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THE Italic Way

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MATTERS

**THE NEW
ITALIAN AMERICAN:
HOW INTERMARRIAGE
IS CHANGING US**





The Italic Way

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Quotable

“Learning about our origins is an important legacy to our children, since memories are not used to remember lost time, but to start again, knowing that losing our roots inevitably leads to a loss in our identity as a people who live, think and love.”

Gabriele D’Annunzio 1863-1938

Tidbits

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ITALY CARES

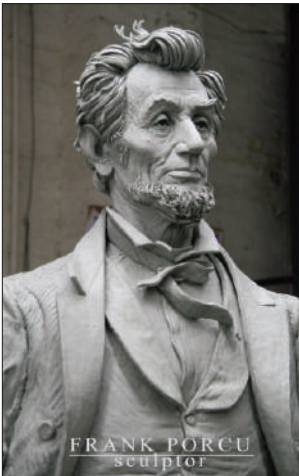
Last August, *New York Times* reporter Eduardo Porter wrote of his Italian vacation in Liguria during which his son developed a rash. He was able to see an Italian doctor who treated the rash at no charge. Porter wrote this about his experience: *“Italy may be in a funk, with a shrinking economy and a high unemployment rate, but the United States can learn a lot from it, and not just about the benefits of public health care. Italians live longer. Their poverty rate is much lower than ours. If they lose their jobs or suffer some other misfortune, they can turn to a more generous social safety net.”*

Porter also asked Harvard economist Alberto Alesina why Italians and Europeans accept higher taxes than Americans for social programs: *“Americans who think they have a fair shot at striking it rich vote against high taxes on their expected future wealth. Europeans who believe wealth is mostly a matter of luck and connections are less resistant to paying taxes for collective welfare.”*

Just to balance this opinion, it should be said that many Americans fear that such social generosity would be monopolized by illegal residents and by citizens who have been acculturated to living off society. Europeans may eventually be confronted with a similar dilemma as millions of immigrants currently flood their shores.



CELEBRATING SOME



FRANK PORCU

We first met sculptor Frank Porcu when he joined us in 2012 protesting the blatant exploitation of the Columbus Monument* by a Japanese designer and the City of New York. Little did we realize that we would be drawn into his amazing Renaissance world. *(Officers' Log #46 & #47)

In April 2013, Frank unveiled his magnificent bust of Abraham Lincoln at the New York Historical Society, along Manhattan's tony Central Park West.

Frank Porcu (a Sardinian surname) is as close as you can get to Leonardo da Vinci without going to heaven. Like Leonardo, Frank is an anatomist. He teaches dissection at Columbia University Medical School and applies his knowledge to sculpture. The bust of Lincoln was commissioned by a wealthy client.



WILL PUPA

Will Pupa is Artist-in-Residence at the Marymount Institute of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. He holds degrees in sculpture from the U.S. and the *Accademia di Belle Arti di Carrara* in Italy, where he studied for ten years. His talent in large-scale sculptures won him the competition to design the bronze statue of St. Roberto Bellarmino, patron saint of Fairfield University in CT. Will created the final clay sculpture (pictured next to him) before a foundry cast it in bronze using the traditional lost wax method. The sculpture stands 7 ft. 6 in. tall and weighs approximately 900 lbs. It was dedicated in January at the university.

Bellarmino, known to the English as Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, is negatively associated with the Inquisition of Galileo, but Jesuits contend that Bellarmine defused the situation by asking Galileo to stop declaring his heliocentric theory until it could be absolutely proven. Bellarmine's sainthood came from his theological writings in response to the Protestant Reformation and his devotion to the poor.

VINCE LOMBARDI (1913 - 1970) 100 Years

Forty-four years after Vince Lombardi's death in 1970, the NFL championship game was played for the first time in the cold-weather region of Metro New York, Lombardi's home turf.

The NFL has become a billion dollar business and football the most popular sport in America, a distinction that Lombardi, who would have turned 100 years old in 2013, helped to create.

The iconic coach traversed the line between being an assimilated American while at the same time maintaining a sense of pride in his heritage. In his 1999 biography of Lombardi, *When Pride Still Mattered*, author David Maraniss cites an incident in the early 1960s when Lombardi first came to the Green Bay Packers. It involved Lombardi and fellow Italian American Jack Vainisi, Green Bay's scouting director:

"Most of the board members were in Green Bay's social elite, members of Oneida Golf and Riding, and despite their awe of Lombardi their attitudes tended to be condescending toward Italians. 'There's the Italian Mafia' was one of their common salutations when Lombardi and Vainisi were seen together. They smiled when they



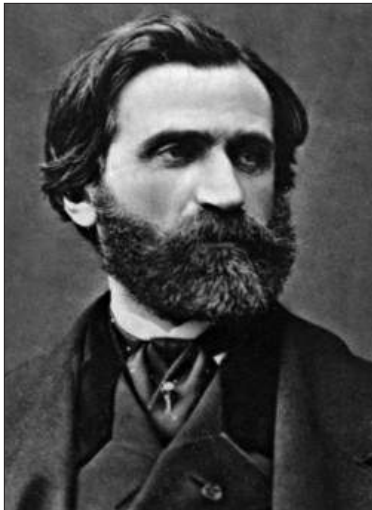
AMAZING PEOPLE

heard it, but considered the statement a slur, and after a time made a point of being seen together less in social settings.”

Lombardi’s own experience with prejudice influenced his decisions as a coach and as a leader. At the height of the civil rights movement, Lombardi made it clear that he had a zero tolerance policy when it came to racism. He warned Packer players that they would be thrown off of the team if they exhibited any prejudice.

While Lombardi clearly left an indelible mark on professional football, it’s fair to say decades after his passing that he has also had a profound and lasting impact on the image of Italian Americans. Of course, it didn’t hurt that he was educated and articulate. Even with his booming baritone voice and quasi-Brooklyn accent, he never came across as anything but intelligent.

On February 2, 2014, it wasn’t just blimps and helicopters hovering over the Super Bowl at MetLife Stadium. You can be sure that Vince’s spirit was there too!
-Anthony Vecchione



GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813 - 1901) 200 YEARS

From La Scala in Milan to Tokyo’s National Theater to London’s Covent Gardens to the Met, the works of Giuseppe Verdi were given even more than their usual prominence in 2013 as the music world celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Italic composer’s birth. So pervasive has Verdi’s richly melodic output remained over the years that even those who never set foot in an opera house can hum many of his tunes. Included on any list of Verdi’s enduring classics are the robust “Anvil Chorus” (*Il Trovatore*), the stately “Triumphal March” (*Aida*), “La Donna e Mobile” (*Rigoletto*), and the immortal “Va Pensiero” chorus (*Nabucco*).

What is not as well known is that Verdi was an ardent patriot who, among other things, championed the cause of Italian reunification through stirring, thinly camouflaged messages and declamations that filled his *Risorgimento* period operas. He was both proud and pleased when Italian insurrectionists borrowed his name as an acronymic code for the cause of establishing an independent Italian nation under a home-grown royal leader (Vittorio Emanuele Re D’Italia). In Verdi’s own estimation, Garibaldi and the other Italian generals were the true “composers” whose patriotic works were triumphantly performed on the battlefield with cannon and guns. Verdi even served a term in the newly-created Italian Parliament once liberation and reunification were achieved.

Coincidentally and ironically, 2013 also marked the 200th anniversary of Verdi’s great musical rival, the distinctly Teutonic Richard Wagner. The chasm that separated the two men in both music and character was vast: spawning more than a century’s worth of analyses and often heated discussions of their massive technical and personal differences. Musical historian and author Carlo Gatti once provided what is possibly the most succinct but accurate summation of the debate – people admire Wagner, but they love Verdi. - Don Fiore

OCTAVIAN AUGUSTUS (63 B.C. - 14 A.D.) 2,000 YEARS

“Rome was not built in a day,” as the saying goes. It took 722 years from the founding of Rome to the ascension of Italy’s greatest son Caius Octavian, known to the world as Caesar Augustus. As the Founder of the Roman Empire, he had a profound effect on mankind down to our own day. His forty-five year reign and peaceful death in 14 A.D. solidified Rome’s and Italy’s place at the forefront of civilization. Few people appreciate how he changed the world. Italian Americans know little of what they owe to him. To celebrate his life the Italic Institute has reissued a commemorative stamp in his honor for 2014. We hope to reach out to students of Latin and Italian to deepen their understanding of his legacy to them and our world. The month of August; Augusta, ME; Augsburg, Germany; Zaragoza, Spain; and the summer break of *ferragosto* only give a hint of his profound effects on humanity and the Italian heritage.



All'Italiana

IN MEMORIAM

Editta Sherman, 101, was born Edith Rinaolo to an Italian immigrant portrait photographer in Philadelphia. She learned her father's trade and went on to become a photographer to the stars: Cary Grant, Charlton Heston, and even Bela Lugosi, among others. Called the Duchess of Carnegie Hall, Sherman lived and worked at the landmark building for 61 years among the art world's most talented people.



Prolific author and political commentator **Gore Vidal**, 86, considered himself Italic and lived in Italy for many years. In his 1987 pictorial book, *Vidal in Venice*, he went so far as to picture the tombstone of a Roman centurion named Vitalis whom he claimed as an ancestor. He once wrote the Italic Institute noting how he and Henry Fonda wondered why they were never counted among Italian Americans. Openly gay and often bracingly controversial, Vidal was unique in so many ways.

Actor **Dennis Farina**, 69, tried to balance a career in law enforcement with acting. What he got was an acting career playing mainly cops and detectives. A regular on the early *Law & Order* television series, Farina played dapper detective Joe Fontana.

Actress-vocalist **Annette Funicello**, 70, was discovered by Walt Disney at age twelve, first as a television Mouseketeer, then as a recording artist ("Tall Paul" and "O Dio Mio"), and then doing feature films (*Beach Party* was her most famous) and finally doing commercials for Skippy Peanut Butter. When she began working for Disney she wanted to change her surname to Turner. Walt urged her to keep her Italian name because it would be more memorable to viewers.



Social scientist **Suzanne Bianchi**, 61, founded the Maryland Population Center and explored how families maintained normal households through divorce or dual wage earners. Her conclusions were published in seven books on the subject of families. She confirmed what most people suspected: parents were sacrificing time and sleep in the struggle to provide a normal life for their children. But of the two, women were taking the brunt of the extra load.

Giulio Andreotti, 94, was Italy's consummate politician who served as Prime Minister of Italy seven times. Andreotti helped resuscitate the old Christian Democratic Party after the fall of Fascism. Part of the "revolving door" political system, he served

his country in many capacities, creating enemies as well as strange bedfellows to reach his goals. His later life was haunted by accusations of Mafia ties to insure votes in southern Italy, but trials in Perugia and Palermo acquitted him. One of his milestone acts was to abolish Roman Catholicism as Italy's state religion.

Guy Tozzoli, 90, was ordered to develop the World Trade Center in Manhattan on his 40th birthday in 1962. He undertook that Herculean effort in all facets, from assembling the myriad professionals to overcoming every political and engineering obstacle. Even after retiring from the Port Authority he maintained an office on the 77th floor of the north tower. It was there he was headed on the morning of September 11, 2001 when he saw the attack while approaching Manhattan. His life's work literally collapsed before him.

Augusto Odone, 80, refused to accept the inevitability of his son Lorenzo's death. When doctors told him his four-year-old son had contracted ALD, an incurable neurological disease, Odone and his wife immersed themselves in scientific research. By the late 1980s they had formulated a mixture of olive and rapeseed oils, christened Lorenzo's Oil, which defied the doctors' dire predictions. Though it did not reverse the child's vegetative state, it stabilized it. Ultimately, Lorenzo lived to age 30. In 1992, a Hollywood feature, *Lorenzo's Oil*, was released starring Nick Nolte and Susan Sarandon.

The creator of Hollywood's famous alien E.T., **Carlo Rambaldi**, 86, was a master of "mechatronics." By definition mechatronics is a combination of mechanical, electrical, and system design engineering. It is the opposite of computerized effects. Rambaldi often observed that digital versions of his animatronics, like E.T., King Kong, and Alien, were eight times more expensive to make. His robots were convincing enough to earn Rambaldi an Oscar in 2002.

Sports has lost golf great **Ken Venturi**, 82, and boxer Carmen Basilio, 85. Venturi famously won the U.S. Open in 1964 when the last round was 36 holes and he nearly passed out from dehydration. He went on to a second 35-year career as a sportscaster for CBS Sports.

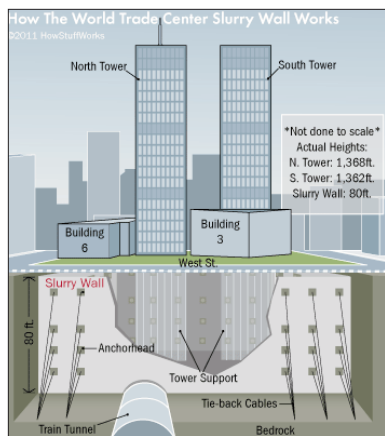
Carmen Basilio was an onion farmer's son who held the world's middleweight title for six months in 1957 after winning a decision against Sugar Ray Robinson. Robinson won by decision in their second match but refused Basilio's challenge to a third. In all, Basilio fought 79 fights with 27 knock-outs. His trainer was the iconic Angelo Dundee, who went on to coach Mohammed Ali.



Dr. Mario Mansueto, 87, was born in poverty outside of Naples, came to America as a child, and rose to prominence in his medical field: ear, nose and throat. He was one of the first to use lasers in throat surgery. The struggles of his family to achieve the American Dream have a common ring. His father worked some ten years before saving enough to bring over his family. Once here, son Mario's academic talents led him to Purdue University. Even among America's elite students he wrapped his sandwiches in newspaper and brought his laundry home, a reflection of the lean years.

Former Governor **Argeo Paul Cellucci**, 65, of Massachusetts was an ardent supporter of fellow Republicans George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush. He battled Lou Gehrig's Disease since 2011 and devoted his last years to finding a cure.

Italian engineer **Arturo Lamberto Ressi di Cervia**, 72, designed and built the slurry wall that prevented the Hudson River from inundating lower Manhattan and the subways when the Twin Towers collapsed on 9/11. The wall remains a crucial component of the foundation for the new Freedom Tower. The importance of this wall is so widely known in engineering circles that it has been left exposed at the site's Memorial Museum, which will open in 2014.



THE RIGHT STUFF

Creativity starts early. So it shouldn't be surprising in this computer age to hear of kids inventing things. Briton **Nick D'Aloisio**, 17, came up with an app (short for computer application) when he was 15, named *Summly*. Installed on an I-phone or computer, this app translates complicated verbiage into a short summary suitable for lazy readers. He sold the app to Yahoo for \$30 million.

Dr. Angela Christiano at Columbia University Medical Center in New York has a problem with female baldness: her own. But she wasn't convinced that transplants were the best way to go. She opted to use her skills as a hair geneticist and dermatologist to find a better solution. Traditional hair transplants require redistributing a patch of hair from the back of your head, remove 1,000 hairs and replant 1,000. Dr. Christiano wanted those 1,000 hairs to multiply, so she assembled a team from Pakistan and Britain to multiply hair in a petri dish. At first, the process didn't work until the petri dish was turned upside down. Gravity made the difference. The new hairs were put to the ultimate test. Implanted on discarded

baby foreskins, the follicles took root in five of the seven samples. Admittedly, these are baby steps but the technique looks promising.

BUONAPARTE, PLEASE

He is the national hero of France despite bringing the country to ruin in 1815. But it is often difficult to convince people that Napoleon Bonaparte was 100% Italic. Born in Corsica, which was ruled by Genoa until the time of Napoleon's birth, his mother was Letizia Ramolino and his father was Carlo Buonaparte. The "u" was lost somewhere in France but a recent find at the Northwestern University library shows that as late as 1792 the family spelled it the Italian way. A letter written that year by Napoleon's brother Joseph (pictured) to a military official in France was in Italian and used the Italian spelling. An American branch of the family produced Charles Bonaparte, Teddy Roosevelt's Attorney General and founder of the FBI.



