle of the street in front of the church, and two children are lowered by strong ropes so that they are suspended just over the figure of the saint, where they sway while chanting a long prayer.

The offerings made during the most important of these feasts amount to from four to six thousand dollars. This money goes into the treasury of the *fratellanza* and is used for the expense incurred by the *festa* and for the death benefit. There are those who say that tribute is paid to certain individuals as well.

These feasts are not approved by the priest, and people say that trouble is started by the jealousy aroused when one village tries to outdo the other. It certainly is true that at these *festas* there is often a shooting.

The position of women in the Sicilian homes in this district is hard to define. The general impression is that women are slaves to their husbands, but this is far from true except in the cases of very ignorant and primitive types. The head of the family takes the responsibility of protecting the women and girls very seriously, and for this reason women have little life outside their homes. It is a mark of good breeding for a man to show *la gelosia* regarding his wife and daughters, and it would be a sign of disrespect to them if he did not guard them carefully. Within the home, however, the wife directs the household, and it is not unusual for her to take the lead in family affairs, such as the expenditure of money, plans for the children, or the choice of friends.

When a girl reaches the age of twelve her freedom comes to an end; she is considered old enough to put away childish things. Until she is married she is not supposed to have any interest outside her home, except school or work, and with these two exceptions she is not supposed to be out of her mother's sight. A family that fails to observe this rule is subject to criticism.

A marriage is arranged by the parents as soon as a suitable young man of their village presents himself. The girl is not consulted and often does not even know whom she is to marry until the matter is all settled. After the girl is promised her fiancé must be consulted before she can go out, and she never appears in public without her mother

or father in attendance. It has become the custom to have a civil ceremony performed shortly after betrothal. This does not constitute a marriage, and often it is several months or even a year or two before the actual marriage takes place. Meanwhile the engaged couple meet only in the presence of their parents or attend various family ceremonies together, always suitably chaperoned.

Sometimes a girl is coveted by a man considered undesirable by her parents, or by one who did not know her before she was engaged. In such a case the man may try to force his attentions on her in the hope of attracting her in spite of her parents or her promise. If she does not respond and will not elope voluntarily, it is not unusual for him to try to take her by force, either carrying her off himself or getting his friends to kidnap her and bring her to some secret place. When a girl becomes engaged her family is on the lookout for just such occurrences; and if they have any suspicion that she is being pursued she is kept a prisoner until she is safely married. If the man is known he is dealt with in no uncertain way-told to stop or take the consequences.

If a girl permits herself to be kidnaped the affair is usually ended with the blessings of all concerned, though the jilted one sometimes makes it necessary for the couple to move to another part of town, at least until he consoles himself with another wife. If a girl is carried away entirely against her will there may be bloodshed as a result.

Not all kidnapings occur in this way; often impatient men, tiring of the long and ceremonious period of betrothal and failing to persuade the fiancée to elope, try to carry her away. A well-bred girl will put up a good fight to escape, and if she succeeds, the engagement is broken; but if she is forced to submit, the family accept the situation and all is forgiven. There are, of course, many voluntary elopements by young people who are attracted by one another and who, because of family differences, could never get the consent of their parents.

Seduction is an almost unheard-of thing among this foreign people, and in the few instances where a girl has been wronged it has meant certain death to her betrayer. Not long ago a man seduced a girl and left town when he discovered she was pregnant. Her family moved from the district, and after a few months the man, Piazza, returned. The girl's brothers met him and seemed friendly, so he agreed to visit their new home. Shots were heard by neighbors, and when the police arrived they found Piazza and the girl's oldest brother dead. The bodies were seated on opposite sides of the table, and it is supposed that both drew and fired their revolvers simultaneously.

During the last four years there has been a great change; the colony is slowly disintegrating; old customs are giving way. Contacts with the outside world, through work and school, have given boys and girls a vision of freedom and new opportunity. They are going to night school and making their friends outside the old circle. They are out of patience with the petty interests and quarrels of the older group, and refuse to have their lives ordered by their parents, whom they know to be ignorant and inexperienced. Families are not being broken up; the deep affections still persist; and though the old folks have misgivings, in their indulgent way they are letting the new generation take the lead and are proud of their progressive sons and daughters. Young married couples are making their homes north of the old district, within easy reach of their parents, but away from the old associations. Evidences of refinement are seen in their homes and in their manner, and their children are dressed and fed according to most modern standards.[17]

"DEATH CORNER" AND THE BLACK HAND

Before the war, contacts with the outside world were few, and principally those made by the men on the job. But even on the job they worked chiefly in gangs of their countrymen. Such accommodations as had to be made with the larger city were made through the steamship agent, the *padron*e, and the banker, who were powers in the colony in its early days.

17. Document 42: Report on the Sicilian colony in Chicago (manuscript) by Marie Leavitt, quoted by Park and Miller, *Old World Traits Translated*, pp. 153-58.

Certain of their Sicilian traditions, however, inevitably brought them into conflict with American custom and law. The corner of Oak and Cambridge streets long ago became known throughout the city as Death Comer, because of the frequent feuds that were settled there by shootings or stabbings. Little Hell has been long notorious for its unsolved murders.[18] The American courts and police are powerless to deal with the situation. This is due in part to the nature of the American legal machinery. In Sicily the police worked secretly; an informant's name is never known. But in America an informant must appear in court. And to inform is to invite swift reprisals. Consequently the already reserved and suspicious Sicilian shrugs his shoulders – "And if I knew? Would I tell?"

Taking advantage of this situation has grown up the Black Hand. Weekly bombings are almost a tradition in Little Sicily. The Black Hand is not an organization.[19] Its outrages are the work of lawless individuals or of criminal gangs. But it trades upon the reputation of the *Mafia*, the fear of which is deeply ingrained in the Sicilian heart.[20]

This type of crime has been carried on to such an extent that, though the majority of those in the colony are honest and industrious laborers, nearly everyone seems to feel that he is in constant danger of either becoming the victim of a plot or of being forced to involve himself with the gang.

Continental Italians and those of other nationalities who live in the district may own well-stocked stores or acquire a reputation for wealth, but are never molested or threatened, but a Sicilian who shows any sign of prosperity almost invariably begins to receive threatening letters, and, though a love of display is a national characteristic, few have the courage to raise their standard of living as long as they continue to live in the district. The streets lying in the heart of the colony are thought to be centers of danger, so there has been a tendency to move toward the boundaries, or a few blocks beyond, and though they still live within easy walking distance and return daily to visit friends, attend church, patronize the shops, etc.

In the district itself it is considered very bad form to discuss these affairs. No one alludes to them voluntarily, or in plain terms speaks of a murder. A murdered man is spoken of as the "poor disgraced one," and the murders or persecutions as "trouble." Certain men are called *mafiosi*, but this generally means only that they are domineering, swaggering, and fearless, and no one would think of making a direct accusation. There are men who are said to be "unwilling to work for their bread," and certain names are never mentioned without a significant raising of eyebrows. The term Black Hand is never used except jokingly, nor does one hear the words *vendetta, omertà,* or *feudo*, though everyone is imbued with the sentiments for which they stand. In the whole colony there is no one so despised as an informer, nor is it thought desirable to show an interest in another's private affairs. There is a general belief that men who are murdered usually deserve their fate. Murdered men are not buried from the church unless a large sum is paid for a special mass.

The American press and police attribute all these "Italian killings" to the Black Hand, and consider them inevitable. Every so often the newspapers print an interview with a police official in which a certain number of murders are prophesied to occur in this district, and the public is given to understand that the situation is hopeless.

---

18. Every year for the past eighteen years there have been from twelve to twenty murders in the square half-mile of Little Sicily (Marie Levitt, *loc. cit.*).

19. Document 43 and Park and Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted*, pp. 238-60.

20. Document 44: "Antonio Moreno versus Tradition." Antonio Moreno lived on Cambridge between Chicago Avenue and Oak. He was a day laborer, but had gotten a little money. He received Black Hand letters stating that his boy would be kidnaped unless he gave a certain sum of money. After much worry he decided to break the Sicilian custom and to tell the police and ask for their help and protection. The boy was kidnaped and no trace could be found of him for several weeks. With advice from the police Moreno answered the next Black Hand letter with marked money. The boy was returned at the place and hour promised. Moreno had told what persons he suspected, and there were arrests and convictions. Two brothers, prominent in politics, were sentenced to the state's prison for a term of years. It was learned, of course, that Moreno had talked to the police. He was furnished protection, one detective with him by day as he worked on the city streets and one by night guarding his home. This protection continued for a year or more. Moreno's wife died-it was said, because of her terror over the whole affair. The house in which he lived was practically deserted because people feared it would be dynamited.

After a short period the two brothers were pardoned, having served practically none of the sentence. When they returned to the city they were met by a brass band. An automobile awaited them, and in this they were driven slowly through Cambridge Avenue to their home, escorted by the band and a good procession of men and boys. This procession was perhaps chiefly political adherents. Moreno lived in constant terror of Black Hand vengeance.

When a murder is committed it is either reported as a minor occurrence, in a single paragraph, or absurdly elaborated in highly romantic style. A few years ago the chief of police, on being urged to have a careful study made of the situation, dismissed the matter by saying, "Oh, we've always had trouble up there; they never bother anyone but each other."[21]

This attitude of the police, based upon their inability to deal with the situation, dealing harshly with the occasional Sicilian criminal apprehended and ignoring the rest, is reflected in the Sicilian's attitude toward the American law.

There is no respect for law in Little Sicily. The law collects the taxes. It takes your children away when they are old enough to work, and puts them in school. It batters down your door and breaks open your kegs of wine. The Sicilian fails to comprehend all this. C ___ came in the other morning… "No free country, no free country! I pay four policeman $16 each a month. Then they bring in police from other district and raid me! No free country!"

You can't convince a Sicilian that the police, the courts, or the law are on the square. A gang of Sicilians was arrested recently for stealing butter. One of them skipped. "Police no good. It blow over. New election, I all right. If me know big man, he talk to judge. Judge no want to lose job. He say 'you go home.'" Everyone is supposed to have his price. The "fixer" is one of the colony's most influential men.

But the wife of this man wrung her hands, and tears ran down her cheeks: "Oh, he will go to Joliet, he will go to Joliet, even if he did not do!" There is no faith in justice. They see the innocent "sent up" while the guilty walk the streets of Little Sicily.

To a large element in the colony the law is a natural enemy. Even to the younger boys, baiting the "cop" is a game, and a ride in the "wagon" is a joy ride. Those who successfully defy the police are among the colony's heroes. Young men openly boast of their "hauls" and of their gun-play. When the bands march up Sedgwick during the festas, they always stop in front of the house of T___, the moonshine king, to serenade him. A year ago the whole colony turned out, with white horses, and thousands of dollars' worth of flowers, and blaring bands, to march in Rini's funeral. And who was Rini? Formerly the proprietor of a tough dive on Clark Street, and convicted of murder and hung in New Orleans. The hero of the colony.[22]

This attitude of the Sicilian toward the law, and of the police toward the Sicilian, has made of Little Hell a stamping ground for criminal gangs. Their operations center about the "bootlegging" and "hi-jacking" business. Politics plays its part in the situation; and there have been in the not distant past "understandings" between the "kings" of Little Hell and officialdom.[23]

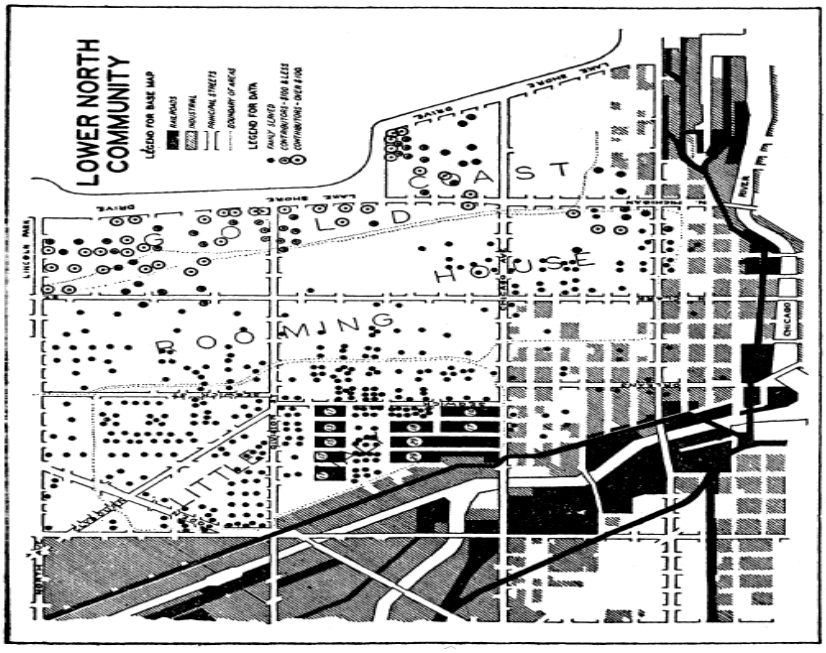
The economic status of the Sicilian has involved him in another train of maladjustments. The greatest concentration of poverty in Chicago, as revealed by the giving of relief, is in Little Sicily. The Sicilian, of peasant origin, is inevitably an unskilled laborer. His acceptance of his status as *contadini* makes him difficult to unionize effectively. Seventeen per cent of the incomes of Sicilian families in this district fall short of the dependency budget worked out by the United Charities of Chicago; and 35 per cent fall short of the minimum independence budget. Considering these facts in the light of the prevalence of begging in Sicily, it is not surprising to find much pauperism and many professional charity cases.[24]

21. Document 42: Report on the Sicilian colony in Chicago, Marie Leavitt.

22. Documents 41 and 64.

23. Not long ago Aiello, leader of a North Side beer gang undertook to dispute "Scarface" Al Capone's sovereignty on the South Side. Aiello's bakery shop on Division Street was riddled by machine gun fire from a passing automobile, and Little Hell was precipitated into another gang war.

24. Document 47: "A Short Study in Poverty in Chicago's Little Sicily," by E. L. Rauber; Document 48, a summary of family schedules on file at the Lower North Community Council; and family schedules of the Lower North District of the United Charities and of Eli Bates House. Less recent studies are "The Concentration of Misery in Chicago," the *First Semiannual Report of the Department of Public Welfare to the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Chicago* (March, 1915); and "The Italian in Chicago," *Bulletin of the Department of Public Welfare of the City of Chicago*, Vol. II, No. 3.



POVERTY AND PHILANTHROPY – A map of the relief cases of the United Charities might well serve as a map of the slum. Economic inadequacy is an outstanding characteristic of the slum. The map, with its marked concentration of poverty in Little Sicily, indicates the difficulty faced by the immigrant family in making the economic adjustment to American life. The concentration of contributors along the Gold Coast, and of those receiving aid in Little Hell, brings out clearly the amazing distances which separate the adjacent but highly segregated areas of the inner city.

The immigrant is utterly unable to comprehend or to participate in the political life of the American city. The spirit of *campanilismo*, limiting the Sicilian's interests to his village group, paralyzes his political competence. The Sicilian vote, with the immigrant vote at large, is a commodity upon the market. It is controlled by the bosses and kings of the colony, marshaled, if need be, with the aid of gangs and automatics, and traded to the higher-ups for petty political favors. There is no "Italian vote" in Little Hell.[25]

In spite of these maladjustments which have grown out of the Sicilian's Old World background, there is not the disorganization to be found in Little Hell that is to be found in many other immigrant areas-across the river in Little Poland, for example. This is due to the persistent emotional attitudes that center around the Sicilian family tradition.[26] Family control in Little Hell has remained remarkably effective. The map showing divorce and desertion on the Near North Side reveals that Little Sicily is an area practically without divorce, and with relatively little desertion.[27] And this family control has persisted despite economic and cultural tensions within the family, and the family's slum environment.

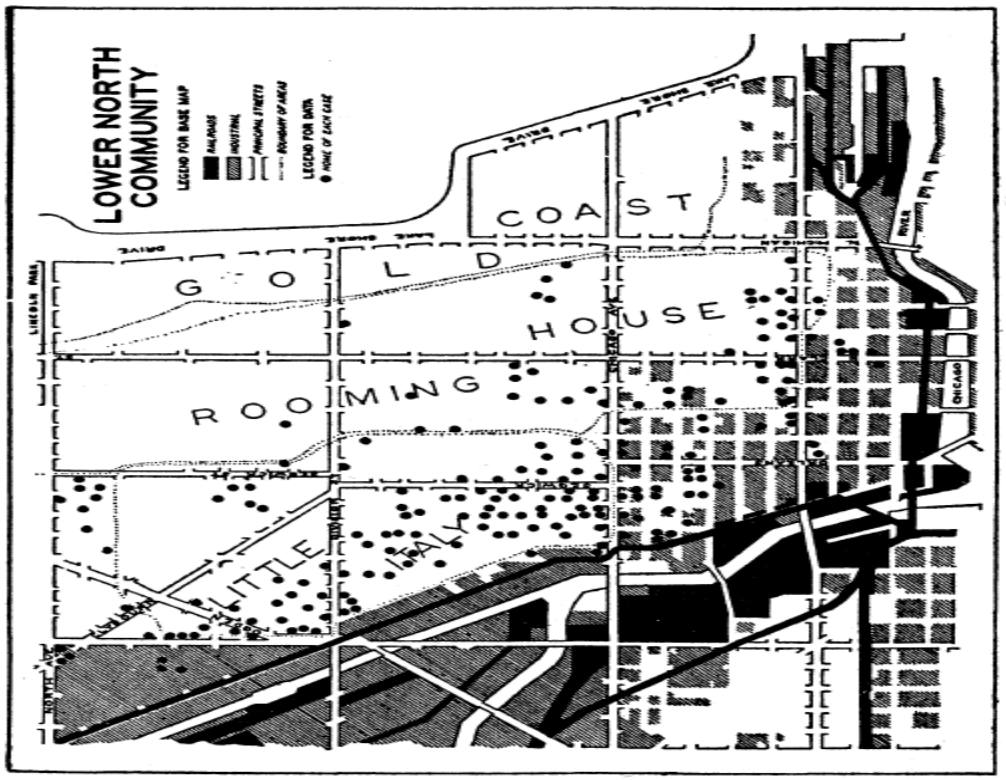
But even the Sicilian family is slowly disintegrating with the increased contacts of the second generation with American life. These contacts are made on every hand. The school holds up customs and ideals unlike those of the family and the community. The movie, for which Sicilian children have a passion, presents situations wholly outside the definitions of the community. The increasing mobility of the second generation, of the boy driving his truck or taxi, of the girl working in the Loop, takes it out of the old community into situations beyond its controls, into contacts with divergent standards and behavior. And there is an increasing amount of personal disorganization among the American-born. The second generation finds itself trying to live in two social worlds. The same situations are defined in contradictory terms by the school, for example, on the one hand, and by the family on the other. If the child conforms to the American definition he is a delinquent in the eyes of the family; if he conforms to the family definition he is a delinquent in the eyes of the American law.

25. Documents 49 and 50.

26. Document 51: A group of several hundred papers, written by school children of the Near North Side about their communities and activities, interestingly brings out the persistence of this family organization into the second generation of the Sicilian.

27. See p. 129.

The child cannot live and conform in both social worlds at the same time. The family and colony are defined for him in his American contacts by such epithets as "dago," "wop," "foreign," and the like. He feels the loss of status attached to his connection with the colony. In his effort to achieve status in the American city he loses his *rapport* with family and community. Conflicts arise between the child and his family. Yet by virtue of his race, his manner of speech, the necessity of living in the colony, and these same definitive epithets, he is excluded from status and intimate participation in American life. Out of this situation, as we have already seen, arises the gang, affording the boy a social world in which he finds his only status and recognition. But it is by conforming to delinquent patterns that he achieves status in the gang. And every boy in Little Hell is a member of a gang. This is substantially the process of disorganization of the Sicilian boy of the second generation. Out of it grows all manner of social disorganization. There is, however, relatively little disorganization among Sicilian girls. The old family controls still seem effectively to define their behavior.



JUVENILE DELINQUENCY – Juvenile delinquency is characteristic not of nationality, race, nor intelligence, but of the slum. It is particularly characteristic of the foreign slum, where the second generation is trying to live and adjust in two worlds with conflicting definitions of situations (data after Shaw).

SOCIAL FORCES IN LITTLE HELL

Control in the colony is largely in terms of personal relationships. There are no organizations, nor individuals, that have an effective influence throughout the colony. Rather, control goes back to the spirit of *paesani* and the village neighborhoods. Every village group has its lodge. Each lodge is organized about the most influential man

© S.IJSPC vol. 1 Issue 1, pp. X-XX

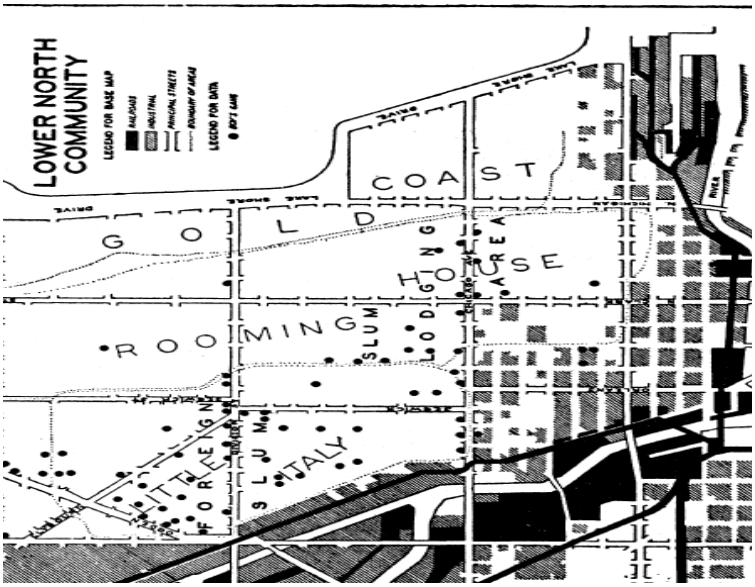
of the village. And it is these men, with their lodges, who are the social forces, the foci of attitudes and collective action, in Little Sicily.[28]

The church retains little effective control in the colony. This is not remarkable in the light of the peasant's attitude toward the church in Sicily itself. Moreover, as in nearly every Sicilian colony, the priest is a northern Italian, which makes rapport between church and community difficult if not impossible. All things considered, the priest at the church of St. Philip Benizi has remarkable prestige and influence. The immigrant generation still desires to dwell in the shadow of the church's tower. Even the second generation would not think of letting a christening, a marriage, or a death pass without the traditional sanction of the church. But the church is none the less rapidly losing its control over the second generation. And it has no great influence upon community action.[29]

Little Hell, like every immigrant colony, has its settlement. And the settlement aids those whom it reaches in innumerable accommodations. However, the activities of Eli Bates House, following the settlement tradition, are institutional in nature. It does not participate in the currents of community life, and, like the church, has little or no effective influence upon the direction of community action.[30]

Far more influential in the currents of -community life than any social agency is the local politician, the ward boss, and the precinct captain.

These political leaders are not theorists; they are workers who set for themselves an objective, definite and alluring, and then go about organizing all the forces around them to work together for that goal. Their methods may seem crude and unscientific, but they are human; a United States congressman who hails from a ward of foreign born citizens in a Middle West city seems to have a private key to the mint, so full are his pockets always of half-dollars available for friends in need. A Polish washerwoman in this man's district said to her employer, "I cannot come next Tuesday."



THE GANG – The boys' gang, like juvenile delinquency, is characteristic of the life of the slum, particularly of the immigrant slum. It is a juvenile pattern of life that grows up in the interstices between old world cultures and the cultures of the American community, and in those areas of the city where family and community control are disintegrating (data after Thrasher).

28. Document 52.
29. Document 53.
30. Out of the settlement grew the Italian Progressive Club. It numbers among its members bankers and attorneys once boys in the colony and the settlement. It is a fraternal organization with educational aims, and takes no part in politics, as an organization. It attempts to draw into its membership the more promising of the younger generation. But its influence in the community is limited. Its members, like the progressive members of the second generation of any immigrant group, tend to move out of the colony. It is a fact not without significance, however, that not one in five of the second generation leaves the colony. And the population of Little Sicily is now more of the American-born second generation than of the Sicilian-born immigrant generation. See Document 41.

"Why not, Maggie?"
"It's election day and I must stand on the comer."
"What do you stand on the corner for?"
"For five dollars."
"But what do you do on the corner?"
"I do nothing-Stanley K. pins a paper on me."

Tangible proof that Stanley is a more generous friend than the employer is found by Maggie in the two dollars' difference in the daily wage, and as adviser in matters of general interest he must be wiser than less generous friends. No hour is too late or too early for this honorable member of Congress to get out of bed to go to the police station to bail out an unfortunate neighbor who has imbibed too much and become too noisy, or by other ways that are dark has found himself in the clutches of the law. Not only Mr. K.'s unfailing willingness to go, but his demonstrated influence with the powers that be when he arrives, makes him a worthy leader in the eyes of his followers. At local weddings and neighborhood funerals he is the outstanding social ornament; his well-cut suit, white spats, top hat, and stick lend dignity and grace to the occasions, and it may be that he has started the subscription paper that has made so grand a ceremony possible. His objective – a seat in the municipal council, or in Congress, or a judgeship, or even a place on the precinct or ward committee – may not seem to us worthy of the coherent, enthusiastic following he is able to acquire, but he has it, and unless we have something better to offer, or take our place at the wire with him, he and his fellows will leave us far behind in the race for neighborhood organization and achievement…

We often wonder at his stock of detailed knowledge; and envy. But it isn't strange; he has visited again and again in every home in the precinct, and each time he goes he has a definite errand: an invitation to a precinct meeting, a visit, and some new family situation is revealed. If in any settlement we had such an aggregation of knowledge of the homes and lives of the neighbors in one precinct as the "boss" of that precinct has, we would be rich indeed. We could acquire it if we would. They are not trained social workers, these precinct leaders; they are just neighborhood people, and perhaps that is one of the secrets of their success.

They are not only in, but of, the neighborhood. Most of our charity organization society visitors, our school teachers, our visiting teachers, our park and playground staff workers, and certainly most of our boards of directors live miles from the neighborhoods where people they serve live. No matter how kind and friendly and helpful they are, "there are some things about us they cannot understand because they do not live here." Even our settlements, who like to feel that we are a stable and stabilizing element, have an astonishing "labor turnover," and are always having to introduce new workers to our neighbors. The precinct boss has lived, does live, and will live there, and although he may now and then switch from party to party, "for the good of the service," or some other reason, he still is he, and the neighbors know him.[31]

The village lodges, the precinct captains, and the kings who have utilized their local followings to secure understandings with the police, the ward leaders, and the politicians higher up, constitute the hierarchy of control in Little Sicily. There is no consciousness in the colony of itself as such, no common sentiment, no common interest. Only twice in the history of the colony has there been anything approaching community feeling: once a dozen or more years ago, when the proselyting activities of Protestant missions resulted in several nights of street fighting; and more recently; in the growing sentiment against the invasion by the Negro. In the last analysis Little Sicily is still a mosaic of Sicilian villages.[32]

West of the elevated, blackened by the smoke of industry, crowded against the gas house, known to the city at large as Tenement Town and Little Hell, Little Sicily is a different world from the world which parades the Espla-

31. Harriet E. Vittum, "Politics from the Social Point of View," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (1924), pp. 423-25.
32. Document 54.

nade, a different world from the world which cooks over sterno stoves in rooming-houses, a different world from the world that gathers in stables and garrets to argue heatedly and endlessly over obscure schools of art. There are those who, knowing it only through headlines in the newspapers or appeals of social agencies, knowing only its poverty, its squalor, and its crime, think of it merely as a world of tragedy. But to those who have participated in its life it has its pathos and humor as well.

We like living here. The Italians are good neighbors, and we like them. They do funny things, of course. Garbage cans disappear from alleys, to reappear on stoves as washboilers. Spring finds the winter's ashes in the bathtub – if there is one. An Italian making six dollars a day at the least takes food from the charities, the proceeds of the Tribune's "Give till It Hurts" campaign, and anything else that he can get. A father went to a public school to protest against paying for his children's books. "Free country, everything free!" he exclaimed from his seal-lined overcoat. The Italians save – but when they die they spend all the insurance on a funeral, bound that no one shall have a grander.

Yes, they are funny. But after all I wonder if there is as much happiness on the Gold Coast as over in these basement rooms. When the father comes home at night, six or seven children run to meet him, and a warm supper is always ready; and summer nights – the streets – you would go a long way to hear the concertinas.[33]

33. Document 55.

Irving L. Child
SECOND-GENERATION ITALIANS[34]

It is convenient to consider the social situation under two main categories. The first, to be considered in this section, is that of culture; differences between Italian and American culture and the modification of each (but principally the Italian) through contact with the other will be considered. The second category is that of conditions of social organization; it will be considered in the second section of this chapter.

First, attention must be turned to the question of why it is to be expected that cultural differences should be relevant to the adjustment of the individual second-generation Italian, and this question can be briefly answered. One of the basic facts about any human society is that it maintains its continuity by taking the offspring of its members as raw material and molding that material into the shape of new members of the society. The normal new-born child is an organism which has the potentialities of becoming an adequate member of any human society which would fully accept and rear it; the task of the society into which it is born is to shape its behavior into the particular patterns which are demanded by the norms of that society's culture. Each child, then, is subjected to a program of training which normally results in its acquiring certain approved modes of response and in its learning not to respond in certain disapproved ways. All of the individual's behavior is not prescribed in rigorous detail. The society greatly modifies and enlarges the repertoire of responses which the child can make, allows of a great deal of individual variation within that repertoire, but in respect to particular forms of behavior either prohibits or requires specific acts with varying degrees of rigor. The process by which a society molds its offspring into the pattern prescribed by its culture is termed "socialization."

The importance of socialization is well known to everyone who is conscious of the great differences between the behavior of adults in one society and in another. Its importance is equally apparent to those of us who, though having little knowledge of any culture but our own, are faced with the apparent "perversity" of children, who clearly do not "naturally" behave in the way that we feel they should. The application of psychological principles to the understanding of the process of socialization is relatively new. Significant suggestions have been made by many psychologists—for example, in some of the writings of Freud (14), of Watson (31), or of F. H. Allport (1). Recent work which combines the careful use of psychological knowledge with an adequate appreciation of the role of the specific culture is to be found in publications by Whiting (32) and by Davis and Dollard (8).

