

CLASS AND ETHNICITY:  
DEITALIANIZATION AND THE ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS' STRUGGLE  
BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW

by

Yvonne Mattevi

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Art

in the

English

Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

May, 2002

Class and Ethnicity:

Deitalianization and the Italian Immigrants' Struggle Between the Old and the New.

Yvonne Mattevi

I hereby release this thesis to the public. I understand that this thesis will be made available from the Ohio LINK ETD Center and the Maag Library Circulation Desk for public access. I also authorize the University or other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.

Signature:

Yvonne Mattevi  
Yvonne Mattevi, Student

4/29/02  
Date

Approvals:

Sherry Lu Linkon  
Sherry Linkon, Advisor

4/29/02  
Date

Betty Greenway  
Betty Greenway, Advisor

4/29/02  
Date

Linda Strom  
Linda Strom, Advisor

4/29/02  
Date

Peter Kasvinsky  
Peter Kasvinsky, Dean of Graduate Studies

5/1/02  
Date

## Abstract

My thesis deals with ethnic and class issues; more specifically, it is about Italian identity and culture, and how it is strictly related to the working class. My point is that ethnicity often hinders upper mobility, so that deculturalization seems to be a necessary step for those who desire to improve their social status. As a matter of fact, those Italian immigrants who wanted to move up had to forget about their origins, mother tongue and tradition. This means that many Italian immigrants had to become American (Americanize themselves, or de-italianize themselves) to become rich and to be part of the middle class. Many Italian-American writers make this point in their novels, underlining the identity struggle that Italian working-class immigrants undergo, when they try to learn the English language and to become part of the American culture/identity.

Guido D'Agostino points out the Italian immigrants' drama and the problem of split identities in his book entitled *Olives on the Apple Tree* (1940), where he tells us about an Italian family that moves from the ghetto in the vain hope of becoming Americans by abandoning their Italian culture. Also contemporary writer Fred Gardaphé addresses this and many other topics regarding Italianness, in *Moustache Pete is Dead*, a collection of fictitious interviews to an Italian old-timer called Baffo Beppe. Both authors emphasize the need of appreciating our ethnic heritage and culture. We cannot forget where we come from, since it affects who we are today; however, it is impossible to keep living in the past, so we need to welcome the new and open our mind to what is different.

## Acknowledgements

This work has been possible thanks to the precious collaboration of some persons. My sincere gratitude goes to all of those who encouraged and helped me.

Especially, I would like to thank for her guidance and extreme patience Sherry Linkon, head of my thesis committee, who is also responsible for bringing to life my interest for this subject that has now become my passion and will be the focus of my future studies and research. My gratitude also goes to Fred Gardaphé for his encouragement, interest and politeness, and for sharing with me some ideas and some important notions written in his not yet published book.

I am also indebted to Linda Strom and Betty Greenway, members of my thesis committee, and Stephanie Tingley, whose course about visual art and literature inspired me to enrich my thesis with pictures, political cartoons and paintings.

For their inspiration, constant interest and help (especially with Italian/Neapolitan songs) I would also like to thank Mary Ann Keifer, as caring as a mother to me, Madeleine Amero, and Iole Checcone.

Many other people both in the English and Foreign Languages Departments deserve my gratitude for sharing their opinions and discuss matters with me: Steven Brown, James Schramer, Rebecca Barnhouse, William Greenway and Ndinzi Masagara.

For their support and encouragement my gratitude goes to Elena Bellina, with whom I had the luck to share the fate of being a student at YSU, and Tony Colaneri, who is a caring friend and helped me with his constant presence and assistance.

Then, even if not directly related to this work, my gratitude and love go to my parents Manuela and Gino, to my sisters Sabrina and Eleonora and to my brother Leonardo, who were always closed to me, even though physically so far away.

It remains to be stressed that all faults and shortcomings lie within the responsibility of the humble author.