SPACE TEAMMATES

At the International Space Station late last year, all the Italic astronauts seems to be aligned. First there was Italy's Luca Palmitano, who nearly drowned during a spacewalk as water filled his helmet. A later incident on the station required American astronaut Rick Matricchio (below) to don the suit to replace a failed cooling unit. Meanwhile on earth, former astronaut and four-time spacewalker Michael Massimino appeared on various interviews to explain the facts of life in space. As always, Italic people remain an integral part of all human activities here and beyond.





WORLD NOTES

CAVE MENTALITY

Neanderthals are an extinct primitive humanoid. But according to researcher John Hawks of Wisconsin University, we all carry a little bit of their DNA. Seems that some interbreeding took place on the way to extinction. The cave-man gene varies, depending on where your ancestors lived 60,000 years ago; Asians may have 2%, black Africans may have only 1%. For Europeans, 3% is traceable. But if your family hails from Tuscany you may have 4% Neanderthal blood, more than any other people living today. Could this explain the origins of our Etruscan ancestors? It may explain why Etruscans were such avid tomb builders – man caves, as it were.



ORGANS TO ORDER

The latest rage in surgery is bioengineering, the ability to reproduce human organs in a lab. At the forefront of this technology is Dr. Paolo Macchiarini (pictured) at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. He has already reproduced and implanted windpipes in a female Korean toddler and an Icelandic man. These engineered parts begin with an artificial scaffolding seeded with the patient's stem cells and other compounds to act as mortar as cells grow and expand. The end result is a living tube that can replace the damaged windpipe without rejection by the body. Can more complex organs like a pancreas or heart be made in the lab? Dr. Macchiarini



doesn't see that as the future. He believes the body itself should be the laboratory with the necessary "scaffolding" implanted to attract the body's own regenerative processes. Evidence of this brave new world is apparent at Massachusetts General Hospital where another pioneer, Dr. Joseph P. Vacanti, serves as director of the Laboratory of Tissue Engineering and Organ Fabrication.

A BRIDGE NOT FAR

San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge saw the Italian yacht *Luna Rossa* go down in defeat in last year's America's Cup but it did see a victorious Italian win earlier. The *Vor70 Maserati*, captained by Giovanni Soldini, captured the record for ocean-to-ocean sailing in February, 2013.

The little known competition celebrates the old California Gold rush route from New York Harbor to San Francisco Bay around Cape Horn, about 13,000 miles. Soldini's crew broke the previous record held by a French boat since 1998. His official time was 47 days, 42 minutes, and 29 seconds, beating the French record by a full ten days! Back in 1853, America's famous *Flying Cloud* established a 100-year record with a sailing of 89 days.



ROME TO KYOTO

The Roman Empire was more than a collection of countries around the Mediterranean Sea. Archeologists have known for years how extensive Roman trade was on three continents. Roman coins have surfaced in China, no doubt payment for Chinese goods, and a trading post unearthed in Ireland testifies to the reach of Italian commerce in 198 AD (see issue XXVI). But recently, Italian glass beads were found in a 5th Century Japanese tomb outside Kyoto. The intriguing question is whether these artifacts were older



family heirlooms or contemporary products from an empire in decline. Italian commerce was sorely limited by barbarian invasions during the 400s AD.

CARING FOR OBAMA

Like him or not, President Obama has counted on many Italian Americans along the way. It was Greg Galluzzo who mentored the future president in the skills of community organizing. A former Jesuit priest, Galluzzo showed Obama the ropes when he arrived in Chicago in 1985, having already worked with two Chicago mayors on minority affairs. To reach the presidency, Obama's team tapped



Larry Grisolano, a media expert to plan its TV advertising strategy. Grisolano had developed "the Optimizer," a system that analyzed target audiences and directed precious ad money to those television shows. In Congress, House Minority Leader Nancy

Pelosi always has Obama's back. Even Obamacare gets guidance from two insurance experts, Karen Ignagni (below), CEO of

America's Health Insurance Plans (a trade association) and Mark Bertolini (above), CEO of Aetna. Ignagni warned of the hard realities of overhauling health insurance, and Bertolini retooled Aetna's product line to help the president with



on-line offerings across the country. However history assesses Barack Obama, it should see Italian Americans as an asset to him.

SETTLING SCORES

When is the past actually past?

It seems everyone is looking for reparations for past injustices. In 2013, fourteen Caribbean nations hired a London law firm to sue the governments of Britain, France, and the Netherlands for profiting from slave labor on their islands centuries ago. The Brits just settled with Kenyan victims of British torture during the Mau Mau Uprising of the 1950s. And Italy committed to \$5 billion in reparations for its colonial past in Libya.

Recently, a Spanish court demanded that Italy apologize for bombing Barcelona in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War. Like any war, civil or international, crimes are always committed. The Spanish Civil War was especially brutal. Massacres were all too frequent. The German bombing of the Basque city of Guernica was immortalized by Picasso. The leftist Republicans murdered priests

and nuns. A 2012 obituary of Communist leader Santiago Carrillo described his part in the Paracuellos Massacre when thousands of right-wing prisoners were bused out of besieged Madrid and summarily shot.

Italy had some 50,000 men fighting alongside Francisco Franco. After their victory, the departing Italians left Franco many of their airplanes, tanks, artillery and munitions. They did not even retain a military base on Spanish soil. In 1941, when Franco refused to join the Axis, a disgusted Mussolini sent him a belated bill for Italy's sacrifices in Spain: \$83 million (\$4 billion today). The bill was never paid. So much for settling!

CHRYSLER IS ITALIAN

Italian auto giant FIAT has absorbed the American carmaker Chrysler in a buy-out of its partner the United Automobile Workers health care fund. The \$4.35 billion buy-out makes FIAT the world's seventh-largest automaker, after Ford but before Honda. Italian-led Chrysler has already repaid government bail-out loans and restored thousands of American jobs. Its leading vehicles are the Jeep Grand Cherokee, Ram pickup truck, and the Dodge Dart, basically a retooled Alfa Romeo (pictured)



CAEMENTUM

Caementum (kai-MEN-tum) is Latin for cement, the stuff Italic engineers developed from mixing lime with volcanic ash before the time of Jesus. Since Italy had the only active volcanos in Europe or the Mediterranean, it was quite a monopoly back then. It is still superior to Portland cement as noted in the *Journal of the American Ceramic Society* and *American Mineralogist*. Portland cement starts breaking down under water after 50 years. *Caementum* only gets stronger. Until now, the Roman formula for *caementum* eluded scientists and engineers. Utilizing new equip-



ment and techniques, scientists in the U.S and Europe analyzed a sample dating from 37 B.C. taken from the Bay of Naples and found what they believe is the lost formula. According to experts, replicating

Roman production techniques could revolutionize today's building industry with a sturdier, less CO₂-intensive concrete. *Caementum* is much more stable and less environmentally damaging than today's blend. Cement-making contributes 7% of the carbon dioxide that we put into the atmosphere.



Editorials



FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

The Media and I

Rosario A. Iaconis

It has been my lifelong mission to set the public record straight. In fact, as Chairman of our Institute, I have managed to publish in the mainstream media, championing the cause of *italianità* and refuting the defamatory tripe peddled by the nattering nabobs of anti-Italian negativism. Among the publications I have gained access to are: *Investor's Business Daily*, *The Financial Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Newsday*(Long Island), *The Star Ledger*(New Jersey), *The New York Times*, *The New York Daily News*, and *The New York Post*. IIA President Bill Dal Cerro has worked the Chicago media and recently published missives in the *Washington Post* and *The Baltimore Sun*. And, yes, we also target the Internet – as well as network and cable television.

My modus operandi involves persuasion and a bold *Italic* worldview. I have gained the respect of many editors who otherwise see our fragmented community from a Hollywood perspective. It has been my particular goal to convince editors that for all our foibles and flaws, the scions of Italy are the direct descendants of the Founding Fathers of Western Civilization – the classical Italians of Roman Italy. But my entreaties aren't limited to antiquity.

Modern Italy is praiseworthy in many areas. In health care, longevity, early childhood development and even physics, America has much to learn from the Seed of Aeneas. In fact, the Reggio Emilia educational approach – a motivational curriculum – has been adopted by preschools around the world.

The World Health Organization cites Italy as one of the top two nations – out of 191 – providing the best overall health care. The United States ranks 37th.

Italy is still first-rate in engineering and scientific research. It is in the forefront of surgical innovation, space exploration, and even solving the mysteries of the universe at the phenomenal underground laboratory in Gran Sasso (Abruzzo).

Despite our Institute's yeoman work, the Magic Boot is routinely and ubiquitously savaged. And when the Peninsula isn't the target, Italian Americans will do. The usual trope involves superimposing the *Sopranos-Godfather* mythos on news stories.

Denuding a people of their classical heritage remains a thriving multi-billion dollar industry in America. That's why we fight. That's why we need constant access to the media. And why it has become a personal imperative. -RAI



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Equal Time?

Bill Dal Cerro

Even if you weren't around in the early 1990s, chances are that if the name "John Gotti" ever came up as a question on TV's *Jeopardy* you would know the answer: a mob boss from New York. But, if you asked people to identify James "Whitey" Bulger, you might get some of the answers I did when I randomly asked a few friends and colleagues about him: a baseball player? a Wall Street banker? The correct answer is, "a South Boston crime boss convicted in August, 2013 of racketeering, drug-running, and murder."

Keep in mind that Bulger was no ordinary neighborhood thug; he was the FBI's Most Wanted Criminal from 1997 (when he disappeared) until 2001 (when he was supplanted by some guy named bin Laden). It took another ten years (2011) before the by-now 82 year-old psychopath was finally tracked down by the FBI in Santa Monica, California, where he and his common-law wife had been living quiet lives of sun-drenched desperation. (Actually, maybe not so desperate: Bulger had over \$1 million dollars stashed inside his apartment's walls, along with some guns for protection). And one of the reasons he was so hard to find? Turns out that a slew of corrupt FBI agents actively protected him. Ah, justice!

How is it possible that a man more vicious than John Gotti, someone convicted in the out-in-the-open-age of *Twitter* and *Facebook*, could remain such a cipher to John and Jane Q Public? We have an easy answer for that one: media coverage—that is, practically none at all.

In 1992, when John Gotti was on trial, the media made sure that everyone knew about it. Newspapers plastered daily updates on their front page editions. National and local news stations reported on every permutation of the proceedings. Hollywood celebrities like Mickey Rourke showed up to watch. The editors of *Time Magazine* made Gotti their cover boy, reminding readers of his cute nickname, "The Teflon Don."

And Bulger? The coverage was low-key, almost perfunctory. No daily updates. No reporters camped out with microphones. No Hollywood celebrities expressing any interest in filming his "colorful" life story. In short, there was no sensationalism, which is as it should be.

If Bulger's name had been *Bulgero*, however, would the media have suddenly abandoned their journalistic scruples? If you don't know the answer to that one, you have been living in a glass bubble for your entire life. -BDC



Forum Italicum



WHY EVERYTHING MATTERS

Americans of Italian origin have a lot going for them. For one thing, we share a self-contained universe complete with a history second to none, a work ethic based on brain as well as brawn, a creativity that covers a multitude of fields, a family culture that has weathered every adversity, and a cuisine suitable for both rich and poor. Yet we find ourselves divided and defensive, often disgusted by the warped version of our culture we see in the media.



John Mancini,
Co-Founder

But like so many things in life we have ourselves to blame. A truly proud culture does not allow others to define it. Sadly, over the course of many decades we have allowed a few people to exploit our name and our culture for their own benefit and the

amusement of our fellow Americans. They are able to do this because the rest of us are either apathetic or ignorant of the consequences.

Everything matters! How well we speak, what we accept as humor, how well we know our heritage, what we expect of our children. They all account for something.

The old Italian admonition to “cut a good figure” (*fare una bella figura*) isn’t just about how you dress. Figure or *figura* means the same: image. It can apply to a group as well as an individual. As Americans visiting a foreign country, we are quite aware of our distinctiveness. We act accordingly and hopefully with a concern for the American image. It should be the same mindset for someone who bears an Italian surname here in America. Like it or not, ethnicity stands out even in the great melting pot.

But not everyone has a group consciousness. Many of us don’t identify with anything beyond ourselves. It’s an individual right,

of course, but apathy reflects badly on the rest of us. Consider the sign posted at an Italian eatery in Manhattan:

O Spagna O Francia, basta che si mangia!

If ever there were a motto that best describes the pervasive apathy of the Italian American community it would be this saying: “It doesn’t matter if we are ruled by Spain or France, as long as we eat!”

A Neapolitan boast born of the numerous invasions of the peninsula, this old saying has become the ultimate escape mechanism of a tired people. It speaks volumes about our aversion to ideology, reflection, and confrontation. Unlike the Christian Greeks who suffered under Muslim Turks, our ancestors were yoked by other Christians and even fellow Latins. Eating became the ultimate



The wrong emperor beckons gamblers to this casino

measure of happiness. By contrast, Greek American solidarity and their commitment to acculturate their children in Greek Schools were born of a deeper pride than we purport to have. Even their ubiquitous diners proclaim their ancient greatness, not just *yaya*’s hometown!

As Americans we would be embarrassed to utter such nonsense – “Whether Mexico or Britain, so long as we eat!” We have learned much since our arrival to these shores, among which are American dignity and pride in the USA. But for all our ethnic pride in, say, Leonardo DaVinci or Christopher Columbus, we pay only lip serv-

(Cont’d. on p. 24)

***We have abandoned
the greater portion of
our vast legacy***

Corrections

Issue XXXVIII

- P. 9 - California activist Larry DiStasi was not credited for his 17-year role in constructing and shepherding the *Storia Segreta* exhibit around the country to raise awareness of the 1942 persecution of Italian Americans. Mr. DiStasi has also written and edited numerous books on the Italian American experience.
- P. 13 - Scotland’s independence vote is 2014 not 2013.
- P. 20 - Congressman William Jefferson had \$90,000 in his freezer not \$400,000
- P. 25 - A chronometer measures longitude not latitude

Issue XXXVII (Update)

Paul Ceglia’s lawsuit against Facebook was dismissed and Ceglia arrested by the FBI for fraud.



Helen Cirese and the Roaring 20s

The True Story of a Pioneering Attorney

by Bill Dal Cerro

Not too many people know that the 1976 Broadway musical *Chicago*, as well as its 2002 Oscar-winning film version, is based on a 1927 play by Maurine Watkins, a crime reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. Fewer people know that Watkins's inspiration for the play was a sudden string of high-profile murder trials in the Windy City involving women who killed their husbands or lovers in cold blood.



Illinois attorney Helen Cirese, born of Sicilian immigrants. Beside her is Frank Mastrioni, a local activist. [Helen Cirese Papers, 1915-1974, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, Special Collections.]

in 1899 to immigrants from the Sicilian towns of Siragusa and Termini Imerese, was a model American success story: the editor of her high-school newspaper (her co-editor was future author Ernest Hemingway!), the youngest woman in Illinois to receive a law license (she was a few months shy of her 21st birthday), and the first female lawyer to start her own firm on Chicago's famous LaSalle Street (because male-run firms wouldn't hire her).

By contrast, Nitti-Crudelle was a poor, illiterate mother of six, 46 years old, who barely eked out a living with her husband, Frank Nitti, in his farming and grocery business. Their physical differences were also quite stark. In his book, *The Girls of Murder City*, author Douglas Perry describes Cirese as "young and unconsciously graceful, with an imperious Roman nose and preternaturally full lips," while the newspapers of the time, chiefly the *Chicago Tribune*, displayed little of the journalistic objectivity of today, describing Nitti-Crudelle as "a wizened-up, crouching, monkey-like creature." The

And probably very few people know that one of the most notorious cases in 1923 involved two Italian American women, and was a historical first, besides — a female attorney representing a female defendant who was already convicted and headed to the gallows.