For the purposes of this section it is not necessary to attempt any psychological analysis of the socialization of the child. In the next chapter some of the principles that are useful in under-standing socialization will be considered, for they are relevant to the problems discussed there. For present purposes it is sufficient to assume that as a result of understandable psychological processes the normal individual does come to conform, on the whole, to certain norms which are the culture of his society. Now the second-generation Italian is a member of a subgroup within American society which has, in some degree, a distinctive culture of its own, yet he is also in contact with the general American community. The fact of socialization would lead one to expect, then, that the second-generation Italian would be molded in rather different ways by different segments of his social environment. Before this effect can be evaluated, the amount and character of the duality of cultural influence must be indicated.

If a thorough comparison of Italian and American culture were being attempted, a great emphasis should be placed upon the fundamental similarities of the two as participants in the general cultural tradition of western Europe. In the adjustment of the second-generation immigrant to his social surroundings, it is undoubtedly of great importance that the two cultures are alike in many ways; his problems are different from those of the second-generation Chinese in this country and may be generally less serious. But this is one respect in which only a partial

34. Estratto da Irving L. Child, *Italian or American? The second generation in conflict*, Russel & Russell, New York, 1943, pp. 18-48.

picture can be given here. Since the purpose is to show how cultural differences do pose psychological problems, it is on the differences that attention must be focused, and the basic similarity may be borne in mind as a corrective.

The Italian and the American cultures are each within themselves extremely diverse, varying, for example, according to region and class. The generalizations made here refer to the two cultures as known to the informants used in the present study, for only when so defined are the two cultures directly significant in the informants' lives. The traits[35] which are described here as Italian are those which emerge from the data obtained from these informants as characterizing fairly generally the culture of the regions and classes from which their parents came.2[36] The traits considered here as American are those which the informants have come to know as American in their own experience. Some of the contrasts may not hold true as between Italian and American culture in general. Some may, for example, be contrasts between western European rural and urban culture ; others may be differences between the customs of the upper and lower classes in the Western world at large. But for the purposes of this research the differences of significance are those between what the second-generation individuals have experienced as Italian culture and what they have experienced as American culture. The contrasts drawn are in most cases ones which have been explicitly pointed out by several informants or can be readily inferred from data obtained from several informants or from several observed situations. Except in one or two special cases, the American culture trait has not been described. The Italian traits have been described as differing from the American, and the American traits can be recognized by simple inference or prior knowledge.

Language and communication

If American folk literature is scanned for a stereotyped picture of the Italian immigrant, the most conspicuous and uniform feature that sets him off from his fellow Americans is his language. He is known as the fellow who "maka da moosic" but "no speaka da Eng." The dialect that is put in the mouth of the comic-strip Italian represents a compromise between two cultures, but the original difference that is pointed to may well serve as an initial example of the nature and significance of the points of contrast.

In the old country, Italians speak a variety of dialects which differ considerably from the uniform Italian language of the educated. Many of the immigrants did not go to school long enough to learn to speak the standard Italian, but all or nearly all of them have heard it enough to be able to understand it ; many second-generation persons who speak a dialect fluently say, however, that they can understand almost nothing of standard Italian. Informants of both generations report that some of the dialects are almost completely incomprehensible to a person who has had experience only with one. Thus a training in Italian culture prepares one to communicate with people from some parts of Italy, and it prepares some people to communicate with all Italians. The obvious difference from American culture in this respect is lessened, in comparison with what it might be, only by the fact that similarities of grammar and vocabulary may make a knowledge of Italian a better preparation for acquiring English than a knowledge of an unrelated tongue would be.

It is true that these two linguistic patterns do not remain in-dependent of each other. Under conditions of American life, the Italian dialects themselves are modified and take over certain elements from the English language. Also, the English that is spoken by the immigrants shows marked effects of Italian linguistic habits, effects which are caricatured in the popular stereotype of the immigrants' speech. Yet the two languages do remain dis-

35. A culture trait is any single custom or tradition, any element or feature that may be abstracted from a culture and considered momentarily by itself. Wherever the term "trait" appears by itself in this book, it is an abbreviation of "culture trait"; if is never used to mean "personality trait."

36. There are considerable differences between South Italian and North Italian culture. As was indicated in Chapter I, the great majority of Italian immigrants in New Haven are from South Italy; of the informants used in this study only one is of entirely North Italian origin. Even within South Italy, there are considerable cultural differences. The informants used in this study are mostly descended from immigrants of the lower and lower-middle classes from the present province of Campania, surrounding Naples

tinct, and the individual who is brought up under the dual influence of Italian and American culture may have a good acquaintance with both.

Associated with the presence of distinct languages are certain other cultural features which are of significance. One is the fact that immigrants and their children bear names which are recognizably Italian. The practice of changing the family name to a non-Italian one is rare. The given names are, in contrast, often translated, and a common practice is for either the English or the Italian form to be used according to which language is being spoken.

Another feature related to the linguistic difference is the culturally patterned use of gesturing. Gestures are an important part of the Italian's equipment for communication. They are used a great deal as an accessory to ordinary conversation, especially when speech is excited or emphatic. There are also a number of special gestures which convey a specific meaning by themselves. All these gestures are of a fairly definite pattern, as has been shown by Boas and associates in a careful objective study (2, 13). South Italian culture[37] differs from American culture, therefore, not only in assigning to gestures a more important role in communication, but also in the specific form of whatever gestures are used.

Another fact of great importance, related in part to the presence of distinct languages, is the existence of separate realms of discourse and patterns of meaning. Every social group has, to some extent, its own rules about what to say and how to say it, and its own knowledge and attitudes which give meaning to what is said. When an outsider is present in a group of first-generation or mixed first- and second-generation Italians, and the conversation goes on relatively undisturbed by his presence, he can observe, as in any small social group, that a very enjoyable complex process of social interaction is going on. Certain subjects are being talked about that have meaning only in this group, notably the personal characteristics and specific actions and experiences of those present and of others known to them. While the same things might be told by a member of the group to an outsider, they would lack the surrounding aura of associations that gives meaning to the recounting. Not only the associations but the particular way in which things are said gives special pleasure to the participants. When something that is said produces an unusually notable response in the group, a member may turn to the outsider and try to explain the source of the amusement. But he is generally at a loss to do so. Usually he expects to be at a loss, for he frequently prefaces his attempts at interpretation with some remark such as, "You can't really translate what he said. I know in English it doesn't sound funny at all, but in Italian, boy! it just knocks you over." The point of this, in relation to cultural differences, is not just that Italian groups enjoy talking about subjects of interest to them in a manner they are accustomed to. That is true of any group. The point is that for Italians as a whole in an American community these ways are different from those of the other people around them. As members of the Italian group, individuals of both generations have certain habits of communication which can be a source of great enjoyment within that group but which cannot be directly transferred to other group situations. Various American groups have their own realms of discourse whose habits must to a large extent be independently learned.

These facts about language and communication show that there are two rather distinct sets of customs, the one adhered to by the Italian immigrants and the other adhered to by the American population. Even in the immigrant generation the Italian pattern may be partially replaced by the American, and it is almost certain to be somewhat modified in the direction of similarity to the American pattern. Yet the traits of the two cultures remain sufficiently distinct so that the second generation finds at least two conflicting modes of behavior being clearly demonstrated in the social environment.

37. See note 2 above. The phrase "South Italian" is used occasionally here to avoid the appearance of attributing to Italian culture at large traits which may characterize only or primarily the culture of the southern provinces. From the point of view of the informants' personal problems, however, and therefore for the purposes of this book, the terms "Italian culture" and "South Italian culture" are functionally equivalent.

Eating and drinking

Similar observations may be made about customs of eating and drinking. The Italian style of cooking is very different from any American cuisine. In eating for several months with a family which adheres to the Italian way of cooking, the investigator found that every dish, almost without a single exception, was different from anything he had ever eaten before. Even where the major ingredients were all such as Americans commonly use, the condiments and manner of cooking made the dish quite distinctively Italian. The degree of contact with American food in the experience of a member of the second generation varies according to his family's adoption of it and according to how much he eats meals outside the home. It is possible for contact with the American customs to be very slight, as is not possible in the case of language, but awareness of the difference still appears to be universal. In the case of beverages, contact with American traits is greater, and drinking habits have changed more in the older generation than have eating habits ; but the change has been by addition of American to Italian practices, and the distinction between the two is recognized by everyone.

Recreation

In recreational life there are also differences between Italian and American culture. For one thing, there is more of a split between men's and women's groups. For many of the men, recreational life centers in the Italian clubs and societies. Men's groups also gather in taverns, in other places of amusement, on street corners, and in private houses. The men typically engage together in drinking, playing games, joking, arguing, and discussing personal and public affairs. Women also find their recreation on occasion in clubs and societies, but not to any such extent as do the men. Their entertainment is likely to be limited to neighborly visits at hours when household work slackens, and to friendly gatherings in the grocery store. Women are not expected to drink very much or play games.

South Italian culture provides men with a number of distinctive games. One of the most widely played is bocce, a bowling game played on the open ground. Several card games and a finger-guessing game (morra) have also retained a high degree of popularity. All these games are generally played for small stakes. As the investigator has most often seen them played, the losing side must buy drinks either for the winning side, or for both sides, or for distribution by the "boss" of the drinks. (The custom referred to involves the selection, by lot or by a brief supplementary game, of a "boss" or "padrone," who has the privilege of doing what he will with the drinks ; he may distribute them to everyone in the game, or he may withhold them from some or from everyone but himself.)

Italian tradition in music is widely known and appreciated by the immigrants, and in addition it is continually reflected in most individuals' active participation in music. Group singing and other musical activities are more important in the recreational life of Italians than in America generally. A more significant point, however, is that the Italian groups sing certain songs which are a part of their tradition. These songs might be sung to a non-Italian group but could not be sung with a non-Italian group, and ability to sing them is an indication that an individual has participated a good deal in Italian social groups.

In addition to such differences in leisure-time activity as have already been pointed out, attention should be called to the relative absence from Italian culture of certain modes of recreation which are very important in American life. Outdoor games and competitions play a major part in the recreational life of Americans, including the second-generation Italians, but with the exception of bocce they seem to have been almost unknown to the immigrants. Reading and talking about athletics also play a less important role in the leisure-time activity of the immigrants. Swimming is another recreation which is outside the experience of many of the immigrants but very popular in the American community in which they live. American dancing has not been practiced much by the immigrants and is widely disapproved of because of the Italian sexual and familial mores. (The South Italians had traditional dances of their own, but they appear to have died out almost completely in America.) Movies and au-

tomobile riding have become major parts of the American pattern of recreation during the time most of the immigrants have been here. The immigrants, because of their relative lack of acquaintance with the American language, ways, and humor, cannot take full advantage of the movies; because of their age and status, they are not prepared to derive as many advantages as the second generation does from the automobile. The immigrants make some use of movies and autos, but they usually object to extensive recreational use of them, both because of the lack of chaperonage and because with their background they do not feel that the reward is proportionate to the cost.

Family structure

The cultural differences thus far described all involve traits which are easily discriminated, either because of the presence of a tangible item of material culture or because of a sharp difference of practice. Some highly important differences are not so easily perceived and actually do not involve an unequivocal distinction ; there may be instead a difference in emphasis, or in the frequency with which certain modes of behavior are practiced or approved. The difference between the structure of the family in Italian and American society approaches this latter character.

The South Italian family is strongly knit and dominated by the father. The father is regarded as the source of authority, even though the mother often may be the actual agent of authority. The father's authority over a child is traditionally regarded as absolute until the latter's marriage, and even afterwards it may be maintained to a high degree. It would appear fairly certain that in the original South Italian culture the father could be rather severely tyrannical without incurring general disapproval of the group. This is not to say that the ideal was tyranny; rather the ideal was benevolent domination. The father's responsibility was to manage the household with a strong hand for the good of everyone in it. The parents seem often to feel, even at the present time, that they have the right to force the child into any occupation they may select, to choose a marital partner for him, and to beat him if they wish.

Among the South Italians the family is a closely bound economic unit. The children are commonly expected to become full-time workers at a very early age. Most families require that as long as a child is still living at home, regardless of his age, he must turn over all his wages to the parents. The income from the entire household goes into a common family fund over which the parents have control and from which they pay the joint expenses of the household and distribute to the individual members allowances or money for special expenses. In return for giving all their money over to their parents, the children expect not only to be supplied with an allowance and all the comforts of home while working, but also to be supported by the family when out of a job, and to be well provided for from the family fund when they come to be married.

In most instances, extreme parental domination and super-vision are regarded by both parent and child as practiced for the good of the child. This is in line with other characteristics of the South Italian family which might be summarized in the assertion that it is a strongly cohesive group of individuals who recognize tight bonds of mutual responsibility among the members. This characteristic is far from absent in American families; but it was a conviction, early formed in the investigator and repeatedly reinforced, that the general cohesion and feeling of mutual responsibility are much greater on the whole in Italian families than in contemporary American families.

As might be expected under these conditions, there is a strong feeling against overt expression of hostility within the family group. Although rather violent quarrels occur, there is a great reluctance to talk about them. Respect for parents and other relatives is mentioned sympathetically by many informants as an ideal impressed upon children of Italians throughout their lives. The greatest freedom to express hostility directly within the family is the freedom that the father, and often the mother; have in dealing with their children. But here the aggressive behavior appears to be almost always rationalized as for the children's own good.

If there is a taboo on explicit hostility within the family, there is also a perhaps stronger taboo on overt physical display of affection. Display of affection by everyone toward infants and small children is, to be sure, demonstrated

over and over again and is often asserted to be characteristic of Italians. But kissing and other signs of affection seem to be very rare be-tween husband and wife in the presence of others, between parent and child, and between children. In at least the first two respects, there is a much stronger taboo on overt affection than in many contemporary American families.

Another difference between the South Italian and the American family is the average size of the family, the Italians tending to have more children. Many second-generation informants believe that their parents do not even have knowledge of contraceptive methods; this is in striking contrast with the urban American pattern of almost universal knowledge, at least among men, and widespread practice of certain contraceptive techniques. Whatever the state of contraceptive knowledge, the average family size is markedly different.[38]

The handling of sex

In sexual mores, it is especially difficult to define the typically American patterns, because there appear to be rapid change and great diversity in the sexual mores of this country. But certain emphases can be distinguished which are placed more strongly or more uniformly in the Italian culture. In the first place, there is officially a more uniform reticence about sexual matters in the family group. Only one informant reported that either of his parents had given him any information about sex, and he regarded this giving of information as contrary to the Italian pattern. At the same time, children are often present when adult conversation includes matters of sex. Also, crowded living conditions both in Italy and in this country probably give opportunity for many children to observe directly something of their parents' sexual behavior. The investigator would make a guess that on the whole, children in Italian families develop at least as much sense of guilt and impropriety about sexual matters as is typical in American families, but are more fully aware of the realities of sexual life.

Because of the reticence of the older generation in talking of sexual matters, none of the informants who were asked felt that they had much idea of what were the sexual habits of unmarried men in Italy. Since the investigator worked almost exclusively with the American-born generation, he has little information about the matter. Williams asserts, however, that the young men in Italy were encouraged to seek heterosexual expression with prostitutes (33, p. 82). The implication that promiscuous sexual experience was accepted as normal in unmarried men is consistent with what observations the investigator was able to make.

The attitude toward girls' sexual experience is quite different. A very high value indeed is placed upon a girl's coming to marriage as a virgin. This double standard has an important effect upon the sexual behavior of the men., If he accepts the mores of the group, a young man must not make sexual advances to women whom he respects or whose families he respects ; that is, he must not make sexual advances to the sort of woman he is encouraged to feel affection for or to consider as a possible wife. Women are divided into two groups according to the type of behavior that may be exhibited toward them, the good women and the bad women. There is a tendency to regard bad women as the primary means of sexual gratification and to regard the good women as primarily serving other functions, even though they be married to the individuals concerned. The family appears to be somewhat more of an economic and status institution, and somewhat less of a sexual institution, than is generally true in America. Of course, the same tendencies are very much present in American culture, but there they are in conflict with certain of the romantic love ideals which are directed toward focusing sexual and other interests on the same individual.

38. Dreis (11) concludes, with reference to a sample family survey of New Haven: "Italian families contributed a very large proportion of the larger families (eight or more persons), more than twice as much in proportion as Irish families and seven times as much as families with American-born heads."

The handling of aggression

The channels into which the culture tends to direct individuals" expressions of hostility or aggression differ somewhat between South Italian and general American culture. One channel already mentioned that is more open to the Italian man than to Americans is the aggressive domination of his wife and children. This outlet for aggression can be used to a much greater extent with less social disapproval than in America generally. Prolonged hatreds between neighbors and former friends appear also to be much more common than among urban Americans at large.

Verbal argument is more developed as a social pattern than in America. Arguments which to an outsider are likely to appear to involve serious antagonism are accepted as a part of the normal social interaction of friends. The amount of hostility expressed is likely to be overestimated by an observer, because the gestures and loudness of voice which are a part of the manners of the group may be interpreted as indicating violence of feeling. Despite this difficulty, the investigator feels rather confident that verbal arguments are permitted to a greater extent as an outlet for aggression by Italian than by American culture. The South Italians have a reputation for carrying arguments out into knife fights, and in part this reputation is justified as of several decades back by stories heard from second-generation Italians. Here is a probable further indication that genuine display of hostility in arguments is rather less tabooed in this culture. (The use of knives is not so relevant to this point as is the underlying assumption that physical attack with intent to injure is more common.)

In speaking of these and other aggressive manifestations that characterize Italian culture, and that seem somewhat different from American customs, second-generation informants would sometimes explain them, either in themselves or in the immigrant generation, by reference to a stereotyped conception of Italians as hot-blooded or quick-tempered. Thus it would seem that a variety of aggressive expressions are supported by tradition as to be expected of Italians by Italians. Whether this stereotype was prevalent among the immigrants when they were in Italy, or whether it has been adopted in this country, cannot be said with certainty.

Several types of aggressive expression have been pointed out with respect to which the Italian culture seems to offer more opportunity, or a greater variety of opportunities, for aggressive expression than does American culture.[39] As already mentioned in the discussion of family structure, a reverse condition seems to hold true of the expression of aggression between members of a family (with the exception of the parent-to-child relationship) . But the major difference in this direction would appear to be in the field of competition for economic gain and social status. Active strivings for and assertions of status and gain are aggressive outlets highly encouraged by American life. "Aggressive" is used here to refer to aggression in the sense of hostility. The assumption is not that activity in social competition is primarily an expression of hostility. It is assumed to be a realistic striving for positive goals, but it offers opportunity for the expression of much hostility in the course of the striving. Thus such activity is aggressive in a further sense than in just involving forceful or strongly motivated behavior. To be sure, these phenomena occur also in Italian society. But as will be pointed out in the next section, the immigrants came from a society whose stratification was relatively much more rigid, so that individuals were not encouraged to set themselves a level of aspiration very far above what they already had.

39. Another specific channel for the expression of hostility is provided by Italian culture in the practice of "playing for boss," mentioned earlier. The winner's choice of whom to deprive of drinks may depend upon conventionalized hostility to the opposing team, upon hostility arising from having been deprived by another individual previously, or from general animosity toward an individual. It is generally expected that the winner will take advantage of his opportunity and deprive at least one or two persons of drinks, and his choice of victims is much discussed, both at the time and later.

Economic life

Economic aspects of the culture differ in several ways as between the society the immigrants left in Italy and the society they came into in America. In the first place, class mobility was very much less in the South Italy of that time than in America. It would be difficult to find a basis for objective comparison of relative mobility, but there is a great difference in social tradition and myth about mobility. The Italian lower class tends to accept a low economic position as inevitable, whereas Americans have commonly believed that every individual has the opportunity to become wealthy. Some degree of social mobility does seem to have been possible in Italy, but even so the techniques were different. The immigrants show a great interest in having their children learn a craft or trade; probably this is because such training was the principal path of mobility open to members of their class. But the general prospect of mobility did not go much further, and the other techniques of advancement found here were apparently not widely available.

Whatever the actual difference in mobility, the economic position of the New Haven immigrants was different in Italy from what it is here. A very large proportion of them were farmers in the old country, either owning a small farm of their own, operating farms as tenants, or working for larger land-owners; most of the remainder were fishermen, craftsmen, and petty merchants, usually working for themselves or for a small family establishment. In New Haven, on the contrary, virtually none are farmers, some are merchants and individual crafts-men, but the great majority are wage laborers in factories or on construction projects. These changes in occupation probably constitute the first way in which the immigrants adapted their habits to the new environment, for such change was the very condition of migration and of survival in America.

The general standard of living differed more than would be indicated merely by the differences of occupation. The scale of living in Italy was sufficiently low so that to many immigrants who arrived in Connecticut around the turn of the century a ten-dollar weekly wage justified the myth that in America the dollar bills grew on the sidewalks. The wants to which they had been accustomed in Italy could be satisfied with so little money, that one is often told of immigrants with large families who saved five dollars out of a fifteen-dollar wage in those days.

While immigrants are heard to speak fondly of Italy in many ways, longing after some features of life there that do not obtain in Connecticut, they are never heard to deny that their standard of living is higher here than it ever was in the Italy they knew. For the older generation, the disposition of money which was in excess of that required for their accustomed mode of living has been principally the buying of a house or the ac-accumulation of money as a reserve in case of old age or emergency, rather than the raising of the day-to-day standard of living. Here is an instance of the survival and adaptation to American conditions of culture traits derived from the economic structure of Italian society.

Religion and superstitions

The South Italian immigrants almost universally were members of the Roman Catholic Church, have remained members, and have brought their children up as members. In New Haven, consequently, the Italians have as fellows in religion the Irish, the Polish, and the French Canadians, while most of the rest of the population belongs to other sects. The immigrants are al-most all insistent that their children grow up under the influence of the Catholic religion, proceed through baptism and confirmation, and be married in church. On the other hand, a remark-able amount of antagonism is expressed toward the church as an institution and toward the clergy, and there are a consider-able number of immigrants who almost never go to church al-though they regard themselves as Catholics. The investigator would judge that religion is on the average less a matter of daily concern and less involved in individuals' emotional lives among the Italians than among the Irish and the Poles.

A number of semireligious practices, presumably not encouraged by the church and not usually related to its dogma, are found in South Italian culture. Witches and sorcerers are feared, as well as evil forces in general. Amulets are worn, rituals are performed, and gestures are made to ward off the evil influences. Fear of vague forces of evil, and the use of some techniques for warding off such forces, appear to be almost universal in the immigrant generations.[40]

CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The cultural norms that have been described in the last section may sound as if they existed in the abstract and did not have to be related to actual persons or groups. Such an appearance derives from the fact that for the purposes of that section the process of socialization was simply assumed and was not examined in detail. That is not the way the cultural norms appear to the individual of the second generation who is undergoing socialization. From his point of view, it is not Italian culture that demands he speak Italian; it is his grandmother, who has no other way of communicating with him, and his parents, who may refuse at certain times to talk to him unless he uses their native language. It is not American culture that he sees as demanding that he speak English; it is his teacher and his classmates, who may criticize or ridicule him if he falls back into Italian. From the point of view of the individual of the second generation, it is because of his relation to persons and groups in his environment that he acts in certain ways. Hence, in order to understand the psychological significance of cultural differences, certain facts about the social organization of the community must be explored in order to see who is able and likely to do what to the second-generation, Italian.

The status of the Italians in the community

The Italians in New Haven are of relatively low status. Their exact position in relation to all other nationality groups has not been determined in the course of this research. It may be said with certainty that the Yankees, British, Scandinavians, and Irish enjoy a much higher status, and that the Yankees have the highest status of all. It may also be said with certainty that the Negroes are the only group that the Italians are able to look down on quite consistently as of lower status than them-selves. The Jews, Germans, and Russians appear to have a higher status than the Italians. The Poles are of low status, possibly lower than that of the Italians. On the whole, then, the Italians appear to have the lowest status of any of the large white groups in the city, with the possible exception of the Poles.[41]

The low status of the Italians may be seen in their occupational distribution. Most of the Italians were laborers during their first few years after arrival here, although some professional people were among the immigrants and a number of the immigrants advanced very rapidly in business undertakings. The occupational distribution of persons of Italian descent is still weighted considerably toward the lower end of the scale in prestige and income, and there appears to be a good deal of discrimination against them in the choice of applicants for the better-paying and more prestige-bearing jobs. According to the advice of informants, a number of small factories, but none of the major factories, are owned by Italians; it is not easy to determine from casual information whether Italians have more or less than their quota of proprietorship in the large wholesale and contracting establishments, although

40. For a fuller account of South Italian superstitions, as well as of many other traits discussed in this chapter, see Williams (33).

41. These statements represent the investigator's general impression developed through this field work. His judgment of the status of the Jews, Germans, and Russians is rather uncertain. The status relationships described here are not purely local phenomena. Questionnaire studies of college students" nationality preferences have shown a remarkable uniformity in various parts of the country, although they have also demonstrated some variation with local conditions. Such studies uniformly show a higher status for British, Irish, German, and Scandinavian stock than for Italian. They usually place Italians slightly higher than Jews, Poles, and Russians. See Katz and Braly (18).

it is certain that they have very little ownership of large retail companies. The Italians have entered professional life in considerable number. Italians comprise sixteen per cent of the doctors in New Haven,[42] as compared with twenty-five per cent of the general population.

There are a number of public schoolteachers of Italians descent, but the proportion is said to be far less than twenty-five per cent. Thus, the Italians of New Haven include many who have risen notably, but their general occupational distribution is lower than that of the Yankees, the Irish, or the Jews.

The status of the Italians as defined by admittance to participation in social functions of high prestige is lower than their status as determined by occupational distribution. The New Haven Social Register for 1938, for example, contains only one name which is unmistakably Italian. The membership lists of two New Haven clubs of some prestige[43] include only one clearly Italian name. At the time of this research, the evening paper in New Haven had on its society page two sections ; one, labeled "Society," was restricted to news about people of high status, " while the other, labeled "Social Notes," was apparently open to news about anyone in the community. Careful reading of this page over a period of about four months disclosed only one Italian name under "Society," with the exception of some Italian names that once appeared in news about a committee headed by women of higher status. Casual reading during a longer period revealed only three additional names.

The relatively low status of the Italian group is represented in the spoken American language by certain words. "Wop" and "guinea"[44] denote Italians, but clearly they connote low status and function to help keep Italians in a low status.[45] There are corresponding words for other national minorities in the city (e.g., "harp," "squarehead," and "nigger"), and it is generally clearly recognized by Italians that their use is insulting to members of those nationalities.

Although Italians have a low status in New Haven, the barriers against their rising in status are not absolute. This has already been indicated with reference to occupational distribution. It is also evidenced by the fact that at least one Italian name appears in the membership lists of certain prestige-bearing clubs and in the Social Register. This actual and potential mobility distinguishes the situation of the Italians quite sharply from that of the Negroes, another group of low status. The Italians are steadily rising in status ; this rise is a very real fact, and many members of the group are thoroughly aware of it. The present state of affairs in the, community makes it plausible for an Italian-American to anticipate a time in the future when nationality origins will not be an important determiner of status in New Haven. For the present, however, a person is as an Italian a member of a low-status group in the community, and problems of status may be expected to be involved very deeply in an individual's reaction to membership in the group.

In recent years detailed empirical studies have been made, under W. Lloyd Warner and associates, of the social structure of several American communities. Careful attention has been given to the status of individual members and to the class-groupings into which individuals fall. The concept of "social class" has been found extremely useful in describing status differences within a community. Especially relevant to the present study is the finding that the Negro caste has its own class-structure with nearly as many gradations of status as are present in the dominant white caste (8). This finding suggests the possibility that even in a less isolated national minority, such as the Italians of New Haven, there may also be a class-structure which is separated from that of the older members of the community. The investigator would judge that there are indeed marked differences of status within the Italian group as such but that the Italian community does not contain any groups higher than perhaps a middle-middle class. Higher class status than that is probably always reached by obtaining status in the general class structure of

42. This figure was arrived at by counting the number of Italian names listed under "Physicians and Surgeons" in the classified section of the telephone directory current in the winter of 1939. Out of 343 names, 56 were judged to be Italian.

43. The New Haven Country Club and The Graduates' Club.

44. The word "dago," which is the most common derogatory epithet for Italians in some parts of the country, is rarely heard in New Haven.

45. These derogatory epithets have been adopted and are widely used by many of the Italians themselves. The way in which Italians use them and which of them use the words will be discussed later. But the fact that Italians themselves use the words does not mean that they are any the less derogatory in intent when uttered by non-Italians.

the American community, and indeed the rise from lower to middle class is most frequently achieved within the general community and not within the Italian segment. In terms of social class, then, the meaning of the low status of the Italians is this :

1. The Italians fall in disproportionate numbers into the lower social classes and are rarely found in the upper social classes.
2. Within a given social class, the Americans of that status are likely to regard the Italians who are of similar status as being nonetheless somewhat inferior.
3. Any individual of Italian descent is likely, because of his association with a group which is generally low in status, to be treated as of a lower status than that for which his other personal characteristics and group memberships would qualify him.

Conditions in the American group

When other forces proceeding from the American part of the community are looked at, one of the first to be noticed today, as well as one of the first to be noticed by each immigrant on his arrival here, no doubt, is the pressure of the economic structure. The conditions of employment in New Haven are such as on the whole are likely to encourage the adoption of American culture and the expression of allegiance to the American group. For the older generation there are certain techniques of earning a living, by laboring under an Italian foreman or by serving the Italian community, which require almost no adoption of American ways. But it is probably true, even here, that adoption of American traits and allegiance to the American group frequently produce a great increment in economic rewards. For the second generation, there is no question of being restricted by any inability to speak English or make all the essential adjustments to the job. But there is, as has already been pointed out, a widespread prejudice against Italians which makes it difficult for people of Italian descent to obtain the better jobs in the community. There is a good deal of evidence that of different people of Italian descent, those who are regarded as the most nearly "American" have the advantage over others in obtaining the more desirable jobs. Thus the economic structure operates in the second generation perhaps even more commonly than in the first generation to reinforce an individual's efforts to become known as an American rather than an Italian.

