

Differentia: Review of Italian Thought

Number 6 *Combined Issue 6-7 Spring/Autumn*

Article 31

1994

The Italian Dream: The Italians of Queens, New York City by Giuseppe Fortuna

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Recommended Citation

Carravetta, Peter (1994) "The Italian Dream: The Italians of Queens, New York City by Giuseppe Fortuna," *Differentia: Review of Italian Thought*. Vol. 6 , Article 31.

Available at: <https://commons.library.stonybrook.edu/differentia/vol6/iss1/31>

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in portraying problematic situations of human interactions: more specifically, gender issues and family relationships. Whereas narration, in both prose and poetry, tends to be more descriptive than expressive, Patriarca's narration maintains its descriptive component while adding an explicitly expressive one. The result is an intensely emotional, quasi-visual work of art—poetry—that engages the reader in its communicative act—the reader, that is, becomes a co-participant in the collection's point of view and signifying act and, therefore, experiences the narrator's emotional iter.

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***The Italian Dream: The Italians
of Queens, New York City***

Giuseppe Fortuna

*San Francisco: Mellen Research
University Press, 1991*

Part-time Assistant Professor in Urban Studies at Queens College, Giuseppe Fortuna has produced a very informative, intelligent, and multilayered description of the Italians who have lived and/or live in the county of Queens, the New York City borough. Although one might be led to believe *The Italian Dream* is of interest only to specialists, this is not the case with Fortuna's book, which besides being an exemplum of how good sociological research is done, plucks the chords of the title image throughout. Proof of data abounds, and references are extensive (which makes it useful, also, as a bibliographic source on the topic), as Fortuna wends his analysis through the concrete harsh facts of the social process, of capital history. This is in part aided

by his providing us, early in Chapter II, with an accurate and synthetic historical reconstruction of Italian history in the 19th century, the relationship between migration, North-South dynamics, class struggles, and what was going on during those same years on this side of the Atlantic. For this alone, I would recommend *The Italian Dream* to my students, as it also acts out its methodic praxis, the necessity to have a multiperspectival view, a network of referents or semantic fields, or themes, before any general evaluative statement can be made. Sociology does not have to be simply and solely charts and diagrams (which I personally always find illuminating in some ways): the "object of study" happens to be a "subject category," with all the deconstructive potential of the latter syntagm. This sociology must be relational, it must account for meanings created and shared and (ex)changed at some point. I find it noteworthy that the author relates the political economy behind the great exodus of 1890-1913 to the industrializing/imperialistic politics of France, England, the Hapsburg Empire, and the United States.

Against this background, the Italians of Queens lived various degrees of dividedness, going through all the pretty established categorical passages (adaptation, accommodation, integration, acculturation and assimilation), although I feel they were infused in a most fundamental way with a future-watch kind of approach to life, to social existence. (We shall leave aside whether that's the way these Queens immigrants were, or whether it was the entirety of the experience of having to leave that changed their psyches in relevant ways.) Certainly that's a character feature that fits in well with the trumpeted American version of the Dream. Among the most complex obstacles

the first immigrants faced upon arrival, besides the objective one of finding a job, was the way to adjust to the host culture (and Fortuna once again gives us the required sociological terms), which difficulty in the last analysis and above and beyond individual cases to the contrary is born out of a second shock wave in their "emigration experience":

Once the immigrants have accommodated themselves to the host society, they become aware that the cultural patterns handed down to them by tradition, parents and teachers are limited to their native culture. They recognize that an adjustment to a new culture is needed. A crisis, a cultural crisis jolts the people questioning the values of old habits. They know that the culture of the approached group has its own history, which can be accessible to them, but that it will never be an integral part of their lives. (3)