The lawyer was Helen Cirese, a brilliant jurist from Oak Park, Illinois, and her defendant was Isabella Nitti-Crudelle, a struggling farm woman from Stickney, Illinois. The two women could not have been more different. Cirese, born

two women — lawyer and client — each left their imprint on an era.

The Roaring Twenties was a decade of excess, inspired by the end of World War I and fueled by the ill-conceived banning of alcohol via Prohibition. Corruption, gangsterism, consumerism, and wild parties became the norm. And so, to the more respectable members of society, it wasn't completely outrageous that murder soon became public spectacle as well. Indeed, the women who began appearing on the front pages of newspapers were simply variations of the already popular "flappers," those risqué bad girls who flouted societal norms by drinking and dancing in nightclubs.

But Isabella Nitti-Crudelle was different — a working-class Italian woman, not a middle-class American party girl, a "disheveled and leather-skinned peasant" (*Chicago Tribune*), not a glamorous woman of leisure. And the circumstances of her case were different. Unlike many of the women held in Cook County Jail who claimed husbandly abuse or too much partying as the causes for their violence, Mrs. Nitti-Crudelle may have possibly had a motive. In July 1922, she reported her husband, Frank Nitti, missing. Eight

months later, in March 1923, she married Peter Crudelle, a young farm hand whom her husband had hired before his disappearance.

The Broadway musical "Chicago" was partly inspired by this murder trial

Less than two months after their marriage, however, Frank Nitti's bludgeoned body (he had been hit in the head with a blunt instrument, possibly a hammer) was discovered floating in the Des Plaines River. Was this a pre-calculated "crime of passion," carried out by Mrs. Nitti and her lover?

(Note: Various newspaper articles of the time first referred to Crudelle as Joseph Pudella and subsequently changed his name to Peter Crudelle, then Crudele, and, finally, Crudelle. Mrs. Nitti-Crudelle was often referred to as "*Señora*," the Spanish term for "married woman," rather than "*Signora*." Reporters also used the name "Sabella," a diminution of her real name, "Isabella." Such journalistic laziness was typical of the times, mixed with a disdain for Italians).

At her initial trial in the summer of 1923, Nitti-Crudelle denied, through interpreters, that she murdered her husband. She also insisted that she and Crudelle fell in love only after her husband's disappearance, when the police told her that they likely would never find him. But Mrs. Nitti and Crudelle had been implicated by her 16-year-old son Charles, who told police that he overheard Crudelle tell his mother that he had disposed of a body. Despite the fact that giving such evidence was also a way of letting himself off the hook — Charles had also been implicated in the murder — such hearsay evidence was enough to convict both Nitti and Crudelle. Mrs. Nitti became the first woman in Cook



County to be sentenced to death by hanging. Her scheduled date of execution was, ironically enough, October 12, 1923 — Columbus Day, a day observed to celebrate Italian culture in America.

Another irony is that dozens of women in Cook County had previously been accused of murder, but, because of their ethnicity and social status, were eventually set free. This irony wasn't lost on Mrs. Nitti, who, at one point while in jail, remarked in her broken English: *"Nice face — swell clothes — shoot man — go home. Me do nothing — me choke."*

And it certainly wasn't lost on a team of Italian American lawyers in Chicago who felt that Mrs. Nitti-Crudelle was being singled out because of her background. Rocco De Stefano, Albert N. Gualano, Nuncie Bonelli, Frank Allegretti, and the aforementioned Ms. Cirese successfully argued that Mrs. Nitti-Crudelle's first attorney was incompetent, which contributed to her not getting a fair and impartial trial. Their reasoning, along with young Charles Nitti's subsequent recanting of statements, led to Isabella Nitti-Crudelle's death sentence — but not her conviction — being invalidated by the Illinois State Supreme Court. She got another chance to prove her innocence.

(Historical footnote: While all of this was going on in Chicago, another high-profile case centered on Italian immigrants, Luigi Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, was gaining headlines in Boston and around the world. But, unlike Mrs. Nitti-Crudelle, Sacco and Vanzetti lost all of their appeals and were electrocuted in 1927.)

Before the new trial began, Ms. Cirese became the liaison to Mrs. Nitti-Crudelle in prison. Cirese decided to make the blatant reverse sexism of the time work in her client's favor; that is, all-male jurors, it seemed, would never believe a well-dressed woman to be capable of murder. Quote Cirese: *"We simply reconditioned (Nitti-Crudelle). I got a hairdresser to fix her up every day. We bought her a blue*



The play and movie *Chicago* was based on a number of sensational trials during the 1920s

suit and a flesh colored silk blouse. We taught her to speak English, and when she walked into the courtroom, she was beautiful — beautiful and innocent. I'll never forget how she looked. You wouldn't have known her."

The strategy worked. On June 16, 1924, Mrs. Nitti-

Crudelle became a free woman.

(Her husband, Peter Crudelle also was freed, but not much is known about the rest of their life together, other than three of Mrs. Nitti-Crudelle's other sons, Michael, James and Frank, all had scrapes with the law — an attempted robbery by Michael and James, and a "Black Hand" type of extortion by Frank — during the year their mother was in jail.)

As for Ms. Cirese, her stature and achievements continued to grow. In addition to being one of the founders, back in 1921, of the Justinian Society, the oldest Italian American lawyers group in the nation, she was elected president of the Women's Bar Association of Illinois in 1930 (the same year she and her brother Charlie started the law firm of Cirese and Cirese); she became the first woman to chair committees for the Chicago Bar Association (the Committee for Poor Prisoners in 1935 and the Criminal Law



Isabella Nitti-Crudelle, a simple immigrant farm wife convicted of murdering her husband

Committee in 1937); and she was elected justice of the peace and police magistrate in Oak Park, Illinois, one of the few people to hold such dual positions (she served and was reelected from 1949—1957).

Says her niece, L.A. based Mary Dickinson, upon meeting her fabled aunt when she came to visit her California relatives in 1968: *"I was*

transfixed. We talked for hours; actually, I listened. She was so articulate. I left that party convinced I wanted to be an attorney. My eyes were opened to true critical thinking."

Another niece, Helen Hachem of Florida, says that her Aunt Helen *"could sit in the midst of a family gathering, reading the newspaper, and interject her comments concerning the conversation irrespective of the fact that she was reading the newspaper all while the conversation was in progress. That's how focused she was."*

Hachem notes that her aunt's legacy is well-preserved via her papers, which are housed at the University of Illinois Library, and through the Helen Cirese Endowed Scholarship at DePaul University in Chicago, which is now up to \$50,000 to benefit potential law students.

Ms. Cirese's remarks after being elected Justice of the Peace in 1946 give one a sense of her real-life poise and *gravitas*: *"There will be no feminine fripperies in my court. The maintenance of dignity, justice, and decorum in our lower courts is extremely vital, because thousands of people come in touch with a justice of the peace, but many of them are never inside a higher court."*

One person who did visit a higher court, Isabella Nitti-Crudelle, had the benefit of being represented by Helen Cirese. These two women—the lawyer and the accused murderer—created some mighty big waves in the City by the Lake. ****

An American first: a female attorney serving a female defendant



THEN THERE WERE NONE:

How Intermarriage is Changing Us

by John Mancini, Bill Dal Cerro, Anthony Vecchione

If your family doesn't already have an infusion of Irish, German, Polish or other common melting-pot blood, you are probably the exception to the norm. Being "Italian" is fast becoming a state of mind rather than a matter of DNA. Once upon a time, we considered a mixed marriage as Sicilian-Neapolitan.

But love knows no bounds. So long as the "American" boy or girl was Catholic, there was quiet resignation in the traditional Italian American family. Eventually, all the barriers came down. Black baseball great Roy Campanella and gridiron star Franco Harris carried our vowels and our blood. New York's former mayor Fiorello La Guardia's mother was Jewish. All the simple combinations have been done, and more complex ones are coming.

The real question is how will more intermarriage affect Italian American self-awareness? Will diluting the genetic pool eventually render ethnicity meaningless? Will Little Italys just fade away? What will happen to the seemingly endless supply of guidos, goombahs, and other blue-collar stalwarts that Hollywood depends on for comic relief? Will the news media and district attorneys run out of old *mafiosi* to do the perp walk? Is that the only good news?

The Name Game

Asians often speak of "perpetuating ethnicity" to describe being pigeonholed as exotic in America even though they are native-born and speak flawless English. Certainly, in their case, racial features set the tone. And except for the surname Lee (as in the Lees of Virginia), most Asians don't pass the social register test. But many European Americans are often cornered by the same name game. Whether it's Lopez, Rossi, O'Hara, or Goldberg, our ethnicity is often front and center. For some, it is a proud part of our essence. For others, it's a distracting wart. How many times have you been asked about your heritage without having a clue about the ethnicity of the person who is asking? Invariably, the questioner will slough off the inquiry by say-

ing "just American" or "a mutt." It seems calculated to make you feel like an immigrant.

But the good news is that we are all becoming mutts. The more mutt you are, the easier to fend off *Godfather* jokes or requests for a recipe. Actor Alan Alda (family name D'Abruzzo) is half Italian. When asked to speak at a major Italian American gala a few years back, he rattled off his grandmother's sauce recipe to the assembled

guests. His Anglo half apparently thought it appropriate.

Early on, celebrities didn't like playing the name game for fear of type casting. Anna Italiano became Anne Bancroft, Dino Crocetti became Dean Martin. Those who took a chance stayed Frank Sinatra, Joe Campanella, Tony Franciosa, or Richard Crenna. Somehow, casting

directors and the public gladly received them as all-American.

Still, others with mixed heritage saw great opportunities by doing Italian *shtick*. Danny Aiello is half Russian and does mostly mafia roles. The same can be said for Robert DeNiro (mother's name: Admiral), Sylvester Stallone (mother: Labofish), and *The Soprano's* Steve Schirripa (his Jewish grandfather was actually a gangster).

Others preferred escape by marriage. Joy Behar, (nee Occhiuto), comedian and former co-host on ABC's *The View*, has a penchant for marrying Jewish men. Behar was husband number one and Janowitz is the surname of her latest. Intelligent, funny, and opinionated, Behar's name doesn't reveal the strong Italian female she actually is.

Marianna De Marco, author of the 1994 book *Crossing Ocean Parkway* (reviewed in issue XXIV), shares Joy Behar's attraction to Jewish men. After marrying Stuart Torgovnick she wrote that Jewish culture represented "upward mobility" to her. In fact, her marriage to him was her "liberation." Growing up in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, De Marco found immigrant-based Italian American culture an intellectual dead-end. Like Joy



One high profile intermarriage is that of New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio. The mayor was born of a German American father but embraced his maternal Italian side, along with the surname. De Blasio's children are Chiara and Dante, clearly an homage to their Italian roots.

***To some, marrying outside
means liberation
and upward mobility***



Italians and Intermarriage

Behar the lure of Jewish intellect can often turn to romance. Thus it is and will be for many Italian Americans who have yet to discover their classical roots.

In 2013, New York mayoral candidate Bill de Blasio saw things quite the opposite. His liberation was in dropping his German surname, Wilhelm, in favor of his maternal one. But he didn't stop there. His amorous eye fell for an African American lady. From that marriage came Dante and Chiara de Blasio – partly-vested Italian Americans with complete Italian names.

The Food Chain

Remember when you watched in horror as your immigrant grandfather ate a lamb's head (*capozello*) or enjoyed a dish of cow stomach (*tripa*) or salted cod (*baccala*)? If the first generation taught us anything, it was that nothing in nature should be foreign to us. Our parents, the second generation, were less daring, preferring octopus (*polpo*), conch (*scungilli*), and *broccoli di rapa*. The third generation went upscale to fish stew (*cioppino*), anything *parmigiana*, and fried *calamari*.

How the fourth and fifth generation reacts to the down-home Italian cuisine depends on their ethnic mix and degree of assimilation. All bets are on 12-topping pizzas and microwave pastas. There is a culinary price to pay for intermarriage. Gone are the slaving Italian mammas willing to spend a lifetime cooking, serving, and cleaning up for twenty guests at a clip. In her place is the "American" wife who would rather order in and eat off plastic plates. The tradition of putting on a good show is reserved for Thanksgiving in the mixed American family today. Chances are you haven't been offered a drink, coffee, or pastry when visiting a modern Italian American family. That wasn't the way it used to be, when even the briefest stopover required formal hospitality. It was a matter of family honor.

The irony in all this is that our heritage has all but boiled down to food. Everyone in America knows about our regional cuisines, and tunes into cooking shows with Lidia Bastianich, Giada DeLaurentiis, or Mario Batali. Yet, for all the perfection of technique and



Alan D'Abruzzo (Alda) and Joy Occhiuto (Behar)

purity of ingredients, Italian American cuisine is now in the hands of only an occasional *paesan* who realizes he or she is the last bastion against Stouffer's Lasagna or DiGiorno Pizza.



Since food is our only means of expression these days, one wonders why our cuisine never incorporated a tradition for Columbus Day to equate the earth-changing event with *italianita*. Maybe it's because Columbus

Don Grady (standing right), as all-American Chip Douglas, from the 1960s show *My Three Sons*. His real name was Don Agrati.

"A trip to Italy can make the biggest cultural impact in an Italian American's life."

wasn't a saint. St. Joseph's Day may bring forth *sfinge*, *zeppole*, or an entire "St. Joseph's table" to traditionalists, but Columbus never made the food connection, not even *pesto* to acknowledge his Genovese roots. The same can be said for *ferragosto*, a summer holiday Italians have celebrated since 18 B.C. when it got its name: the Feast of Emperor Augustus. The Church hijacked it and made it the Assumption of the Virgin Mary on August 15th. Without a food connection, two of Italy's greatest sons, Augustus and Columbus, will hardly survive mixed marriages.

Cost of Assimilation

Something happened when Italians came to America by the shipload. What they didn't have was a national identity or meaningful education. What they did have was an autocratic religion, a tradition of manual labor (skilled and unskilled), and a village mentality (*campanelismo*). Notwithstanding the handful of individuals who embraced political movements like anarchism and unionism, most of our grandparents just wanted to be left alone to recreate their small Italian world in America. Most were instinctively against higher education and intermarriage as changes that would bring their insular system crashing down. What the old-timers didn't count on was how their narrow attitudes left them vulnerable to ethnic erosion.

Their children in particular were totally unprepared to deal with an Anglo-Saxon educational system in which their southern Italian heritage was disconnected from European and as well as Roman and Renaissance history. Their enormous numbers and Mediterranean ways evoked ridicule from more Americanized groups. Without

(Cont'd. on p. 16)



The Jaws of Defeat:

How Italy Lost the Battle of History

by John Mancini, Alfred Cardone, Don Fiore, Joseph D'Alelio

In a previous issue*, we revealed the “Big Lie” about Italy’s efforts in the Second World War. Our Anglo-Saxon culture has raised us to consider our Italian cousins as lovers not fighters. As media mogul and part-time bigot Ted Turner once told an audience, *“Imagine Italians at war. I mean, what a joke. They’d rather be involved in crime and making some wine and just having a good time.”*

*(XXXVI (“For Lack of Fortune”))

This is the picture most Italian Americans have been given in history books and in movies since the 1940s. Even today, the two world wars are recounted with few honorable references to Italy, this despite Italy having lost nearly one million lives in those struggles. Italy may as well have been neutral for all historians care.

The Italic Institute continues to research and disseminate a more balanced history of Italy’s military efforts in the 20th Century. You might be surprised at the details most traditional historians overlook.

The Great War 1915 – 1918

Originally a member of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy) the Italians had nothing to do with the madness that engulfed her northern neighbors in 1914. What began with the assassination of an Austrian archduke by a Serbian gunman in the Balkans spun out of control as Austria and Germany decided to teach the Slavic Serbs a lesson. That brought the mother of all Slavs, Russia, into the fray. Russia’s allies, France and Great Britain, immediately joined in.

The very rational Italians saw no obligation in their defensive alliance with the Teutons in what was clearly an aggressive war. For its neutral stance Italy earned the reputation of a traitor, a reputation that would have profound effects in another war.