The political organization and rules of the community also appear generally to encourage affiliation with the American group. Participation in politics in the city or state is laid very largely in a framework of American culture traits. The individual success of Italian political leaders is conditional upon getting along with the non-Italian political leaders. To the extent that the rank and file organize politically as Italians, however, the conditions of political life may make for conservation of Italian traits by allowing people to feel they are represented by fellow Italians and do not have to adjust individually to American political life. Thus the political rules of the community contain opposing potentialities; so far, the influence appears to have been mostly in the direction of Americanization.

Compulsory attendance in the American school system exerts some of the most significant pressure effective in leading to the adoption of American customs and affiliations by the Italian group. No very satisfactory information was obtained from informants about the Americanizing influence of the schools, but there can be no doubt that the general policy of the school system is oriented toward developing American citizens and that very little is done in the school which would tend directly to increase individual adherence to the Italian group. As an absolute minimum, of course, the school forces the acquisition of American language habits and knowledge of certain American traditions, and much more of American culture must inevitably be transmitted, whether by plan or not. The child is brought into contact at school with teachers who are for the most part not of Italian descent. He is forced to observe how non-Italian adults talk and act, whereas he may not have had any previous opportunity to observe them except at a distance. He is treated by the teachers in the way they have learned as participants in American

culture, not in the way his parents have learned as participants in Italian culture. Also, he may come to know many other children who are not of Italian descent. The school system, then, serves as a powerful medium for transmitting American cultural traits to the Italian children, by forcing them into contact with American culture and by inculcating in them many of its basic traits.

The role of the public school is supplemented by that of the community house. In New Haven there are a number of community houses working primarily with children and adolescents. These institutions are supported either by general community subscription or by individual patrons. They secure the attendance of young people in the districts of lower economic status by offering opportunities for athletics, craft work, discussion groups, and other activities which will appeal to various individuals. Their aim seems to be quite explicitly to Americanize the second generation of the various immigrant groups in the city, as well as to reduce delinquent behavior. From statements by a number of informants who have attended community houses, it is clear that the houses are an influence in the direction of the adoption of American culture traits by the second generation by way of at least two factors:

(1) The leaders talk to the members about American ideals in connection with the group activities.

(2) The leaders are often typical Americans of fairly high status who appeal as individuals to many of the second generation who have not come into personal contact with such people elsewhere.

Thus some rather subtle rewards of approval by admired persons of high status are offered to those who in the community house indicate their adherence to American ways and ideals. Additional forces making for change in group affiliation lie in the institutionalized media of mass communication and of entertainment. The most varied and the most accessible sources of information and entertainment in the community are the American newspapers, magazines, radio programs, and moving pictures. They undoubtedly exert a profound influence on the second generation, and in at least two fairly distinct ways. In the first place, there may be effects that are relatively independent of the goals of the individual. He is acquainted with facts about American people and American ways that he might not learn in his experience with his own friends and acquaintances. To the extent that he feels himself into the events and the characters that he reads about, sees on the screen, or hears over the radio, he is likely to pick up attitudes and modes of action in a rather automatic manner. But among the facts that the second-generation Italian becomes cognizant of through these media are the variety of rewards to be obtained in American life, and it is by this route that he is perhaps most significantly influenced. He is acquainted with the many goals for which Americans may appropriately strive, and with the rewards that are offered, in fact or myth, to those who act in accordance with the expectations and rules of American society. He learns of the outfielder who, by developing skill in an American game and displaying a personality that appeals to American lovers of sport, has won a salary in five figures, a beautiful wife, and the adulation of thousands. He sees that the son of an Italian family, through a brilliant career at the Harvard Law School and successful participation in American political life, has become lieutenant-governor of a neighboring state. He learns from the movies that the clean-cut, hard-working youth who enters business may hope to marry his employer's daughter and spend the late afternoons drinking highballs on the terrace of a country club. The Italian group in New Haven has no such spectacular rewards to offer. At a less ambitious level, too, the American sources of information and entertainment may set up goals which compete with those he has learned from his family. They provide him with a picture of even the humblest American as living a respectable, secure, and enjoyable family life in which the mention of spaghetti, bocce, or a mother country would be more than a little incongruous. The total effect is a continuous, subtle suggestion that just to be a plain American would bring such ample gratification that it is a goal eminently worth striving for.

Religious institutions also affect the behavior of the immigrants and their children in relation to nationality. The most conspicuous example of influence in the American direction is found in the operation of community houses and the proselytizing activities of the Protestant churches. As the Protestant churches are in this region a longer established American institution than the Catholic churches, such activities must be regarded as oriented toward diffusion of American traits. However, Protestant activities of this sort appear to be rather unimportant in New Haven, as the investigator has met only two informants who report having been influenced by them. The Catholic

Church, even though it was the church of the Italians in Europe, also operates in several ways as an Americanizing influence. Many of the Italians who live outside the solidly Italian neighborhood attend churches where English is the only modern language used. In this case, an understanding of the English language becomes important for even the older generation to satisfy its religious needs.

Many other social groupings occur in the city which bring together people who are of Italian origin and people who are longer established in this country or are of other recent immigrant stock. For example, an Italian family may have close neighbors who are not Italian, and will see them in the yard and in the street or may exchange visits with them. Various clubs are open to people of assorted nationalities. Informal social groups gather continually in public drinking places. In general it may be said that an individual of Italian descent can participate more freely and equally as a member of these groups, the more he adopts the behavior and attitudes that characterize members of the community at large rather than the special behavior and attitudes of the Italian group.

From these samples of forces operating from the "American" part of the community it is clear that second-generation Italians are inevitably brought into contact with persons who are not Italian, and with their habits and attitudes. Therefore second-generation Italians are socialized under genuinely dual cultural pressures. Were the Italian group sufficiently isolated from the rest of the community, the individual of the second generation might not become acquainted to any significant extent with American culture. The structure of the community is such, however, that the second generation is forced into repeated contact with American culture and people who conform to it.

The forces that have been described are intimately bound up with the status of the Italians within the community. If, on the one hand, the Italians were of high status, the community at large might value more highly their distinctive characteristics and not demand so much conformity to American ways as a condition of social acceptance. On the other hand, if their status were clearly defined as irrevocably low, the community might also not exert as much pressure as it does toward Americanization. Their intermediate and rising status is associated with their being at times rewarded for attempts at inclusion in the general American group and at times rejected.

Conditions in the Italian group

Of those aspects of community organization in which a distinctively Italian character is best preserved, the family is the most conspicuous. The family may be considered in general as the primary locus of the passing on of culture traits from generation to generation. Among the Italian-Americans of New Haven, it is still usually headed by people who came from Italy, and in the absence of influences to the contrary, the effect of the family organization would be, here just as in Italy, to preserve the culture traits which were internalized by the parents in their own childhood. This effect is indeed very pronounced. Under conditions of culture contact, knowledge and practice of American culture traits are also communicated from individual to individual within the family and in some cases are required for the survival of the family. Many parents are found, moreover, who feel that their children should become as thoroughly American as possible, and who exert some influence in that direction. But for the most part, so long as a family re-mains headed by members of the first generation, it may be recorded as exerting pressure in the direction of conservation of Italian culture traits. This influence is to be seen even in families that are oriented toward adopting American ways. As a very minimum, for example, the presence of elder relatives who have not learned English leads to the offering to the younger generation of certain rewards for learning at least some of the Italian language. In general, but with limits in certain families, the more that a person behaves in accordance with Italian norms, the more fully and positively will the older members of the family respond to him and accept him as a worthy member of their group.

Not only the immediate family but also the extended family group operates toward the conservation of Italian traits. The extended family usually includes, in addition to blood relatives on both sides who may be living in

the community or may visit it, several God-relatives. This extended family group, perhaps even more than the immediate family with its preponderance of American-born members, permits to an immigrant a great deal of social satisfaction almost entirely within the framework of Italian culture. For a member of the second generation, participation in the extended family group has a similar effect, and to the extent that participation is with the older members, emotionally satisfying relationships reward behavior which conforms to Italian norms.

Most of the Italians in New Haven live in neighborhoods where either all their immediate neighbors, or a considerable number of close neighbors, are fellow Italians. Most commonly the immediate neighbors include families who originated in the same town in Italy. Participation in informal neighborhood groups, therefore, usually acts, similarly to participation in the immediate family and in the extended family group, in the direction of conservation of Italian culture. It should also be remembered, however, that the neighborhood and the extended family associations are, just like the associations within the immediate family, a locus of transmission of acquaintance with American culture, and that the neighborhood frequently includes non-Italian families. The point to be made here is simply that these conditions generally, as a minimum, make for conservation of Italian culture and loyalties more than would conditions of similar association with non-Italians.

The church has already been shown to have some influence toward breaking down the isolation of the Italian group. On the other hand, the Italian churches in which sermons and announcements are made in Italian operate in part to conserve the Italian group and its customs. The presence of such churches makes it possible for members of the older generation to satisfy their religious needs without being required to adopt any American traits for that purpose. The second generation, under the dual influence of the family and the public school, is prepared to satisfy its religious needs in either an American or Italian context. Attendance at an Italian church, for this generation, simply tends to encourage adherence to Italian traits by associating them further than they otherwise would be with the satisfaction of religious needs.

In providing public information and entertainment for the second generation, the Italian part of the community is far less conspicuous than the American. This fact is partially due to the reaction of the second generation, for the facilities are present. There are at least four weekly newspapers published in the Italian language in New Haven, and one or two daily papers published in Italian in New York which have a wide circulation in New Haven. For the older generation, influence of these newspapers must be mostly in the direction of conservation of Italian culture. But they are read by very few of the second generation, and there they probably have a negligible effect. The same is true of presentations of Italian movies, plays, etc.; they are attended by very few among the second generation.

There are in New Haven a number of Italian clubs. For the older generation they make possible the satisfaction of needs for entertainment, companionship, identification with a group, and, to a certain extent, economic security with a minimum of adoption of American traits. For the second generation, similar specific rewards are offered. Also, for the second generation, Italian clubs are a means of acquainting the individual with Italian culture traits more fully than might otherwise occur. In general, an Italian club is likely to be a social group in which Italian characteristics are at a premium ; to the extent that a member of the second generation wishes to be accepted in the group, direct or subtle pressure is put on him to conform to Italian norms.

To some extent the government of Italy was acting at the time of this study, directly or indirectly, to encourage the cohesiveness of the Italian population in New Haven.[46] There is very little information gained directly from informants that indicates such an influence. However, the public utterances of the Italian vice-consul in the city were a very clear call to the people of Italian descent to maintain a feeling of solidarity and a loyalty to the idea of the mother country. At the same time the vice-consul may well have been an influence also toward adoption of American culture. For example, he was known to urge members of the first generation to become American citizens, and he spoke of the need for being good American citizens. It is very likely that the Italian Government also operated indirectly to encourage solidarity through aiding with whatever facilities it could the formation and

46. It should be remembered that facts are being stated as of 1937 and 1938.

continuance of the Italian organizations. In addition, the contents of the Italian language newspapers which had the widest circulation suggested very strongly that the Italian government was influential in determining their policies, with presumably the same purpose in mind of encouraging the solidarity of the Italian population here. All these influences probably had a considerable effect on some of the first generation and to some extent on members of the second generation. But as they operated principally through the medium of the written Italian language and of its spoken form, their influence must of necessity have been very much less in the second generation.

These separate forces proceeding from the Italian side of the community indicate the presence of a general tendency similar to that traced in the American part—a tendency to expect individuals to conform to certain norms if they are to be accepted as members of the group. The second-generation Italian, therefore, is in contact with two groups which possess conflicting cultural norms. Each group demands conformity to its own norms as a condition for acceptance by the group and offers attractive rewards to its members. The psychological significance of this cultural situation and its consequence for the individual of the second generation will be discussed in the next chapter.

REFERENCES

ALLPORT, F. H. Social psychology. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1924.

BOAS, F. The effects of American environment on immigrants and their descendants. *Science,* 1936, *84,* 522-525.

BROWN, *J. S.* Generalized approach and avoidance responses in relation to conflict behavior. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Yale Univ., 1940.

BURLING, T. Cultural conflicts within the individual. *For. Lang. Inf. Serv. Interp. Release Clip Sheet,* 1934, *11,* 77-82.

CARPENTER, N. and KATZ, D. A study of acculturization in the Polish group of Buffalo, 1926-1928. *Univ. Buffalo Stud.,* 192829, 7, 101-133.

CHILD, I. L. A psychological study of second-generation Italians. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Yale Univ., 1939.

DAVIE, M. The pattern of urban growth. *In* Murdock, G. P. (ed.), *Studies in the science of society.* New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1937.

DAVIS, A. and DOLLARD, J. Children of bondage. Washington, American Council on Education, 1940.

DOLLARD, J. Caste and class in a southern town. New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1937.

DOLLARD, *J.,* DOOR, L. W., MILLER, *N. E.,* MOWRER, O. H. and SEARS, R. R. Frustration and aggression. New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1939.

DREIS, T. A. A handbook of social statistics of New Haven, Connecticut. New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1936.

DUNCAN, W. L. Parent-child isolations. *The Family,* 1929, *10, 1*15-118.

EFRON, D. and FOLEY, J. P., JR. Gestural behavior and social setting. *Z. Sozialforsch.,* 1937, *6,* 152-161.

FREUD, S. Civilization and its discontents. London, Hogarth Press, 1930.

HERSKOVITS, M. J. Acculturation. New York, Augustin, 1938.

HILGARD, E. R. and MARQUIS, D. G. Conditioning and learning. New York, Appleton-Century, 1940.

HOVLAND, C. I. and SEARS, R. R. Experiments on motor conflict. I. Types of conflict and their modes of resolution. *J. exper. Psy-chol.,* 1938, *28,* 477-493.

KATZ, D. and BRALY, K. Racial prejudice and racial stereotypes. *J. abnorm. soc. Psychol.,* 1935, *30,* 175-193.

KINGSLEY, H. L. and CARBONE, M. Attitudes of Italian-Americans toward race prejudice. *J. abnorm. soc. Psychol.,* 1938, *33,* 532537.

KOENIG, S. Immigrant settlements in Connecticut. Hartford, Conn. State Dept. Educ., 1938.

KRALL, D. The second-generation immigrant in America, with special reference to problems of adjustment. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Yale Univ., 1937.

LEWIN, K. A dynamic theory of personality. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1935.
LINTON, R. (ed.). Acculturation in seven American Indian tribes. New York, Appleton-Century, 1940.
MCGRANAHAN, D. V. A critical and experimental study of repression. *J. abnorm. soc. Psychol.,* 1940, *36,* 212-225.
MOWRER, O. H. Anxiety-reduction and learning. *J. exper. Psy-chol.,* 1940, *27,* 497-516.
MYERSON, A. The conflict between the new and the old generations. *The Family,* 1922, *3,* 163-165.
REDFIELD, R., LINTON, R. and HERSKOVITS, M. *J.* Memorandum for the study of acculturation. *Amer. J. Sociol.,* 1935, *41,* 366-370.
SEARS, R. R. Functional abnormalities of memory with special reference to amnesia. *Psychol. Bull.,* 1936, *33,* 229-274.
SELLIN, T. Culture conflict and crime. New York, Soc. Sci. Res. Counc. 1938.
WARE, C. F. Greenwich Village, 1920-1930. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1935.
WATSON, J. B. Psychological care of infant and child. New York, W. W. Norton, 1928.
WHITING, J. W. M. Becoming a Kwoma. New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1941.
WILLIAMS, P. H. South Italian folkways in Europe and America. New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1938.

Anthony Julian Tamburri
John D. Calandra Italian American Institute – Queens College, CUNY

REFLECTIONS ON ITALIAN AMERICANS AND "OTHERNESS"

Preliminary Musings

As I wrestled with some thoughts late one night soon in the aftermath of the Don Imus vs. the Rutgers University women's basketball team, I wondered what lesson(s) there could possibly be for us within the Italian/American community.[47] I subsequently mused: If there is one thing—and I must underscore, one of many—we might learn from the Don Imus debacle of spring 2007, it is that "names [indeed can] hurt you," to paraphrase the old children's retort to name-calling.[48] We might indeed rethink the twenty-first-century deconstructionists and rework Descartes's "Cogito ergo sum" into "Loquor ergo sum"; or, to be more precise with regard to the theme at hand, "I speak, therefore, I can hurt."

More significant to the matter at hand, if there is anything positive that can come out of such a media debacle, it is the possibility of rekindling such a discussion on race and ethnicity within the Italian/American community.[49] Yes, we have had ample opportunities in the past decade to rekindle such a conversation—indeed, with very little success, if any at all—but we should not lose hope. We did, I believe, as the collective imaginary of the United States, lose something somewhere between the 1980s and 1990s, when, so it seems, certain concepts fell by the wayside. One sad result in all of this is the loss of the word "acceptance" and its concept of inclusiveness. If memory does not fail me, this was indeed the operative word in the 1960s and 1970s, during the progressive period of socio-political advancements in a collective consciousness with regard to race and gender. Yet, today, it seems to have been replaced by the ever so implicitly exclusionary term "tolerance." Furthermore, to be sure, the power of language became tantamount; people stated things (be it fact or fiction), and these things often became Truth.[50]

This most significant difference in terminology, as simple as it may seem at first glance, could make a wonderfully productive starting point for a reworking of an Italian/American collective imaginary on race and ethnicity, so that, while we are always wanting to move ahead, this might be one moment where we indeed decide to go backwards (if ever so briefly), in order to move forward eventually in a much more constructive manner, which has clearly proven otherwise in this regard. This can, for sure, be a beginning for a discussion between all the main "players"—media, political, and intellectual/academic figures alike—in order for Italian Americans to tackle head-

47. For more on my use of the slash in place of the hyphen, see my *To Hyphenate or not to Hyphenate: the Italian/American Writer: Or, An* Other *American?* (Montreal: Guernica Editions, 1991).

48. For more information on the story, see for instance, http://nbcsports.msnbc.com/id/17982146.

49. Jerry Krase is one of the names that come to mind when one thinks of race relations and the Italian/American community. He has indeed revisited much of the many related issues in his i-Iraly.org blog at http://www.i-italy.org/user/krase. In this regard, for instance, I would also point to one of the more recent publications on the topic of race and Italian Americans, *Are Italians White?: How Race is Made in America.* Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2003).

50. This seems ever so present in our national discourse on politics as articulated by both elected officials and the many media. With specific regard to Italian Americans, for sure, the analogous topic of individualism and all that it comports within the Italian/American community is a topic ripe for exploration, though better suited for its own venue. To date, no one has truly addressed the issue in any profound manner. The one thing that has become apparent is that the Italian/American community has an excess of dinner dances and black-tie galas for the purpose of fundraising, but very little of those funds raised ever go to cultural events such as symposia on the social sciences, theater, film, or literature, to name a few. Germane to these opulent celebrations, some have even called them mutual admiration events. Furthermore, in informal conversations some have mumbled about so-called "self-proclaimed leaders" who, regardless of their lack of expertise in certain socio-political and/or cultural arenas, insist on being the lead voice(s). It comes down to, so it seems, a sense of entitlement and lack of humility of any sort for which the self-appointed, paradoxically, consider themselves the obvious choice for that situation at hand. These are, in fact, some of the issues that, in a disinterested self-assessment of the community, would come to the fore for further examination and analysis.

© S.IJSPC vol. 1 Issue 1, pp. X-XX

on the discourse of race and ethnicity that, over the past twenty-five-plus years, seems to have been conveniently muzzled by the power of language, be it verbal or visual.[51]

Where We've Been

How might all of this relate to Italian Americans, one might further muse, at this juncture?[52] First, I would suggest that race is an issue we still need to explore—interrogate, if you will—within the Italian/American communities. This question, I would further contend, is twofold in nature and scope. It deals with, on the one hand, how Italians in America (read, Italian immigrants and Italian Americans) have been considered, portrayed, and treated throughout the long history here within the United States. One might readily argue that the plight of the Italian began back in 1906, at the onset of the motion picture industry; one need only hark back to silent films such as F. A. Dobson's *TheSkyscrapers of New York* (1905), Edwin Porter's *The Black Hand* (1906), and/or D. W. Griffith's *The Avenging Conscious* (1914), each of which may figure as early, *good* candidates as the springboard for such stereotyping; *Skyscrapers* offered the first appearance of "Dago Pete," a small-time crook who steals his boss's watch while shifting blame onto a co-worker; the second film clearly helped solidify the stereotype of the "black hand"; and the Italian character in this third film is an ill-reputed blackmailer.

Themes such as sex, violence, sentimentality, family relations, and the like will seem to dominate the cinema of and about Italian Americans, generating a most contested debate, within the Italian/American community at the end of the 20th century about the portrayal of Italians and Italian Americans in United States media in general. In fact, even in his earlier film, *At The Altar* (1909), Griffith seemed to raise concern within the dominant culture by underscoring, in an apparently positive story-line, sexuality and violence as part of the Italian character. To be sure, both aggressive behavior and sexuality ultimately figured as two components of the Italian and Italian/American character as cinema developed, within the first half of the 20th century, in the United States.[53] Be it the gangster films of the 1930s, which laid the foundation for the violent mobster, or the oversexed individuals of the later years, the Italian male will, in many respects, ultimately culminate in a figure such as Tony Soprano, a violent, oversexed capo-regime whose sexual proclivities bring him to the edge of seducing his own nephew's fiancé, Adriana.[54]

On the other hand, the afore-mentioned Imus debacle calls into question the issue of how race is perceived, processed, and treated by a certain component of the Italian/American community. We need only to think back

51. While I have opted for the term "starting point," one might readily substitute it with "rallying point." This, I would submit, is the necessary ingredient for the community to cohere. To date, it seems we have yet to identify such an issue. I have dealt with this issue in my "The Italian/American Writer in "Exile": At Home, Abroad, Wherever!," *The Hyphenate Writer and The Legacy of Exile.*Paolo Giordano, ed. (New York: Bordighera P, 2010) 1-25.

52. I have dealt with various aspects of these issues in greater depth in two recent essays of mine: "Uno stato d'animo italiano/americano," *Nuova prosa* 50 (2009): 61-8; and "Appunti e notarelle sulla cultura diasporica degli Italiani d'America: ovvero, suggerimenti per un discorso di studi culturali," *Campi immaginabili* 34/35 (2007): 247-64.

53. On this and other themes surrounding the culture of the Italian American, see the following collection of essays: *Teaching Italian American Literature, Film, And Popular Culture*, Kathleen Zamboni McCormick and Edvige Giunta, eds. (New York: MLA, 2010).

54. In this regard, see my "Italian Americans and the Media: Cinema, Video, Television" in *Giornalismo e Letterature tra due mondi*. Ed. Franco Zangrilli (Caltanissetta: Sciascia, 2005) 305-24. Also, for For an acute reading of this early period of United States cinema vis-à-vis the representation of the Italian, see Ilaria Serra's excellent study, *Immagini di un Immaginario: L"emigrazione Italiana negli Stati Uniti fra I Due Secoli (1890-1924)* (Verona, Italy: CIERRE, 1997), especially 102-59, now available in English as *The Imagined Immigrant: Images of Italian Emigration to the United States between 1890 and 1924* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinso UP, 2009) 96-130.

While there have been numerous essays over the years dedicated to the cinema and/or representation of Italians and Italian Americans in US cinema, since the turn of the century, conversely, only five books have appeared in the United States, one edited, four authored. They are: Anna Camaiti Hostert and Anthony Julian Tamburri, eds. *Screening Ethnicity. Cinematographic Representations of Italian Americans in the United States* (Boca Raton: Bordighera P, 2002), published simultaneously in Italian as *Scene italoamericane: Rappresentazioni cinematografiche degli italiani d'America* (Rome: Luca Sossella Editore, 2002); Anthony Julian Tamburri, *Italian/American Short Films & Videos: A Semiotic Reading* (West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2002); Peter Bondanella, *Hollywood Italians: Dagos, Palookas, Romeos, Wise Guys, and Sopranos* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Fred Gardaphé, *From Wiseguys to Wise Men: The Gangster and Italian American Masculinities* (New York, Routledge, 2006); George De Stefano, *An Offer We Can't Refuse: The Mafia in the Mind of America* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2006).

to the two infamous episodes of the 1980s, Howard Beach and Bensonhurst. These were two tragic sites of racial strife that involved to varying degrees the Italian/American community. Yet, so it seems, the majority of the then leaders of the Italian/American community remained silent on the issues. Yet, again, the counter-demonstrations did nothing but underscore the fairly widely perceived stereotype of the Italian American as racist, bigoted, and, ultimately, capable of engaging in dumb-show, as a number of Italian Americans countered the protests of the African-American community with vulgar gestures, racial epithets, and the despicable display of watermelons, as the African-American contingency marched down the streets of Bensonhurst. Two Italian Americans spoke up in print. Immediately after the Brooklyn tragedy, Jerome Krase, then professor of sociology at Brooklyn College, wrote an op-ed in *Newsday*.[55] A few months later, Robert Viscusi, also of Brooklyn College, published an essay in *Voices in Italian Americana*, in which he laid out a series of "strategic imperatives" for Italian/American culture.[56]

One of the primary steps that we in the Italian/American community need to do at this juncture is to re-visit our history. It is a record that is rich with achievements and successes. It is also a record that lists a series of sad and tragic events and episodes that have befallen our own turn-of-the-twentieth-century Italian Americans. But, it is also a record that, as the more recent cases of racial strife have demonstrated, has also proven at times to be inimical to the racial challenges that blacks have had to confront throughout the years.[57] Such challenges, so it seems, have often been seen as "their" problems. But, as the history of Italian America proves, these have also been "our" problems. During the first half of the twentieth century, actually since the onslaught of the major wave of immigration (1880-1924), Italians, like other southern Europeans, were perceived as non-white in this country. Indeed, while it is true that blacks constituted the larger amount of people lynched, Italian immigrants have the dubious distinction of being the largest group hung at one time.[58]

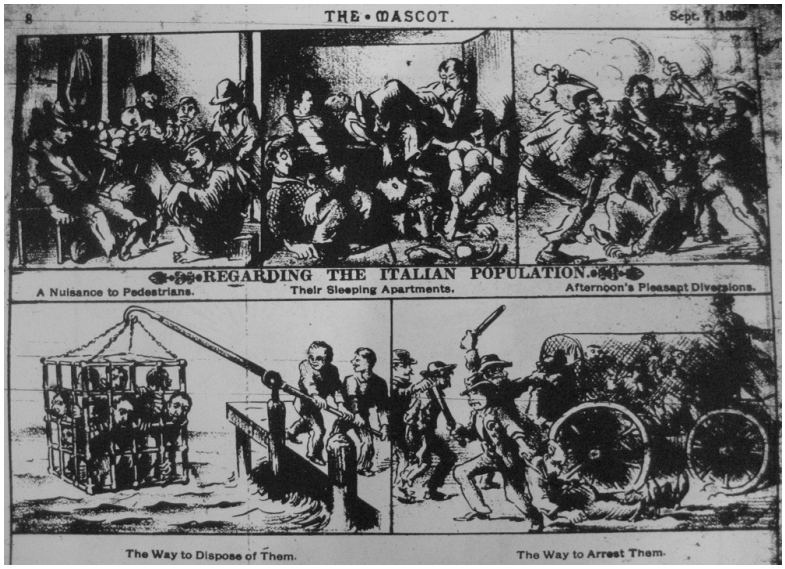
Furthermore, well before the onset of cinema at the beginning of the twentieth century and its negative representations as we have seen above, Italians had already been suffering acts of visual vilification in the print media. Be it in magazines such as *The Mascot*, *Judge* and even *Life*, the cartoon depictions of the Italian immigrant were fundamentally mean and, both literally and figuratively, *dehumanizing*. The following two cartoons underscore the vituperative attacks against Italians at the turn of the century, well over one hundred years ago. The first cartoon was published in 1888 in *The Mascot*:

55. See, Jerry Krase, "Lest We Forget: Racism Will Make Victims of Us All," *The Brooklyn Free Press*, September 22, 1989, and John Kifner, "Bensonhurst: A Tough Code In Defense of a Closed World," *New York Times*, September 1, 1989.

56. See his excellent essay, "Breaking the Silence: Strategic Imperatives for Italian American Culture," *Voices in Italian Americana* 1.1 (1990): 1-13.

57. How ironic that as far back as 1974 Patrick Gallo wrote the following: "What is needed is an alliance of whites and Blacks, white-collar and blue-collar workers, based on mutual need and interdependence and hence an alliance of political participation. But before this can realistically come to pass, a number of ethnic groups have to develop in-group organization, identity, and unity." Gallo then concludes that "Italian-Americans may prove to be a vital ingredient in not only forging that alliance but in servicing as the cement that will hold our urban centers together" (see his *Ethnic Alienation: The Italian-Americans* [Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1974] 209). His words speak for themselves.

58. In this regard, I refer the reader to the following documentaries: *Linciati: Lynchings of Italians in America*. Dir. M. Heather Hartley, 2004, and *Pane amaro*. Dir. Gianfranco Norelli, 2009. See also the following books: *The 1891 New Orleans Lynching and U.S.-Italian Relations: A Look Back*, Marco Rimanelli and Sheryl Lynn Postman, eds. (New York: Peter Lang, 1992); Tom Smith, *The Crescent City Lynchings: The Murder of Chief Hennessy, the New Orleans "Mafia" Trials, and the Parish Prison Mob* (Guilford, CT: The Lyons Press, 2007); Richard Gambino, *Vendetta: A True Story of The Worst Lynching in America, The Mass Murder of Italian-Americans in New Orleans In 1891, The Vicious Motivations Behind It, And The Tragic Repercussions That Linger to This Day* (New York: Doubleday, 1977; now available by Guernica, 1998); and *On Lynchings: Southern Horrors, a Red Record, Mob Rule in New Orleans* (New York: Ayers, 1969).



This drawing proves to be, for sure, one of the vilest depictions to date of any ethnic group, to be sure. The triptych in the upper half is divided into the following categories: (1) "A Nuisance to Pedestrians (read, the Italians hanging out on street corners); (2) "Their Sleeping Apartments (read, their supposedly over-crowded living conditions); and (3) their "Afternoon's Pleasant Diversions (read, violent characteristics as a people).[59] As one views the lower half of this vignette, one finds a diptych that represents a violence toward the Italians, which, in the case of the first of the two sections, would seem reserved for the rodent or retile that one wishes to dispose of. Similarly, when arrested, as the second section recommends, they should be packed into a cage like the proverbial sardines; again, an action reserved the non-human.