**Table of Contents**

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. CHAPTER ONE: the American Mirage.....	6
3. CHAPTER TWO: the Working-Class Italian Immigrants and their Resistance to Change .....	15
4. CHAPTER THREE: Upward Mobility and Deitalianization .....	31
5. CHAPTER FOUR: the Solution: the Compromise .....	46
APPENDIX.....	55
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	75

## Introduction

This country has taken everything  
his health, his language  
the respect of his modern children  
the love of his angry wife.

in some forgotten lifetime  
he was a young, dark-haired man  
in a ship packed with young  
dark-haired men  
floating uncomfortably towards  
a dream they didn't want to bury  
with the still young bones  
of mothers and fathers  
among the ruins of a postwar Italy.

Gianna Partriarca "Dolce-Amaro"  
(in *A Semiotic of Ethnicity*, 102)

Class and ethnicity are closely linked and interdependent. As we read in *Literature, Class and Culture* "class is not only a matter of money and power," but also "a category of identity" (3), and our identity determines to what class we belong. In fact, some cultures have more connections to a certain social status than others, because they are historically associated to a particular job or field. After recognizing the existence of this reality, Joe Gallo coins the word "ethnicclass," which is a "subsociety ... created by the intersection of the vertical stratification of ethnicity, and the horizontal stratification of social class" (*Ethnic Alienation*, 196). Because of this strong relation, social mobility is often a cause of ethnic dimming or deculturalization. This general assumption is true for many ethnic groups that immigrated to the USA; integration, or Americanization, favors economic success and individual growth, but at the same time causes a loss in terms of values, identity and culture. My study of some Italian-American literature aims

to demonstrate how that Italian immigrants were often limited to the working-class sphere because of some strong aspects specific to Italian culture. So, trying not to stereotype the Italian culture, but admitting the weaknesses and the merits of the Italian culture, I analyze the many typically Italian characteristics that relate Italians to the working class, rather than the middle class. By doing this, I portray the miserable conditions of many Italian immigrants of the last century, who had to struggle to survive in a country where culture and values were extremely different. Many of these Italian immigrants never succeeded in integrating in the American society, but lived miserable lives in poor ghettos with precarious and poorly paid jobs. Those who did improve their social status and climbed the social ladder often had to give up their ethnic identity and forget about their past, and this demonstrates how “class is ... heavily inflected ... by ethnicity” (*Literature, Class and Culture*, 7). America offered Italian immigrants many opportunities but wanted them to adapt quickly to the new culture. This required a fast change, which was necessary to attain success, but involved an immediate loss of the old traditions and culture.

Many pieces of literature of the 20th century deal with problems of class and culture. The history of the Italian immigrants is faithfully recorded in many romances, novels, poems and other types of narratives, which are fictional but can be regarded as important realistic documents. By reading this literature we can better understand the Italian immigrants' adventure, their suffering, their hope and their struggle to become Americans through integration, but without entirely losing their cultural heritage. In my study, I will analyze and compare two literary works, which particularly deal with class and ethnicity: Guido D'Agostino's *Olives on the Apple Tree* (1940) and Fred Gardaphé's

*Moustache Pete is Dead* (1997). These two works realistically portray, in different forms and styles, the world of the Italian immigrants at two different historical moments.

In *Olives on the Apple Tree*, D'Agostino writes about the Italian immigrants' conditions at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The characters of his novel struggle to survive in a new country: some of them cannot give up the old ways, language and values, and for this reason live segregated in an all-Italian ghetto; others forgot and denied their origins and cultural heritage in order to become rich quickly. In this powerful novel, the contrast between the two attitudes is wonderfully portrayed, and the need for integration and change collides with the necessity to keep traditions and old good values. The Americanization process is presented as necessary but difficult, painful and dangerous, since it involves a loss of identity. The meaningful title of this novel expresses, with a lovely metaphor, the sense of inadequacy that the immigrants felt, when they moved to this country. Like olives trying to grow on a apple tree, they struggle to fit in an element they are not used to, feeling like 'pesci fuor d'acqua,' fish out of water. Even though the apple tree is strong, flourishing and fruitful, it is nearly impossible for an uprooted olive to get transplanted and grow on this new tree. It takes a very difficult and long operation of grafting to do it.