By 1915, the European powers were stalemated in trench warfare, looking for a game-changer. That game-changer was Italy, still neutral, but now being seduced by Britain and France. In the Secret Treaty of London that year, Italy agreed to tie down Austria-Hungary’s army and navy and send reinforcements to France to fight the Germans. Italian forces also participated in the Balkans (210,000 troops at their peak), in Palestine (10,000) against the Teutonic ally Turkey, and 60,000 in Libya to suppress a Turkish-led revolt. (Italy “liberated” Libya from the Turks in 1912 and pioneered the use of airplanes in combat during that conflict.)

In a series of battles in the Alpine regions, the Italians bled themselves and the Austro-Hungarians white. So battered were the Austro-Hungarians that Germany had to rescue its stumbling ally with seven crack divisions in September, 1917. No tribute to Italy’s



German Field Marshal von Ludendorff did not underestimate Italy’s resolve in the First World War

war effort could be better expressed than the words of German Field Marshal Eric von Ludendorff, an enemy: *“...it became necessary to decide for a [German] attack on Italy in order to prevent the collapse of Austria-Hungary.”*

[Ludendorff’s Own Story, vol. II. p. 95, Harper, 1920]

Among the Germans rushed to the Austrian front was young Lieutenant Erwin Rommel. With fresh German troops in the attack, the Italians were forced back in what is now labeled the disaster at Caporetto. This disaster continues to be the Mark of Cain on the Italian military. Yet, despite the rout, 40,000 killed or wounded,

and the surrender of 265,000 Italian troops, the enemy was stopped on the Piave River before even one French or British soldier arrived to help. It is also rarely mentioned that when the Americans entered WW I, they sent hundreds of candidate pilots to Italy, including future New York mayor

Fiorello LaGuardia, for training at Italian aviation schools. This alone serves as an indicator of how advanced Italy was in aeronautics at the time. The Italians had already successfully deployed mass squadrons of Caproni bombers in strategic raids on Austrian naval and rail yards.

On the Western Front, the Italian II Corps (53,000 men) helped to stop Germany’s last offensive at the Second Battle of the Marne. Marshal Philippe Petain, as late as 1934, acknowledged that the Italians under General Albricci saved the Allied flank. The Americans would soon be famously engaged in that battle at Château Thierry and Belleau Wood. But who remembers the Italians?

By November, 1918, the Italian Army completed the destruction of its enemy at Vittorio Veneto, capturing 450,000 prisoners and finally achieving Austria-Hungary’s collapse. Germany’s last ally was crushed and its southern flank now exposed. German General Kalisch, recalling his advice to the Kaiser during a meeting of the German high command at Spa, Germany, wrote: *“In consequence of Vittorio Veneto the door into South Germany is open to the Italians, and Germany has no reserves with which to*

For its neutral stance before WW I, Italy earned the reputation of a traitor



Assessing the Damage

oppose them. For this reason Germany must accept any armistice conditions; she is at the mercy of her enemies." The Germans would linger on only for another week on the Western Front. Nevertheless, the Allies did not inflict a *coup de gras* on the German Army as the Italians did to the Austro-Hungarians. Although the terms of the Armistice cost the Germans their planes and armaments, their army in France withdrew, intact, back to Germany.

Italy lost over 650,000 soldiers in the Great War. Yet, all its stunning victories and sacrifice have been darkened by Caporetto, incessantly emphasized by Allied historians to this day. In addition, Italians considered the war a "mutilated victory." The Allies reneged on many terms of the secret Treaty of London, denying Italy much of the territory it had been promised.

World War II (June, 1940 – September, 1943)

Why Italy joined the Axis, a painful decision, will not be dealt with here. What is rarely considered, however, is the burden on Italy of being an ally of a nation consumed by racial superiority, having at its head a maniacal madman who made countless strategic blunders. It is, no doubt, strange to hear this version of the Axis. Normally, it is told as a tale of a mighty and efficient German nation chained to the corpse of a weak, deceitful Italy. It is shocking to read some American and British military historians defending Nazi Germany as a victim of the Italian alliance instead of the other way around. "We had them in the First War, it's your turn now," was the running tale the Allies spun about Italy in the Axis, followed by a litany of how Mussolini dragged his unwilling partner into North Africa and the Balkans, delaying Hitler's magnificent timetable to vanquish the Soviet Union.

These same historians seem to forget that Germany's military "genius," Adolph Hitler, let 338,000 French and British troops escape at Dunkirk, or that he invaded the USSR before finishing off Great Britain, or that he refused to help invade Malta, the key to the Mediterranean. Italy was to pay the ultimate price for these strategic blunders.

And let us not forget which Axis partner opted to exterminate Jews and Slavs as soon as it won victories on the Eastern Front. Germany's military "genius" managed to unify all Russian-hating Slavs with that decision. As author Paul Kennedy suggests in his new book *Engineers of Victory*: Hitler's cruelty cost the Axis

potentially 40 million Ukrainian allies, traditional enemies of Russia.

Italy, with half the population and a fraction of the industrial capacity of Germany-Austria, and few natural resources, was engaged on multiple fronts: in the north and south Atlantic, on the Eastern Front, in the Mediterranean, in the Balkans, in East Africa, in North Africa, on the Black Sea, and even in the Battle of Britain.

Moreover, for nearly half the years between 1911 and 1945, Italian troops were waging war somewhere. When the Second World War came, Italians had just finished fighting to victory in the Spanish Civil War. They hadn't lost a war or conflict in the 20th Century until 1943. To say they were exhausted spiritually and materially would be an understatement.

For those with a deep interest in military history who have not read of the

events to follow, don't be surprised. The victorious Allies had a historical interest in maintaining the myth of Italy as an ineffectual power. Even Italy's German ally needed a scapegoat to cover its own failings. Moreover, Italian historians rarely published in English and, to most, defending the Italian military is tantamount to defending Fascism and Mussolini. Academia often takes a back seat to politics.

So, let us revisit the Second World War from the Italian perspective.

Why Did Italy Declare War on the United States?



It was the Italian Bersagliero, like this modern one, that broke through American lines at the Kasserine Pass in Africa

It would seem insane for a nation with a land area the size of Arizona and a population half that of Hitler's Reich or Japan to declare war on the USA. But it was the logical conclusion to America's pro-British "neutrality." President Roosevelt's Lend-Lease program unleashed America's vast industrial base in support of the British war effort. Thousands of tanks, ships and warplanes were shipped to England even before Italy and Germany declared war on the U.S. Those ships, planes, and tanks were used against Italian troops. In April, 1941, eight months before Pearl Harbor, when Britain was on the verge of defeat in the North Atlantic and North Africa, President Roosevelt seized 28 Italian merchant ships in U.S. harbors. These ships were eventually "sold" to the British or used to ferry American supplies. America was informally at war with Italy well before the

Italians declared war. Of course, the final decision came with the U.S. declaration of (Cont'd. on p. 29)



Intermarriage (continued from p.13)

recourse to a deeper understanding of Italy, the second generation made a wholesale dash for assimilation. And, unlike the other ethnics who had proprietary religions (Jews, Greeks, Nordics, et al.), the Irish-dominated Catholic Church was not a source of ethnic education or preservation. In short, the Italian family was on its own. Assimilating while keeping its Italic heritage intact was a daunting challenge, and still is.

A well-known celebrity who tries to maintain a viable sense of Italian identity within the public sphere is Giuliana Rancic (maiden name: DiPandi), a reporter for the E! Entertainment Network and star of a reality TV show, *Giuliana and Bill*, with husband Bill Rancic, former winner of Donald Trump's *Apprentice*. The subject of *italianita`* comes up frequently on their show, whether it's Bill's attempts to learn the Italian language or what name to choose for their first child (Giuliana wanted an Italian one while Bill wanted—and got—a more “American” one, Edward Duke). In addition to marrying in Capri and visiting Italy many times since, the Rancics also visited Croatia, one-half of Bill's ethnicity (the other is Irish). It is a nation which is still bilingual, Italian/Croatian, due to shifting borders after the Second World War.

Even though a relatively modern Italian immigrant, moving from Naples to Maryland with her parents when she was seven years old, Rancic still recalls the ridicule she felt her first few years in America.

“I was definitely laughed at for having a thick Italian accent,” she says. “I will never forget one day in class when my teacher gave us an assignment to draw a picture of what we wanted to be when we grew up. I idolized a local news anchor, Barbara Harrison. I stood up and said, ‘I wanna be an American anchor woman!’ with my thick accent. The kids all laughed at me. Even worse, the teacher laughed at me, too, and advised me to look into another career path. That moment has stuck with me all this time. It gave me the drive and determination to not only reach but surpass my wildest dreams.”



One casualty of intermarriage may be the decline in Italian American hospitality

“A trip to Italy can make the biggest cultural impact in an Italian American's life,” says Chicagoan Frank DiPiero, a third generation

Italian American and owner of Jeri's Grill, a popular Chicago diner. *“My whole life I thought of myself as being Italian, but when I actually went to Italy (as a student in Loyola University's Rome Program) I realized I wasn't really Italian. Living and studying in Italy was like attending an Italian language-and-culture camp on speed. Being in Italy gave me a tremendous sense of pride.”*



The 1952 high profile marriage between singer Pearl Bailey and Italian American jazz drummer Louie Bellson (Balassoni) raised eyebrows in pre-civil rights America

DiPiero points to other ethnic groups as examples of what is lacking in the Italian American community:

“Where I live,” he says, “one of the biggest ethnic groups is Polish. Nearly all Polish kids that I know attend a ‘Polish school’ on Saturday mornings, where they learn the history, language, and culture of Poland. I believe they go for eight years and even finish with a graduation ceremony, complete with cap and gown! It's not easy trying to keep ethnic awareness alive in America but the fate of our family and, on a bigger scale, the fate of our entire ethnic identity depends on it. Maybe that's why I married an Italian-born girl (his wife Ivana).”

Another Chicagoan, lawyer and activist Teresa Amato, writes a monthly column for *Fra Noi*, an Italian American newspaper. A majority of her articles focus on her family history, her marriage to a mostly Irish, partly-French American, and her attempts to inculcate a sense of *italianita`* within her two young daughters, Isabella and Vittoria (aka Bella and Vita).

“They were strategically born on March 16th and March 18th, diplomatically navigating Saint Patrick and Saint Joseph's Day,” Amato jokes.

As someone with a “100% Italian background,” Amato says that she *“came fully developed into my marriage with a thorough understanding of my own culture and family. I spend time teaching my daughters about Italian traditions, values, history, culture, and more, to pass on what was conveyed to me.”*

While DiPiero and Amato have all-Italian backgrounds, Jack Spiezio is a 17-year old high school student on Long Island of Italian and Irish parents. Here is his perspective on intermarriage:

“My parents were diligent in educating me about my Italian heritage,” (Cont'd. on p. 18)

Probably 70% of the third generation will marry outside their group.

In contrast to (DiPandi) Rancic, many third generation Americans reversed the process, traveling to Italy to rediscover their *italianita`*.



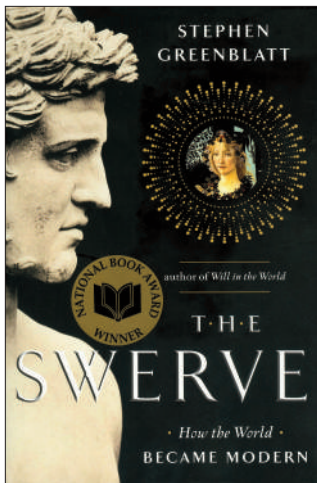
Lighting the Dark Ages

The Swerve

by Stephen Greenblatt

Paperback, 356 pages

-Reviewed by Rosario A. Iaconis



Author Greenblatt reveals how Italian scholar Poggio Bracciolini discovered the lost work of the Roman Lucretius

How many books have nurtured ideas that changed the course of human events? Certainly the *New Testament* is one. Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and Marx's *Das Kapital* are two others. Before any of these tomes saw the light of day, though, an ancient Italian poet penned a scroll that not only shattered superstition in his time but also awakened the minds of modern scholars: Copernicus, Charles Darwin, Isaac Newton, Thomas Jefferson and a host of geniuses who revealed the truths of nature.

Stephen Greenblatt is a *mensch* among men for penning this Pulitzer-prize winning tale of hope, triumph and history. The author

exudes a profound appreciation for both Lucretius and the civilization that created him. (*The Swerve's* hardcover edition spent 17 weeks on the *New York Times* Bestseller list; the paperback version boasted a ten-week run.) This affection also extends to Poggio Bracciolini, the book lover who rescued the ancient past and paved the way for a return to true wisdom.

Like Stephen Greenblatt, I happened upon a prose translation of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* ("On The Nature of Things" or "On

Lucretius influenced Copernicus, Darwin, Newton, and Jefferson, among other greats

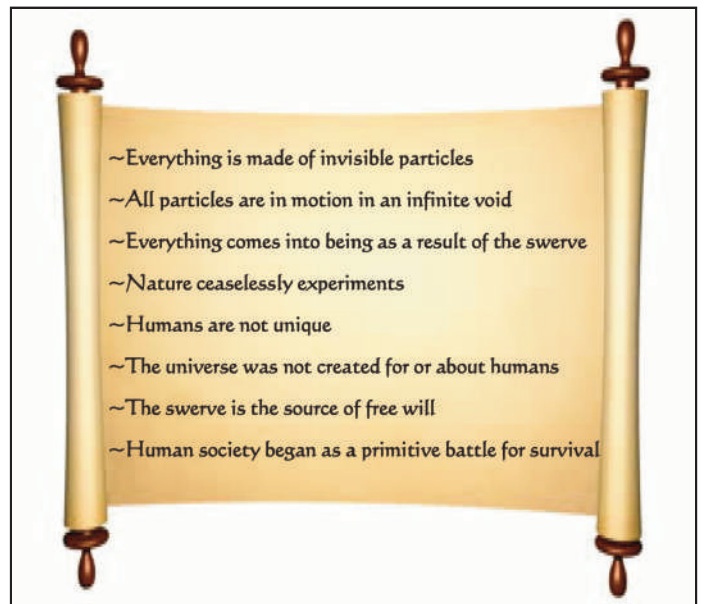
the Nature of the Universe") in a dusty old book store. And like the author of *The Swerve: How The World Became Modern*, I, too, was thunderstruck by the modernity embodied in this most precocious *magnum opus*.

But Titus Lucretius Carus penned something more than a literary poem for the ages. Lucretius' Latin was at once sensual and vivid. And his words opened the mind's eye to the

wonders of this world, the universe of the here and now — not some mythological afterlife. However, his greatest gift was the poet's wellspring of humanist thought. Fully inspired by the Greeks Democritus and Epicurus, Lucretius combined the atomic theory of the former and the naturalism of the latter to create the ultimate guidebook to the real world. Perhaps his own contribution was a dash of chaos ("the swerve") that gave nature her unpredictability. What the religious call "miracles" or "God's wrath" may be Lucretius' swerve.

Herein lies true wisdom for many. The eternal damnation and heavenly rewards of draconian monotheism are destructive fictions that have no place in the pristine cerebral environment of the physical sciences and the natural world.

In the poet's own verbiage: "*This dread and darkness of the mind cannot be dispelled by the sunbeams, the shining shafts of day, but only by an understanding of the outward form and inner workings of nature. In tackling this theme, our starting-point will be this*



Half a century before Christ, *The Nature of Things* presaged the atomic theory and evolution. Grounded in Greek Epicurean thought, Lucretius introduced the "swerve," or deviation, in Nature.

principle: Nothing can ever be created by divine power out of nothing." [emphasis added]

Lucretius' humanism revealed "*a clear light by which you can gaze into the heart of hidden things.*" The Augustan poets Virgil (in the *Aeneid* and *Georgics*) and Horace owed much to this liberating onrush of reality. In the second book of his *Georgics*, Virgil hails Lucretius: "*Happy*" (Cont'd. on p. 28)



Intermarriage (continued from p.16)

from Rome to the Renaissance. My high school curriculum includes Latin, which I have studied for two years. Because of this foundation, I never felt the need to find an alternate cultural identity, as I already had one.”