Such dehumanization is actualized in the following cartoon that appeared in *Judge* magazine in 1903, "The Unrestricted Dumping-ground," where the Italian immigrants are half-human and half-animal, as we see below:

59. This depiction of Italians in 1888 is an uncanny anticipation of some of the lamentations we hear today about "illegal" (read, Hispanic) immigration in the United States. Namely, the three categories of Italian yesteryear resonate ever so loudly in today's discussions on Hispanic immigration: the day laborers and "gang-bangers" hanging out on street corners; Hispanics in over-crowded living conditions; and, as was thought about Italians of a century ago, violent characteristics of the Hispanic immigrant laborer. For a cinematic representation of the undocumented Hispanic immigrant, see the Italian/American movie *Amexicano* (Dir. Matthew Bonifacio, 2007).

Of course, when one thinks of that creature that is half-human and half-animal (i.e., horse), the first image that comes to mine is the centaur, which though half-animal—and possibly representative of an unbridled nature—it was also, like the mythic Chiron, civilized, kind, and intelligent, renown for his knowledge of the sciences. Our Italians in this vignette, to the contrary, are part human (head) and, in their animalistic characterization, part rodent, that which is, along with reptiles, the lowliest of the animal kingdom, one might readily argue. Thus, the Italian immigrant, "direct from the slums of Europe daily," as the shoot from which they fall is labeled, is represented as the lowliest from the animal world—the rat—and, as human, carries in his mouth those very weapons—stilettos—for which the Italian immigrant was accused of carrying and wielding when he so desired. Labels such as "mafia," "anarchists," and "socialists" written across their hats or bandanas, and the stereotypical dark complexion, black hair, and moustaches, only underscore the negative and dehumanized image of the Italian immigrant.

Indeed, while the specific theme of this vignette is that of the Italian immigrant, the overall notion of immigration is called into question by the image of President William McKinley in the upper left-hand corner in a cloud, as if looking down from heaven in disapproval, he having been the victim of assassination at the hands of immigrant Leon Frank Czolgosz. Finally, there is an extra-textual aspect to this vignette, in the form of the recently added "georgetownbookshop.com," obvious vendor of this image. Why, one wonders, is it acceptable for such negative and vituperative imagery of the Italian to be sold so it can be possibly framed and hung as a wall decoration? And, I should add, this now Internet book shop also sells similar posters of dehumanizing and vilifying imagery of other groups. The obvious question that comes to the fore would be that since posters of all ethnic groups are sold, the damage is cancelled out. Not necessarily. If anything, it reinforces the Wasp / Ethnic (read also, race) dichotomy that has and continues to divide the socio-political fabric of the United States.[60]

Such vituperation did not end early in the twentieth century. It indeed became intense once more after the alliance between Italy, Germany, and Japan during WWII, together with Italy's declaration of war on the United States on December 11, 1941. These two consecutive acts, especially, placed many immigrants on an enemy aliens list. One unspoken result, for sure, was what would seem to have been the subsequent generation's linguistic inheritance. "Don't speak the enemy's language," clamored the innumerable posters and other public announcements during that time. Furthermore, Italians were underutilized in numerous professions over the years, and in more recent times when it seems we became white and, consequently, respected members of the upper middle class, things have not improved as one might have expected.[61]

These are some of the reasons we need to revisit our history. Let us not forget that, according to what we might surmise from the behavior of some in the entertainment world, Italians are sometimes still fair game for ridicule in the public arena. We cannot always take for granted that we enjoy all the benefits of those who inhabit on a daily basis that world of WASP-dom. This, I would submit, is still not the case in spite of the wonderful successes of those past and present, including our current Speaker of the House, who broke both ethnic and gender boundaries, "at a single bound," as the old TV show proclaimed about Superman. Joey of *Friends*, George of *Seinfeld*, and the Romanos of *Everybody Loves Raymond* are three examples of what some might consider more recent negative portrayals of Italian Americans in the medium of television.[62]

---

60. For a general overview, Salvatore LaGumina, *WOP: A Documentary History of Anti-Italian Discrimination* (Toronto: Guernica, 1999; originally published 1973). Let us, in the meantime, keep in mind that discrimination for discrimination's sake should not be an end product. Victimization unto itself is, in the end, counterproductive.

61. For a chronology of governmental documentation, see the following website: http://italian.about.com/gi/ dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.foitimes.com/internment/chrono.html. For more on the history of this unspoken event, see *Alien Justice: Wartime Internment in Australia and North America*, Kay Saunders and Roger Daniels, eds. (St. Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 2000); Lawrence DiStasi, editor, *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment During World War II* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2001) and Steven R. Fox, *UnCivil Liberties: Italian Americans Under Siege during World War II* (Boca Raton: Universal Publishers, 2000 [1990]).

62. See Jonathan Cavallero, "Gangsters, Fessos, Tricksters, and Sopranos: the Historical Roots of Italian American Stereotype Anxiety," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (2004): 50-63.

Of course, the greatest issue here is one of a lack of a unified national Italian/American voice on these larger questions of the dominant culture's perception of Italians (read also, Italian Americans) in the United States. It is, of course, a question of hegemony, on the one had; that the collective imaginary of the United States has put forth an image of the Italian that most Italians know to be false. Yet, conversely, it is also a question of intra-

Why then, one might continue to ask, do individuals and companies continue to use a most offensive stereotype in a public forum, regardless of the context? The answer is quite simple, as disturbing as it may seem. Kinsley, MillerCoors LLC, Verizon, as well as others, basically feel entitled to do so because the so-called dominant culture thought process in the United States allows, indeed encourages, people to do so. From Kinsley one Italian-American groups sought a public apology (Not sure that happened. If it did, it was behind closed doors); others, like the Italian American Human Rights Foundation, succeed in having the spot pulled. This, I would underscore, is admirable to be sure. But it is not the end all. Indeed, it is only the beginning. we need to move forward from these apparent end goals.

Remedy to some of the above was sought out and obtained by individuals in the past. The late New York state senator John D. Calandra and colleagues took it upon themselves to investigate the treatment of Italian Americans—faculty, staff, and students—at the City University of New York in the 1970s, since there had been numerous complaints about the treatment of Italian Americans within CUNY. The finding was that Italian Americans were indeed under-utilized and under-represented at all levels university-wide. The immediate result was then Chancellor Kibbee's proclamation (December 9, 1976) that Italian Americans were to be considered a protective class throughout CUNY, with all the rights and privileges of the federally recognized affirmative action groups. Another result was the eventual formation of the Italian-American Institute to Foster Higher Education, in 1979, which, over the years, has been transformed, in both size and mission, into The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, a university-wide, research institute under the aegis of Queens College, CUNY.

The 1979 Institute was founded primarily to foster higher education among Italian Americans (through academic and career counseling especially) and impart, to both Italian Americans and non-Italian Americans alike, knowledge of the culture of Italian America. Over the years, the mission broadened, to include social, psychological, and demographic research on Italian Americans both within and beyond the walls of CUNY; one of its primary channels of communication is the television program *Italics*.[63] Today, these earlier research components are now buttressed by an equally rigorous sector of cultural activities that range from lectures to symposia to film series. Such an institute dedicated to Italian Americana—be it the original structure of 1979 or the more expanded unit of today—is a unique entity. No other center or institute both here in the Americas or in Italy (the exception being the Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli of Turin) approaches its magnitude and the possibilities therein.[64]

Where Might We Go from Here?

In his by now classic essay, *Race Matters* (1993), Cornel West suggested that the "fundamental crisis in black America [was] twofold: too much poverty and too much self-love."[65] I wonder if we might not be able to say that the problem, if this is the right term we might want to use, within Italian America is "too much [affluence] and [not enough] self-love," to borrow from West. Strong words, some might say. Problem? What problem, since many Italian Americans run major companies—national and international—and some of our best writers, for example, are of Italian descent? This, indeed, is, I would contend, part of the problem.

The affluence among Italian Americans has led them out of the city and into the suburbs, thus believing that all is well, all obstacles have been surpassed, and now we can move forward. With such an exodus, the various

collaboration on the part of the Italian/American community; that it must indeed unite itself around that one or two issues that coalesces the group, and, *una volta per tutte*, it moves forward in a constructive manner. I have discussed this further in my above-cited essay "The Italian/American Writer in "Exile."

63. *Italics* first aired in 1988, and has since broadcast monthly programs of thirty minutes in conjunction with CUNY TV. For more on its more recent broadcasts, go to http://cuny.tv/series/italics/index.lasso.

64. There is still much to resolve vis-à-vis the question of Italian Americans within CUNY as a "protected class" and thus part of the "affirmative action" policies and procedures. For more information, see the Calandra Institute website: http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/calandra.

65. See his *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993) 63.

Italian/American neighborhoods (proverbial Little Italies and the like) underwent dramatic change. First of all, the younger members left, often selling off parents' homes and businesses to new immigrants, non Italian Americans, for which the various old stomping grounds, especially the Little Italies, turned into what Jerry Krase and others have recently labeled "Italian-American theme parks."[66] Second, the original cultural artifacts and practices were willy-nilly transformed into commercial ventures, losing their original cultural and historical valence. A more recent example is the brouhaha over the San Gennaro festival of Manhattan's Little Italy, when a subcommittee of Community Board 2 rejected the application for the 79th annual San Gennaro Feast, reason being that no representative of the Feast appeared before the subcommittee. If "The San Gennaro feast is a very important tradition for the Italian-American community, and I hope to see it continue," as Ms. Derr stated when offering to postpone the vote so the application can be defended, one wonders why no one from the San Gennaro committee showed up in the first place to present the application? In addition, one surely wonders about the current cultural and historical valence of the feast; as the *New York Times* article, in closing, quoted an unidentified customer in a barbershop, "When I was a kid, the feast was about family, religion, and food. Now it's about CDs and three socks for $10" (April 15, 2007).

Affluence: There is no doubt that our *paesanos* have "made it" in all walks of life. Some of the more notable companies, national and international, have had and continue to have Italian Americans at the helm. There are those who run major home-furnishing companies, those who run major investment firms, those who run major publishing houses, those who run major medical companies, and those who are at the helm in significant governmental positions (in this case perhaps more influence than affluence), from local to national. Affluence, therefore, and, dare I say its inseparable twin, influence, are up front and present in the Italian/American community.

"And so what's your point?, one might readily ask. To be sure, there has been an admirable display of a certain type of philanthropy within the Italian/American community: various sectors of hospitals, endowed chairs in business and the sciences, and sports arenas have all been the beneficiaries of Italian/American philanthropy. Where we are dramatically lacking, I would contend, is with regard to what I have labeled in conversations with friends, *book culture*. Here, of course, I use the term "book" as a wide-reaching label that necessarily includes all of the arts: classical and contemporary, high-brow and popular; figurative, performative, visual, and written. One example: Only this month was there the announcement of a set of three buildings acquired for an Italian/American museum in New York City. To date, a brick and mortar museum, *come Dio comanda*, as we might say in Italian, does not exist.[67] The 1999 co-sponsored New York exhibition of Five Centuries of Struggle and Achievement (co-sponsored by the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute and the New York Historical Society, and curated by the late Philip Cannistraro) was a wonderful project that ran for four months. It consisted of at least a half dozen rooms in which artifacts were displayed and, in some cases, living and travel conditions were reassembled in order for the twenty-first century individual to have some sort of concrete idea of the conditions at the turn of the twentieth century. In all, it was an excellent exhibition, with an impressive catalog; it surely could have been the impetus from which to move forward in an expeditious manner. Instead, it has taken, so it seems, close to eight years just to get possession of property for a future museum. Basically, we have had to wait more than one hundred twenty years for an independently standing Italian/American museum, whereas other United States ethnic groups got the job done well before we did.

Amor proprio: self-love, we would call it in English. One of the first steps, to be sure, which demonstrates that we possess a healthy dose of Italian/American self-love, is for us to be aware of our culture and its history. A second step

66. See, Jerome Krase, "The Spatial Semiotics of Little Italies and Italian Americans," in *Industry, Technology, Labor and the Italian American Communities*. Mario Aste et al., eds. (Staten Island, New York: American Italian Historical Association, 1997) 98-127.

67. As I write, there is the emergent Italian American Museum in Little Italy, in Manhattan, which opened in April 2008. But its space is currently limited to the original site of the old Banca Stabile, which closed in 1932. Something similar to the other ethnic museums in New York, for example, can only make us ponder why it has taken so long for such an entity to come into existence. Of course, other questions abound. But they are more suitable for another venue.

is that, when the situation warrants, we are willing to bring forth the cause of Italian America, even if it means that someone from outside our community may indeed question our *modus operandi*.

One of the most egregious examples of one's unawareness is Gay Talese's 1993 essay, "Where Are the Italian American Novelists?" Until the appearance of this essay, Talese, to my knowledge, had never truly negotiated in any profound manner the cultural terrain of Italian America, except of course for his 1970 bestseller, *Honor Thy Father*, a journalistic investigation into the history of the reputed Joe Bonanno, crime family. The book eventually earned Talese a great deal of respect in the world of print journalism and consequently solidified his name as one of the founders of what was then dubbed "new journalism" (The irony in Talese having written a book on the Bonanno family, however, is that today he is one of the more vocal people against those who adopt similar themes [organized crime] in their work. All this seems to be a 1990s awakening on his part, which appears to have coincided with the publication of his genealogical account, *Unto The Sons*.). The type of activity that Talese exhibited in his 1993 essay on the Italian/American novel, nevertheless, resembles to some degree what I have previously dubbed, in conversation with friends and in a 2003 essay, as *intellectual ethnic slumming*: that is, a visitation upon the greater realm of, in our case, Italian America by someone whose quotidian space is, to the contrary, the *non Italian/American* world, and yet, every once in a while, decides to visit the *Italian/American masses*, so to speak, for an array of reasons, many of which are not always clear. In his essay, Talese demonstrated precisely how misinformed he was at that time of the extent to which the Italian/American novel had already been in existence.[68] The scholar Rose Basile Green had already documented the history of Italian/American novels in her 1974 study, *The Italian-American Novel*, both in the ninety-plus number of books she discussed within her main text and the more than two hundred entries of novels she listed in her bibliography. The question then, for Talese, should have been not so much "where are the novelists?" but "why are the novelists ignored?" Talese himself, however, was obviously not familiar with the Italian/American fictional landscape, for which the more relevant and therefore exceedingly more significant question to pose did not form part of his semiotic horizon.

There is, more significantly, another side to the metaphorical coin of *ethnic slumming*, and it is Gramscian in content, to be sure. Namely, what are the *duties* and/or *responsibilities*, if any, of someone involved, however so slightly, in Italian Americana? Must this person take on that Gramscian role, or some semblance thereof, of the "organic intellectual," or can (should?) s/he just go about his/her business and *do his/her thing* as the individual s/he is? This is, I would submit, one of the most important issues that impact our community, one that clearly deserves much greater attention from all of us. It is, I would contend at this point, that second step required by one's sense of *amor proprio*. We need, for sure, to ponder further the issue of the group versus the individual, that person similar to a Gay Talese who has the ability (read, *cultural currency*) to further the group's cause. This is an age-old question that Italian Americans need to tackle since we can now readily say that we have, literally and metaphorically, arrived.

Allow me to suggest possible remedies, modest to be sure, in the form of a series of questions that follow. First, why is there no section in certain bookstores, especially those larger establishments in a city like New York, dedicated to Italian/American writing? Why would a manager, owner, and/or corporate CEO shun such an idea? Given the thousands of square feet a bookstore occupies, what impact could a regular bookshelf (five to seven yards of space) of Italian/American books have? Second, why is it that of the six or seven of the dozen or so forthcoming books on the home page of a book publisher, the one title that is dedicated to Italian Americana does not appear? Does the director not think the Italian/American title warrants mention on the first page of the press's website instead of being relegated to the second page among the second half of the titles mentioned? Third, how is it possible that a book dedicated to United States poetry, one that seems to present itself as histor-

68. "Beyond "Pizza" And "Nonna"! Or, What's Bad about Italian/American Criticism?Further Directions for Italian/American Cultural Studies." *MELUS*. 28.3 (2003): 149-74.

ically analytical and prescriptive, does not include a chapter on any Italian American, not even someone like John Ciardi?

In an interview with author George De Stefano, I posed the question of responsibilities of those of us in positions of authority in our respective fields. His first words were, poignantly so, "cultural transmission." We need to be sure that those who follow, the younger generation, are aware of our culture, past and present. They can indeed have access to such knowledge in two ways: (1) People need to be there to impart the information necessary for such cultural awareness. This includes teachers and professors, on all levels. Such a strategy for success is twofold: (a) people need to get into the various K-12 curricula lessons on significant Italian Americans. To date, the New Jersey Italian and Italian American Heritage Commission has a wonderful plan they are trying to get passed on a state level; (b) Professors at the college/university level need to include Italian Americana in their various courses and, especially at the graduate level, in their seminars. (2) This, in fact, leads to the second of two ways—an area where "push comes to shove," so to speak. This is where cultural philanthropy comes into play; professorships in Italian Americana need to be established; centers for Italian/American Studies need to be established. Both, clearly, can be done through endowments of approximately $2,000,000 and $1,000,000 respectively. Endowed professorships and centers run the gamut for other United States ethnic groups, funded by individuals and/or their foundations. Very few individuals among the Italian/American community have engaged in such cultural philanthropy; we can count the number on one hand, with an extra finger to spare.

So, what to do? We need to be sure that Italian and Italian/American history and culture are part of the USA curriculum at the public school level, K-12. We also need to be sure that professorships in Italian Americana exist on the college level; I have spoken to this issue in this venue on a couple of occasions. The success of such actions lies with us, the Italian/American community. We need to support our own activities in that we attend events, and this means sitting through lectures that, in the end, truly do inform us toward a greater completeness of knowledge of our culture in spite of the fact that we might believe we know it all already. We need to respond with courteous yet firm indignation when—whether it be at a social event or business meeting—someone makes an offensive comment about Italians or Italian Americans in his/her feeble attempt to make a joke. We need to engage in a cultural philanthropy that is second to none!

More significant, it is tantamount that our public officials engage in a greater degree of ethnic discourse, one that clearly surpasses those ethnic boundaries of social events. Namely, it is simply not enough for our elected representatives (congressional, senatorial, state, and municipal) to proclaim their Italian pride at Italian events such as Italy's National Day or the Columbus Day Parade. They need to do so at events and in venues that are NOT Italian and Italian/American. They need to uphold the value of our Italian legacy in these venues precisely because, for instance, (1) what we know today as "modernity" has its origins in the Italian Renaissance; (2) what we know as philanthropy today has its "modern" roots in the Italian Renaissance; (3) what we know today as the United States legal system, it has its roots in an eighteenth-century Italian legal philosopher, Cesare Beccaria; (4) what we know of the art world is that more than sixty-percent of the world's production is Italian in origin; (5) what we know of United States contemporary literature is that some of our best sellers are Baldacci, Ciresi, DeLillo, Scottoline, Trigiani, to name a few. Simply stated, we need to go beyond "pizza" and "nonna"!

We need, in the end, to learn to take our culture much more seriously than we have as a community at large. We cannot continue to engage in a series of reminiscences that lead primarily to nostalgic recall. Instead, we need to revisit our past, reclaim its pros and cons, and reconcile it with our present. Namely, we need to figure out where we came from, ask those unpopular questions of both ourselves and the dominant culture, and continue to champion our Italian/American cultural brokers of all sorts—artists and intellectuals—so that they can continue to engage in an Italian/American state of mind, if such is their choice.

Ultimately, all of this is dependent upon our recapturing our own sense of *amor proprio* and combining it with our abilities—financial, performative, aesthetic, intellectual, etc.—in order to document, maintain, transmit, and further propagate our Italian/American culture; anything short of such activity is tantamount to failure.[69]

69. This essay first appeared in the volume *The Status of Interpretation in Italian American Studies: Proceedings of the First Forum in Italian American Criticism [FIAC].* Jerome Krase, ed. (Stony Brook, NY: Forum Italicum Publishing, 2011) 45-60.

Ben Lawton – Purdue University

THE MAFIA AND THE MOVIES

Why Is Italian American Synonymous with Organized Crime?[70]

Americans are fascinated by the "Mafia" and its very different depictions in the media by, among others, "Italians," "Italian Americans,"[71] "Jewish Americans," and "Other" Americans. Any attempt to study this phenomenon risks running aground on the twin shoals of the intended meaning of the terms used to describe it and the preconceived understanding of those terms by one's audience. And yet, given that this is the topic at hand, one can't avoid using these expressions.

What do we mean when we speak of "Mafia," and of its depiction by "Italians," "Italian Americans," "Jewish Americans," and "Other" Americans? If I may repeat myself (Lawton 1995), it should be self-evident by now that many terms have broken entirely free from their etymological and semantic moorings and are, if not automatically under erasure, at least capable of "different" interpretations. As a result, they have come to men whatever the speaker/writer and the reader/listener wish them to mean, however, antipodally. In this first paragraph and whenever I felt it particularly necessary, I have, therefore, chosen to enclose in quotes such free-floating signifiers to indicate that, while I may presume to ascribe a particular meaning to them, I am fully aware that different readers may opt to understand them otherwise. This is certainly true of terms such as "Mafia" and "mafioso" (and its variants), which are used so ubiquitously that they have become virtually meaningless. The same is obviously true of expressions such as "Italians", "Italian Americans," "Jewish Americans," and "Other" Americans. When does an "Italian" become an "Italian American," or an "American?" The media of the times considered Al Capone an "Italian;" he considered himself an "American" (Yaquinto 7). To the best of my knowledge, at that time, neither the media nor he ever used the expression "Italian American" to describe him. When does a "Negro" become a "Black," an "African American," or an "American?" Do we think of the "American" descendants of "white" South Africans as "African Americans?" Probably not. When does a "Jew" become "Jewish American," or an "American?" What do we think of when we speak of "Hispanics?" Very probably not someone who comes from Spain. And when we speak of "Latinos" we certainly don't think of the descendants of the ancient Latins.[72] The adoption of arbitrary labels by given self-defined "minority" "groups" which only the given "group" can use to speak of self is, essentially, a device intended to make it impossible for "others" to speak for and about the "group." "Minority" "groups" frequently reject any attempt to be categorized as "group" while laying claim to benefits which accrue only as a function of belonging to the given "group." To cite only one example, "race," we are told, is a "social construction" which is to be eschewed. And yet, many of those belonging to that presumably non-existent category accuse those who question the advisability of "affirmative action" of being "racist." At first blush this appears to be a paradox or a conundrum. "Race," ethnicity," and the "Mafia" are and are not at the same time. Like nation states, they are arbitrary constructs. They are "fictions," and yet the are very "real." Like nation states, they have borders which, however arbitrary, can be crossed only if one is in possession of the appropriate passport and, quite frequently, visa. Like national states, the differences between those within are frequently far greater than those with "foreigners" residing just across the border. And yet, like nation states, those within, no matter how different, al-

70. Originally published in *Screening Ethnicity*, Anna Camaiti-Hostert and Anthony Julian Tamburri, eds. Boca Raton, FL: Bordighera Press, 2002.

71. As Pelllegrino D'Acierno acknowledges in his "Introduction" to *The Italian Heritage: A Companion to Literature and Arts*, the "discussion [of how to write the expression "Italian American"] is greatly indebted {to} . . . Anthony Tamburri." I refer the reader to Tamburri's *To Hyphenate or Not To Hyphenate? The Italian/American Writer as Other American*; to D'Acierno's "Introduction" cited above; and to Thomas Belmonte's defense of the hyphen in "The Contradictions of ItalianAmerican Identity: An Anthropologist's Personal View" (D'Acierno). As for me, while I am tempted to continue to use the orthographically questionable but, I hope, ethnically more optimistic neologism, *ItalianAmerican* which I first used in "What is 'ItalianAmerican' Cinema" (Lawton 1995) in response to Tamburri's essay, I will return to orthodoxy given that I do not want to lose myself in a debate that deserves to be developed more fully elsewhere.

72. Interestingly, my MS Word spellchecker offers me, inter alia, the following alternatives: Latino; Latinos; Latin. The plural of Latin is not contemplated.

© S.IJSPC vol. 1 Issue 1, pp. X-XX

most invariably speak a common language, one all too frequently incomprehensible to those without. Like nation states, they engage in internal political strife, foreign policy, and, not infrequently, wars to conquer other "lands" or defend their own "turf." While understanding and respecting the usefulness and perhaps even the necessity of such tactics from a "political" perspective, I shall plunge forward between Scylla and Charybdis, my ears deaf to deadly appeal of their siren songs, my eyes on my objective--to attempt to understand why "Italian American" is synonymous with "organized crime."

Some films *seem* [emphasis mine] to glorify what is self-evidently unacceptable criminal behavior (*The Godfather*, *Goodfellas*). Others condemn the pernicious influence of this allegedly very dangerous "shadow" government (*Salvatore Giuliano, Seduction of Mimi, The Godfather 2, The Sicilian, Lucky Luciano*). Some would seem to depict the "Mafia" as metaphor for the U.S. government (*The Godfather; The Godfather 2*). A select few condemn this unacceptable behavior (*The Flight of the Innocent; Bronx Tale*); Far too many seem to suggest that certain kinds of behavior are intrinsically Italian-American (*Some Like it Hot, Mean Streets, Prizzi's Honor, Analyze This, Mickey Blue Eyes*). Finally, there are those that suggest that organized crime is simply one means of achieving the American dream, means that has been adopted to a greater or lesser degree by all immigrant groups (*The Godfather, Cotton Club, Scarface, Year of the Dragon*). The cumulative effect of all these films creates the impression that all Italian Americans are somehow connected to organized crime. A quick search of the Internet Movie Data Base for films that include the word "Mafia" in their title results in 67 movie titles, eleven television movies, one made for video movie, and three television series.[73] Carlo Cortes has observed that Hollywood produced "film after film involving the Mafia or other Italian-American criminal agglomeration referred to more generically as the mob or organized crime," and lists 21 titles.[74] The number of films that deal with organized crime and that either state or imply that it is comprised of Italian Americans is virtually endless.

Other studies have considered and will no doubt continue to consider these depictions, their frequently questionable historical accuracy, their "intent," and reactions to them. They have and will also ask if the "Mafia" really exists as all-powerful criminal organization whose tentacles reach into all aspects of American life, or if it is the equivalent of the Wild West and the Pony Express, phenomena of relatively brief duration and of marginal importance even in their heyday, occurrences that were immortalized by the media. What I am concerned with here is why mainstream American movies and television always, seemingly, depict Italian Americans as members of organized crime. Why has "Mafioso" become a synonym for Sicilian, for Italian, for, in short, Italian American?

It should go without saying that this assumption is wildly inaccurate. This has been demonstrated repeatedly in study after study (Iorizzzo, 1970, Homer 1974, Smith 1975, Potter and Jenkins in NIAF 1986, Hess 1998, Mangione and Morreale 1992, Morreale 1995, De Stefano, and Kappler et al. 2000). This point was made repeatedly by the distinguished participants in the NIAF-sponsored crime symposium held in November of 1986.[75] There is absolutely no reasonable correlation between the extremely limited involvement of Italian Americans in organized crime and the pandemic depiction of this alleged involvement in the media. The discrepancy between these figures is made particularly apparent by the statistics furnished by a recent publication of the Italic Studies Institute which reveals that, while the total number of Italian Americans was 14.7 million according to the 1990 U.S. Census, the total number of Italian Criminals were less than 5,000, according to 1999 FBI Statistics. The study goes on to point out that historically, "Italian gang members never numbered more than 5,000, which amounts to less than .03% of the overall Italian-American community." Others reports seem to suggest that even these figures are inflated. Justin Dintino, citing figures taken from the President's Commission on Organized Crime, stated that in 1986 there were only "seventeen hundred members of the La Cosa Nostra in this country," out of a total of

73. See Appendix 1**:** http://us.imdb.com/Tsearch?mafia.

74. *The Don is Dead* (1973), *Crazy Joe* (1974), *Mr. Majestyk* (1974), *Capone* (1975), *Silver Bears* (1978), *Gloira* (1980), *Absence of Malice* (1981), *Sharky's Machine* (1981), *The Cotton Club* (1984), *The Pope of Greenwich Village* (1984), *Code of Honor* (1985), *The Naked Face* (1985*), The Big Easy* (1987), *Heat* (1987), *Sweet Revenge* (1987), *The Untouchables* (1987), *The Dead Pool* (1988), *Last Rites* (1988), *Kill Me Again* (1989), *GoodfFellas* (1990), and *Mobsters* (1991).

75. See Appendix I.

approximately "five hundred thousand" members of organized crime nationwide (NIAF 1986).[76] In other words, "when you look at the total number of L.C.N. members and you divide it into five hundred thousand, the L.C.N. is one-twenty-fifth of the organized crime members in this country." He concludes by arguing that, in fact, the members of L.C.N., "many of whom are not Italians," in fact constitute only .01% of Italian Americans.

Not only are Italian Americans not connected to crime in any statistically significant manner, historically, as a whole, they have always been extremely hard working, law abiding citizens. Turn of the century police reports describe them as the most law-abiding ethnic group in New York, to cite only one example (Giacosa 170). They have also been extremely successful economically. It should suffice to remember that until the advent of the Japanese megabanks, the largest bank in the world was the Bank of America, institution that was originally called the Bank of Italy of California, and that it was founded by Amedeo Peter Giannini (Schiavo 311; Mangione and Morreale 198-99 and 388-89). It should also be remembered that by 1974 the average family income of Italian Americans was above that of Baptists, British Protestants, and Episcopalians, among others. They were surpassed only by Irish Catholics and Jewish Americans (D'Acierno 700).