Fred Gardaphé's *Moustache Pete is Dead* is a collection of interviews with a fictitious character, Baffo Beppe, who represents all the Italian old timers. Moustache Pete enriches our knowledge about Italian immigration, by telling us about his life experience, his family and particularly his job. The last one is particularly important since "you can tell a lot about a people by the work they do" (21). In this collection of "oral histories of first generation Italian immigrants," Gardaphé illustrates "how hard those



people struggled to adapt to America,” and how “because of look or language they were discriminated against” (Preface, II). Gardaphé has a clear educational purpose, since, as he affirms in his Preface, the old timers are “who [we] come from” (IV), and can teach us a lot about our past. Moreover, he also wants to record the experience and wisdom of the Italian immigrants before it is too late, because “Pete’s generation will be gone” (III) soon, and we cannot forget that they are a treasure for us<sup>1</sup>. Gardaphé’s love for authenticity and truth is also reflected by the language used by his character throughout the book. In a notable linguistic effort, Gardaphé uses a colorful, rich and complex language, Italenglish, where syntax, grammar and pronunciation of two languages are mixed together. Gardaphé’s work confirms, supports and reactualizes what D’Agostino affirmed half a century before him, demonstrating in this way that many issues still exist nowadays, and for this reason still need to be addressed, discussed and studied.

So, after a brief historical introduction (Chapter 1) about Italian immigration, I analyze and compare D’Agostino and Gardaphé’s works. In Chapter 2, I portray the miserable situation of those immigrants who could not integrate in the American system, and remained trapped in the working-class sphere. I also tried to find out what typically Italian cultural characteristics favor their lack of social mobility. Many immigrants do not even take into consideration the possibility of moving up, since they are discouraged by the many discriminations and injustices they face. Because of this lack of self-confidence, they believe in a sort of ethnic predeterminism, and think Italian immigrants are meant to work hard for little money. In Chapter 3, I analyze the situation of those immigrants who did succeed in improving their social status, but had to renounce their ethnic identity and

---

<sup>1</sup> The inevitable and sad loss of the old Italians, with their wisdom and their experience, is also denounced by Lawrence Ferlinghetti in his long poem “The Old Italians Dying.” See **Doc 1** in the appendix to read Ferlinghetti’s poem.

their old values. The change affects in a diverse way the different generations of immigrants. Those who were born in Italy resent the loss of their heritage, while those who are born in America want to be considered Americans, refuse and deny their Italian origins and are ashamed of them. In Chapter 4, I present a brief solution to the problem, the attempt to find a compromise, and an invitation for open-mindedness. The old values should survive, and the traditions should be always remembered, but American culture presents many different but positive aspects that should be welcomed, accepted and embraced. New generations above all should be taught respect for the old timers, who are the origin and the base of what we are today, and no one should ever be ashamed of his/her ethnic provenience. In my conclusion, I try to reactualize the issues of class and ethnic identity in contemporary America; and I also discuss how Italianness is today considered and viewed in America.

**Chapter 1: the American Mirage:** brief historical and sociological survey about Italian Immigration to the U.S.

<b>Apolide</b>	<b>Without a country</b>
Una volta sola	One time only
terra madre	mother land
ti ho tradito	I betrayed you
lasciandoti	leaving
ogni istante	each instant
terra matrigna	foreign land
ti tradisco	I betray you
restando	staying

Giuglia Minuccio  
Originally published in  
*Spazio/Space* (1992)<sup>2</sup>



<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAEItaly.htm>

**Italian family arriving in New York in 1905.**

<sup>2</sup> In D'Acerno, Pellegrino (Ed.), *The Italian American Heritage*, London and New York, Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999, page 81.

Italy is a land of emigrants. For historical, sociological and above all economical reasons, Italian people left their home country and ventured all over the world in search of fortune. In *From Immigrants to Ethnics*, Humbert S. Nelli defines Italy as “the land of La Miseria... a poverty-stricken land whose only major natural resource was people” (19). However, even “overpopulation constituted a fundamental and chronic problem in Italy” (19). For Italian immigrants, America was one of the most quoted and desired goals, and welcomed many of them. “Initially, most emigrants hailed from the Northern Italy. However, as time passed, the south become the place of origin for most emigrants” (*Causes of Italian Mass Emigration* 1). At the same time, rapidly growing America needed workers, and using a convincing political propaganda, invited more immigrants to leave their country to find a better life. Of course, the welcoming atmosphere portrayed in the political cartoons was not real; many Italian immigrants found a bitter surprise at their arrivals. No gold-paved roads were waiting for them, but miserable ghettos and hard and dirty jobs. Soon enough, the Americans’ attitude changed, and the immigrants were forced to face racism, persecution and discrimination in addition to poverty and fatigue. The new political cartoons<sup>3</sup> of the time changed into aggressive invectives against those who were not WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants).