Leonardo DiCaprio with his all-Italic father George. The son is proud of his German-side looks.

“My parents never beat me over the head with praise of some remote peninsula; rather, being Italian was just a natural part of everyday life. It was in the foods we ate, in the art we saw at museums. It was my father pointing out that Marconi sent his first

radio broadcast from my hometown of Babylon, Long Island. It was my (Irish) mother showing me how Italian architecture influenced the buildings of our nation’s capital. The way to continue the Italian heritage, then, is to have common reminders of all the great things the Italic people have brought to our own modern lives.”

Jack’s story is unique. Few families connect Latin to the Italian heritage. In fact, many Italian American families deem Italian language study as not useful or too ethnic. How many parents understand that heritage is more than religious traditions and culinary specialties? How, then, are succeeding generations to have a grasp of the greater legacy? The clear answer is only through a formal youth program or self-study. Both Jack Spiezio and Frank DiPiero are witnesses to that.

Feeling “Italian”

Many Italian American academics and community leaders definitely see the Italian glass as half full rather than half empty. “Feeling Italian” may be the ultimate metric in judging the effects of intermarriage and assimilation. The popularity of things Italian in the American media and Italy’s exports of food, luxury items, and *la dolce vita* seem like the hallmarks of success and an inspiration to the coming generations. This combination may explain why the 2010 U.S. Census shows only Italian Americans, of all the white ethnics, increasing in numbers.

Aileen Riotto Sirey, Ph.D, founder of the National Organization of Italian American Women (NOIAW), says that well over 50% of second generation and probably 70% of the third generation Americans will marry outside their group. “*The interesting part of all of this is that while we know that intermarriage has grown with each succeeding generation, there has been a surprising increase in ‘self-reported’ identification as Italian American.*” This means, according to Sirey, that even those who are one-half or one-quarter

Italian have identified themselves as Italian American.

Sirey also points out that Italian Americans have made visible and outstanding contributions to American society in great numbers. “*We have excelled in politics, the arts, literature, science, business, and the professions. In my mind this desire to ‘identify’ as Italian American has clearly transcended all of our worries about negative stereotyping—not that it isn’t annoying—but I think many, many more of the children of mixed ethnic groups will be thinking of themselves and identifying as Italian American.*”

In his 2001 book, *The New Americans: How the Melting Pot Can Work Again*, Michael Barone notes: “[Intermarriages] suggest a dilution of the Italian heritage, but they also mean that a much larger number of Americans are of Italian ancestry than would be the case if the rate of intermarriage had stayed as low as is in the first or second generation.” In other words, more mixed Americans prefer being described as Italian.

Quantity vs Quality

But what good is having more people claim Italian ancestry if they don’t have a proper understanding of the classical roots of that

ancestry, or if all these “part-Italians” have a distorted sense of pride? How many only feel that being Italian is just more fun, or that being Italian is simply more interesting? It could be the quest to capture an image of the carefree Italian or to be someone who doesn’t

follow rules, in other words, the stereotypical Italian. Among African Americans, for example, it is a very common practice to claim Native American ancestry as it represents free-born warrior DNA, something opposite the black experience in America.

How many part-Italians will know only the media version of the Italian experience?



Sending teens and young adults to Italy is the best option to infect them with *italianita*

It may be like the world of pizza. A few decades ago, only Italian Americans made pizza. Now everyone is claiming the real thing – Pizza Hut, Domino’s, Little Caesar’s, et al. So has this influx of ersatz Italians improved the quality of

pizza? Or has it just spread the joy of pizza?

Sadly, it was the “pure” Italians like Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola, nurtured by hardworking and honest families, who dragged

(Cont’d. on p. 20)



ITALY BY THE BOOK

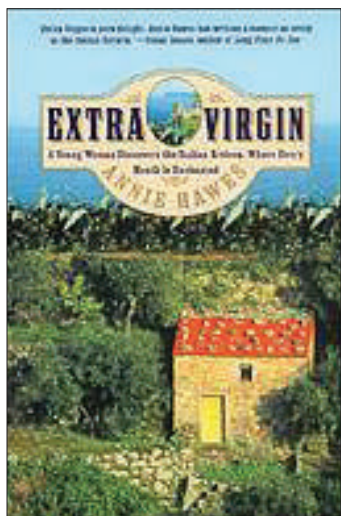
Watch What You Read!

by Judith Testa

It's time to toss out your copies of *Under the Tuscan Sun* and *Bella Tuscany*, and replace them with a pair of much wiser and better books about a foreigner's experiences in Italy: Annie Hawes' memoirs *Extra Virgin*, and *Ripe For The Picking*. If you've never heard of Annie Hawes and her books, that's not surprising, since the best-seller sensation created by *Tuscan Sun* has pretty much drowned them out. But Hawes' books are wonderful.

What's wrong with Frances Mayes' volumes, you may ask. Just about everything. We all know her basic story by now: American woman buys dilapidated villa in Tuscany (just outside Cortona), and spends a fortune restoring, decorating, furnishing, and appointing it, while coyly refusing to acknowledge the virtually unlimited financial resources that make all that possible, even before the mega-millions she earned from *Tuscan Sun*. Thanks to a well-chosen title and sharp marketing, she managed to tap into the fantasies of millions of American readers, most of whom will never set foot in Tuscany, much less own a villa there.

In her follow-up volume, *Bella Tuscany*, she capitalizes on the success of her first volume, providing more of same: smug, self-congratulatory prose — verbal “O lucky me!” hand-clapping — along with recipes, “vacations from her vacation” in Tuscany in the form of trips to Venice

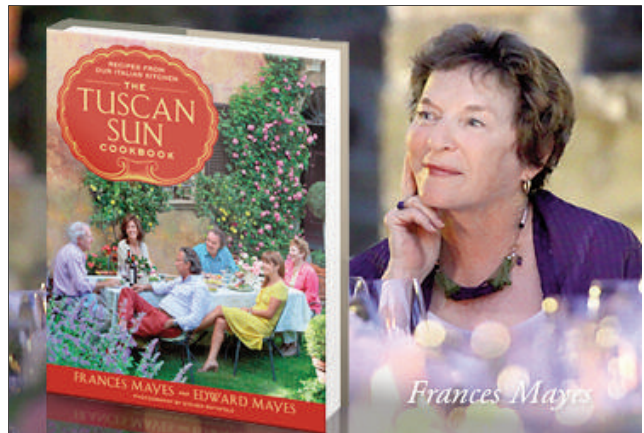


Not a great title, but much better insight

and Sicily with her gentleman friend, identified only as “Ed,” and, in this second volume, some leaden lumps of autobiography. The latter includes more than we wanted to know about her affluent Georgia childhood, her further spending sprees involving her other home in San Francisco, and her marriage to Ed — who takes HER last name! Mayes' obsessive horror of encountering the Mafia in Sicily would be funny if it weren't so insulting.

Mayes tries to be lyrical and profound in her effusions about Tuscany, but instead comes across as shallow, pretentious, self-absorbed, and condescending.

When I analyzed what it is that I find so obnoxious about Mayes, I realized that a good part of my annoyance comes from her patronizing attitude toward Italians, and her mind-boggling degree of ignorance of Italian culture, religion, art, and history. She thinks Italians were put on this earth for her personal



Author Frances Mayes thinks Italians were put on this earth for her personal entertainment — they're so quaint

entertainment — they're so quaint, with their funny hand gestures and odd little customs that she makes no effort to understand. Or else, they exist to perform whatever manual labor at her villa she finds too heavy or too tedious, and whatever skilled labor her exacting Martha Stewart standards of decorating demand.

It's time to toss out your copies of “Under the Tuscan Sun” and “Bella Tuscany”

At no point in either of her books does she form any meaningful relationships with Italians — they're either her household servants, her day laborer-employees, the shopkeepers from whom she makes her unending stream of purchases, or the few snobbish rich people who associate with her only because of her

own wealth. She finds the Italian version of Catholicism amusing, and wants a holy water font for home decoration. Her comments on Italian art are pretentious, poorly informed, and without a single interesting insight. Her one moment of humility comes when she admits her difficulties in learning Italian. (An informant in Cortona tells me that even after decades spent mostly in Italy, Mayes still speaks terrible Italian, with an appalling accent.)

But so what? She doesn't need to know Italian. Mayes lives in the insulated dream world that only the very wealthy can afford to build around themselves. There are no poor people in Mayes' books, nobody unemployed, nobody mentally ill or physically disabled. No word on the tragic swath that heroin and cocaine addiction has cut through even the smallest and most remote Italian towns. Nothing about the intractable problem of illegal immigrants flooding the Italian peninsula from Eastern Europe and Africa, although she is happy to hire Polish laborers, implying that they work harder and produce better results than Italians. In passing she mentions the puzzling presence of African prostitutes by a roadside, but then hurries back to her interminable musings on selecting a competent gardener, trying to make up her mind between tile or marble for her renovated bathrooms, and buying yet another set of antique linens. The parties she gives and attends are so unvaryingly elegant that you start wishing someone would belch, tell a dirty joke, get nastily drunk, come down with a (Cont'd. on p. 22)



Intermarriage (continued from p.18)

our heritage into the gutter with *The Godfather*. Can we expect better from part-Italians who have been raised on media stereotypes?

A recent example is Kelly Ripa, a television celebrity with an Italian surname who claims to be “nearly three-quarters Italian.” But Ripa, like so many of our *paesani*, has a funny way of demon-



Manhattan's Little Italy is itself an intermarriage of Italian and Asian

strating that pride. Together with her Mexican American husband Mark Consuelos (who also claims some Italian blood), Ripa starred in an ill-begotten video on YouTube titled *Bensonhurst Spelling Bee*. Dressing their own son in stereotypical “eye-talian” garb — dark glasses, tacky jogging suit, and gold chains — the boy murders Italian food names (“bra-zhoot” for *prosciutto*). The judges, Lorraine Bracco and Tony Sirico, ex-stars of HBO's *The Sopranos*, accept the dialect vocabulary as correct. Therein lies the humor.

The fact that Ripa and Consuelos went public with this gag, recruiting their own son to mock the Italian side of his heritage, does not bode well for the concept of “feeling” Italian.

Italy in Flux

If you think Italy itself is immune to intermarriage, you don't read much. With an extremely low birthrate and a need for agricultural workers, the Magic Boot is being transformed into a new melting pot. Granted, Italy was always a melting pot, beginning with a peninsula divided among Italic, Hellenic, Celtic, and Etruscan peoples; however, it had the benefit of Roman unity and “italianized” Catholicism that melded even the later barbarian invaders into what is recognizable as an Italian nation.

Yet today, massive influxes of Asians, Africans, and Eastern Europeans, legal and illegal, are transforming Italy into something akin to America. Over 7% of Italy's 57 million inhabitants are immigrants, including 1.5 million Muslims, 457,000 Moroccans, and 200,000 Chinese. The center-left government of Prime Minister Enrico Letta recently appointed a Kenyan-born doctor as Minister of Integration. For many Italian Americans who have recently visited Italy, the transformation is startling. The Italian shoreline is daily awash with immigrants from the war-torn Middle

East and Africa. Add to that the open borders with the European Union and the Italy of yore is fast becoming a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state.

New Vistas

With the dilution of the old Italian American in the U.S., however, things may be brighter. Perhaps we can look forward to fewer testimonials to the Mafia and to *la miseria* of the Old Country. With the infusion of Irish word craft and Anglo scholarship, our heritage may go beyond the repetitive immigrant experience and into something more complex. Perhaps the rampant apathy pure Italians have for their media image will be transformed through intermarriage into a deeper pride and a concern for what people think of us.

Intermarriage also means our looks will change. “You don't look Italian” will be a very common response to someone bearing an Italian surname or waxing nostalgic for things Italic. For example, U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy is half-Italian but his Irish side shows the flag. Actor Leonardo DiCaprio may have the moniker but he looks too German to bear the Boot. He has even said as much.

And what of the Little Italys, the street festivals, the religious processions, and the social clubs that have struggled to survive across the country? Will they meet their end with intermarriage? Manhattan's Little Italy has all but succumbed to the Asian invasion. Even New York's famed San Gennaro Feast has been largely staged

by Mort Berkowitz & Les Schecter, two Jewish Americans. Yet Boston's Italian North End thrives, as does San Francisco's North Beach. And in San Diego, a third generation Sicilian American like Marco LiMandri has, indeed, revised the very concept of a Little Italy: His

leadership blends modern-American business acumen with an appreciation of traditional Italian American values.

Perhaps these manifestations of southern Italian culture will live on for a few more decades, but it is doubtful they can make it beyond that. In the scheme of things, their disappearance may clear the field for other tributes. It may even inspire a more classical sense of *italianita`*, one based on the greatness of Italy and the worldwide contributions of its children, rather than the fleeting immigrant experience. That, finally, will be the best tribute to our legacy.



Entertainment Network's Giuliana (DiPandi) Rancic [photo by Andrew Eccles]



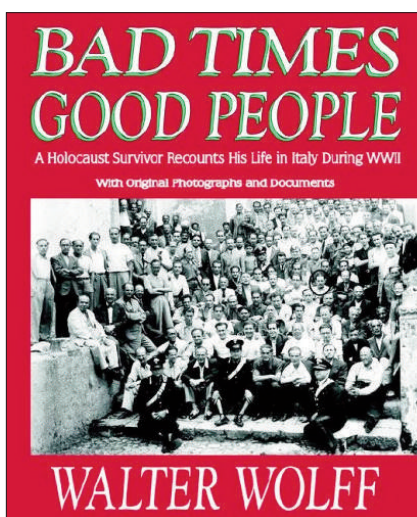
Italy and the Holocaust

The following testimonies are excerpted from *Italy and the Holocaust*, published in 2013 by the Italic Institute of America.

WALTER WOLFF

from his book *Bad Times Good People*

Prior to the United States entry into World War II, America was not readily open to Jewish refugees. The experience of Walter Wolff,



whose book *Bad Times Good People* is representative of many Holocaust survivors who were desperate to leave Germany and found that only Italy would take them in.

In the wake of *Kristallnacht* (November, 1938), Walter Wolff, then a young man of 26, was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Dachau Concentration Camp. He was released a few months later because he had received a scholarship to

study in the United States. America was to be his ticket out of Germany until he tried to obtain a visa from the U.S. consulate in Stuttgart. As he relates the story, the American clerk denied his visa because, 'we don't have any firm guarantees that you would leave the United States at the end of three years [of study]... We cannot take the risk.'

The American clerk denied his visa. His next stop would be Dachau.

Walter only had six months to leave Germany or he would be sent back to Dachau. Worse, neither his widowed mother nor brother had a way out of Germany. Fortunately, he learned that Italy did not require a visa to cross its border. In August, 1939, one month before Hitler plunged Europe into war, Walter Wolff, his mother and brother found themselves in Fascist Italy.

Upon their arrival, Walter was sent alone to a camp in central Italy (*provincia Salerno*), much different from Dachau. There was no forced labor, few and unarmed guards, adequate food, civilian clothes, and Sabbath observance. A few months later, the

Italian government allowed families to reunite and Walter's mother and brother joined him.

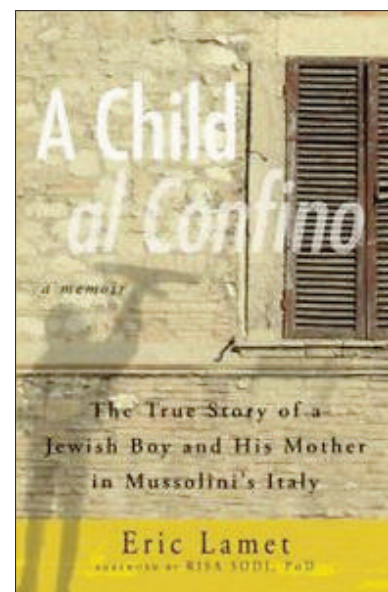
In 1940, after Italy entered the war on Germany's side, Walter was given *confino libero* status. He was able to reside in an Italian city with a small stipend. Free to live and work, Walter chose a town in northern Italy that had a Jewish community. He worked for the Italian Army as a foreign language instructor and later at a scientific laboratory named for Arnaldo Mussolini, the Duce's deceased brother.