When one contrasts these facts with the depiction of ItalianAmericans in American movies as reported by the Italic Studies Institute, one can't but be astonished, to say the very least:

Total Italian related films since sound era (1928) 1057

Films which portray Italians in a positive light 287 (27%)

Films which portray Italians in a negative light 770 (73%)

Individual categories 1057

- Mob characters 422(40%)
- (Real mob characters) 59 (14%)
- (Fake mob characters) 363 (86%)
- Boors, buffoons, bigots or bimbos 348 (33%)
- Positive or complex portrayals 287 (27%)

Influence of "The Godfather" (1972)

- Mob movies prior to "The Godfather" 108 (25%)
- Mob movies after "The Godfather" 314 (75%)" (*Italic Studies* 2000)

These figures and these general conclusions are echoed in a study by William Dal Cerro published in *The Italic Way*. The author looked at some 450 films which feature images of Italians and ItalianAmericans, starting with *Little Caesar* in 1931, and found that 88% stereotyped and caricatured ItalianAmericans. He further breaks down the depiction of ItalianAmericans in film as follows: positive characters, 12%; mob characters, 52%; boors, buffoons, bigots, 36%.

Given that I am usually primarily interested in film as "art," I don't necessarily agree with either study's assessment of each and every film. To cite only one film explicitly mentioned by both studies, *The Godfather* is perceived

76. "Justin Dintino is currently the Chief of Organized Crime nd Intelligence for the New Jersey State Commission of [sic] Investigation; he served on the President's Commission of Organized Crime from July of 1983 to April of 1984." NIAF Panel on Organized Crime (1986).

by them as highly problematical. Dal Cerro, is quite explicit in stating that it is perhaps the worst of all films depicting Italian Americans because, before it's appearance in 1972, only 13% of films about Italian Americans were "Mob Movies," while after 1972, 87% were "Mob Movies." Dal Cerro also describes films such as *Beach Blanket Bingo* (1965) as positive because, even though, in his words, it is "cheesy commercial drivel [in which] nevertheless, leads Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello are presented as wholesome and attractive."[77]

Still, these differences to the contrary notwithstanding, one can't help but be struck by the incredible number of films in which, as Dal Cerro and the Italic Studies statistics point out, Italian Americans are depicted as mob characters, as boors, buffoons, bigots, bimbos, or all of the above. And so I return to my question, to the question that haunts not just Italian Americans: Why is this?[78] Why do we get the impression that all films about organized crime are about the Italian-American Mafia?

In order to explore the discrepancy between the realities of organized crime as they relate to various ethnic groups, as much as these realities can be determined, and their cultural construction in relation to and by various ethnic groups, a couple of years ago I began to teach a course entitled, "The Mafia in the Movies."[79] As a result of the courses, of varied readings, of conversations with friends and colleagues, and of lively debates with the members of the American Italian Historical Association internet-based discussion group, I have developed a theory which I will present here. However, before I present my theory, I must define what I mean when I speak of theories in a humanistic context. I will borrow my definition in large part from Francesco Casetti's *Theories of Cinema: 1945-1995.* He writes that theory "is a device that is not necessarily scientifically rational (as those who reserve the label *theory* for a highly formalized construct would like). . . . Rather, theory is a device that is used to acquire knowledge. Theory cannot be reduced to an abstract form of knowledge; it is more nuanced, just like metaphor, analogy, parallelism, which provide a basis for equally efficient explication. . . . The primary characteristic of a theory is its *cognitive* capacity in the broadest sense of the word. In particular, it is the ability to present itself as *institutionalized, social, and historical knowledge.* . . . Theory is a device that focuses and at the same time charts thoughtful content, means of observation, attitudes toward the world at large . . . it 'institutionalizes' knowledge; theory defines both its limits and its utility. Furthermore, a theory is knowledge that circulates among those working in a give field and through them reaches broader audiences, producing discussion, loyalties, and dissent. In this respect, it is a social device, something that is diffused and shared within a community. Finally, a theory is also a historical event: it is a discourse that comes on the scene at a given time, in a given place, and by its very presence it is capable of defining the ambiance in which it appears. In this sense, it is a historical reality, something that reflects the path (or even the error) of thought" (314-15).

What I am presenting is precisely this, the provisional result of an ongoing discourse. I do not presume to have definitive answers or that my path is without error. Furthermore, I certainly do not intend to imply that my theories are predictive, replicable, or falsifiable. Along with Casetti, I wish only to encourage further discussion, whether the result be consent or dissent. I should add that when I speak of "my" theory, it is "mine" only to the extent that I am articulating it here. I do not presume to suggest that is necessarily original with me. The sources, the inspirations, the participants in this discourse are far too numerous and diverse to be cited.[80]

---

77. I do have one quibble with Mr. Dal Cerro's otherwise important study. His article is entitled, "Hollywood versus Italians: Them 400; Us-50." My problem is that in this rubric he includes not just movies made in Hollywood, but movies made by Italian Americans (from *The Godfather* to *Goodfellas*), by African Americans (*Harlem Nights*, *Hoodlums*, *Jungle Fever*, *Do the Right Thing*), movies that, to the best of my recollection, do not depict a single Italian American (DePalma's *Scarface*), or very few (*Once Upon a Time in America*), movies about a time before the existence of Italy in which Romans are depicted in a negative light (*Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Spartacus*, and *The Robe*), movies that present the study of Latin as stultifying (*Dead Poets Society*), and even Italian movies made by Italians in Italy (*Stealing Beauty*, *Palermo Connection*).

78. Suffice it to think of the many non-Italian-American scholars who have been engaged in research which has proven that Italian Americans are not involved in organized crime to any significant degree.

79. In the context of this essay, I am using the term "ethnic" to signify any distinct group of people, whether they be such because of language, national origin, or race, or any specific subdivision within these groupings.

80. This notwithstanding, in particular I want to thank John DeMatteo for furnishing transcipts of the NIAF Symposium on Organized Crime held on Novermber 16, 1986, and for a bibliography of works on this topic; Michael Bacarella for the data on Saracen piracy and for his invaluable research tool, *Italactors: 101 Years of ItalianAmericans in U.S. Entertainment.* Also Anthony J. Tamburri, Paolo Giordano, Fred Gardaphé, Joe Stornello,

Casetti has postulated that a theory can be a metaphor or an analogy. I will posit that the image of Italian Americans in mainstream media is much like a river that eventually empties into the sea of public opinion. Like the Po river, it has many tributaries, each of which contributes waters enriched, but more frequently contaminated, by specific, identifiable organic and inorganic materials. Like the Po river, it has many estuaries which pour into the Adriatic sea. Finally, like the Po river, its presence, resulting from the confluence and divergence of waters, can be detected for miles into the Adriatic. What I am suggesting is that the main course of the image of Italian Americans in mainstream American media might be called "iella," a peculiarly Italian form of bad luck.[81]

There are many tributaries to this main stream, not all of them negative. In fact, among the images of Italian Americans that flow into this river are also "hard work," "honesty," "family values," "honor," "pride," "self-reliance," and "patriotism." Unfortunately, however, as they flow into "bad luck" they are joined all too soon by two major tributaries: "bad timing" and "bad marketing." As a result, by the time the river of Italian-American images reaches its delta, every estuary, no matter how positive its source waters, has been contaminated by the "iella" of the main stream. It is, obviously, incredibly difficult and frustrating to try to unravel these liquid threads. Whenever you begin to trace one strand, you have to consider the influences of one or more others and the way they reciprocally influence each another. Thus, inevitably, when I have seemingly finished with one thread and I have begun to trace another, I find myself once again dealing with the former. For all of this, I beg the readers' indulgence.

According to my "theory," Italians and Italian Americans, have become identified with organized crime because of bad timing, bad marketing, and, most importantly, "iella. "Iella" seems to pursue Italians and Italian Americans in the United States. Like a black cloud, it seems to hover over them so that any event, no matter how positive, somehow is transformed into a negative.

Iella and Timing.

As I have stated repeatedly, there is no justification for the depiction of Italian Americans as particularly prone to becoming involved in organized crime or as having a preponderant role in organized crime in the United States (Dintino, Homer; Iorizzo, Kappler, Kelly, Lyman and Potter, Mangione and Morreale, Morreale, Morris, Potter 1986 and 1994, De Stefano). In fact, the use of "mafia" as synonymous with organized crime is, to a very large extent, an invention of "white" American media, of "white" American law enforcement, and, not surprisingly, of "white" American business interests (Hess, Homer, Morreale, Smith, NIAF).

The great migration of Southern Italians to the United States began in part because of intolerable conditions in Italy,[82] but also because good, reliable workers were needed, particularly in the Southern United States in the years immediately following the Civil War to replace the African Americans who had emigrated to the industrial North (Gambino 51, Mangione and Monreale 181). One might have expected the immigrants to be welcome and that their achievements be celebrated. Instead, as a result of the xenophobia of the time, their very successes became the source of their indictment. The term "Mafia" was first used from 1890 to 1913 primarily as a way of explaining the entrepreneurial successes of the new "nonvisibly black" immigrants (Richards, 12). Given the racism of the times, it was easy for individuals who wanted to eliminate the Sicilian competition on the New Orleans docks (Gambino 59, Mangione and Monreale 200-213) to explain their successes in terms of the "myth of an alien conspiracy" (Kappleler et al 101). It also served as a "weapon of immigration restriction" (Smith in NIAF 90, Gambino 108,

Vivian Cassandra, Richard Annotico, and Joseph Sciorra for their thoughtful suggestion, insights, and recommended readings. And, of course, the many students at Purdue University and Dartmouth College who challenged by assumptions and made me clarify my ideas.

81. "Iella" refers to the effects of the "malocchio," the evil eye that has been cast upon a person and all the pertains to him or her, usually as a result of jealousy or envy. It is an evil fate of virtually epic proportions that can only be removed by a fattucchiera, a sorceress.

82. "Booker T. Washington, [. . .] remarked after visiting Italy: 'The Negro is not the man farthest down. The condition of the cloured farmer in the most backward parts of he Southern States in American, even when he has the lest education and the least encouragement, is incomparably better than the condition and opportunities of the agricultural population in Sicily.'" Mangione and Monreale, xv).

Mangione and Monreale 181-213). The most dramatic result of this attitude, but not the only one by any means, was the murder of 11 Sicilians in New Orleans in 1891, largest mass lynching in American history (Gambino, Mangione and Monreale, 200-213). The feelings of hatred for Southern Europeans became so prevalent that several Southern states passed laws forbidding their immigration (Gambino 108, Mangione and Morreale 213).

The most interesting thing is that from 1913 to 1944 the "Mafia label virtually disappeared from the American scene" (Smith in NIAF, 90). And yet, like a bad penny, it continues to resurface.

Iella, bad timing, and bad marketing came together again with the rise of Italian Americans to visibility in organized crime during prohibition. While it is difficult to say precisely what was the order of arrival and ascendance of the ethnic criminal groups in the United States, it is clear that Italian Americans were not the first ethnic group to be involved in organized crime in the United States. They were obviously preceded by WASP, Irish American, and other Northern European criminals, and among their contemporaries at the very least we find, in addition to the former, Jewish Americans, African Americans, and Chinese Americans mobsters. Nor were Italian Americans the last ethnic group to become prominent in organized crime. They were followed, among others, by Hispanics, Eastern Europeans, other Asians (Japanese, Vietnamese, inter alii), and Africans (from the Caribbean and from Africa).[83]

Basically, all ethnic groups that have become involved in organized crime in a serious manner in the United States have one thing in common: in their country of origin they were outcasts of one kind or another (Homer, 67-73). The Irish were brutally oppressed by the British; the Jews were victims of endless pogroms in Russia; the Sicilians, Calabresi, and Campani, who not coincidentally came from that part of Magna Graecia and of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies most exposed to the Mediterranean and thus to depredations of various kinds, were oppressed for centuries by foreign and home-grown tyrants, starting with the Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Saracens, and Normans, and ending with the Bourbons (both French and Spanish) and the (Northern) Italians. (Baccarella H-NET List on Italian-American History and Culture)[84]

Regardless of who came first, or who was in power first, turn of the century America was packed with criminals of every immigrant ethnic group. The names of the gangsters who were to come to power over the next couple of decades reflect this fact: Edward Osterman (Jewish) Tom Lee (Chinese) Arnold Rothstein (Jewish) Frank Costello (born Francesco Castiglia, Italian), Meyer Lansky (Jewish), Dutch Schultz (né Arthur Flegenheimer, Jewish) Charles Dion O'Bannion (Irish) Charles "Lucky" Luciano (Salvatore Lucania, Italian), Ellesworth "Bumpy" Johnson (Black), and Mock Duck (Chinese). The titles of the earliest films, however, do not, as a rule, reflect any necessary connection between ethnicity and crime: *The Burglar* (1898), *The Kidnapper* (1903), *The Thieving Hand* (1904), *Burglar Bill* (1904), *The Moonshiners* (1904). However, by 1906 we begin to find titles such as *The Black Hand* (remade in 1912 and 1913), and its sequel, *The Black Hand Conspiracy* (1914). Still, the identity of Italian Americans and crime in America had not been yet been established. D.W. Griffith made a number of films set in the tenements of New York City. He featured a Chinese white slaver in *The Fatal Hour* (1908), and showed Italians devoted to vengeance in *At the Altar* (1909), and in *The Cord of Life* (1909). However, in 1912, in *The Musketeers of Pig Alley*, the gangsters are Irish and the alleys are teeming with Russian Jews (Yaquinto 1-14). In short, there were plenty of choices. In addition to Italian Americans, the movies could have continued to depict the Irish Americans, Jews, Blacks, and Chinese as gangsters. Why did this not happen?

Italian Americans acquired greater visibility in organized crime around the time of Prohibition (1919). The Volstead Act was, to put it mildly, unpopular with the American public at large. As a result, many otherwise respectable, law-abiding citizens began to reject laws that they considered absurd and were ready to start glamorizing the picturesque characters who brought them the liquid solace they so devoutly desired.

83. For eye-opening account of what appears to be the dominant criminal organization worldwide, see Robert I. Freidman's *Red Mafyia: How the Russian Mob Has Invaded America.* While I had read and heard about Russian organized crime, I had not previously had any inkling that the so-called Red Mafyia is comprised overwhelmingly of Jewish emigrés.

84. See Appendix II.

At first, this chance to grab the American brass ring seemed to be proof that luck was smiling on Italian Americans. Italian-American criminals might well have made their fortunes and then merged with the American establishment, as did the WASPs, the Northern Europeans, the Irish, and the Jews before them. This might have happened had sound not come to movies in the same decade (1928). As a result, movie attendance exploded. Approximate weekly movie attendance skyrocketed from 57 million in 1927 to 90 million in 1929 (Yaquinto 26). In the search for subject matter for the new technology, it was inevitable that the existing gangster genre be included in the mix. The sound of shots, wailing sirens, and screeching tires seemed to be made to order to bring back to life a genre that was waning.

The first major gangster movies made in 1930 after the advent of sound were: *Little Caesar*, starring a young Edward G. Robinson as Rico Bandello, and modeled on Al Capone, and *Scarface*, also obviously based on Al Capone (starring Paul Muni as Tony Camonte). Even though the equally successful *The Public Enemy* (starring James Cagney as the Irish Tom Powers) was made in the same year, henceforth it will increasingly be Italian Americans who are depicted as criminals. Why? Why the Italian Americans and not the Irish Americans or the Jewish Americans? Why did the overwhelming majority of films about organized crime focus on Italian Americans from the 1930s through the 1970s? What happened to all the other ethnic groups, the Irish Americans, Jewish Americans, African Americans, and Chinese Americans that had been depicted as criminals of one kind or another during the first 30 years of American cinema?

Why were the other ethnic groups, which still continue to play a significant role in organized crime, no longer available as filmic images?

Although African Americans have always been real players in organized crime, they were essentially invisible to white America because of racism. Ironically, this was in part as a result of the depiction of "black bucks" and "black brutes" in the most racist film ever made in America. (Bogle 13) According to Donald Bogle, "one thing was certain after *The Birth of a Nation* [1915]: never again could the Negro be depicted in the guise of an out-and-out villain. This treatment was too touchy and too controversial. . . . . Consequently, blacks in Hollywood films were cast almost exclusively in comic roles."[85] Bogle goes on to add that, "Not until more than half a century later, when Melvin Van Peebles' *Sweet Sweetback's Baadassss Song* (1971) appeared, did sexually assertive black males make their way back to the screen . . . . Afterward . . . the screen was bombarded with buck heroes in such films as *Shaft* (1971), *Superfly* (1972), *Slaughter* (1972), and *Melinda* (1972)" (Bogle 16-17).[86] Before this time, white filmgoers were simply not ready to see physically and sexually threatening blacks. Interestingly, so far as I can tell, it wasn't until 1984 that an Italian-American director, Francis Ford Coppola in *Cotton Club*, through the fictional character of Bumpy Rhodes, tells us about Bumpy Johnson, an African American gangster who dealt as a virtual equal with the likes of Lucky Luciano and Dutch Schultz.[87]

The presence of the Chinese in America for five generations has also largely been obliterated from history, as Tracy Tzu (Ariane) tells Stanley Fish (Michael O'Rourke) in Michael Cimino's *Year of the Dragon* (1985). The same can be said by and large about the Chinese as criminals in film for several decades after *The Fatal Hour* (1908) in which a Chinese is depicted as a white slaver (Yaquinto 14). Those that do appear are usually cut from the mold established by serials such as *The Yellow Menace*, films such as *The Red Lantern* (1919), and *The Mysterious Dr Fu Manchu* (1929), directed by Rowland V. Lee. They may be evil, but their physicality, be it related to sex or violence is concealed by long flowing robes. It is only with the invasion of Kung Fu movies, that exploded on American

85. In 1936, Black director Oscar Micheaux "took the typical Hollywood script and gave it a racial slant. *Underworld* was a gangster film with black gangsters and a black gun moll. (Bogle 115). There were other films by black directors in which black actors played heroes and heroines. "Certainly ghetto kids could look up to Herb Jeffries, the lead in *The Bronze Buckaroo,* just as their white counterparts admired Gene Autry" (Leab 193).

86. In reality, as Bogle himself points out on page 220: Jim Brown "arrived in motion pictures at a time when the mass black audience was in a desperate need of him. Even though he was to be nothing more than the black buck of old, he answered — because of his unique charisma and astounding physical presence — the need for a viable black-power sex figure."

87. It should probably not be surprising that, while *Cotton Club* is a highly self-conscious artistic film that in many ways is reminiscent of American musicals, it is also the most historically accurate depiction of the multi-ethnic nature of (dis)organized crime during Prohibition.

screens thanks to the martial arts virtuosity of Bruce Lee in the early 70s, that we once again see Chinese as physically and sexually attractive subjects who can be desirable to white women and thrash white men.[88]

By the late 20s, the Irish Americans had become somewhat integrated; they no longer confronted the material poverty, political oppression, and spiritual despair that drives some people to crime; they had gone from being the dominant criminal group to being policemen, judges, politicians, and businessmen. They had, in other words, begun what has been called their transformation into "white" people and thus, while individual Irish Americans would occasionally be depicted as gangsters, they were no longer to be depicted as a criminal "race" (Ignatiev). While the Irish may have been despised and mistreated by the British, in the U.S. they were perceived as English-speaking whites. Italian Americans, and in particular Italian Americans of Southern extraction, instead, were perceived as both foreigners and as colored, or as Richards puts it, as "nonvisibly black" (186). This does not mean that the Irish Americans didn't continue to be involved in crime and, in particular in bootlegging. Among the many Irish American mobsters it should suffice to recall Owney, "the Killer" Madden who at age 17 "had killed his first man, an Italian, for no other reason than to celebrate his election to leadership of the Gophers (Sifakis 205), and Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll, who at different times was at war with Dutch Schultz, Owney Madden, Legs Diamond, Lucky Luciano, Vito Genovese, and Joe Adonis (Sifakis 78). Among the most socially prominent Irish Americans, Joseph Kennedy, a Harvard graduate, United States Ambassador to Great Britain, and the father of assassinated former president John Fitzgerald Kennedy, is reputed to have been actively involved in bootlegging (Gray, Sifakis). Still, in those days political, legal, and financial power offered great cover and concealment.

Jewish Americans, who had worked hand in hand with Italian Americans during prohibition, were still a long way from being considered "white." Given their prominent role in organized crime and the pandemic racism of the time, Jewish Americans would have seemed like a very desirable choice as movie mobsters. Interestingly, they are virtually non-existent as protagonists of the gangster films of the 30s and 40s. In part this is because, given past experiences of anti-Semitism in Europe, they understood the importance of participating actively in the public discourse (Richards 195). One can't help but wonder if, in part, this isn't also the case because Jewish Americans, by and large, controlled the movie studios.

Even a cursory glance at any history of American cinema reveals that the five "Major" studios (MGM, Paramount, Warner Bros., 20th Century-Fox, RKO) and two of the three "Minors" (Universal Pictures, Columbia Pictures) were run by Jewish Americans. Oddly, the fact that Jewish Americans essentially controlled the production, distribution, and screening of American movies for several decades seems to be completely transparent. I have found only one history of American cinema that confronts, however tangentially, the impact of the Jewish immigrant experience on the film industry. Gerald Mast writes that "The first Hollywood producers were not just businessmen; they were a very specific breed of businessmen. Most of them were either Jewish immigrants from Germany or Russia or Poland, or the sons of Jewish immigrants. They sold herring or furs or gloves or second-hand clothes. They jumped from these businesses into running amusement parks and penny arcades. . . . When movies left the peep-show box for the screen, these arcade owners converted their stores into nickelodeons" (Mast 125).

Given this rough and tumble immigrant heritage, it should come as no surprise that they had connections with organized crime. Jack Warner, whose father was a cobbler from Kraznashiltz, Poland, boasted of being a mobster and a member of the Westlake Crossing gang in Youngstown, OH, a gang led by John Dillinger. (Yaquinto 10) Thus perhaps it should not be surprising that Warner Brothers, that received the special Academy Award (1927-1928) for producing *The Jazz Singer,* "the pioneer talking picture, which has revolutionized the industry," was responsible for revitalizing the gangster genre with films such as *Little Caesar* (Melvyn LeRoy, 1930), *Public Enemy* (William Wellman, 1931). Other Jewish American individuals prominent in the film industry who were in some way involved in criminal activities or connected with organized crime include Harry "King" Cohn, of Columbia

88. Interestingly, in 1972, even though Bruce Lee had been very well received as Cato in *The Green Hornet* television series, Warner Brothers, fearing that the public would not accept a Chinese hero, rather than star Bruce Lee in the *Kung Fu* television series, which had been conceived with him in mind, selected the rather torpid David Carradine.

Pictures, who admitted to having been a thief in his youth and Adolph Zukor, of Paramount Pictures, who reported that the studio bosses hired gangsters to protect their operations. (Yaquinto 10). According to David A. Cook and other sources, "gangsters began loan-sharking to the studies following the Wall Street crash. Harry Cohn, e.g. wrested control of Columbia pictures from his brother Jack in 1932 with mob money borrowed through Johnny Roselli, and William Fox turned to similar sources in his unsuccessful bid to regain control of his own company in 1933. At the same time MPPDA [Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, more commonly known as the Hays Office] was hiring gangsters as strike breakers against Hollywood unions, and the Chicago mob was infiltrating the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Operators (IATSE) . . . . By 1935, the racketeers George Brown and Willy Bioff had taken control of the IATSE and begun to extort protection money from the Big Five in the sum of $50,000 per studio per year. In *The Hollywood Studio System* (88), Douglas Gomery estimates that over $1 million changed hands this way before the racket was exposed the decade's end" (Cook 293).

Other prominent Jewish leaders of the film industry include Samuel Goldwyn (né Goldfish), Louis B. Mayer, and Irving Thalberg of MGM, whose parent company was owned by Loew's Incorporated and "ruled from New York by Nicholas Schenck" (Cook 302); Carl Laemmle of Universal, Joseph M. Schenck (who as chairman of 20th Century-Fox was the Big Five's corporate bagman and went to jail, briefly; for tax evasion in the transfer of payoff funds to Browne and Bioff (Cook 293); Darryl F. Zanuck of 20th Century-Fox, Jesse Lasky, Marcus Loew, Lewis J. Selznick, Thomas Ince. I don't think it is anti-Semitic to suggest that, in the racist climate of the times, one should not be surprised that these Jewish American producers protected their own people. In fact, Cook points our that "Warners was also responsible (and rather courageously so) for the first American anti-Nazi film, Anatole Litvak's *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939)." I am not suggesting here that there was a deliberate Jewish American anti-Italian conspiracy. Among other things, as Monaco points out, "By 1936 it was possible to trace major holdings in all eight companies to the two powerful banking groups of Morgan and Rockefeller" (207). It was simply more bad luck. More "iella" for Italian Americans that one more group of eligible ethnic criminals was eliminated from the palette of possible film gangsters.

The "iella" of Italian Americans was compounded by the fact that, thanks to "movie magic," Italian Americans not only became de facto the only ethnic criminal organization in the United States, they also came to be perceived as beasts, boors, and buffoons deprived entirely of brains. While it was impossible to conceal completely the Jewish American involvement in organized crime, it was sanitized. Hollywood American films almost inevitably depicted Jewish American criminals as outsiders, as "consiglieri" for the Sicilian Mafia families. In essence, allegedly they were the brains of the operations, the non-violent mathematical geniuses thanks to whom those bumbling, violent clowns, the Italian Americans, reaped unjustified and unexplained fortunes.

What most Hollywood American movies conceal is that Jewish American gangsters took a back seat to no one when it came to participation in criminal endeavors. American style organized crime was invented by Meyer Lansky and Lucky Luciano. When Luciano was deported from the United States, the guests at his farewell banquet offer a excellent indication of the multicultural nature of organized crime: "Meyer Lansky, Joe Adonis, Willie Moretti, Bugsy Siegel, Longy Zwillman, Moses Polakoff, Joe Bonanno, Tommy Lucchese, and Owney Madden" (Mangione and Moreale 257). And yet, the public at large has bought the myth that organized crime is a Sicilian thing. Furthermore, Jewish American mobsters were easily as violent as the most violent Irish American and Italian American mobsters. Suffice it to remember that Dutch Schultz was Jewish American and that "not only was he the flakiest of the bosses, he was also the most cold-blooded" (Sifakis 296). And while his violence and his "matta bestialità," his insane rage are depicted convincingly in films such as *Cotton Club* (1984), *Billy Bathgate* (1991), and *Hoodlum* (1997), the fact that he is Jewish American is, to the best of my recollection, never an issue. At the peak of the power of organized crime, Jews, Irish, and Italians worked together. Murder Incorporated, the enforcement arm the national crime syndicate, was comprised predominantly of Jewish Americans, a fact which becomes immediately apparent at a reading of the names of the principal operatives. The orders came from Louis Lepke and Joey

Adonis and were carried out by, among others, Albert Anastasia, Louis Capone (no relation to Alphonse), Mendy Weiss, Abe Reles (who, along with Buggsy Goldstein "may have killed at least 60 men") (Sifakis 231), Phil Strauss ("who easily held the top score in kills . . . was named in 58 murder investigations and authorities agreed his total of kills was probably twice that number") (Sifakis 231), Vito Gurino, Happy Maione, Buggsy Goldstein, Blue Jaw Magoon, Frank Abbandando and Charlie Workman. Ironically, the most notorious Italian American gangster, Al Capone, the object of the greatest number of stories and films, was not born in Naples or Sicily. He used to say proudly: "I am no Italian. I was born in Brooklyn" (Yaquinto 7).[89] And his organization was for an American corporation of the time, very progressive: it was completely integrated.

The "iella" that was befalling Italian Americans on Hollywood screens was compounded by events in the halls of Washington. In 1950, Senator Estes Kefauver became "chairman of a special committee to look into organized crime in interstate commerce" (Homer 41). He made the mistake of confusing criminal societies with criminal matrices of activity (Homer 41). The McClellan Senate Permanent Subcommittee of Investigations, established in 1955, repeated his mistake, particularly after November 14, 1957, when several leaders of crime families were discovered at a meeting at the Apalachin home of Joseph Barbera. Further seeming confirmation of the existence of an Italian-American criminal organization was furnished by Joe Valachi in 1963 when he spoke of "la cosa nostra." The questionable accuracy and importance of Valachi's testimony is the object of other studies (Mangione and Monreale, 345-348; Homer, 30-45). The 1967 Task Force Report repeats and reinforces the definition of organized crime of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice according to which "organized crime is a society" (Homer 6-12). One result of these descriptions of organized crime is that in order to receive funding from the Federal government, law enforcement organizations felt they had to name as targets of their inquiries either the Mafia or La Cosa Nostra. Not coincidentally, it was at this time and for this reason that J. Edgar Hoover suddenly and belatedly discovered the existence of organized crime in the United States. Another result was that it became virtually impossible to publish articles in newspapers or in academic journals that did not at least mention these organizations and that did not include Italian-American names (Jenkins in NIAF 79).

The Italian-American image was struck by further iella when Joseph Colombo, the head of the Bonanno family, founded the ItalianAmerican Civil Rights League in 1970. An organization which should have protected the image of Italian Americans became the source of further embarrassments. After a few successes--the June 29, 1970 rally attracted fifty-thousand people and many politicians, including then Governor Nelson Rockefeller took honorary membership in the league--Colombo began to irritate the FBI by picketing its offices and, more fatally, Carlo Gambino. The latter, it seems, did not appreciate the loss of revenues caused by Colombo stunts. The result was that on June 28, 1971 Colombo was assassinated by Jerome A. Johnson who, in turn, was killed by Colombo's bodyguards.

Colombo did succeed in forcing the Justice Department and the FBI to drop all references to the Mafia and to La Cosa Nostra. He also forced "movie producer Al Ruddy to eliminate references to Mafia or Cosa Nostra from his adaptation of *The Godfather*" (Hammer 326). Unfortunately for the Italian-American image, the film, which is included among the best films ever made by virtually everyone, was so successful, and misunderstood, that it elicited hundreds of imitators, as both Dal Cerro and Italic Studies have shown. And while in *The Godfather* neither the Mafia nor La Cosa Nostra are ever mentioned, they will be, ad nauseam, in the plethora of films which follow in the newly reborn genre.