Out of this well-established pattern—or experience—in relevant demographic flows, what I would like to underscore is the fact that immigrant culture is in principle and necessarily so preoccupied with the future, with filling in a story for generations to come. The story told by Fortuna is a story that, the record shows, has followed the same or similar plot in many other Americans towns and cities. What I feel must be assessed in the contemporary critical consciousness is the reality of a vanished historical situation. The Americans of Queens who can in any way be called Italians are an amalgam of recent immigrants, first-, second-, and third-generation Italian Americans, with the complexity raised when family are constituted by members of the different groups, or marry outside their national/ethnic stock, and relocate several times. Nevertheless, an identity with sfumato contours can be adduced. In comparison, the most recent immigrants from Italy are of

such a particular physiognomy that they would be of more interest to scholars of international banking and the politics of the secret services. They no longer partake of—and some do not want to be associated with—that proteiform social entity called Italian Americana. But consider. The destiny of migrants *is* to be changed, it is the very first effect of the verb *migrare*, as movement entails leaving something behind, *but also*, and most important, going somewhere. The usefulness of this book to humanists consists also in this: it gives us the objective validation, the numeric presences, the clubs and churches and associations that came and went. It wraps up in 145 pages the undisputable facts and coordinates of an ethnic and cultural group which, independently of why and how it left behind the place called Italy, has *also* risked, searched, settled, and finally entered into something called America, the United States. That's not to forget that migration is an unsutured wound in the cultural memory of Italians in America. I suppose it is the sheer number of them that baffles to this day, and their not having yet been told an acceptable story. Among Fortuna's findings is the unsettling one of how "Italian Islands"—that for generations served as communal bond and social cohesive reference points throughout the stages of acculturation and assimilation—are fast disappearing in Queens and in practically all major American cities that have had a significant Italian population. "Authentic" Little Italies are nearly extinct and are fast reappearing to a second and third degree of re-symbolization: they will look more and more like Epcot Center at Disney World: and the product of a distinctly recognizable megabuck American businessman. These Italian Americans are no longer what they used to be: they are their new identity, and being Italian is

no longer a major issue in their psyche or socioeconomic reality. It is these contemporary Americans of Italian descent that new commercial and elitist investors from Italy have to deal with. Money makes the world go round, we have been told, and that may obtain even at the global level. But the history and the memory of a social and cultural group from Italy begins here, *not* in Italy. Even against ever thinning Italian Islands throughout Queens and the Northeastern Seaboard, there is now a sizable number of Americans of Italian origin or background who have experienced, attained, and affected all walks of life, including government, the law, and national security. The dialogue between Italian Americans and Italian Italians is not going over very easily to this day. The differences between the two is fundamentally one of historical record, of the different (hi)stories each has told or has yet to tell. This story must be told by the Italian Americans, and in English, of course. It is interesting that in the great abundance of information on the social, political, family lives of Italian immigrants and their descendants, psychology or better psychoanalysis does not enter, neither as a profession nor as a practice or possibility. Some truths do seem to come from the other side, from the ones with the shorter and shattered memory, the founders, the immigrants. (Because we are looking at this from the viewpoint of America, of English: they are emigrants only to Italian(s).) After reading the chapter on the bocce game, I came away feeling that the stories of these Italians must be told and known. The founders are also humble, patient, inventive: they and their descendants have sailed the seas, they have persisted in furrowing the earth, or forge architectures, and costumes. The language they now possess will link up

the islands also, we hope, and reveal to us an intricate, endlessly fascinating sociocultural archipelago.

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To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate: The Italian/American Writer: An Other American

Anthony Julian Tamburri

Montréal: Guernica Editions, 1991

In this essay, Professor Tamburri argues that hyphen is not the innocent piece of punctuation that it might seem to be; to Tamburri it is a sign loaded with ideological baggage. In the process of unpacking that sign Tamburri questions the arbitrary construction of rules. Rules and standards, he tells us, when examined closely, reveal prejudices and the very socio-cultural mechanisms that produce them. Through his questioning he reveals how the standardized use of the hyphen has contributed to the social distance our society has created among its cultures. This discussion is substantive in its own right, as few scholars today even think of the ramifications of considering Italian/American culture as an ethnic American culture. More importantly, Tamburri's exploration of Italian/American culture is symbolic of the great need our society has to reconcile the effects of its marginalization of all minority cultures.

Tamburri sees literature as a "mirror of society in which it was conceived, created and perceived" (12), and thus tells us that one of the goals of ethnic literature is to "dislodge and debunk the negative stereotypes" (13). To see this, he says, we need to em-