His good fortune in Italy changed in September, 1943, with the Nazi occupation. Still, with the help of many Italians, civilian and military, he lived a tolerable life, eventually meeting his future Italian Jewish wife in 1945. In 1947, Walter, his wife, mother and brother finally reached America.

ERIC LUMET (nee LIFSHÜTZ)

from his book *A Child at Confinio*

The Lifshütz family, of Polish Jewish origin, owned luxury hotels in Vienna before fleeing Nazi-occupied Austria in 1938. Eric and his mother sought refuge in Italy while his father went to Poland to stay with his parents. From 1938 to 1941, mother and son lived comfortably and unmolested in Milan and San Remo, though Eric was not allowed to enter a public school because of Italian racial laws. However, during those years they were free to travel to Switzerland, where Eric attended summer camp, and to France, as well as destinations within Italy.



In June, 1941, they were required to relocate to a village near Avellino in central Italy for *confino libero*. They were given 50 lire each month for rent. Eric's mother was given an additional 275 lire per month for living

Though they were fleeing Nazis, the Fascist government gave them a monthly stipend

expenses and another 50 lire for Eric's benefit. They were able to choose their own apartment (they found one (Cont'd. on p. 28)



Italy by the Book (cont'd from p.19)

case of Tuscan Tummy, or admit to cravings for a Big Mac. Did I mention that Mayes has absolutely NO sense of humor?

In contrast, neither of Annie Hawes' books has received anything close to the publicity and adulation lavished on Mayes' efforts. As a quick index of comparative success, *Tuscan Sun*, although more than 15 years old, still ranks around 20,000th on Amazon.com's 7-million-title book list, while Hawes' *Extra Virgin*, published in 2001, lurks down around 430,000th. *Bella Tuscany* comes in at a mediocre 103,000th on the list, but Hawes' second book, *Ripe For The Picking*, ranks an abysmal 638,000th. There are more than 500 on-line reviews of *Tuscan Sun*, but only 61 of *Extra Virgin*.

Perhaps part of the problem is Hawes' unfortunate title. *Extra Virgin* is a clever play on words, referring both to olive oil and — jokingly — to the author herself, who's definitely not a virgin, but, as a single, unattached woman, IS often seen as an extra; however, this only becomes clear after you start reading the book. The subtitle is even worse: "A Young Woman Discovers the Italian Riviera, Where Every Month is Enchanted." Along with being cumbersome, the subtitle sounds like it belongs on a cotton-candy, silly-girl memoir, and doesn't do justice to the riches of insight and observation, and the hilarious humor the book contains. Another problem is — as they say in the real estate business — location, location, location. Hawes' memoir records her experiences in an obscure little hill town in Liguria, an Italian region most Americans, even Italian Americans, would be hard put to locate on a map. It's the region that contains the Italian Riviera, as her subtitle indicates, but even with that knowledge, the region hardly has the instant and rapturous name recognition accorded to Tuscany. So, Hawes starts out with two strikes against her.

Like Frances Mayes, Annie Hawes (along with her sister Lucy) bought a ruinous house in Italy and fixed it up, but that's where the resemblance ends. The Hawes sisters aren't rich. They're middle-class English girls who came to Liguria to work as rose-grafters, hoping to combine a bit of sight-seeing with gainful employment, and with no plans to stay. The house they eventually buy is a bargain — a farmer's *rustico*, little more than a shack far out in the country, which nobody in their right mind would actually want to live in, according to the locals. And fixing it up is a very long, slow process that extends across many years, with regular trips back to England in order to earn enough money to return to their little property and make a few more modest improvements. But the difference between Annie Hawes and Frances Mayes is far more than the difference in economic status. The contrast of personalities is pro-

found. Mayes is self-centered, self-satisfied, pompous, and humorless, while Hawes is friendly, respectful, humble, open-minded, keenly observant, and brimming with the best sense of humor I've encountered in ages. And she's often as not the butt of her own jokes.

At first, what she encounters seems mysterious and incomprehensible, including the thick Ligurian dialect and just about everything everybody does, says, and wears. She makes endless blunders, tries to correct them, does something dumb again, but good-naturedly



Annie Hawes lives in Diano San Pietro along the Ligurian coast

picks herself up and carries on. Slowly, over the course of years, she learns to communicate, both in standard Italian and Ligurian; figures out ways of improving her property that don't cost the earth; deciphers customs and mores that turn out, when properly understood, to make perfect sense; nurtures close, lasting friendships with people of both sexes, and, in her second volume, falls in love with a local man who becomes her husband. "What a different perspective you do get on a place, when you've taken up with a local," she observes, as she navigates the intricacies of her fiance's family. Instead of

sitting loftily on the surface of local life, as Mayes does when she claims to be "at home" in Tuscany, Hawes learns by trial and error to fit in and become a genuine part of that life.

Reading Annie Hawes will give you — in a most entertaining way — real information about the lives of real Italians, not the alternately over-romanticized or condescending views of Italy and Italians that Mayes offers. Hawes is well aware that life in her little corner of Liguria is far from problem-free. Because she becomes friendly with

Annie Hawes is never disrespectful or patronizing

her neighbors, and doesn't merely see them as a means to satisfying her own needs, the way Mayes does, she learns the intimate details of people's lives. We see enduring, devoted marriages, and stormy, unhappy ones. We learn about the tragic effects of drug use not through statistics but through its impact on individuals and families. We see people with active social consciences, and we also feel Hawes' indignation when she discovers people who exploit a mentally retarded youth by reducing him to a condition little short of slavery. Through her increasingly understanding eyes, we see her tiny town of Diano San Pietro, and Ligurian society in general, change over the decades Hawes spends there — little history lessons that we're painlessly taught.

With wit, insight, humor, and a wonderfully warm, ingratiating, and lively style of writing, Annie Hawes shares her hard-won knowledge of Liguria and Ligurians. She also provides a vivid, detailed, and affectionate portrait of Italian rural life that is never disrespectful or patronizing. Her writing is often funny, but she never "makes fun" of the local culture. Why would she? Through her own untiring efforts she's become a happy and productive part of it.



WHAT'S A LATINO?

WORD GAMES

by Louis Cornaro

When Argentine Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected to the Throne of St. Peter in 2013, he was hailed by many to be the first Latino pope. Not one year later, the media no longer refers to him as a Latino. After all, though he was born in a Spanish-speaking country in “Latin” America, both his parents were immigrants from Italy. And Italians are, well, just Italians.

So what is a Latino? Is it the same as a Latin? Is it only synonymous with Hispanic?

In his 2002 book, *Brown, The Last Discovery of America*, journalist Richard Rodriguez finds fault with all the labels placed on “Hispanics.” Some folks, he writes, don’t like Hispanic because it harkens back to colonial bondage. They prefer Latino. Nevertheless, Rodriguez opts for Hispanic as a cultural designation, i.e., Spanish-speaking. But even Hispanic, he writes, is an “Anglo” invention to lump Mexicans, Bolivians, and everyone else into the same pot. He doesn’t go too deep into the use of Latin/Latino, except to point out that it was previously applied to celebrities, as in a “Latin Lover.” He correctly notes that it also applied to ethnic Italians like Rudolph Valentino. Nor does he mention Iberian as a suitable adjective to join Brazil with its Spanish-speaking neighbors. The Iberian Peninsula is the homeland of both the Spanish and Portuguese tongues. Ibero-America has a nice ring to it, and it’s very accurate.

Origins

Like “Hispanic” which refers to the ancient name for Spain, *Hispania*, the term Latin or *Latino* came from ancient Rome’s colonization of France,

Once upon a time
Latins only came from
Latium, today’s Lazio.
It’s where the word
Latin comes from.
Legend has it that
Aeneas the Trojan
married a Latin
producing the
Roman people.
The Latins/Romans
were an Italic people.



**Among Italian Americans
there is little attachment
to the word Latin**



We know the pope is Catholic but is he Latino?

Spain and Portugal. It was chosen by some North American (probably an ethnic Englishman) many years ago to lump all the people of the Americas who live “south of the border.” It was a term of convenience for former Spanish, Portuguese and French colonies in the Americas. Technically that would make French-speaking Haitians, black Brazilians, and Amerindians all Latins. However, the cockeyed rules of this word game would exclude U.S. Cajuns and French-Canadians because they are north of the Rio Grande. Understandably, Haitians don’t consider themselves Latins, and Brazilians are insulted by the term because it connotes Spanish-speaking rather than Portuguese-speaking.

Perhaps we should call all Hispanics/Brazilians “South Americans.” Americans and Canadians are called *norteamericanos* by their southern counterparts. Who would have a problem with that? No ethnicity is implied. No language or cultural traits are loaded in. We use the terms African- and Asian-American quite easily. Just because there is Central America and the Carribean below our borders it doesn’t mean “South American” is useless. It covers everyone! “Latino” just has too many exceptions.

This is all meaningless to the average Italian American. But for many of us, though, Latin is an important word. Italians are culturally and ethnically Latins, as are the “pure” French, Spanish, and Portuguese. Tens of thousands of Italic soldiers manning the Roman legions and thousands of Roman bureaucrats Latinized these countries, spreading their DNA, culture, and language. More specifically, many of our immediate ancestors came directly from the region of *Lazio* in Italy. *Lazio* is Italian for *Latium*, the homeland of the Latin people. The Latins were an Italic people. The Latin language is rooted in the Italic Language Family. In the eyes of the media and academics, we now share (Cont’d. on p. 27)



ice to what they really represent. We have abandoned a greater portion of our vast legacy in a shorter time than our ancestors took to create it. If we had the true pride of heritage, we would have ended media defamation years ago and created a real cultural infrastructure. But we haven't.



The late A. Bartlett Giamatti,
a classical Italian

What can we do now? One point of attack is to transcend our blue-collar culture. Lest anyone think I'm being an elitist, I can assure you I came from blue-collar stock and totally revere the backbreaking toil our working class families endured to survive and prosper. The problem is that many Italian Americans do not want to rise above those hard times when it comes to their culture. It is easier to feel successful when comparing yourself to hardscrabble immigrants rather than to the Caesars, the Medicis, or the Garibaldis of Italian history. It is easier to parrot the dialect of grandparents than to learn standard Italian. In America, we look up to patriots and leaders. In the Italian American community, we look up to our actors and chefs. We admire celebrity and ignore greatness.

A perfect example of this stares us in the face in Las Vegas and Atlantic City. There, at Caesar's Palace, Caesar Augustus, founder of the Roman Empire, the man who made Italy the center of the Western World, enriching it beyond all measure, paving the way for the Catholic Church, the Renaissance and the reunification of Italy, stands as the prop for a gambling casino. The insult is lost on 99.9% of Italian Americans. Try putting George Washington, King David or Queen Victoria on that pedestal. Perhaps Emperors Nero or Caligula would be a more appropriate choice. But the casino owners will never know that because we don't understand our own history.

In truth, the media and our own Catholic Church teach us from childhood that classical Rome was an evil empire. Should we accept that? I suppose if you want to write off one thousand years of Italian heritage as a war crime, it's just fine. Renaissance scholar and baseball Commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti (the father of actor Paul Giamatti) wrote: "*The unlettered or barely literate [immigrants] who crowded the docks and decks, waiting to leave [Italy] would not have known The Aeneid and would not have believed they were affected by Roman culture.*" Know your ancestors!

Does it matter that Christopher Columbus drops down a notch every year? Instead of making him a part of our legacy here in America, we participate in his downfall. Last year, two major Italian American organizations offered up the iconic Columbus

statue in Manhattan's Columbus Circle as a coffee table prop for a Japanese artist. Sold short again! Columbus should be joined with Cabot, Vespucci, and Verrazano as the real "Team America," the heroic Italians who opened these continents. What other group has such a winning combination? How many Americans even know Cabot was Italian and that he was the source of England's claim to North America? He simultaneously launched the British Empire. He came here 500 years ago not 100. And he came at his own expense. We should lionize him.

But how do we communicate a higher, classical, Italian heritage to our own people and to America? The Italic Institute offered a solution in its *Aurora Youth Program* for some twenty-five years, enrolling 5th and 6th graders in Saturday morning classes. Some 4,000 youngsters attended these classes. But our efforts failed to stimulate the major organizations to underwrite the program.

Sheldon Adelson is a big name in funding U.S. political agendas, but his heart is in preserving Jewish identity. His *Birtright Israel* funds free trips to Israel for young adults between the ages of 18 - 26. Some 340,000 have gone!



Another alternative is to tap into the wealthy among us, to find the Italian American equivalent of Jewish philanthropist Sheldon Adelson. Adelson created a fund to provide trips to Israel for Jewish teenagers called Birtright Israel. To date, it claims that 340,000 Jewish kids, aged 18-26, from various countries have enjoyed 10-day educational trips to Israel, at a cost of \$3,000 per person. Check out the Birtright Israel website (www.birtrightisrael.com) to understand the mission and methods of this amazing program. We have an equivalent to Adelson in former Ambassador to Italy Peter Secchia. He has endowed a program called the Voyage of Discovery through NIAF. We need thousands of scholarships of this kind.

In the meantime, we must continue to resist media defamation. For those who still believe America has tired of Italian

ridicule, check DVDs for *Don Jon* and *The Family*. These are updated versions of the same genre Hollywood has been producing since *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) and *The Godfather* (1972). They are the only version of "Italian culture" that our young people know. Worse, millions of youngsters born here of Asian, African, and Hispanic parents are being imprinted with these images of low-life Italian Americans. That we are considered white by them adds a dash of smugness that we are lower-class white people.

That is not cutting a good figure for anyone with an Italian surname.

The real "Team America" was Columbus, Cabot, Vespucci, and Verrazano: A new way to see our explorers

If Rome Did Not Exist

What We Take for Granted

by Alfred Cardone

One of the strangest things about Italian Americans is how little they know of or appreciate their Roman roots. For most, Italy miraculously appeared during the Dark Ages, after the fall of decadent Rome. Magically, the Italian was born, speaking a host of dialects, but practicing the same religion, diverse in talents — business skills, engineering know-how, athletic abilities, artistic genius, scientific curiosity — with a magnificent taste in fashion and cuisine. And it seemingly all started when those cruel warmongers, the Romans, met their end. Rome had to die before Italy was born.

Well, if you believe that, you are, indeed, a product of the Dark Ages. The truth is Italians owe some 90% of what they are to the Roman heritage, from the first unification of Italy in 222 B.C. to its language, customs, talents, law, religion and even our family ways.

As Americans, we all know that the Roman legacy has had a major impact on the development of Western civilization — our calendar, the alphabet, the Latin words and roots in our languages, literature, architecture, government and the law. But that legacy has been especially significant in Italy, the center and homeland of the Roman Empire.

Rome provided the foundation for an uninterrupted Italian history spanning the medieval, Renaissance and modern eras. The Romans had thoroughly colonized the peninsula and its islands before Christ, melding the Greek, Etruscan and Italic DNA to create a successful and prosperous culture that survived the numerous later invasions of Goths, Lombards, Franks, Arabs and Normans. Consequently, Italy never descended to the same level of primitive barbarism as the rest of Europe. Trade, industry and crafts were able to continue at a diminished level through the Middle Ages. The solid base of Roman civilization gave Italy the resilience to recuperate from famine, disease and war. Moreover, as the seat of the Roman domain, Italy attracted a diverse pool of superior DNA from three continents — gladiators, artists, scholars, and specialists in every field. It should be no mystery why modern Italian talent spans a wide range.

The remnants of some Roman institutions were able to survive, especially Roman property law. By the eighth and ninth centuries the Germanic Lombards abandoned their communal concept of land and property in favor of the Roman concept of private property. The Latin language was also able to survive, preserved by Italian scholars and clergy. By the 700s A.D., the minority Lombards had become fully integrated with Italians. The total enslavement of the population by its conquerors did not occur in Italy. It could be said that the conquerors of Italy were

themselves conquered by the superior Roman civilization they encountered.