The most recent manifestation of iella has to be the Emmy-winning series, *The Sopranos*. Regardless of what one thinks of it, the result is that the presence of Italian Americans in organized crime, never dominant in the first

89. Ironically, Al Capone came from a law-abiding, lower middle class family. His early years gave no indication that he would, eventually, become a legendary criminal. Even more ironic is the fact that his older brother, James Vincenzo Capone, served honorably in World War I (he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant). Later he changed his name to Richard Hart and moved West. Thanks to his extraordinary skills with guns and his brace of pearl-handled revolvers and his heroic exploits in busting stills and arresting horse thieves and other criminals, he acquired the nickname of "Two Gun Hart." Over the years he served as a prohibition enforcement agent, a marshall, an U.S. Indian Service agent, and a bodyguard for President Calvin Coolidge.

place, has been foregrounded once again. Recent studies suggest that Americans overwhelmingly think that Italian Americans are, somehow, connected to crime — when nothing could be further from the truth (Response Analysis Corporation).

The oddities, in the depiction of Italian Americans as criminals, never seem to cease. One the one hand, the Mafia is supposed to be an all-powerful, secretive, terrifying, massively successful criminal conspiracy. On the other, while it is true that Italian Americans are depicted as beasts and boors in many Hollywood films, they are even more frequently portrayed as buffoons. How they can be both at the same time is beyond comprehension. How can the alleged masterminds behind this purportedly incredibly successful business, the "soldiers" who fought in this war for absolutely unfettered laissez faire capitalism, be depicted as retarded clowns, as inept, incompetent, bumbling idiots who can't speak English or shoot straight?[90]The roots of this humiliating depiction of Italian Americans in the movies can already be seen in *Little Caesar*. While Rico himself is all beast for most of the film, many of his colleagues are depicted as boors and buffoons throughout. And by the end of the film Rico himself has become a pathetic drunken bum who is reduced to living in a flop house. By the time we get to *Some Like It Hot* (1956), which was inspired at least in part by both Al Capone's St. Valentine's Day massacre of Bugs Moran's gang on February 14, 1929, and by *Little Caesar*, the Italian-American mobster has been stereotyped as a violent, erratic, dangerous, incompetent, sentimental, opera-loving clown who couldn't hit the broad side of a barn with a machine gun. This is what Hollywood will give us time and time again, *ad nauseam*, in an endless series of absolutely deplorable films, from *The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight* (Goldstone 1971), to *Prizzi's Honor* (John Huston 1985), to *Married to The Mob* (Jonathan Demme 1988), *Jane Austen's Mafia* [sic!] (1998), to, most recently, *Analyze This* (Harold Ramis 1999) and *Mickey Blue Eyes*.

Conclusion

For the past 28 years I have been speaking and writing both in praise and in defense of the films of Italian American filmmakers such Coppola, Scorsese, De Palma, and Cimino. By and large, my response to films about the Mafia has been that of a person raised in Northern Italy. It was something that did not touch me. The alleged criminals were the Other. However, after having lived in the United States off and on for the past 35 years, I have come to realize that I too am that Other. Even though my name does not finish in a vowel, by the mere fact I teach Italian language, literature, culture, and film, I too am tarred by this scurrilous brush. As deplorable as I find knee-jerk ethnic tribalism, I am coming to the conclusion that Italians, Italian Americans, and, in fact, all people of good will must become actively engaged in public discourse on these issues.[91]

Works Cited

Arlacchi, Pino. *Mafia Business: The Mafia Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Trans. Martin Ryle. London and New York: Verso, 1987.

Bacarella,Michael. *Italactors: 101 Years of Italian Americans in U.S. Entertainment*. Washington: NIAF. 2000.

_____, H-NET List on Italian-American History and Culture H-ITAM@H-NET.MSU.EDU. Tue, 27 Jun 2000 16:47:25 EDT.

Bogle, David. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films.* 3rd ed. New York: Continuum. 1997.

90. For an original, thought-provoking essay on the genesis of the Mafia in the United States, see Morreale 1995.

91. Inevitably, involvement in public discourse is political and requires joining organizations that promote one's concerns. Among the organizations that are working intelligently to change the image of Italians and Italian Americans in this country are: NIAF, UNO, FIERI, ??? etc??

Casetti, Francesco. *Theories of Cinema: 1945-1995*. Trans. Francesca Chiostri and Elizabeth Bartolini-Salimbeni, with Thomas Kelso. Austin: UT Press. 1999.

Cook, David. *A History of Narrative Film*. 3rd ed. N.Y and London.: W.W. Norton & Co. 1981.

Cortes Carlos E. "The Hollywood Curriculum on Italian Americans: Evolution of an Icon of Ethnicity. *The Columbus People: Perspectives in Italian Immigration to the Americas and Australia.* Ed. Lydio F. Tomasi, Piero

Gastaldo and Thomas Row. New York: Center for Migration Studies and Gianni Agnelli Foundation, 1994. 89-108.

D'Acierno, Pellegrino. *The Italian Heritage: A Companion to Literature and Arts.* New York: Garland, Inc. 1999.

Dal Cerro, William. "Hollywood versus Italians: Them - 400; Us - 50". *The Italic* Way 27, 1997. 10-32.

De Stefano, George. *Ungood Fellas*. *The Nation* website at http://www.thenation.com.

Dintino, Justin. National Italian American Foundation. *Conference on Organized Crime & the Media: Exploring the "Mafia Mystique*." New York: NIAF, 1986. Tape transcripts 54-77.

Freidman. Robert I. *Red Mafyia: How the Russian Mob Has Invaded America.* Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 2000.

Gambino, Richard. *Vendetta: True Story of the Worst Lynching in America.* 2nd ed. Toronto: Guernica, 2000.

Giacosa, Giuseppe. *Impressioni d'America.* 2nd ed. Milano, Cogliati, 1902.

Gray, Edward, producer/director. *Mafia: The History of the Mob in America, 2: The Kennedys and the Mob.* A&E Home Video. 1993.

Hammer, Richard. *Playboy's Illustrated History of Organized Crime*. Chicago: Playboy Press, 1975.

Hess, Henner. *Mafia & Mafiosi: Origin, Power and Myth.* Trans. Ewald Osers. New York: NYUP, 1998.

Homer, Fredric, D. *Guns and Garlic: Myths and Realisties of Organized Crime.* West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 1974.

Ignatiev, Noel. *How the Irish Became White.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

Internet Movie Data Base: http://us.imdb.com/Tsearch?mafia.

Iorizzo, Luciano, J. *An Inquiry Into Organized Crime: Proceedings of the American Italian Historical Association*. New York: AIHA, 1970.

Jenkins, Philip. National Italian American Foundation. *Conference on Organized Crime & the Media: Exploring the "Mafia Mystique*." New York: NIAF, 1986. Tape transcripts 76-82

Jones, Thomas, F. *Letter to John De Matteo.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. May 21, 1992.

Kappler, Victor, R., Mark Blumberg, and Gary W. Potter. *The Mythology of Crime and Criminal Justice.* 3rd ed. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press Inc., 2000.

Kelly, Robert, J. *Organized Crime: A Global Perspective*. Totowa, N.J.:Rowman & Littlefield, 1986

Lawton, Ben. "What Is ItalianAmerican Cinema?" *Voices in Italian Americana* 6.1 (1995): 27-51.

Leab, Daniel J.. *From Sambo to Superspade: The Black Experience in Motion Pictures.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976.

Lyman, Michael D. and Gary W. Potter. *Organized Crime*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1999.

Mangione, Jerre, and Ben Morreale. *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience.* New York: Harper, 1992.

Mast, Gerald. *A Short History of the Movies*. N.Y.: Pegasus. 1971.

Meyer, Nicholas, director. *Vendetta.* HBO, 1999.

Morreale, Ben. "Mafia in America from Alexander Hamilton to Richard Nixon." *Voices in Italian Americana* 6.1 (1995): 74-90.

Messick, Hank. *John Edgar Hoover.* New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972.

Morris, Norval, and Gordon Hawkins. *The Honest Politician's Guide To Crime Control.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972.

National Italian American Foundation. *Conference on Organized Crime & the Media: Exploring the "Mafia Mystique."* New York: NIAF, 1986. Tape transcripts.

Order Sons of Italy. *Americans of Italian Descent: A Study of Public Images, Beliefs, and Misperceptions.* Princeton, NJ: Response Analysis Corporation, 1981.

Potter, Gary W. National Italian American Foundation. *Conference on Organized Crime & the Media: Exploring the "Mafia Mystique."* New York: NIAF, 1986. Tape transcripts 82-86.

_____. *Criminal Organizations : Vice, Racketeering, and Politics in an American City*. Prospects Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1994.

Response Analysis Corporation. *Americans of Italian Descent: A Study of Public Images, Beliefs, and Misperceptions*. Princeton, N.J.: 1981.

Richards, David J. *Italian American: The Racializing of an Ethnic Identity*. New York: New York UP. 1999.

Roediger, David R. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. London: Verso, 1991.

Schiavo, Giovanni. *Four Centuries of Italian-American History*. New York: Center for Migration Studies. 1992.

Sifakis, Carl. *The Mafia Encyclopedia: from Accardo to Zwillman.* New York: Facts on File, Inc. 1987.

Smith, Dwight C. *The Mafia Mystique*. New York**:** University Press of America 1975.

Tamburri, Anthony Julian. *To Hyphenate or Not To Hyphenate? The Italian/American Writer as Other American*. Montreal: Guernica. 1991.

Yaquinto, Marilyn. *Pump 'Em Full of Lead: A Look at Gansters on Film*. New York: Twayne Publishers. 1998.

Appendix I: Personal Correspondence Furnished by Dr. John De Matteo

Drs. Potter and Jenkins

"Demolishing the Mafia Myth has laid the foundation for a minor academic industry, and it is appalling to see how few of these revisionists attacks >have been incorporated into the views of the press, government, or law enforcement."

A. Bartlett Giammatti

"It is finally as foolish to deny existence of Italian-American gangsters and criminal combines of various kinds. It is as it is bigoted to believe that the Mafia (or Cosa Nostra or any other media-sanctified name) is all-pervasive or that in America only Italian-Americans are gangsters, worse that because one has an Italian surname one may be must be, "connected," in some sinister way."

Drs. Morris and Hawkins

"a large proportion of what has been written (about organized crime) seems not to be dealing with an empirical matter at all. It is almost as though what is referred to organized crime belongs to the realm of metaphysics or theology."

Dr. Robert J. Kelly

"Since the late 1960s, when the government began to show some interest, public hearings, prosecution, and the testimony of members of crime groups, have focused attention on Italian dominated criminal activities. For the public organized crime and Italian Mafia or La Cosa Nostra became essentially synonymous. This slanderous impression was and is more fiction than fact; other crime groups also were deeply involved in vice and rackets.

"As the apotheosis of organized crime Cosa Nostra reflects not so much an obsession with the folklore of feudal bandits descending on Brooklyn and Little Italys as it betrays an ignorance of the facts. The fabrication have become glossed over so creatively and ingeniously, they have created an intrinsic fascination that not even the participants in the real thing, who ought to know better, are tempted to believe. Not unlike the debates about the existence of God, all that is known about the Mafia seems to be known by now except whether it really exists. Many scholars still find the evidence conflicting and unreliable — particularly the idea of a nationally coordinat-

ed conspiratorial brotherhood. Scholars demythologize the legend as quickly as popular writers and film makers re-mythologize the grandeur of Godfather."

Dr. Peter A. Lupsha
"Unfortunately, the attention to organized crime has often been myopic and monocular, focusing narrowly on Italian-American groups, referred to as Mafia or Cosa Nostra, when in fact organized crime is a process which can occur within any ethnic group or social system"

Potter and Jenkins
"... in the recent federal war on organized crime, the great majority of targets have been Italian".

Professor Messick
"...-the Mafia as such, was but a minor part of the whole (of organized crime)." Robert Kennedy focused on Italian criminals because the Italian community is politically impotent.

Drs. D. Smith and R.A. Alba
"The notoriety of Italian-American gangsters does not justify belief in the Mafia but merely reflects it, since that belief leads law enforcement agencies (and the press) to concentrate their energies on Italians with the result that much is known about them and little about others".

Dr. Hess
"As it did (and does) for Northern Italians, today these theories of Mafia conveniently serves Americans as an explanation of social problems by reducing them to purely criminal problems... The Mafia conspiracy enables Americans to embrace self-satisfying illusion that their problems are not the
manifestations of a deep-seated structural stresses within the polity itself."

U.S. Senator Sam Nunn
"Organized crime should no longer be — if it ever should have been — described as being dominated by individuals belonging to any one ethnic group. Nor is it limited to "traditional" criminal activities such as gambling, loan sharking, prostitution, pornography, and the like." "Organized crime never has known any ethnic bounds, and its activities run the gamut from the gutter to the board rooms of legitimate business and labor unions in this country." (Albanese)

Rudolph Giuliani
"If you do a case involving 19 members of the Mafia — Pizza Connection of the Colombo case of the many cases we've done — it gets a tremendous amount of attention. Front page. If you do a similar case, say a black organized crime group or a Colombian or Israeli or motorcycle gang or Nigerian, all of which we have done cases on in the last year — they get moderate attention. The end result is that it creates a impression that the Mafia is the only significant crime group. It isn't true . Its only one of 20 or 25. We should try to find a way to balance the attention given to these so we don't continue this impression.

FBI Letter
In a letter I received from the FBI, dated May 21, 1992, we note welcome changes in the government's position regarding Mafia predominance. The FBI had the following to say about Italian-American criminality; " It would be not only inaccurate, but unfair, to suggest that organized crime today is made up exclusively of individuals of Italian origin. Organized crime is not monolithic and consists of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds".

Appendix II Furnished By: Mike Bacarella, Tue, 27 Jun 2000 16:47:25 EDT H-NET List on ItalianAmerican History and Culture

From the 14th to the 19th centuries the Barbary states of North Africa, that is Morocco, Algeria, Tripoli, Tunis, Fezzan, and Barca, were the abode of hordes of pirates who terrorized the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Raiding Sicilian or Sardinian coastal towns enslaving the woman and children and killing off all the men and the elder were not uncommon for all those centuries. Prior to the existence of the United States all European powers paid ransoms to the rulers of Morocco, Tripoli, and Algeria. If demands were not met Barbary . . . would under a flag of truce approach any merchant ship not flying their "Barbary Tribute Colors," attack her, board her, take the passengers and crew prisoner, confiscate all the goods on board and take the prize to the nearest allied port. There they would ascertain if the captives could be ransomed. If they could, arrangements could be made to receive payment and they were set free. I think that the Receptionist Fathers had much to do with the plight of these people. If not they were sold into slavery and shipped into the interior of Africa, Arabia, and India.

Trade and commerce aside the very threat that Americans would suffer the same fate as their European counterparts was abhorrent to the Naval officers and seamen alike. This is well documented in the communications to their superiors. One example lists the captives in Algiers, 8 April 1799, as the following:

Genoese 100
Neapolitans 92
Venetians 76
English 8
Ragusians 3
Portuguese 37
Piedmontese 29
Maltese 39
Corsicans 19
Sardianians 4
Tuscans 2
Franciaisa de Oran 63
From le Calla 91
Spaniards 12
Romans 4
Greeks 376
Imperialia 62

Total 1026. To this account should be added 300 more who are slaves to particulars, as also 250 French daily expected, supposed to be emigrants from Leghorn fled and taken by the Algerines. (signed) Richard O'Brien US Consul General, Algiers."

After the American war with Tripoli the British sent Lord Exmouth in 1816 to Algiers with a fleet of 16 vessels to enforce the Abolition of Christian Slavery and the liberation of all Christian slaves. Three thousand Christians, mostly Spaniards and Italians, where freed and conveyed to their respective countries.

Chiara Mazzucchelli – University of Central Florida

"In Both Social Worlds at the Same Time:" The Literature of Sicilian Americans[92]

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, leaving became a significant part of the life of Sicilians. It is easy to understand how the island's finite geography translates into a lack of economies of scale, resources and, in most extreme scenarios, access to decent standards of living and quality of life, therefore encouraging emigration. Since the unification of Italy in 1861, all of the above phenomena, exacerbated by the newborn state's failure to adequately address the different realities of the Italian mosaic, caused the whole Italian South to experience periods of intense emigration flows to the other side of the ocean, mainly to Brazil, Argentina, and the U.S. The debate around the figures of this diaspora from different regions of Italy is still open but, according to historian Piero Bevilacqua, emigration in Sicily, Campania, and Calabria caused an "authentic demographic earthquake" (*Breve storia dell'Italia meridionale* 37).[93] Sicilian historian Francesco Renda helps us better understand the importance of this phenomenon with hard numbers. In his 1963 study *L'emigrazione in Sicilia*, Renda reports that in 1900 about 29,000 migrants left Sicily, 21,000 of whom headed to the United States. Only six years later, in 1906, the number of Sicilians leaving the island had grown to more than 127,000, with 70 percent of them directed to the New World (48). For the most part, these immigrants settled in small clusters and, within the geographic and symbolic boundaries of these ethnic enclaves, Sicilian immigrant communities were able to preserve their cultural identity and maintain their social order and traditions in a new and radically different setting. More often than not, however, these ethnic settlements were far from being safe havens even for immigrants themselves and their inherently foreign character made them a topic of wide interest and sociological investigations. One such case is Chicago's Little Sicily, which in the 1930s became the subject of study of urban sociologist Harvey Warren Zorbaugh. In his 1929 now-classic text, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, Zorbaugh focused on Chicago's urban landscape to provide insight into the diversity within the city and the social segregation of its Near North Side. One of the most notable Sicilian slums in large metropolitan cities in the U.S. was to be found in this specific area, "known variously to the police, the newspapers, and the world at large as Tenement Town, Little Sicily, and Little Hell" (159). Zorbaugh devoted an entire chapter of his sociological study to this neighborhood in Chicago, which had previously been predominantly Irish and Swedish until "the 'dark people' began to come" (160) in such large numbers to gain, by 1910, the moniker of Little Sicily (161). Zorbaugh estimated that by the late 1920s some fifteen thousand first- and second-generation Italians lived in the "colony," most of whom hailed from the province of Palermo, "bringing with them their Old World tongue, and dress, and customs - persistent and divergent social patterns that condition the Sicilian's participation in American life" (162). All in all, Zorbaugh gave an exceptionally dreary account of the Sicilian community in Chicago's Near North Side:

> [d]irty and narrow streets, alleys piled with refuse and alive with dogs and rats, goats hitched to carts, bleak tenements, the smoke of industry hanging in a haze, the market along the curb, foreign names on shops, and foreign faces on the streets, the dissonant cry of the huckster and peddler, the clanging and rattling of railroads and the elevated, the pealing of the bells of the great Catholic churches, the music of marching bands and the crackling of fireworks on feast days, the occasional dull boom of a bomb or the bark of a revolver, the shouts of children at play in the street, a strange staccato speech, the taste of soot, and the smell of gas from the huge "gas house" by the river, whose belching flames make the skies lurid at night and long ago earned for the district the name Little Hell – on every hand one is met by sights and sounds and smells that are peculiar to this area, that are "foreign" and of the slum. (159-60)

92. This article is adapted from my 2015 book, *The Heart and the Island: A Critical Study of Sicilian American Literature*.
93. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

The sociologist further notes that while the socio-economic order of the new settlement might meet the needs of first-generation immigrants, growing up in such an environment did not bode well for the future of the American-born generation that "finds itself trying to live in two social worlds" (176). Squeezed between the expectations of the "colony" and the demands of "American life," the second generation seemed unable to emerge from this apparent impasse to move ahead in society: "The child cannot live and conform in both social worlds at the same time," Zorbaugh concluded (176). And yet, many of them thrived not in spite of but because of their experience as second- and third-generation Sicilian Americans and some wrote about what it was like to grow up in such enclaves. A lost has changed since Zorbaugh first published his study and now, as literary critic Fred Gardaphé notes in his 2004 *Leaving Little Italy*, "[i]n their destruction, their transformations from Italian enclaves to gentrified hot spots, Little Italys have become little more than Italian theme parks that no longer resemble Big Italy" (154). The only way to catch a glimpse of what life was like in the Little Hells of America is through the creative works written by the second- and third-generation children of those settlements. "A secondary street sign, a poster on a wall, might show what used to be," Gardaphé writes, "but a better way back is through the literature of Italian Americans" (154). In this article, I will explore the historical and cultural roots of Sicilian regionalism in order to start a discussion on the works of authors of Sicilian within the body of 20th-century American literature. I will finally provide a brief survey of the most significant contributions to this literary phenomenon.

Throughout the 1900s the sense of a distinct *sicilianamericanità*—or Sicilian Americanness—manifested itself in a corpus of texts subsumed under the broader context of American ethnic literature. Writers such as Jerre Mangione, Tony Ardizzone, Ben Morreale, Josephine Gattuso Hendin, Rita Ciresi, Nat Scammacca, Vincenzo Ancona, Gioia Timpanelli, Dodici Azpadu, Rachel Guido De Vries and others, regardless of generational considerations or inter-regional filiations, have taken imaginative possession of the island and its *weltanschauung* and capitalized on their Sicilian-American identity in their works. For all of them, Sicily plays a special role as the source of emotional experiences and aesthetic inspiration. Some of these authors, notably Mangione and Scammacca, even initiated a sort of "Back to Sicily" movement by getting involved in the civil struggles of the island against the two related phenomena of political and economic stagnation and the Mafia. Most of these first-, second-, and third-generation Sicilian-American novelists, short-story writers, and poets focus on their experiences as Sicilian Americans and lay out a recognizable set of Sicilian cultural markers in their works; these authors have produced Sicilian American literature.[94] The literary accomplishments of these writers stand in stark contrast to Zorbaugh's observations on the Sicilian community of Chicago's Near North Side. The sociologist's work is especially concerned with the cultural and social practices and systems of what he calls the "colony." The importance of the family as its basic social institution, its norms regarding gender roles and marriage, Sicilians' attitudes toward the Catholic Church, and the community's propensity toward criminality are some of the topics that are treated in detail in the book. On the topic of Sicilians' attitudes toward education, Zorbaugh quotes from Helen A. Day's "Sicilian Traits" to note that:

> "The Chicago Sicilians have come largely from the villages and open country of Sicily, where they were poor, illiterate peasants, held down by the *gabelloti* or landlords in a state little better than serfdom. Generations of this condition have led them to look upon this status as fixed, and as the horizon of their ambitions. Why should *contadini* send their children to schools to bother their heads with letters? And besides, in Sicily the boys go to work in the fields at fourteen. Why should they not go to work here?" (162)

94. Two anthologies of Sicilian and Sicilian-American literature have been compiled and published by Venera Fazio and Delia De Santis: the 2004 *Sweet Lemons: Writing with a Sicilian Accent*, and the 2010 *Sweet Lemons 2: International Writings with a Sicilian Accent*. These collections feature, for the most part, contributions by or on Sicilian, Sicilian-American, and Sicilian-Canadian authors. The editors' wide-ranging selection testifies to the unifying role that the island plays for Sicilians of the diaspora.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on the colony's distrust of formal schooling as a means to overcome the adverse effects of poverty and disadvantage on their children, their families, and the whole community. Quoting from Marie Leavitt's report on the Sicilian neighborhood in Chicago, Zorbaugh further notes

> "There were no bookstores. Italian newspapers had a limited circulation, and the Chicago daily papers were sold at only two transfer points on the edge of the district … There was no educational standard; the older people were almost all illiterate; they accepted this as natural, and explained it by saying, 'We are *contadini*, and our heads are too thick to learn letters.' Some of the younger ones had had a little elementary training, but with very few exceptions no one in the colony had gone beyond the *quarto elementario* [sic]" (166)

But many second- and third-generation Sicilian Americans made it through their education and went on to become writers in their own right. By clinging to the island's shores and articulating their *sicilianamericanità* on paper, these authors have elaborated a discourse that aims to question the reduction of the complex fabric of a people to a monolithic version of national identity, be it "American" or "Italian."

Interestingly enough, this phenomenon parallels the existence in Italy of a sense of a distinct *sicilianità*—or Sicilianness— that continues to this day to manifest itself in a corpus of texts, which, although subsumed under the broader context of Italian literature, have distinguished themselves as examples of an exquisitely regional literary experience. Writers such as Giovanni Verga, Luigi Pirandello, Maria Messina, Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, Vitaliano Brancati, and more recently Leonardo Sciascia, Vincenzo Consolo, and Andrea Camilleri, just to mention a few, have contributed, in different ways and through different genres, to the formation of this literary experience. In light of what has been said above, it would not be farfetched to suggest that at the core of these two phenomena, which take place on two opposite ends of an ocean, there is a similar process of identity construction. In both the Italian and the U.S. contexts, writers of Sicilian descent have clung to the island's shores and have defined their identity in regional terms.

For the purpose of a deeper understanding of this concept, it is essential to briefly investigate the historical causes that push Sicilians and Sicilian Americans to rewrite their position in both Italy and the U.S. along regionalistic lines. To be sure, every Italian region has its own unique history, culture, traditions, dialects, foods, and the like, but there is something about Sicily that makes the claims to a distinct character echo louder: Sicily is an island. With a total area of almost 10,000 square miles and a population of about five million inhabitants, Sicily is both the largest island of Italy--and of the whole Mediterranean--and one of its most populated regions. I might be stating the obvious, but a study of *Siciliana* that underplays the "island factor" is, at best, incomplete, and at worst, misleading. The legacy of its geography cannot be overemphasized because living on an island forces one to think of it, first and foremost, in geographical terms. Sicily is part of the broader national Italian context and of the Italian South as it is one of the twenty administrative regional entities that make up the Italian state. These are all perfectly sensible and valid perspectives from which anyone can view and consider it. However, as an island, Sicily is detached though connected to the mainland, geographically separated but politically united to the state, and this feature warrants further consideration.

The condition of being an island is, of course, not peculiar to Sicily alone. In fact, much of what is being and will be said in this article with regard to Sicily also applies to a discussion on, say, Sardinia, or any other island, for that matter. A whole field of scholarship, namely, Island Studies, or Nissology, is devoted to the study of the world's islands on their own terms with a transdisciplinary research approach. In his article "The Geographical Fascination of Islands," Russell King focuses on islands as a geographical phenomenon that has inspired the scholarly attention of historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and literary critics. King writes: "An island is a most enticing form of land. Symbol of the eternal contest between land and water, islands are detached, self-contained entities whose boundaries are obvious; all other land divisions are more or less arbitrary" (14). According to this scholar and many others, the geographical factor is at the core of an island's peculiarity and, at the same time, of the commonalities

among islands. In fact, although nearly everyone agrees that many elements contribute to differentiating one island from another--among them, an island's scale, its population size, landscape and weather conditions, location and degree of isolation and peripherality, and political and administrative systems--Island Studies scholars seek to uncover the common elements that bind together islands the world over. In sum, even though each island has its own specific identity, the fact itself of being an island influences the character of all islanders in similar ways.

On the cultural and social levels, the "island factor" or "island way of life" produces what some have called *islandness*, which Godfrey Baldacchino defines as "an intervening variable that does not determine, but contours and conditions, physical and social events in distinct, and distinctly relevant, ways" ("The Coming of Age of Island Studies" 278). Baldacchino adds: "Geographical boundedness, historical distinctiveness, floral and faunal speciation and endemism, linguistic nuances, cultural specifics, jurisdictional adventurism … collectively, the evidence proclaims *islandness* as a commanding paradigm" (279). There is no fixed yardstick with which to measure the scale of islandness, and there are, of course, extreme variations among islands. The experiences of some islands are not necessarily the experiences of all others and there is no universal Truth for all islands in the world. However, islandness is a key feature that cannot be underestimated, and it is felt by islanders as well as perceived and recognized by others.

As a case study, Sicily seems to confirm the idea that its clear geographical limits influence the way its people think of themselves. Sicilian writer Gesualdo Bufalino pointed out that "Sicily suffers from an excess of identity, and I don't know whether it's a good or a bad thing" (*Cento Sicilie* v).[95] The island's specificity, Bufalino continued, "is not just a geographical segregation, but it engenders other types: of the province, of the family, of one's bedroom, of one's heart. Hence, our pride, our mistrust, our modesty; and the sense of being different" (*Cento Sicilie* vi).[96] Sicilians show a self-awareness of being born and living on an island, an exasperated sense of belonging that engenders an amplified sense of community and identity, which is a form of cultural-specific islandness.

However, this islandness is not the unilateral product of geographical conditions. In fact, an inherent contradiction generally characterizes islands. If, on the one hand, their geography invites closure, on the other, the history of most of the world's islands shows connection. Islandness, Edward Warrington and David Milne write,

> … may best be understood in terms of a characteristics set of tensions and ambiguities, opportunities and constraints arising from the interplay of geography and history. *Geography tends towards isolation*: it permits or favors autarchy, distinctiveness, stability and evolution propelled endogenously. *History*, on the other hand, *tends towards contact*: it permits or favors dependence (or interdependence), assimilation, change and evolution propelled exogenously. An island's character develops from the interplay of geography and history, evasions and invasions, the indigenous and the exotic. (383)

In fact, islands have always been, and still are even in postcolonial times, hot spots of international political strains. Due to their usually modest size and scarcity of military and non-military resources, most islands are vulnerable and have been overseas possessions for many colonizing countries and empires. Sicily is no exception; it has been, for most of its history, a territory ruled by more or less distant political centers.

Sicily's island status is essential to its identity as is its troubled history. Especially because of its geographical location, embedded as it is between Europe and Africa, and, on the east-west axis, between Western Europe and western Asia, Sicily has historically been the strategic epicenter of colonizing enterprises. A "crossroad of civilizations" is the most common euphemistic definition for the island's past, for there met the interests of the Greeks, the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Normans, and the Spaniards, to mention just the most influential groups in chronological order. With the 1861 Unification, Sicily was finally annexed to the Kingdom

95. "Soffre, la Sicilia, di un eccesso di identità, né so se sia un bene o sia un male."

96. "Non è una segregazione solo geografica, ma se ne porta dietro altre: della provincia, della famiglia, della stanza, del proprio cuore. Da qui il nostro orgoglio, la diffidenza, il pudore; e il senso di essere diversi."

of Italy, thus becoming the southernmost part of the new-born country. To some, time-wise Italy is only the most recent off-shore colonizing power to conquer the island, so much so that in the aftermath of WWII, almost 100 years after the Unification, Sicilian nationalists coded their dissent to the Italian state in the language of a postcolonial struggle.[97] In short, armed conquest, expropriation of land, extortion of tributes, unsuccessful negotiations, military occupation, and, most recently, *miseria*—or starvation—, emigration, and high unemployment rates have played an almost uninterrupted role in the historical development of the region.