Italian cities remained infused with Roman law, customs, and government, and even a pagan version of Christianity. The foundations of Roman urbanization and civilization led to the development of



The pagan Greeks taught the Italic people the art of sculpture, but Christian Greeks do not allow sculpture in their churches. Pagan Rome freed the Italian mind from many inhibitions.

If you believe Italy was born in the Dark Ages, then you yourself are a product of the Dark Ages

successful and prosperous Italian city-states during the medieval and Renaissance periods, including Venice, Florence, Genoa, Pisa and Amalfi. Like their Roman ancestors, they became commercial and maritime powers that dominated trade and commerce in the Mediterranean world. They were dynamic and enterprising cities that experimented with republican and princely forms of government, in the Roman manner.

Christianity was profoundly modified and the Church immensely influenced by Rome. Beginning in 313 A.D., Constantine legalized Christianity, later becoming the first Christian emperor. This Roman emperor is considered the “13th Apostle” by the Greek Orthodox Church because he standardized Christian ritual and doctrine. The emperor Theodosius went a step further and made Christianity the state religion. This enabled Christianity, especially in Italy, to grow at a remarkable pace. The Church recognized the Roman genius for organization and gradually adopted the hierarchical structure of the Empire. The bishop of Rome became the leader of the Western Church or Supreme Pontiff. This corresponded to the high priest or Pontifex Maximus of the ancient Romans. Roman law became the basis for canon law. As Roman power declined, the other bishops would replace the role of the Roman prefects as the source of order and the center of power in the cities. The Church also adopted the vestments of pagan priests, the communion of saints (lesser gods), the use of holy water and incense for purification. (Cont'd. on p. 26)



If Rome Didn't Exist (cont'd. from p.25)

tion, as well as the architecture of the basilica. What Italian Americans see today in their earthly Church came directly from Rome, not Jerusalem.

The newly converted Italians missed certain aspects of the old pagan faith such as the worship of goddesses and specialized deities from whom they could seek personal patronage. This led to the eventual veneration of Mary and the many saints. Clearly, many of the doctrines and practices of medieval Catholicism originated with the Roman Empire. The popes assumed temporal as well as spiritual power ruling the city of Rome and the papal states of central Italy. They eventually held sway over foreign kings and emperors during the Middle Ages. Much like the ancient Caesars, they ordered the construction of magnificent churches and the creation of great works of art to project their power and enhance the beauty and glory of their realm. Without its derivation and association with ancient Rome, the papacy could never have aspired to such heights.

It is no accident that Medieval Italy's greatest poet Dante used the Roman Virgilius (Vergil) Maro as his guide in the *Divine Comedy*. Even in the darkest of times, educated Italians never forgot the greatness and traditions of their ancient Roman past and their splendid achievements in the arts. The ubiquitous remains of Roman aqueducts, roads, bridges, baths, theatres, libraries, palaces, forums, stadiums, fountains, monuments, walls and temples served as a reminder and inspiration. Classical literature had been copied by monks throughout the Middle Ages. Inspired by these ancient works, Italian scholars developed nothing less than the modern concept of humanism. They were captivated by a sense of man's tremendous powers, his rich potential and the creative play of human talent in diverse fields. They also gloried in the achievements of the great individual who stood out above the crowd. Ancient writers were now studied in a new spirit of excitement. Antiquity was viewed as a world of light, which was neither supernatural nor mysterious and untroubled by the dogmatic Church and its petty clergy. The humanists championed the classical Latin and even tried to dress, talk and conduct themselves like the ancient Romans.

The Romans had preserved the knowledge of the Mediterranean world. Without Rome's legions to protect it, Western civilization would have been overwhelmed by barbarous invaders and quite possibly eradicated with disastrous consequences for future gener-



The Church inherited the power and sovereignty of Rome's emperors. Even after the Fall of Rome, Italians wielded tremendous power throughout Europe. Global wealth continued to flow into Italy to fund construction, including St. Peter's, and the arts.

Scholars like Niccolo Machiavelli also saw Rome as a source for political theory instead of looking for answers regarding man's nature in the Bible or in narrow Church doctrine. Rather than ancient Greek theory, Machiavelli chose the Roman Livy's history for his guide to politics. In *The Prince*, his greatest work, Machiavelli describes how princes actually behave and how power is exercised and political control maintained in the real world. This was the beginning of political science without theological considerations. It was no mere coincidence that Machiavelli ended his book with a call for the reunification of Roman Italy. That plea was to echo down three hundred years to inspire Giuseppe Garibaldi and the men of the *Risorgimento* (the Resurgence of 1860).

That very same inspiration can be found in Dante and Petrarch. In his *Italia Mia*, Petrarch (1304–1374) proclaimed that the “*ancient valor in Italian hearts is not yet dead.*” Revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini was captivated by Rome, which he referred to as the “temple of humanity.” His goal was to establish a united Italy as a “Third Rome” that would emphasize its ancient spiritual values. Mazzini believed that Roman culture had made invaluable contributions to Italian and Western civilization and promoted the concept of *romanita*, the Roman ideal.

For Garibaldi, Rome was “*the dominant thought and inspiration of my whole life.*”

Italian Americans will remain in their “dark ages” until they unlock the true source of Italy's greatness. The cinema and even the Catholic Church have conspired to denigrate Italy's classical heritage, the envy of educated people the world over. Rome never fell. It lives every day in our Italian soul and the traditions that make us unique.

It was no mere coincidence that Machiavelli ended “The Prince” with a call for the reunification of Italy



this distinct lineage with anyone who eats rice and beans.

Political Correctness

To codify this sloppy nomenclature, most media franchises have what is called a Style Book. It's the reference used by all reporters and editors for consistency. I once jousting with the *New York Times* style book editor about the meaning of mafia vs. Mafia. We all know how that word has taken off in many directions. It has become interchangeable with any organized criminals – the Russian Mafia, the Irish Mafia, et.al. The *Times* editor explained that the unmodified noun, Mafia, only refers to organized crime in Sicily, but that mafia is a generic word. Notwithstanding, I later found his reporters using the capital M for crime stories dealing with Italian American criminals. There was a time when Italian American crime syndicates were labeled *La Cosa Nostra*. Now the word Mafia is back and it's pan-Italic.

Lots of Italian words have gotten out of our control through style books, beside Mafia and Latin. Fascist has become an all-purpose word even for religious fanatics, as in Islamo-Fascists. Gypsies are now called Roma. Talk about social climbing! The word Gypsy derived from Egypt even though Gypsies originated in India. Then, they were called Romany (from Romania). Now, they proudly carry the name of Italy's capital. Who got the better of that deal?

While the media and government are lifting all boats on the tide of political correctness, Italian Americans are still dragging anchor. What used to be called deviant behavior is now called alternate lifestyles. The term LGBT covers a variety of sexual lifestyles – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. Epithets like “fag,” “dyke,” and “hermaphrodite” have gone the way of crude ethnic slurs like “nigger,” “kike,” “spic,” and “chink.” However, there appears to be a renaissance of Italic slurs – “wop,” “dago,” and “guinea” – not just on the street but in mainstream media.

Most people are familiar with the term Guinea Red, meaning wine made by immigrant Italians at home. A salesman used the term to me recently and was shocked when I told him it offended me. Of course, in his “style book” it was a standard term of endearment.

Owners of a food truck in Saratoga, NY, recently went to court suing the state for revoking their license to serve customers at the famous racetrack. The state objects to the business name emblazoned on the side of the truck: *The Wandering Dago*. Of course, the owners of the truck are part Italian and insist that Dago is a proud reference to day labor (“work as the day goes”),



Most media “style books” lock in our vocabulary. Here, *Time Magazine* chooses Latino over Hispanic.

not an ethnic slur.

In Colorado a number of eateries list “wop-burgers” on their menus, referring to Italian topping like provolone cheese. When some Italian Americans objected to the term and were rebuffed by the owners, they reached out to local Congressman (at the time) Thomas Tancredo. To their shock, he defended the appellation as a wholesome word dating back to the old days. In fact, Tancredo doesn't mind being called a wop by friends. But the old days he was referring to included frequent lynching of immigrant Italian miners (“wops”) by Colorado natives. Forgive and forget, right?

More recently, CBS-TV has taken the low road by using the word wop in an episode of the hit sitcom *Mike & Molly*. Our Institute asked that the term be bleeped in reruns and syndication, but were put off by the Vice President of Diversity (yes, there is such a person) and ignored by CBS President Nina Tassler. In frustration, we reached out to two members of the CBS

Corporation Board, Joseph Califano and Frederic Salerno, both Italian Americans of unquestionable integrity. Board members at any corporation are there to insure the integrity and mission of the company. Thus far, neither gentleman has responded to us. Hopefully, they don't share Tancredo's affection for wopburgers. Just to see if these two Italic board members were discreetly working on our behalf, we caught a rerun of that *Mike & Molly* episode. It was unchanged. Wop was not bleeped or deleted. This is national broadcast television, not a small cable station. The *Mike & Molly Show* has an audience of some 10 million viewers and will grow with reruns and syndication.

Italians are not considered white in that part of the country

Lessons Learned

So what are we learning about how word games are played in America? It depends on who you are and who is in your corner. For Italian Americans, having one of their own in a position of

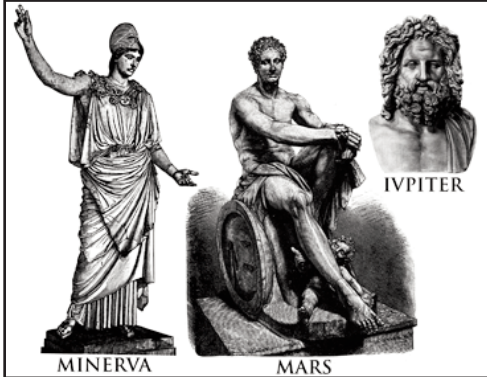
power or influence seems to be worth little. Assimilation means not having to treat your own people with the respect you give others. One can only wonder what rises or sinks to defamation in the eyes of prominent people like Tancredo and other *prominenti*.

There are more examples of how words are misused on Italian Americans. Only our criminals have “crime families.” Only our criminals have military titles like captain and soldier. Only we have rigid tables of organization with *dons*, *capos*, *consiglieri* and godfathers. Our murderers and thieves, it seems, have quite a knack for formality and rank according to the media and law enforcement. It's all the more amazing since most of these goodfellas never finished high school and certainly (Cont'd. on p. 32)



The Swerve (cont'd. from p. 17)

is he who has discovered the causes of things and has cast beneath his feet all fears, unavoidable fate, and the din of the devouring Underworld.”



Epicureans were atheists, but Lucretius hedged his bets. He believed the gods chose not to be involved in nature or human affairs.

Following the fall of Rome in the fifth century AD, an iron curtain of darkness, ignorance and superstition befell the West — and with the Dark Ages came the onrush of mass ignorance and the loss of *De Rerum Natura*. (One can detect a similar whiff of religiously

inspired fear and cultish insipidity in many of today’s evangelical Christian movements. Modern-day Islam is plagued with splintering fanatical sects whose most murderous adherents claim to be acting on direct orders from almighty Allah.)

And it took Poggio Bracciolini, a 15th century scholar, copyist, apostolic secretary and book hunter to rediscover Lucretius’ lost manuscript in 1417 (in Germany of all places!) that sparked an astounding revival of Italy’s seminal civilization, the Roman Empire. This “Renaissance” reintroduced the pragmatism, purpose, knowledge and majesty of Italian antiquity. Indeed, “the world became modern” because Bracciolini went back to the future.

Stephen Greenblatt avers that Lucretius provided the intellectual underpinning of — and the connecting bridge to — the scientific method of Galileo Galilei and the works of Petrarch, Giordano Bruno, Thomas Jefferson, Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein. (Einstein noted that it was the pioneering physics of another Italian genius, Enrico Fermi, that ushered in the power of the atom — an Epicurean concept explored

by Lucretius long before Jesus Christ bestrode the Earth.)

Moreover, in describing the milieu in which Lucretius crafted his pivotal poem, Greenblatt joyfully describes the literary culture and love of learning that was an intrinsic part of the Italic world: “Greek libraries had few amenities, but throughout their territories the Romans designed comfortable chairs and tables where readers could sit and slowly unfold the papyrus, the left hand rolling up each column after it was read.”

For book lovers, it gets even better: “The great architect Vitruvius — one of the ancient writers whose work Poggio recovered — advised that libraries should face the east, to catch the morning light and reduce the humidity that might damage books.”

Greenblatt also writes admiringly of ancient private (and public libraries) throughout Italy, noting that excavations in Pompeii — not to mention the Herculaneum dig that unearthed the actual remains of Lucretius’ work — “uncovered the plaques honoring the (library’s) donors, along with statuary, writing tablets, shelves to store papyrus rolls, numbered bookcases to hold the bound parchment volumes or codices.”

So that’s where the Riggio Bros. got their idea for Barnes & Noble!

Greenblatt’s discovery of Lucretius was as much a therapeutic pursuit as it was a scholarly one. In attempting to cope with his mother’s perennial hypochondria and fear of death, he seized on the provocative cover of his inexpensive copy of *On the Nature of Things* — what appeared to be two legs hovering over the Earth in “celestial coition”— and found a mission and a life-affirming solution.

Stephen Greenblatt’s book is a genuflection to humanism and a labor of intense love. With apologies to Rod Serling and Damon Knight, to “Swerve” man is to serve mankind.

It should be required reading for all Italians who embrace their classical heritage.



Holocaust (continued from p.21)

for 50 lire with a communal toilet). Each day, they checked in with the local police and each month they would pick up their stipends. In the same area were other foreign Jews, and Sabbath services were conducted in someone’s apartment. Eric’s mother fell in love with a fellow internee, an Italian gentile named Pietro Russo. Eric revered him as a father, not knowing the fate of his real father in Poland.

When Mussolini was deposed in 1943, German troops occupied the village demanding a list of all internees. The Italian officials never complied. Eric, his mother and the other Jewish refugees lived to see the Allies take control of southern Italy. Eric and his mother remained there after the war while Eric attended the University of Naples. In 1950, they immigrated to the United States with step-father Pietro.

Eric lost 80 of his Polish and Austrian relatives in the Holocaust. His father, as it turned out, had escaped Poland when the Germans invaded but was captured by the Soviets and sent to a concentration camp in Siberia, where he barely survived. Upon reuniting with Eric, he divorced his wife and settled in Israel.

Italy and the Holocaust is available for \$15 (\$25 for non-members) by mail to:

**Italic Institute of America,
PO Box 818, Floral Park, NY 11002
or
on our website at www.italic.org**



Jaws of Defeat (cont'd from p.15)

war against Axis partner Japan.

Why Did Italy Enter the War with Inferior Equipment?

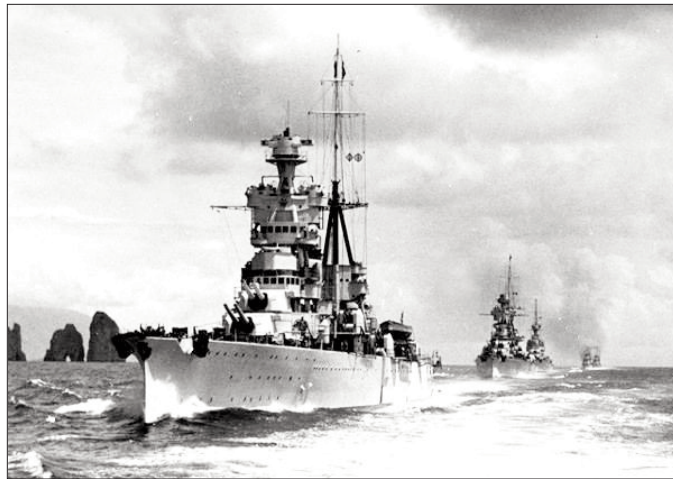
The Italian Army was substandard by any measure. It was armed for colonial wars with light tanks and WW I vintage artillery. But its navy was first class and its air force among the best. One of the major shortcomings was lack of radar technology, which gave the British a marked advantage in naval engagements and air attacks.

The British also had severe equipment shortages. But unlike the Italians, the Brits had an inexhaustible supply of armaments from the United States. The U.S. supplied Britain with 7,411 aircraft, 5,128 tanks, 4,932 anti-tank weapons, 4,000 machine guns, as well as ships and vast amounts of fuel and other supplies. There is hardly any record of Germany supplying the Italian Army, Navy or Air Force with anything significant other than coal and oil. The Germans had few extra armaments to give Italy and unlike the Brits, Italy had no Lend-Lease option. When Mussolini asked for tanks in Africa, he also got General Erwin Rommel and the German Afrika Korps to operate them. The Italians fought and died with mainly their own equipment in Africa, the USSR, and the Balkans.

What Value Was the Italian Navy?

The Italian Navy, operating subs for three years in the Atlantic, was responsible for some one million tons of Allied shipping sunk, about 134 vessels. (Paul Kennedy in *Engineers of Victory* notes that Japanese submarines sunk only 184 ships in four years, proportionally less than Italian sinkings in the Atlantic.)

In the Mediterranean, Italian merchant ships ran the suicide run to North Africa while the British knew their routes and schedules from breaking the German Enigma code. It is not clear if the Italian naval code was ever cracked but the Brits got what they needed from meticulous German informa-



The Italian Navy was one of the finest in the world, but it had no air arm or radar. Oil shortages restricted its activity. Its greatest liability, however, was German chatter deciphered by British intelligence.

tion. The Germans blamed an Italian admiral in Naples for the security leaks. Eventually, the Italian merchant fleet was annihilated and supplies had to be ferried by Italian warships and aircraft.

Also in the Med, Italian frogmen wreaked havoc in Alexandria Harbor, sinking two British battleships, a tanker, and destroyer in December, 1941. A British-Italian movie, *The Valiant*, was produced in 1962 depicting this heroic attack. At the other end of the Med, frogmen also sank British ships at Gibraltar, traversing the

channel in the dead of night from a disguised merchant ship in Morocco. All told, this sort of low-budget warfare, from Gibraltar to the Crimea, cost the Allies thirty ships. Winston Churchill called a secret emergency session of Parliament in 1942 to deal with the Mediterranean crisis in which he referred to the Italian frogmen's "extraordinary courage and ingenuity."

For those who want an unconventional British version of how effective the Italians were against British convoys in the Mediterranean, the book *Siege: Malta 1940-1943*, by Ernle Bradford would be a start. "The stories of cowardice carried in the British press, like all things else always in wartime, were designed for home consumption by civilians."

Weren't Italian Soldiers Demoralized?

Morale is a problem in every army, especially among draftees. Not every soldier buys into the idea that sacrificing his life helps the nation. Italian units ran the gamut from elite to half-baked. Morale also varied by training, equipment, and battle conditions. In the First World War, some 750 Italian soldiers were summarily shot to maintain discipline during the disaster at Caporetto. The French executed 600 of their troops in that war, the British 300. There were no such wholesale decimations by the Fascist government in the Second World War. The Germans reportedly shot 10,000 of their own. Stalin's decimations were notorious and a key factor in Soviet battle success. Even the United States famously shot Pvt. Eddie Slovik in 1945, the only one of 49 (Cont'd. on p. 30)

Italian subs in the Atlantic had a better proportional success rate than Japanese subs in the Pacific



The Italian Air Force suffered losses from the Spanish Civil War and poor industrial production. Italian pilots were excellent, but in the spirit of team work, the Fascists did not permit ace competitions.



condemned men executed for desertion during the conflict to maintain American discipline.

The stain of surrender looms large in public perceptions. When an Italian expeditionary

force was trapped by British Empire troops in the Egyptian-Libyan desert in 1940, Italians surrendered in the thousands, eventually 130,000. There are few places to hide in the Sahara and surrender or death is the only option when you have no vehicles or gasoline left to evacuate. As noted above, Italians were stuck with their own, often inferior, equipment against superior tanks and planes. Even the Germans were impressed by Italian units in their "sardine cans" attacking Sherman tanks.

We did an article on the "Art of Surrender" in issue XXXIII to put this subject into perspective. Needless to say, few victorious powers enjoy recounting their own demoralization and surrender, including the British at Tobruk (33,000) or Singapore (80,000), the USSR in 1941 (3 million), or the Germans in North Africa (70,000), or Americans at Kasserine (3,700) and the Battle of the Bulge (4,000). (In one official history, U.S. units that surrendered at Kasserine "went out of battalion control.")

As the war progressed and training improved, Italian units like the Ariete, Folgore, and Centauro Divisions could match any in the war in spite of inferior equipment. *"The sacrifice of the Ariete, Littorio and Trieste and the tough Folgore was gradually forgotten. Yet without them the Afrika Korps could not have garnered the laurels it had, survived at Alamein as long as it had, or escaped in the manner it did."* [El Alamein, Bryn Hammond]

In East Africa (Abyssinia, Eritrea, Somalia), even the British propagandists were hard-pressed to denigrate Italian troops. The siege of Keren, in 1941, lasted two months. *"Keren was as hard a soldiers' battle as was ever fought, and let it be said that nowhere in*



Eight months before Italy declared war on the United States, neutral America seized 28 Italian merchant ships and imprisoned their crews



The passenger liner Conte Biancamano was seized at the Panama Canal. It became the USS Hermitage in 1942, a troop transport, and returned to Italy in 1947.

The sacrifice of Italian troops allowed the Afrika Korps to garner laurels at El Alamein and escape capture

prisoners in World War II. For example, 33% of American prisoners died in the notorious Japanese camps. Russian prisoners in Germany suffered a 57.5% mortality. One belief is that Italian Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti, in asylum in Moscow, asked Stalin to annihilate his compatriots to foment revolution in Italy. People tend to forget that old-style Communists were as vicious as Nazis. After royal Italy switched sides in 1943, some 600,000 Italian troops were enslaved by the Germans. It is estimated that

50,000 of these former allies perished in German prison camps. [*Exorcising Hitler, Frederick Taylor]

When did Italian Troops Battle the Americans?

One of the amazing feats of historical revision has been exorcising Italy

from World War II. Recounting the North African campaign, for example, the word Axis is rarely used. It is invariably "Rommel" and the "Afrika Korps." Military maps generally use the swastika without the fasces to delineate frontlines and troop movements. Yet, two-thirds of the Rommel's forces were Italian. The British are loath to refer to their nearly three-year strug-

the war did the Germans fight more stubbornly than those (Italian) Savoia battalions, Alpini, Bersaglieri and Grenadiers.... except for the German parachute divisions in Italy and the Japanese in Burma no enemy with whom

the British and Indian troops were matched put up a finer fight than those Savoia battalions at Keren." [Eastern Epic, Compton Mackenzie]

With the loss of Africa and the invasion of Sicily in 1943, Italian morale was on the downhill slide and affected the military brass and government. Total collapse came after Mussolini's fall and Italy switched sides. The military was thrown into chaos.

A word must be said for the mortality rates of prisoners of war. Some have estimated that more Italians died in Soviet POW camps than Germans (84.5% vs 35.8%)*. In fact, this rate would be the highest mortality rate of all



gle with Italian adversaries except in humorous and degrading ways.

American troops first encountered Italians at the Kasserine Pass in February, 1943. Like the Brits, our American historians gloss over the Italians. The fact is Kasserine was an American disaster, its first defeat in the Western theater with 2,000 killed, 3,700 captured, and 300 tanks destroyed. It was Rommel's last planned battle in Africa and it began with an all-German attack against the Allied lines in Tunisia. When a break-through eluded them, the Germans called in the Italian Centauro Division. On February 20th, Col. Luigi Bonafatti's 5th Bersaglieri shock troops broke through the American lines. Bonafatti was killed in action. This is how Rommel described it: "...I have special praise for the 5th Bersaglieri, who attacked fiercely and whose commander fell during the attack; they threw the American, British and French forces out of the pass, allowing the II/86 and K.10 to exploit the break-through..."

By May, 1943, the Axis position in North Africa was hopeless and escape by sea was impossible. Rome and Berlin ordered a general surrender.

The Americans next fought the Italians in Sicily (July, 1943). Axis resistance cost the Allies some 20,000 killed and wounded in the 38-day battle. Axis forces were eventually cornered at Messina by generals Patton and Montgomery. Amazingly, the trapped Axis troops and equipment escaped to the mainland. Sicily was not a cakewalk. Americans were to first learn of "battle fatigue" when Gen. Patton slapped a demoralized soldier. Patton was relieved of command.

After the Italian Kingdom surrendered in Sept., 1943, Mussolini's Republican army fought the Allies until 1945. One notable engagement was the Monte Rosa Alpine Division's attack on the U.S. all-black 92nd Division (Buffalo Soldiers) in central Italy in December, 1944. The 92nd was "badly mauled" and was later withdrawn from the sector. In February 1945, the 92nd Infantry Division again came up against Republican units. This time it was Bersaglieri of the 1st Italian "Italia" Infantry Division. The Italians successfully blocked the American advance.

The Miracle of Messina

Much has been written of the "miracle" of Dunkirk in 1940. Over 338,000 British and French troops were rescued by small boats under the nose of Hitler's conquering army. Movies have been made, legends created, and speculation abounds as to why Hitler didn't do more to finish off his trapped enemies.

But who ever heard of the Axis escape from Sicily? British Official History called it "brilliantly successful." The Germans ferried nearly 40,000 troops, 47 tanks and 9,600 vehicles with supplies to mainland Italy. The Italians managed to escape with 70,000 troops, 41 artillery pieces, 227 vehicles with supplies, and even 14 mules. (The Germans confiscated the few Italian trucks when they arrived on the mainland.) When General Patton's forces finally captured Messina on August 17th,

the last evacuation ship had left just hours earlier. You will not see this in the iconic movie *Patton*.

Why did the Allies allow this massive escape when they had control of the air, land, and sea? Was it Allied incompetence, fear of Italian shore batteries on the mainland, or the rumor that the still intact Italian battle fleet was headed to the Straits of Messina? Perhaps all of the above, and maybe political reasons.

It should also be noted that Sicily was lost, in part, because the British had broken the German Enigma code. All the Italian defensive plans were learned by reading German communiques. Moreover, Italian General Alfredo Guzzoni had ordered both German divisions in Sicily to cover what was to be the actual Allied landing site. But trusting their own judgement the Germans split their divisions, allowing the Allies to gain the beachhead. Had Guzzoni been obeyed, and the Germans kept the secrets, the Allied landing might have been disastrous.



General Alfredo Guzzoni, Commander of Sicily, correctly predicted the Allied beach head. But the Germans ignored his defense plan.

Equipment & Industrial Failures

We can rightly wonder why the Italians were so technologically behind during the war. The lack of radar on its warships was astounding when we consider that inventor Guglielmo Marconi pioneered radio and microwave technology. He died in 1937 but Mussolini had provided him a laboratory ship, the *Electra*, during the 1930s. Rather, it was the British who saw the value in radar and brought it to perfection.

British radar often neutralized the powerful Italian navy and helped Britain counter the Italian air attacks of 1940-41. British radar tracked Italian bombers and fighters that crossed the Channel. This Italian "blitz" was short-lived and, according to British accounts, ineffective. Unlike the German blitz, the Italians targeted port installations not the London population. The primary reason the Italian Air Force was diverted from more vital fronts was a matter of revenge. Soon after Italy declared war on France and Britain in June, 1940, the Brits sent bombers to attack Italian industrial cities. One raid on June 12th accidentally bombed a residential neighborhood in Torino, killing fourteen civilians and wounding twenty children. Outraged by the attack on civilians, the Italians asked Germany for an airdrome in Belgium and dispatched a squadron to participate in the air war. British historians, if they mention the Italian effort at all, say it came out of

(Cont'd. on p. 32)

Sicily: The Allies learned of Italian defensive plans by reading German communiques



Jaws of Defeat (cont'd. from p.31)

Mussolini's bombastic need to show the Italian flag on every front. They neglect to mention the provocative Torino raid. As with every other front, the Brits dismiss the Italian air attacks as a humorous sideshow, of little consequence. (Was the morale-boosting Doolittle raid on Japan pointless?) They refer to the Italian use of antiquated biplanes to escort their bombers. Nevertheless, they concede that the biplanes (CR/42 *Falcons*) gave as good as they got. They also concede the courage of these daring pilots in fighting during the bitter winter in open cockpits against radar detection and the legendary Spitfires and Hurricanes.

Italy's Battle of Britain lasted only five months (October, 1940 – April, 1941) but it gave the embattled Italian people satisfaction in having avenged British bombings.

The full story of Italian military history in the 20th Century has yet to be told in the English-speaking world

Biplanes weren't used exclusively by Italians; the British had the Gladiator, not as good as the *Falcons* but it had an enclosed cockpit. By 1943, the Italians had developed the Macchi 205 *Veltro* (Greyhound) a fighter even envied by the Germans. Another, the SM-79 *Sparviero* proved to be one of the most (if not the most) successful torpedo bombers of the Second World War, claiming 72 Allied warships and 196 freighters.

To compensate for the lack of heavy tanks, the Italians developed a mobile 75-mm anti-tank gun called the *Semovente*. They were quite effective against Allied tanks in North Africa, Russia, and Sicily. However, like most of Italy's war effort, not enough of these weapons could be produced.

Reflections on Defeat

You can see that the full story of Italian military history in the 20th Century has yet to be told in the English-speaking world.

When historians talk of Italy's surrender in 1943 they are more correctly referring to the Kingdom of Italy (south of Rome). Fascist Italy (aka Italian Social Republic) fought on until May 1, 1945, even after Mussolini's summary execution by Communist partisans. General Rudolfo Graziani signed the surrender of his remaining 50,000-man army one day before the German Army in Italy. The German homeland surrendered on May 8th.

Italy was a great power in 1940. But she has lost that status today. She lost her empire and the Istrian peninsula, notwithstanding royal Italy's switch to the Allied side in 1943 and even after a massive lobbying campaign by Italian Americans. Little did she know that her ethnic prestige was also a fatality. Media mogul Ted Turner, quoted in the opening of this article is a real-

istic reflection of the typical American view of Italy's military history, whether as an ally or an enemy. It is sustained by history books, feature film libraries, and more current television documentaries.

Latino (cont'd. from p.27)

don't speak Italian. Much of this terminology was created from the Valachi Hearings of 1963 and the *Godfather* sagas. Since then, America prefers its Italian American criminals well organized, and real Italians unruly and disorganized. And we mustn't forget the civilian monikers of *guido* and *goombah*, again born within the Italian American community.

Some Italian Americans would be appalled were anyone to borrow these terms outside the community. There can be no Madoff Crime Family or a Mexican *goombah*. Likewise, among white Americans no one would consider Anglo as a multi-ethnic label. One might wince at seeing the racial mix of Boston Celtics or Notre Dame's Fighting Irish, but these are merely team names. The Amish may still call everyone else "the English," from colonial days. And even our immigrant grandparents called non-Italians "Mericans" as a point of reference.

Then, there's the world of white. The Census Bureau sees most European Americans as white. Actually, we are "non-Hispanic whites." What about white Hispanics? They're lumped with any Spanish-speaking peoples. Do you wonder how many white Hispanics choose not to check the Hispanic box on the census form? Probably a lot.



Would a media style book call these Americans kids in a Benetton ad "Anglos?" If they all speak English or live an American lifestyle, why not?

But even white is a loaded word. For many Americans, especially in the heartland, white means northern European. I learned that when my nephew married a Midwesterner of Scottish stock. She matter-of-factly stated that Italians were not considered white in that part of the country. In fact, even the word heartland connotes more than geography. Like the old "silent majority," it whispers white. At one time even the Irish were in their own category as "non-white" papists.

The point is most people take their proprietary ethnic tags seriously. But among Italian Americans there is little attachment to the word Latin. It has drifted so far away from us that the media, academia, and government have permanently assigned it to others. So, is Pope Francis a Latin (*Latino* in Spanish and Italian)? Yes he is! And more Latin than many of the people of South (or Ibero) America.





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