According to some, most notably intellectual and writer Leonardo Sciascia, the history of colonial suffering and exploitation, coupled with geographical insularity—read, isolation—, has engendered a particular process of identity construction as well as recognizable cognitive and behavioral patterns in the population. In his 1970 *La corda pazza: Scrittori e cose della Sicilia*, Sciascia speculated on the perpetual insecurity of the Sicilian people, which, according to him, was the primary legacy of a history of colonization:

Si può dunque dire che l'insicurezza è la componente primaria della storia siciliana; e condiziona il comportamento, il modo di essere, la visione della vita--paura, apprensione, diffidenza, chiuse passioni, incapacità di stabilire rapporti al di fuori degli affetti, violenza, pessimismo, fatalismo—della collettività e dei singoli.[98](13)

This "historical fear," Sciascia maintained, has turned into an "existential fear," which, sociologically, manifests itself in

> una tendenza all'isolamento, alla separazione, degli individui, dei gruppi, delle comunità—e dell'intera regione. E ad un certo punto l'insicurezza, la paura, si rovesciano nell'illusione che una siffatta insularità, con tutti i condizionamenti, le remore e le regole che ne discendono, costituisca privilegio e forza là dove negli effetti, nella esperienza, è condizione di vulnerabilità e debolezza: e ne sorge una specie di alienazione, di follia, che sul piano della psicologia e del costume produce atteggiamenti di presunzione, di fierezza, di arroganza.[99](14)

Borrowing the expression from Sicilian avant-garde poet and painter Crescenzio Cane who, in turn, took inspiration from Senegalese poet Leopold Senghor's concept of *négritude*, Sciascia baptized the sum of these attitudes *sicilitudine*.[100]

Sicilitudine is a controversial discourse but it is certainly more than a form of self-exoticism with little conceptual merit. Following in the footsteps of Frantz Fanon's 1952 analysis of the "black men of the Antilles" in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Sciascia too shifted his interest from the political and economic effects of colonialism in Sicily to a psychoanalytic study of its consequences on the population. In the light of Sicily's colonial past, Sciascia maintained, *sicilitudine* would be more accurately interpreted as one articulation of the arsenal of complexes that Sicilians have been developing in a colonial environment. Thus, by creating the notion of *sicilitudine*, Sciascia was bringing to the political fore again, after Antonio Gramsci, the "Southern question," only this time from a Sicilian *and* postcolonial angle in essentialistic terms.

Sicilitudine as a postcolonial discourse heavily informs the literature of some Sicilian authors. Since 1861, the works of Verga, Pirandello, Maria Messina, Tomasi di Lampedusa, Brancati, the aforementioned Sciascia, Consolo,

97. From 1943 till 1946, the traditional autonomist aspirations in Sicily found a spokesperson in Andrea Finocchiaro Aprile, leader of the MIS (Movement for the Independence of Sicily), a movement which reclaimed the separation of the island from Italy and the constitution of an autonomous republican government. Finocchiaro Aprile's nationalist project survives today in the anachronistic and provincial claims of some scattered movements in Sicily of relative political weight.

98. "One can safely say that insecurity is the primary component of Sicilian history, and it affects the behavior, the way of being, the take on life--fear, apprehension, distrust, closed passions, inability to establish relationships outside of the private sphere, violence, pessimism, fatalism--, of both the collectivity and single individuals."

99. "A tendency to isolation, separation of individuals, groups, and communities-- and, finally, of the entire region. At a certain point, insecurity and fear have reverted to the illusion that such insularity, with all the conditionings, qualms, and rules that originate from it, constitutes a privilege, as well as a source of strength, when, in truth, it engenders vulnerability and weakness. Hence a sort of alienation, of madness, which, on the plane of psychology and customs, ignite attitudes of presumptuousness, haughtiness, and arrogance."

100. On a linguistic note, the expression was a rather felicitous choice since in Italian it rhymes with *solitudine*--or solitude—which hints to the isolation of the island.

Camilleri, and others, have all been dealing with questions of regional identity in different historical and social contexts. The contestatory potential of Sicilian regionalism lies in its refusal of the forced process of "Northernization"—read, homogenization according to northern-Italian standards—on a cultural level in literature. These authors have managed to enter the Italian literary panorama by capitalizing on their distinctly regional voice. In the Introduction to the anthology *Narratori di Sicilia*, Sciascia and Salvatore Guglielmino thus lay out the effects that *sicilitudine* has had on Sicilian-born writers:

> all have experienced dramatically, or with aching anxiety, the fact of being Sicilian, of belonging to a reality, to a manner of being, to a human condition which is distinct and unrepeatable. (Trans. by Joseph Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia* 36)

According to the two critics, Sicily is, by choice, and more often necessity, the favorite topic of the literary production of Sicilian writers, who have engaged in a particular and recognizable process of construction of regional identity in literature.

Interestingly enough, the 1967 edition of *Narratori di Sicilia* featured, among others, Sicilian-American writer Jerre Mangione. Born in Rochester, New York, Mangione is the only "narrator of Sicily" in the anthology who was not born on the island, and whose piece—part of his 1943 memoir *Mount Allegro*—is originally in a language other than Italian and, therefore, appears in translation. The editors must have obviously believed that Sicilianness as a "manner of being" had shaped the identity of some Sicilian Americans too, and that even a second-generation American writer such as Mangione could not help but experience "with aching anxiety, the fact of being Sicilian [American], of belonging to a reality, to a manner of being, to a human condition which is distinct and unrepeatable." By including American-born writer of Sicilian descent Jerre Mangione in his anthology, Sciascia was validating the existence of a distinct Sicilian-American literary vein.

> The articulation of a sense of ethnic regionalism proved to be the most distinctive trait and a crucial factor in Jerre Mangione's literary career. The author consistently and persistently portrayed himself as an American-born of Sicilian parents, thus emphasizing his ethnic and regional heritage. If, in fact, there exists a literature which is intimately tied to Sicilian-American identity, its history dates back to the 1940s, and precisely to the publication of Mangione's *Mount Allegro*.Although, when it first appeared in 1943, it was labeled as fiction for marketing purposes, Mangione's debut book was meant as a non-fiction memoir, the autobiographical account of his youth in the multiethnic neighborhood of the same name in Rochester, New York.[101] Continuously in print since its launch and promoted by sociologist Herbert Gans in his Introduction to the 1989 edition to the rank of "classic of American ethnic literature," *Mount Allegro* is only the first of a number of books in which Mangione undertook to explain to an American readership what it means to be a Sicilian ethnic in the United States. Questions of ethnicity and identity construction are, in different ways, addressed in all of Mangione's four memoirs—namely, *Mount Allegro, Reunion in Sicily* (1950), *A Passion for Sicilians* (1968), and *An Ethnic at Large* (1978)--and also surface in significant ways in his two novels, *The Ship and the Flame* (1948), and *Night Search* (1965). With all his works, Mangione set the foundations of Sicilian-American literature both in chronological terms and in terms of importance of a literary quest for his ethnic heritage, which earned him the honorary title of "dean of Sicilian American writers" (Gardaphé, "Re-inventing Sicily" 56).

101. In *An Ethnic at Large* first, and later in a footnote of the Finale added to the 1981 edition of *Mount Allegro*, Mangione explained that the publishers decided at the last moment to present the book as fiction instead of memoir for reasons of marketing. As a consequence of this editorial maneuver, the Mangiones became the Amoroso family, while the writer simply kept his real name in Italian, i.e., Gerlando (*An Ethnic* 298-99). Finally, in the 1981 edition by Columbia University Press, the author could clarify the nature of his book by adding the subtitle "A Memoir of Italian American Life."

Literature became one of the privileged sites for the construction of an ethnic regional identity for Ben Morreale. Arguably more than any other Sicilian-American writer, Morreale has used Sicilian literature for the creation of his Sicilian-American writings. While the influence of Leonardo Sciascia is too obvious to ignore,[102] more generally, Morreale inscribes his own works in the regional literary tradition of the island. Through the use of a series of strategies such as intertextual references and allusions as well as various themes and topoi, Morreale's Sicilian-American texts reveal their literary (af)filiation with Sicilian literature. Especially in his novels *The Seventh Saracen* (1958), *A Few Virtuous Men (Li Cornuti*) (1973), and *Monday, Tuesday…Never Come Sunday* (1977) Sicilian literature surfaces in the form of implicit and explicit meta-literary motifs. By turning *sicilianamericanità* into part of a greater discourse on Sicilianness—or, in Sciascia's words, *sicilitudine*—enacted by Sicilian writers, Morreale's novels become an ideal bridge between the fields of Italian and Italian-American studies.

Mangione and Morreale are only a few reflections of the prismatic nature of the phenomenon of literary regionalism as it surfaces in American ethnic literature. The re-investment of a Sicilian cultural capital in the works of other Sicilian-American writers takes the most disparate forms, as it intertwines with the authors' all-too-personal aesthetic choices and ways of dealing with issues of regionalism, gender, class, sexual preference, political affiliation, and the like. For instance, poet Vincenzo Ancona, and storyteller Gioia Timpanelli both draw inspiration from Sicilian oral traditions, folklore, legends, and humor for their works. Ancona is the author of a collection of poems, the 1990 *Malidittu la lingua/Damned Language*, published in Sicilian with English translations, while Timpanelli has dealt with Sicilian folktales most explicitly in her 1998 *Sometimes the Soul: Two Novellas of Sicily*. The paucity of their published production is consistent with the oral and performed nature of their work. Ancona and Timpanelli, in fact, imported in the U.S., respectively, the tradition of the *poeta contadino*—or 'poet-farmer,' or 'illiterate poet'—, and that of the *cantastorie*, the professional storytellers who, in the old days, roamed from town to town enchanting the crowds with their stories.

After a literary debut in the tradition of mainstream short stories, third-generation Sicilian-American Tony Ardizzone published in 1997 *In the Garden of Papa Santuzzu*. In this novel, Ardizzone weaves, in an original fashion, Sicilian folkloric tales with a recollection of immigration stories. The writer plays with his Sicilian heritage through a literary trip back in time and place to Sicily in the early 1900. That is the origin of a series of tales of immigration, displacement, and adjustment to the New World through which the Sicilian-American characters as well as the author are able to inscribe their presence onto the American palimpsest.

Second-generation Nat Scammacca inverted the immigration trajectory of his parents by moving from the United States, where he was born, to Sicily, where he died in 2006. "I supply myself with ideological excuses for my choices and destiny," he explained in a 1988 interview with Fred Gardaphé, "Like Odysseus, I had to return to Sicily if life had any meaning at all" (*Dagoes Read* 201). In Sicily, Scammacca joined the *Antigruppo*, a populist movement which expressed its anti-establishment attitudes by bringing free public poetry readings to small towns' piazzas. In his numerous poems as well as his autobiographical works—such as the collection of short stories *Bye Bye America*, first published in Italian in 1972 with the subtitle *Ricordi di un Wop,* or 'Memories of a Wop," the 1979 novel *Due Mondi*, and the 1989 *Sikano l'Amerikano!*—Scammacca took to writing about what it means to be a Sicilian American in Sicily.

The questions and issues raised by Sicilian-American women writers reveal a problematization of patriarchal and sexist practices within the Italian-American family and community. In her 1988 novel *The Right Thing to Do*, Josephine Gattuso Hendin fictionalizes inter-regional, gender, and assimilation conflicts in the lives of a Sicilian man, his Neapolitan wife, and their rebellious American-born daughter. The emotional problems faced by a dysfunctional Sicilian-American family also inform Rachel Guido De Vries's 1986 novel *Tender Warriors*. The DeMarco brothers try to overcome their respective social "handicaps"—Rose is a lesbian, Lorraine an ex-junkie, and

102. In his 2000 memoir *Sicily: The Hallowed Land*, Morreale recalls Sciascia first as the kid who was two years ahead of him at school in Racalmuto, and, later on, as the now-famous writer whom he "often interviewed informally while walking in the *chiazza*" (13). Sciascia makes a cameo appearance in *The Seventh Saracen* and features as one of the main characters of *A Few Virtuous Men* under the guise of writer Nardu Pantaleone.

Sonny suffers from epileptic seizures—for the sake of recovering the sacredness of family unity. Together with Rachel Guido De Vries, Dodici Azpadu contributed to the discussion about gender and sexual identity with her 1983 novel *Saturday Night in the Prime of Life*. The protagonist, Neddie Zingaro, is a Sicilian-American woman who is estranged by her family, and particularly by her mother, because she is a lesbian. Interestingly, Azpadu portrays her Sicilian-American characters as racially defined. What especially connects Neddie to her mother Concetta, in fact, besides the fact that Neddie is the only child who can still speak Sicilian, is that they are both characterized by a markedly olive complexion. Despite these connections, the mother cannot accept Neddie's lesbian identity and, in one last desperate attempt to save their relationship, she breaks with her daughter for good. The above-mentioned women writers negotiate a Sicilian-American feminist subjecthood within and against the boundaries of both the greater Italian and American national identities. Through their feminist and lesbian counter-narratives, these authors are able to subvert a century-old passivity and acceptance of the normative role of women in traditional Sicilian culture, and thus re-write the larger social and sexual narratives of Italian-American identity.

Although a sense of literary regionalism is not a constant in their works, other American authors of Sicilian descent, such as poet and critic Sandra Mortola Gilbert and Beat poet Diane Di Prima, novelist and short-story writer Rita Ciresi, poet Maria Luisa Famà, Susan Caperna Lloyd, and others have, in different ways, dealt with their Sicilian-American identity. In her 2007 book *Unto the Daughters: The Legacy of an Honor Killing in a Sicilian-American Family*, Karen Tintori digs into her family secrets to discover the truth behind the disappearance of her grandmother's sister. Several other Sicilian-American authors explore the possibilities offered by memoir and confessional writing. Most recently, Domenica Ruta laid bare her dysfunctional life, and, especially, her problematic relationship with her addicted-to-anything mother in her best-selling debut 2013 book *With or Without You*. Before her, Sicilian-American women writers such as Mary Cappello, Kym Ragusa, and Carol Maso published memoirs inspired by their own personal experiences as Sicilian Americans without engaging, though, in the identity politics that I investigate in this study. While this general survey in no way should be considered an exhaustive, let alone complete, inventory of Sicilian-American authors who have already received some critical attention, I believe it nevertheless conveys a sense of the importance of the phenomenon. These and other writers have contributed in characteristic, yet original ways to shape the landscape of 20th-century (ethnic) American literature. None of the authors I have mentioned in this brief survey is truly representative of Sicilian Americanness, but each suggests a way to cope with issues of identity construction and regional allegiances in literature. Most of these authors do not feel completely at ease in mainstream America and their works explore the conflicts due to the continuous negotiations between Sicilian and American ways. Generally, they all seem to believe, just like their Sicilian colleagues, that being a Sicilian in the United States is a "special" occurrence. Sicilian-American writers too, just like Sicilian writers, have come to see their "distinctiveness" not as an obstacle to literary development but, rather, as a source of inspiration for the growth of a distinct literary tradition. In fact, each of these authors deal in his or her own way with the issue of *sicilianamericanità*, endeavoring, in different manners, to present, understand and explain, challenge, and reinvent it. Each of them attempts a conceptual reorientation of some of the most pressing issues of being an American of Sicilian descent.

All in all, the works of these Sicilian-American authors function as a counterpoint to Zorbaugh's sociological findings in his 1929 *The Gold Coast and the Slums*. In his analysis, Zorbaugh posited that the American-born child of the Chicago's Sicilians "cannot live and conform in both social worlds at the same time" (176). The opportunities for acculturation and social mobility for Sicilian Americans were, in the sociologist's view, severely limited by their ethnic status to the point that their only option was, for the men, to join the underworld of violence and crime:

> The family and colony are defined for him in his American contacts by such epithets as "dago," "wop," "foreign," and the like. He feels the loss of status attached to his connection with the colony. In his effort to achieve status in the American city he loses his rapport with family and community. Conflicts arise between the child and his family. Yet by

> virtue of his race, his manner of speech, the necessity of living in the colony, and these same definitive epithets, he is excluded from status and intimate participation in American life. Out of this situation, as we have already seen, arises the gang, affording the boy a social world in which he finds his only status and recognition. But it is by conforming to delinquent patterns that he achieves status in the gang. *And every boy in Little Hell is a member of a gang*. This is substantially the process of disorganization of the Sicilian boy of the second generation. (176-77, my emphasis)

The fate of Sicilian girls did not look any more promising than that of the boys, secluded as they were in their own homes until it was time for them to marry a man of their father's choosing (168-69).

However, ninety years have passed since Zorbaugh published his now-classic book and, as sociologist Robert Lombardo notes, "Little Sicily does not exist today. It was replaced in the 1950s by public housing, but the community lives on in the hearts and minds of former residents and their children who have stubbornly held on to their memories ("Chicago's Little Sicily" 41). The Italian ethnic enclaves are almost everywhere in the U.S. a thing of the past and they only come to life once or twice a year when the community crowds the streets to celebrate a beloved patron saint or to observe a day of ethnic pride. While the pretext for this article was to respond, in a way, to Zorbaugh's study on Chicago's Little Hell, its real purpose is to extend current research on and understanding of the complexities of Italian America. The field of Italian-American studies benefits now from a number of good to excellent anthologies, edited collections, and monographs dealing with many aspects of Italian-American culture and literature. The works of Italian-American authors have been analyzed and dissected from the point of view of their ethnic content, feminist perspective, political message, gay and lesbian agenda, linguistic features, and so on. This article aims to complement all these studies and allow for a more accurate characterization of Italian-American literature at large, while at the same time it opens a space for new discussions on what it means to be Sicilian on both sides of the ocean.

Works Cited

Ancona, Vincenzo. *Malidittu la lingua/Damned Language*. Mineola, NY: Legas, 2010.

Ardizzone, Tony. *In the Garden of Papa Santuzzu*. New York: Picador USA, 1999.

Azpadu, Dodici. *Saturday Night in the Prime of Life*. Iowa City: Aunt Lute Books, 1983.

Baldacchino, Godfrey, ed. *A World of Islands*. Charlottetown, CA: Institute of Island Studies, 2007.

---. "The Coming of Age of Island Studies." *Tijdschrift Voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 95.3 (2004): 272-284.

Bevilacqua, Piero. *Breve Storia dell'Italia Meridionale*. Roma, Italy: Donzelli Editore, 1993.

Bufalino, Gesualdo, and Nunzio Zago, eds. *Cento Sicilie: Testimonianze per un ritratto*. Scandicci, Italy: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1993.

deVries, Rachel Guido. *Tender Warriors*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1986.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.

Farrell, Joseph. *Leonardo Sciascia*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995.

Fazio, Venera, and Delia De Santis, eds. *Sweet Lemons: Writings with a Sicilian Accent*. New York: Legas, 2004.

---. *Sweet Lemons 2: International Writings with a Sicilian Accent*. Mineola, NY: Legas, 2010.

Gardaphé, Fred. *Dagoes Read*. Toronto: Guernica, 1996.

---. *Leaving Little Italy: Essaying Italian American Culture*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2004.

---. "Re-Inventing Sicily in Italian American Writing and Film." *MELUS* 28.3 (2003): 55-71.

Gramsci, Antonio. *The Southern Question*. Trans. Pasquale Verdicchio. West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera Press, 1995.

Hendin, Gattuso Josephine. *The Right Thing to Do*. New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1999.

King, Russell. "The Geographical Fascination of Islands." *The Development Process in Small Island States*. Ed. Douglas G. Lockhart, David Drakakis-Smitt, and Patrick Schembri. New York: Routledge, 1993. 13-37.
Lombardo, Robert M. "Chicago's Little Sicily." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 100.1 (Spring 2007): 41-56.
Mangione, Jerre. *A Passion for Sicilians: The World around Danilo Dolci*. New York: William Morrow, 1968.
---. *An Ethnic at Large: A Memoir of America in the Thirties and Forties*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1978.
---. *Mount Allegro: A Memoir of Italian American Life*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1998.
---. *Night Search*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1965.
---. *Reunion in Sicily*. New York: Columbia UP, 1984.
---. *The Ship and the Flame*. New York: A.A. Wyn Inc., 1948.
Mazzucchelli, Chiara. *The Heart and the Island: A Critical Study of Sicilian American Literature*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015.
Morreale, Ben. *A Few Virtuous Men (Li Cornuti)*. Plattsburgh, NY: Tundra Books, 1973.
---. *Monday, Tuesday … Never Come Sunday*. Plattsburgh, NY: Tundra Books, 1977.
---. *Sicily, the Hallowed Land: A Memoir*. Mineola, NY: Legas, 2000.
---. *The Seventh Saracen*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1958.
Renda, Francesco. *L'emigrazione in Sicilia*. Palermo, Italy: Ed. Sicilia al Lavoro, 1963.
Ruta, Domenica. *With or Without You*. New York: Random House, 2013.
Scammacca, Nat. *Bye Bye America: Memories of a Sicilian-American*. Merrick, NY/Trapani, Italy: Coop. Ed. Antigruppo Siciliano & Cross-Cultural Communications, 1986.
---. *Due mondi*. Trapani, Italy: Coop. Ed. Antigruppo Siciliano, 1979.
---. *Sikano l'amerikano!* Merrick, NY/Trapani, Italy: Coop. Ed. Antigruppo Siciliano & Cross-Cultural Communications, 1989.
Sciascia, Leonardo. *La corda pazza: Scrittori e cose della Sicilia*. Milano, Italy: Adelphi, 1991.
Sciascia, Leonardo, and Salvatore Guglielmino, eds. *Narratori di Sicilia*. Milano, Italy: Mursia, 1967.
Timpanelli, Gioia. *Sometimes the Soul: Two Novellas of Sicily*. New York: Vintage Books, 1999.
Tintori, Karen. *Unto the Daughters. The Legacy of an Honor Killing in a Sicilian-American Family*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2007.
Warrington, Edward, and David Milne. "Island Governance." *A World of Islands. Ed. Godfrey Baldacchino*. Charlottetown, CA: Institute of Island Studies, 2007. 379-427.
Zorbaugh, Harvey Warren. *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1929.

Sabrina Vellucci – Università Roma Tre

"Complicated homecomings": le scritture nomadi di Sandra M. Gilbert e Louise DeSalvo

"I write from what has been called a position of deterritorialization. That my work is called ethnic is not a literary description, but an attempt to turn me over to the sociology department." (Helen Barolini, *Chiaroscuro*)

"A hybrid, an inhabitant of cultural borders, I am one of those who feel at home and in exile on both sides of the border." (Edvige Giunta, *Writing with an Accent*)

È degli ultimi anni una lungamente attesa fioritura degli studi sulla cultura e la letteratura italiano-americana, sia in Italia che negli Stati Uniti. Benché tardiva rispetto ad altre tradizioni, l'inclusione di questa letteratura nel canone statunitense è parte della consolidata tendenza a valorizzare le scritture cosiddette etniche. Se la traduzione italiana del volume *Are Italians White?* di Jennifer Guglielmo e Salvatore Salerno ci ricorda (nel momento in cui Nancy Pelosi ricopre la carica di Presidente della Camera dei Rappresentanti) che per molto tempo gli italiani americani sono stati una minoranza razzializzata negli Stati Uniti (Guglielmo e Salerno 2006), dalla lettura di una qualsiasi testimonianza dell'ampio *corpus* di opere letterarie si comprende facilmente come "l'italianità sia (stata) per gli italo americani, e le italo americane, una differenza sofferta," soprattutto, prima ancora di essere "un patrimonio da custodire e tramandare" (Crispino 2004, 4)[103]

Non molto tempo fa, nell'introduzione a un volume dedicato allo studio della narrativa italiano-americana, Fred L. Gardaphé affermava con perentorietà che "la storia dell'intellettuale italiano-americano non è stata ancora scritta" (Gardaphé1996, 5)[104] e raccontava la propria vicenda di "outsider" nella "little Italy" della sua infanzia, dove chiunque ricercasse la solitudine per leggere o scrivere – attività considerate equivalenti a "crimini culturali" – era guardato con sospetto dagli stessi famigliari. Da adulto, Gardaphé avrebbe scoperto che la volontà di "irrompere" nel canone letterario statunitense da parte di un autore "etnico" costituiva una trasgressione culturale almeno altrettanto oltraggiosa. Tra le principali difficoltà che il critico italiano-americano doveva affrontare, egli avrebbe inoltre individuato la mancanza di fiducia nella cultura di provenienza, come mezzo attraverso cui esprimersi di fronte al pubblico *mainstream* statunitense, e una disistima di sé stesso riconducibile all'esperienza della migrazione.

Se la coltre di silenzio che ha avvolto la storia e la cultura italiano-americana pare ora, finalmente, essersi levata, affinché il lavoro delle donne e sulle donne guadagni visibilità è tuttavia necessario un passaggio ulteriore. In uno studio fondamentale sui *memoir* delle italiane d'America, Caterina Romeo illustra come le difficoltà di articolare la propria voce senza tacitare l'etnicità raddoppino quando a complicare la posizione autoriale concorrono fattori quali l'identità di genere o l'orientamento sessuale (ma, come è noto, le categorie di marginalità potrebbero moltiplicarsi). In una cultura fortemente patriarcale, l'ambizione alla scrittura o alle attività di studio da parte di una donna è stata, giocoforza, più a lungo, più o meno apertamente, osteggiata.[105] Benché esistano esempi di romanzi scritti da donne a partire dalla prima metà del Novecento, solo nella terza e quarta generazione un numero signifi-

103. In Italia, l'altrettanto tardiva inclusione della letteratura italiano-americana nel canone pare piuttosto scaturire dalle recenti ondate migratorie verso il nostro paese, che hanno determinato la rivalutazione della cultura e della produzione letteraria di quei migranti che hanno lasciato l'Italia, in tempi più o meno remoti (cfr. Romeo 2005, 14). Contributi fondamentali al recupero di tale letteratura, come l'antologia *Italoamericana* di Francesco Durante, hanno messo in luce, tra l'altro, l'esistenza di una produzione letteraria italiana in America di molto anteriore alla Grande Migrazione del 1880.

104. Ove non altrimenti indicato in bibliografia, le traduzioni italiane delle opere citate sono di chi scrive.

105. Si veda, a questo proposito, il saggio di Louise DeSalvo *A Portrait of the Puttana as a Middle-Aged Woolf Scholar*, inizialmente pubblicato nella raccolta *Between Women* a cura di Ascher, Carol, DeSalvo Louise e Sara Ruddick. 1984. Boston: Beacon Press. e poi incluso in *Vertigo* (DeSalvo 2006).

cativo di autrici si affaccia sulla scena letteraria. Si tratta ancora, però, almeno in una prima fase, di esordi in incognito: per essere prese in seria considerazione dall'*establishment* letterario, queste scrittrici anglicizzano il loro nome (come già alla fine degli anni '20 faceva Frances Winwar, nata Francesca Vinciguerra), oppure, più spesso, mettono in atto un "ethnic passing,"[106] un mascheramento della propria identità etnica, attraverso l'acquisizione del cognome anglofono del marito: "[i]n questi casi il nome che denota italianità scompare del tutto o, nella migliore delle ipotesi, viene ridotto a un'iniziale che […] 'riesce a cogliere lo stato diminutivo dell'etnicità italo americana.'" (Romeo 2005, 75) Si scopre così che il nome di Sandra M. Gilbert, nota studiosa di scrittura delle donne, oltreché poetessa e autrice di *memoir*, nasconde origini italiane – la 'M.,' in questo caso, sta per 'Mortola.' Così come la 'B.' di Linda B. Hutcheon, eminente teorica del postmodernismo anglo-canadese, è una crittografia di 'Bortalotti.' Solo in tempi relativamente recenti queste scrittrici e studiose hanno dichiarato le loro origini e rivendicato una collocazione ambivalente ed eccentrica rispetto alla cultura dominante del loro paese d'adozione. Alcune di loro, come Marianna (De Marco) Torgovnick e Cathy (Notari) Davidson sono, insieme a Hutcheon e Gilbert, docenti di Inglese "cripto-etniche,"[107] secondo la definizione coniata dalla stessa Hutcheon, la quale si interroga su "cosa significhi diventare un professore di *Inglese* quando si cresce in una famiglia italiana in cui 'gli inglesi' sono considerati portatori di un'identità etnica separata e distinta,"(Hutcheon 1997, 252) quando, cioè, sono loro a essere percepiti come stranieri. Con un liberatorio rovesciamento di prospettiva Hutcheon elabora un'interpretazione dell'etnicità come "essere situato/a," alludendo a una collocazione comunque transitoria e parziale. Superando il modello di "ibridità" culturale – che sottintende la mescolanza di elementi "puri" o "autentici" e, paradossalmente, sembra votato a conservare quegli stessi confini che aspirerebbe a dissolvere – Hutcheon intende la propria etnicità come un processo di "inter-riferimento" tra due o più tradizioni culturali (ivi, 255). La sua interpretazione di ciò che significhi essere "etnico" alla fine del ventesimo secolo non è tanto legata a immagini di "incrocio" (di gruppi etnici, classi sociali, ruoli, e così via) quanto basata sull'idea di complesse e dinamiche interazioni "trans-etniche"[108]: "[p]iuttosto che sradicare l'estraneità in nome di una naturalizzazione universale," scrive Hutcheon citando Djelal Kadir, si dovrebbe "persuadere ognuno della propria estraneità di fronte all'estraneità di ogni altra persona" (Hutcheon 1997, 256).

Se solo di recente le italiane d'America hanno imparato a "scrivere con l'accento" – secondo la definizione di Edvige Giunta – per molte di loro, la voce italiana è ancora destinata a rimanere muta, e la scrittura continua a essere, spesso, testimonianza di una difficile mediazione tra l'impulso a cancellare le tracce della propria identità etnica e l'impulso a scrivere con gli accenti rivelatori di quella stessa identità. È sulla modulazione di questi accenti che pare opportuno soffermarsi per dare conto delle diverse articolazioni, nella produzione critica e letteraria, della visione "straniata" di due autrici e intellettuali quali Sandra M. Gilbert e Louise DeSalvo. Ovvero, per indagare come ciascuna rappresenti i propri diversi gradi di separazione rispetto al *mainstream* statunitense, rispetto alla cultura italiano-americana di appartenenza e rispetto a una cultura d'origine sconosciuta, alla quale tornare in cerca di radici che possono solo essere ricreate nella costruzione letteraria.

Laddove Hutcheon fa del suo essere italiano-canadese oggetto di riflessione teorica, Gilbert lascia emergere il forte legame con le sue origini italiane solo nella produzione poetica e memoiristica, poco conosciuta fino a qualche tempo fa. Nell'introduzione a *The Dream Book* (1987), una pionieristica antologia di scrittrici italiano-americane, Helen Barolini riportava il passo di una lettera speditale da Gilbert: "Mi chiamo in realtà Sandra Mortola Gilbert

106. Il fenomeno del *passing*, molto studiato in riferimento alla cultura africano-americana, è ricorrente in quella italiano-americana, come illustra una poesia di Rose Romano: "Most Italians escape by hiding, / don't teach the children Italian, / use Italian to tell the old stories, / and never complain. / Now most Italians pass / And don't know it." Secondo Mary Jo Bona, poesie come questa "costringono il lettore a riconoscere il potenziale genocidio culturale insito nel *passing*" (cit. in Giunta 2002, 74).

107. La studiosa Marianna Torgovnick è diventata nota come autrice italiano-americana dopo la pubblicazione di *Crossing Ocean Parkway: Readings by an Italian American Daughter* (1994), una raccolta di saggi nella quale ha adottato per la prima volta il suo cognome da nubile, De Marco. Cathy Davidson, invece, accenna alla sua italianità solo *en passant* nel memoir *36 Views of Mount Fuji* (1993).

108. Riprendendo quanto scritto da Homi Bhabha a proposito della costruzione culturale dell'"essere nazione," Hutcheon afferma che la costruzione (inter)culturale dell'etnicità può consistere altresì in "una forma di affiliazione sociale e testuale" messa in atto da lettori e scrittori, poiché entrambi operano all'interno di un ordine di parole, ed entrambi emergono come funzione di diverse e, forse, contrastanti codificazioni (Hutcheon 1997, 256).

e il cognome di mia madre è Caruso, così mi sento sempre stranamente falsificata con questo cognome americano dal suono WASP che ho adottato a vent'anni, quando ero una giovane sposa che non aveva mai riflettuto sugli effetti delle proprie azioni" (Barolini 1987, 22). Poetessa dotata di una "forte e appassionata identità italiano-americana," la stessa Gilbert scrive: "[s]ono sempre molto colpita nel constatare l'esiguo numero di persone che abbiano mai scritto cosa significasse essere come *noi*" (Ivi, x)[109] L'eredità italiana – l'Italia come paese e come "idea" – evoca misteri e "visioni criptiche" nell'autrice, che sperimenta un senso di alienazione e, nei ripetuti ritorni a quel "luogo perduto" attraverso la poesia, matura la consapevolezza di essere, al contempo, "insider" e "outsider":

> For even while the Italy of my imagination is a province of mystery and a site of shame, it is also a sort of lost Eden, the very opposite of a place of sin, as well as a foreign realm that is a center of otherness—a kind of anti-nation or place of alienation where I might find what Yeats would have called an "anti-self" and perhaps finally, therefore, a symbol of what is eternally desired by me but yet (or thus) perpetually incomprehensible, remote, deferred, inaccessible (Gilbert 1998, 57).

Nella poesia, soprattutto, Gilbert ricerca un congiungimento con un passato mai vissuto, eppure tenacemente presente e determinante, e crea un ponte tra i territori che formano la sua identità, aprendo varchi a propizi benché problematici attraversamenti. Si tratta comunque di speculazioni circa una "storia lunga e intricata," "a volte smarrita, a volte ritrovata," che l'autrice sa di non poter in nessun caso comprendere. Come le fredde parole straniere pronunciate dalla nonna siciliana in "The Grandmother Dream" (1968):

> My Sicilian grandmother, whom I've never met,
> my Sicilian grandmother, the midwife, who died
> forty years ago, appears in my bedroom.
> She's sitting on the edge of my bed,
> at her feet a shabby black bag,
> and she speaks a tangled river of Italian:
> her Sicilian words flow out like dark fish, slippery and cold,
> her words stare at me with blank eyes.
> […] (Gilbert 2003, 5).

La sua poesia mappa quindi una geografia ancestrale "infused (as such places must be for everyone) with those family secrets in which the mysteries of origin are perhaps hopelessly embedded" (Gilbert 1998, 53). Origini avvolte in un manto di vergogna ("I wanted a name that wouldn't shake hands with Mussolini! I wanted—to be perfectly frank—a name that never met a mafioso!"(ivi, 56), che, in un primo momento, Gilbert ammette di avere volutamente obliterato, come testimonia "The Leeks" (1982):

> They tell me I want to be an American,
> I want a name that ends in a Protestant consonant
> instead of a Catholic vowel!
>
> Stooping above the cool

109. In seguito, riferendosi ai "blocchi interni" che ostacolano l'espressione creativa, Barolini scriverà di "mind-racking doubts as to the worth of one's own experience because of the lack of related models in the reading our schooling provided. We are what we read, but, in the case of Italian Americans, we can seldom read who we are" (Barolini 1999, 55).

New England fronds,
I become a red-haired freckled

Presbyterian girl […]

On an April Sunday I journey
over the fields, down to the murmuring swamp:
going to pick leeks and lilies, mint and chamomile.

Humming "*Rock of Ages*," I inhale
the damp New England spring: America's
my dooryard, my quilt, my rag rug!

I've never eaten *potage parisienne*,
never drunk red wine,
never tasted olive oil,

but I've a skinny aunt beyond the hill
who makes Presbyterian love-drinks
from lilies and chamomile and leeks! (Gilbert 2000, 271-272)

Non solo nel rifiuto del nome, inequivocabile indicatore di etnicità (DeSalvo e Giunta 2002, 64),[110] ma spesso attraverso il rifiuto del cibo, espressione precipua dell'italianità e della tradizionale domesticità del ruolo femminile, si manifesta il desiderio di emancipazione dalla cultura di appartenenza. Ricordando la spiccata avversione della propria adolescenza per le pietanze preparate dalla madre, Louise (Anita) DeSalvo scrive:

Per anni mia madre ha cucinato cose che io credevo nessuno avrebbe dovuto mangiare, cose che io certamente non riuscivo a mangiare, cose del vecchio mondo, cose a buon mercato, cose che facevano male, ne ero sicura, cose che mi vergognavo di dire che mangiavo, e certamente non potevo invitare i miei amici a rimanere a mangiare da noi. Io volevo essere presa per un'americana. Volevo un hamburger (DeSalvo 2006, 230-231).[111]

DeSalvo ricorda poi di avere iniziato nei primi anni '70, "come tutti," a esplorare le proprie radici etniche:

> È durato molto poco. Ho comprato una macchina per fare la pasta. Ho imparato a mettere insieme gli ingredienti per la pasta, a stendere la sfoglia e a tagliarla. […] Poi ho cominciato a capire che è possibile dire quanto le donne siano schiavizzate in un paese dal tipo di preparazione che il loro cibo tradizionale richiede. Ogni ricetta che comincia con: "Prendere un mortaio e un pestello," ora mi fa venire un impulso di ribellione. (ivi, 248)

Nell'antologia *The Milk of Almonds. Italian American Women Writers on Food and Culture* (2002),che DeSalvo cura insieme a Edvige Giunta, è affermata la volontà di demistificare il sentimentalismo prevalente nei discorsi

110. Si veda a tal proposito anche quanto scrive un'altra studiosa italiano-americana, Janet Zandy: "My children want names that climb / and cling to the sun / Diaphanous names / Clear pools, clubs, and right-school names / Names whose sails billow out / White and clean / American names / Names that sound like something you buy. // Heather, Brittany, Amber, Tiffany, Bunny, Lance. // Not Rumpelstiltskin, but Snow White names."

111. DeSalvo continuerà a indagare il tema dei conflitti famigliari che si manifestano attraverso il cibo e la sua preparazione nel *memoirCrazy in the Kitchen: Food, Feuds, and Forgiveness in an Italian American Family* (2004).

che associano le italiane americane al cibo, privando le loro storie di "complessità, conflitti, e contraddizioni e, in ultima analisi, della loro autenticità, bellezza e forza narrativa" (DeSalvo 2002, 2). La raccolta, che include diverse poesie di Gilbert, traccia nel complesso una prospettiva inquisitoria e destabilizzante degli assunti essenzialisti sul cibo, ridefinendo il significato culturale di questo tema centrale nella storia degli italiani americani – "one of the least understood ethnic experiences in the United States" (ivi, 22). Analogamente a Gilbert, DeSalvo, che ha iniziato la carriera accademica dedicando alcuni studi alla vita e all'opera di Virginia Woolf, esplora la propria italianità in testi che esulano dalla sua produzione critica caratteristica. Ad eccezione di un saggio del 1984 (vedi nota 4 *supra*) e di *Casting Off* (1987), un romanzo edito in Inghilterra che tratta con audacia il tema dell'adulterio anche attraverso protagoniste italiano-americane (tema ripreso in seguito nel memoir *Adultery* [1999]), è con *Vertigo. A Memoir* (1996), dato alle stampe all'età di cinquantaquattro anni, che DeSalvo segna una tappa fondamentale nella storia letteraria italiano-americana. Se "l'identità culturale si definisce dall'esterno e a posteriori"(Braidotti 2002, 23), la volontà di riconciliarsi con le proprie origini si manifesta in tempi successivi, attraverso il filtro della memoria oppure compiendo viaggi alla ricerca di presunte radici: ritorni letterali e metaforici che segnalano momenti importanti nello sviluppo di questa letteratura.

Gilbert racconta di una vacanza in Sicilia durante la quale, ansiosa di sondare il mistero della propria storia famigliare, si cimenta nella vana ricerca di Sambuca Zabut, il paese nativo della madre, che non riesce a trovare su una cartina di Palermo e dintorni altrimenti dettagliata. In seguito una zia le dirà che il paese è situato vicino ad Agrigento: "Which is to say, I never really understood *where* it was at all, not to mention *what* it was" (Gilbert 1998, 60). Scoprirà altresì che del nome esistono diverse interpretazioni, tra cui quella di Leonardo Sciascia, che associa suggestivamente il termine al significato di 'luogo remoto.'In "2085" (Gilbert 1985), l'autrice immagina una sua discendente intraprendere lo stesso percorso e sperimentare la medesima frustrazione nel tentativo di conoscere l'esperienza di un passato che resta incomunicabile:

It's 2085, you're walking on a dirt road
in Sicily, you're my blood-
kin, a seventeen-year-old girl

with black curls and a faint smudge of
shadow on your upper lip.
Have you

come from New York to find lost ancestors,
or have you always been here?
Dry hills, stacks of heat,

tower around you; nearby, there are goats,
donkeys, chickens—a smell of dung simmering,
and smoke, grain, *rosmarino*;

in the sky, a track of supersonic light—
but you don't look up, you're reading, thinking,
trying to imagine the past,

and my sentences won't help you, though they
brood in you like chromosomes;

I can't

tell you who I was, in my queer costume,
with my modern ideas.
My words

stand in the fields beside you—
stones, dead trees—the way
the land you walk through

stood behind me, an unknown monument.
And now the road unfolds and shines ahead
like the history neither of us understands.

It turns you
toward the sea, toward
the inarticulate Aegean (Gilbert 2003, 35-36)

Dalla consapevolezza di questa perdita ancestrale, ma anche "da una caparbia determinazione a vivere – da un punto di vista culturale, linguistico e creativo – in tutti e due i mondi" (Giunta 2002, 3), nasce la predilezione delle scrittrici italiano-americane per la forma del *memoir*, un genere letterario autobiografico in cui la verità emotiva e discontinua del ricordo prevale sulla verità dei fatti: in *Vertigo* DeSalvo afferma che ciò che scrive "non è del tutto vero, e […], forse, non è vero affatto" (70). Coniugando memoria e storia, finzione e riflessione teorica, il *memoir* resiste al concetto stesso di genere, così come ribalta la logica del racconto di vite esemplari: è un tipo di scrittura autonarrativa attraverso cui "soggetti 'eccentrici' usano la memoria personale per recuperare una memoria storica sistematicamente ignorata dalla cultura dominante" (Romeo 2005, 16). DeSalvo ne è forse la più autorevole teorica e propugnatrice: i suoi *memoir* mettono in luce i molteplici livelli di esclusione sperimentati come soggetto di scrittura in quanto donna, italiano-americana, di famiglia operaia, e animata da ambizioni censurate sia dal contesto sociale di provenienza sia dalla cultura che avrebbe dovuto accoglierla. In *Vertigo* – il titolo è ispirato al celebre film di Hitchcock, noto in Italia come *La donna che visse due volte* – l'esperienza delle diverse forme di esilio si traduce nella rappresentazione di una difficoltà di relazione con lo spazio circostante, la vertigine, appunto, che riproduce il trauma del primo grande attraversamento, che per molti italiani aveva sancito la separazione dalla terra e dalla cultura di appartenenza. Romeo rileva che, nei *memoir* scritti da italiane americane, la ricorrenza di disturbi di relazione con lo spazio quali acrofobia, claustrofobia e agorafobia segnala, da un lato, "una difficoltà delle donne […] a occupare lo spazio troppo angusto assegnato loro"(ivi, 24) e, dall'altro, l'incapacità, dovuta all'assenza di modelli di riferimento, di collocarsi in un contesto pubblico più ampio[112] – circostanza che nella scrittura si traduce in ciò che Gilbert e Gubar, in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (Gilbert e Gubar 2000, 49), definivano *anxiety of authorship*. "Nonostante avessi letto un sacco di libri, non ce n'era neanche uno scritto da una donna italoamericana.

112. L'instabilità di alcuni personaggi femminili è sintomo della dislocazione culturale della famiglia italiana in America: romanzi come *Paper Fish* (1980) di Tina De Rosa collegano la patologia mentale allo sradicamento dell'immigrazione, denunciandone l'incidenza nelle comunità svantaggiate e facendo della malattia, in quanto mancanza di stabilità, una metafora dell'esperienza del/la migrante (cfr. Giunta 2002, 65). A proposito della maggiore difficoltà di adattamento delle donne, le quali dovevano superare i mandati di una cultura che affidava a loro il compito di preservare le tradizioni del paese di provenienza, reprimendo ogni aspirazione al cambiamento, Barolini scrive: "Not able to Americanize on the spot, the Italian immigrant woman suffered instant obsolescence (an American invention), and became an anachronism, a displaced person, a relic of a remote rural village culture." (Barolini 1987, 13). Sul nesso tra "displacement" e "disease," cfr. anche Elisabetta Marino *Molding Identity and Femininity in Tina De Rosa's Paper Fish and in Maria Mazziotti Gillan's Italian Women in Black Dresses (writing as a talking cure)*.

© S.IJSPC vol. 1 Issue 1, pp. X-XX

Tra le donne non ce n'erano che avessero il mio retroterra," scrive DeSalvo, la quale afferma di avere invece trovato coraggio e "ispirazione nel lavoro delle scrittrici afroamericane ed ebree americane" (DeSalvo 2006, 25-26).

Nello spazio che intercorre tra silenzio e parola per le italiane d'America c'è lo spaesamento di chi attraversa territori alieni e deve imparare a comunicare in contesti regolati da codici sconosciuti. Uno spaesamento debilitante che, trasmesso alle generazioni successive, si trasforma in "sintomi," i quali, attraverso una lingua caparbiamente padroneggiata, assumono talvolta la forma di arte. Per DeSalvo esplorare le (s)connessioni tra la storia dei suoi antenati, emigrati dalla Puglia e dalla Campania tra la fine del XIX e l'inizio del XX secolo, e la sua storia di intellettuale italiano-americana vuol dire affrontare questo persistente senso di spaesamento, sia a livello personale che culturale. Non più (solo) geografico o spaziale, tale spaesamento appare dunque determinato da precise coordinate storiche e "acquista una valenza molto diversa dal generale senso di frammentazione e di dislocazione del soggetto postmoderno" (Romeo 2001, 75).[113]

Testimone di uno sradicamento atavico è, prima di Louise, sua madre, nata negli Stati Uniti, la quale afferma di essersi sempre sentita "senza casa," anche (o tanto più) in seguito al trasferimento, nel 1949, dalla proletaria Hoboken, nel New Jersey, al quartiere residenziale di Ridgefield, che segna l'agognato passaggio alla "solida" e "rispettabile" classe media. La perdita del senso di appartenenza alla comunità del quartiere italiano-americano che accompagna la promozione sociale è "una frattura completa e totale" che segna la stessa Louise, la quale da adulta continua a tornare a Hoboken, perché quello è il luogo in cui la sua "memoria ha trovato dimora" (DeSalvo 2006, 116). "Imparare a trovare la strada di casa" è la metafora di un fondamentale momento di crescita, nella narrazione di un episodio dell'infanzia in cui DeSalvo ricorda le esperienze scolastiche, contrassegnate da successi ma anche dalle derisioni subite a causa del suo cognome manifestamente "Wop."[114] Nel corso degli anni trascorsi in due scuole elementari cattoliche, la futura scrittrice impara a difendersi con parole taglienti, le uniche armi di un arsenale peraltro già considerevole: "[e]ro una bambina, troppo piccola per andare a scuola, molto piccola per la mia età, di famiglia proletaria e italiana. Agli occhi del mondo non valevo molto e non sarei arrivata da nessuna parte" (ivi, 98). Attraverso gli insegnamenti impartiti dalle religiose, DeSalvo apprende "che c'è della bellezza nella struttura di una frase ben bilanciata" e che la lingua deve essere utilizzata con "cura, correttezza e precisione" (ivi, 103). Un percorso che la condurrà alla scrittura, e infine alla narrazione della "storia improbabile" della sua vita, in cui scopre connessioni inaspettate, come la derivazione di 'vertigine' dal latino 'vertere' ('volgere, girare'), che rimanda alla voce 'verse':

> *Vertigo*; *verse*. L'una, poi l'altra. L'una e l'altra. Queste parole negli anni si presentano congiunte, a un livello molto profondo. […] Attraverso l'atto del versificare, trasformare la mia instabilità, il mio senso di vertigine, in qualcosa di valore (DeSalvo 2006, 25).

In *Writing as a Way of Healing* (1999) DeSalvo teorizza la scrittura di *memoir* come pratica di guarigione e invita i lettori a utilizzare "il semplice atto di scrivere" per reimmaginare se stessi e ricordare chi erano, per scoprire e soddisfare i desideri più profondi ma anche per accettare "il dolore, la paura, l'incertezza, il conflitto" (DeSalvo 1999, 9).[115] La ridefinizione in senso democratico del concetto stesso di scrittura e della figura dell'"autore" conferisce al

113. Tra gli ulteriori sintomi di sconnessione vi è quel "disgusto per se stessa" – sentimento la cui genesi è acutamente analizzata da Gilbert in riferimento a Mary Shelley (Gilbert e Gubar 2000, 241) – testimoniato in diverse opere di italiane americane. In *Public School No. 18: Paterson, New Jersey*, Maria Mazziotti Gillan scrive: "Without words, they tell me / to be ashamed. / I am. / I deny that booted country / even from myself, / want to be still / and untouchable / as those women / who teach me to hate myself" (Barolini 1987, 18).

114. Acronimo di "Without Papers," per indicare gli immigrati clandestini, è uno dei termini spregiativi con cui venivano designati gli italiani americani (cfr. N.d.T., 97). Scrive DeSalvo: "A me mi avevano già presa in giro per il mio cognome italiano, lungo e impronunciabile (che aveva in tutto dodici lettere, sette consonanti e cinque vocali [il cognome da nubile della scrittrice è Sciacchetano] sia nel cortile della scuola, quando i bambini mi chiedevano chi fossi, sia in classe, quando Sister Mary faceva l'appello. Avevo già sentito gli insulti che sarebbero diventati una costante durante i miei anni di scuola" (DeSalvo 2006, 97).

115. Sulla scrittura come "cura" nelle opere di altre due importanti autrici italiano-americane, si veda Marino (2007) *Molding Identity and Femininity*, cit.

testo una forte carica innovativa, generando una "commistione di personale, culturale, teoretico, politico" (Romeo 2005, 159). Al di là delle gerarchie letterarie, DeSalvo auspica l'integrazione di tale processo nella vita quotidiana di ogni individuo:

> Writing testimony, to be sure, means that we tell our stories. But it also means that we no longer allow ourselves to be silenced or allow others to speak for our experience. Writing to heal, then, and making that writing public, as I see it, is the most important emotional, psychological, artistic, and political project of our time (DeSalvo 1999, 216).

La scrittura di DeSalvo, come quella di altre italiane americane, è contraddistinta da una spiccata propensione a denunciare le tare della propria cultura, rompendo il silenzio che circonda temi tradizionalmente impronunciabili, e sfidando l'ostracismo che spesso consegue a tale scelta (Giunta 2002, 87-88). Tali opere, perciò, non esprimono tanto il tentativo di recuperare la memoria quanto il proposito di reinventarla, superando visioni nostalgiche o ciecamente celebrative e criticando l'inadeguatezza delle rappresentazioni stereotipate della cultura italiano-americana. Come osserva Giunta, per autrici impegnate in un lavoro di revisione radicale dei dettami della cultura patriarcale, un concetto chiave come quello di "casa" assume connotazioni ambivalenti, laddove il desiderio di avere un luogo dove sentirsi a casa coesiste con la necessità di non sentirsi a casa da nessuna parte: "Per loro una casa sicura è sempre – e soltanto – un processo, mai un punto di arrivo" (Romeo 2005, 128). Anche secondo Janet Zandy, questa non può che essere un'"idea," una "geografia interiore," e la scrittura un modo per collocarvisi: "casa" è il luogo in cui "the ache to belong finally quits, where there is no sense of 'otherness,' where there is, at last, a community. Writing is also a way of locating oneself" (Antonucci 2005, 105).

Situate nello scarto tra l'America e la cultura italiana che in America si sviluppa, Gilbert e DeSalvo imparano a capire il mondo attraverso le differenze, attraverso scampoli di parole e di storie lontane ma mai dimenticate. Nel loro perenne nomadismo culturale e linguistico, trovano una dimora nella scrittura e articolano un'identità che può finalmente essere abbracciata come scelta critica, come assunzione consapevole di una visione ambivalente riconosciuta (anche) come ricchezza. In transito tra generi narrativi e autobiografici e la critica letteraria e culturale, queste autrici rifiutano la marginalizzazione che impedirebbe un intervento attivo e trasformativo nei discorsi culturali correnti, e indicano l'opportunità di articolare forme situate di critica, una critica propugnata da "soggetti nomadi" sufficientemente ancorati "a una collocazione storicamente determinata da accettarne la responsabilità e, grazie a questo, in grado di risponderne" (Braidotti 2002, 25).[116] Posizioni che si traducono, tra l'altro, in opere che fondono riflessione personale e denuncia sociale: in *Breathless: An Asthma Journal* (1997), DeSalvo critica le politiche sociali e ambientali del governo statunitense così come la "rassicurante parabola della guarigione" (DeSalvo 1997, 150) che, sottintendendo la responsabilità personale del malato nel risanamento dalla propria malattia, assolve le istituzioni e la collettività da ogni implicazione. Analogamente, in *Wrongful Death. A Memoir* (1994), Gilbert narra la morte inspiegata del marito in seguito a un errore medico denunciando l'omertà e le logiche di profitto dominanti nel sistema sanitario nazionale statunitense.

"Italiane d'America," come spesso amano definirsi, queste scrittrici privilegiano quindi forme di espressione legate alla testimonianza. A proprio agio nel paradosso di una cultura che abita la distanza segnata dall'impossibilità di vivere le proprie radici e dalla difficoltà di "sentirsi a casa" nell'America *mainstream*, esse si espongono al rischio di chi, esule in terra straniera, parla una lingua sconosciuta non solo per chi l'ascolta, ma anche per se stessa: "una lingua che è sempre e costantemente sul bordo estremo dell'afasia" (Rella 2004, 134). Esiste infatti un'implicazione di estraneità nell'atto stesso di testimoniare, nello sguardo del testimone, il quale è partecipe/complice dell'accadere

116. Scrive Braidotti: "Il nomade non rappresenta l'essere senza dimora o la condizione di dislocazione obbligata, è piuttosto un soggetto che ha abbandonato ogni idea, desiderio o nostalgia di stabilità. Esprime il desiderio di un'identità fatta di transizioni, spostamenti progressivi, mutamenti coordinati senza o contro ogni idea di unitarietà essenziale. Il nomade incarna quindi 'l'uomo o la donna di idee.' Come dice Deleuze, ciò che distingue gli intellettuali nomadi ha a che fare con l'attraversare i confini, l'atto di andare, senza curarsi della destinazione. 'La vita del nomade è l'intermezzo […]. Egli è un vettore di deterritorializzazione.'" (Braidotti 2002, 44).

e dunque non è solo colui/colei che guarda, ma anche colui/colei che è guardato/a, o colui/colei che si figura essere guardato/a – "è uno sguardo duplice: uno sguardo che guarda l'accadere e uno sguardo che si guarda guardare" (ivi, 73). Tale duplice estraneità, riconosciuta dalle autrici, conferisce loro quel "grano di isteria senza il quale non c'è alcuna teorizzazione" (Braidotti 2005, 104) e, al contempo, quella "visione stereoscopica" attraverso cui rifuggire dall'adozione della mentalità del ghetto, che è "una forma di esilio interiore" (Rushdie 1991, 24). Come scopre infine Barolini: "I was American, Italian descended and not conflicted any longer between the two cultures, but enriched by both. It was no longer a strain to wonder where I really belonged because my bridge went in both directions" (Barolini 1999, 85).

Se terra straniera è stata per le autrici italiano-americane la professione della scrittura, e spaesante la scelta di testimoniare l'ambizione a percorrere, con caparbietà e spregiudicatezza, una strada ancora da tracciare, nella scrittura esse hanno trovato infine una forma d'ordine e di equilibrio. I ritorni ai luoghi reali e immaginati delle origini diventano così manifestazioni di una "etnicità opzionale" (Antonucci 2005, 116), che il lavoro della scrittura trasforma continuamente reinventandone la storia – le storie – e generando nuove possibilità di (auto) rappresentazione. Coniugando scrittura personale e scrittura critica, Gilbert, DeSalvo e le altre partecipano a un progetto collettivo di riscrittura della storia statunitense: nella creazione di nuove possibilità di immaginarsi e di rappresentarsi a partire dalle proprie esperienze, queste autrici interrogano l'italianità d'oltreoceano e, stabilendo nessi fecondi tra passato, presente e futuro, ci inducono a ripensare la nostra.

Bibliografia

Antonucci, Clara. 2005. *Scrittura e memoria: I luoghi del sé nella creatività italoamericana*. In Bottalico, Michele e Maria Teresa Chialant (a cura di). *L'impulso autobiografico. Inghilterra, Stati Uniti, Canada… e altri ancora*. Napoli: Liguori.

Barolini, Helen (a cura di). 1987. *The Dream Book. An Anthology of Writings by Italian American Women.* New York: Schocken Books.

———. 1999.*Chiaroscuro. Essays of Identity*. Madison: The U. of Wisconsin P.

Braidotti, Rosi. 2002. *Nuovi soggetti nomadi. Transizioni e identità postnazionaliste*.Roma: Luca Sossella Editore.

———. 2005. *Madri, mostri e macchine*. Roma: manifestolibri.

Crispino, Anna Maria. 2004. "L'italianità in altro contesto. Incontro con Francesco Durante." *Leggendaria* 46-47: 4.

DeSalvo, Louise e Edvige Giunta (a cura di). 2002. *The Milk of Almonds. Italian American Women Writers on Food and Culture.* New York: The Feminist P.

DeSalvo, Louise. 1997. *Breathless: An Asthma Journal.* Boston: Beacon P.

———. 1999. *Writing as a Way of Healing. How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives*. San Francisco: Harper-SanFrancisco.

———. 2004. *Crazy in the Kitchen: Food, Feuds, and Forgiveness in an Italian American Family*. New York-London: Bloomsbury.

———. 2006. *Vertigo.* Roma: Nutrimenti.

Hutcheon, Linda. 1997. *Cryptoethnicity.* InCiongoli, Kenneth A., e Jay Parini(a cura di). *Beyond The Godfather. Italian American Writers On the Real Italian American Experience*. Hanover and London: U. P. of New England.

Gardaphé, Fred L. 1996. *Italian Signs, American Streets. The Evolution of Italian American Narrative*. Durham and London: Duke U. P.

Gilbert, Sandra M. 1998. *Mysteries of the Hyphen. Poetry, Pasta, and Identity Politics.*In Ciongoli, Kenneth A., e Jay Parini (a cura di).*Beyond The Godfather. Italian American Writers On the Real Italian American Experience*. Hanover and London: U. P. of New England.

———. 2000. *Kissing the Bread. New and Selected Poems, 1969-1999.* New York: Norton.
———. 2003.*The Italian Collection*. *Poems of Heritage*. San Francisco: Depot Books.
Gilbert, Sandra M. e Susan Gubar. 2000. *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven and London: Yale U. P.
Giunta, Edvige. 2002. *Writing with an Accent. Contemporary Italian American Women Authors.*New York: Palgrave.
Guglielmo, Jennifer, e Salvatore Salerno (a cura di). 2003.*Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America.*New York: Routledge. tr. it. 2006. *Gli italiani sono bianchi? Come l'America ha costruito la razza.* Milano: Il Saggiatore.
Marino, Elisabetta. 2007. *Molding Identity and Femininity in Tina De Rosa's Paper Fish and in Maria Mazziotti Gillan's Italian Women in Black Dresses (writing as a talking cure)*. In Izzo, Donatella, Mariani Giorgio e Paola Zaccaria (a cura di). *American Solitudes. Individual, National, Transnational*. Roma: Carocci: 80-84.
Rella, Franco. 2004. *Dall'esilio. La creazione artistica come testimonianza*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
Romeo, Caterina. 2001. "A casa, senza casa: la relazione con lo spazio." *tutteStorie* 8: 75.
———. 2005. *Narrative tra due sponde. Memoir di italiane d'America.* Roma: Carocci.
Rushdie, Salman. 1991. *Patrie immaginarie*. Milano: Mondadori.