The first wave of Italian immigrants arrived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As S. Mondello and L. Iorizzo say, they were explorers, “artists, musicians, courtiers, writers, teachers, merchants, skilled workers, and physicians [who] were accustomed to migrating into Northern-Europe in search of a better life. The more venturesome among them were not reluctant to try their fortunes in the struggling new colonies across the Atlantic” (*The Italian-Americans* 9). This was not a significant influx, and it was followed, throughout

---

<sup>3</sup> See Doc 3 – Doc 14 in the Appendix.

the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by another minor wave mainly constituted by “Italian missionaries [who] assisted in building over thirty churches in twenty years and establishing colleges, seminaries, academies, convents, an orphan asylum, a hospital etc” (*The Italian-Americans* 11). So, we can say that, “the early Italian experience in America is essentially that of a handful of prominent and successful individuals” (*From Immigrants to Ethnic* 8). As S. Mondello and L. Iorizzo point out in *The Italian-Americans*, at the change of the century (1700/1800), “political suppression in Europe caused many Italian intellectuals and revolutionaries to seek for refuge in the United States” (12), so that a greater number of Italians, mainly from the North, came to the USA. One of the prominent political exiles was Filippo Mazzei, friend of Thomas Jefferson: “Like Mazzei, settlers in the colonial period generally came from Northern Italy. This pattern continued in the decades between the Revolution and the 1880s” (*From Immigrants to Ethnic*, 16). In the nineteenth century, “hundreds of political exiles [were forced to leave] the Italian peninsula by disturbances which accompanied the movement for national independence ... among the most important were Garibaldi, Marconcelli, Italian patriot” (12).

However, there was little Italian emigration to the United States before 1870. At the end of the nineteenth century, “Italy was... one of the most overcrowded countries in Europe and many began to consider the possibility of leaving Italy to escape low wages and high taxes. Most of these immigrants were from rural communities with very little education” (Italian Immigration: web page). So, this second wave was massive and affected mainly Central and Southern Italy. These immigrants left Italy because of the economic situation rather than the political one. As Linda Magnusson underlines in *Causes of the Italian Mass Emigration*,

it is known that the standard of living became worse in the whole of Italy between 1870 and 1900, especially in the countryside. Disease and starvation were the main causes of migration. Food became the biggest cost for an Italian family ... the agricultural system of Italy was not modernized, and there was little hope of improving the situation ... another important factor in the emigration of Italians, was the agricultural crisis that Italy suffered in the 1880s. During this time, Italian agriculture was hurt by the increasing amount of products from America that invaded Italian markets (1-2).

This is why, "by the year 1871, 400,000 Italians had migrated, but this number was to be increased. In the 1870s, 20,000 Italians emigrated per year. But, people attracted by the promise of successful lives in America came to form a mass emigration with 205,000 emigrants a year by 1888. In 1891, as much as 1.5 million Italians lived abroad in the hope of successful futures. And many more continued to arrive in the land of many promises" (1). Generally speaking, the Italian immigrants did not come with the intention to stay; this is demonstrated by the fact that many men first came alone, leaving their families behind. Most actually planned to return once they had built up some capital, but then the majority decided to stay, and asked their families to join them in America. Italian immigration reached its peak during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>.

In the very same period, America was promoting immigration, by encouraging immigrants from all over the world to come to the U.S. In this flourishing country, economic growth demanded more and more workers, so that many political cartoons attempted to attract immigrants with false promises.

---

<sup>4</sup> see tables (Doc 2) in the Appendix to check how the number of Italian immigrants increased from the 1850s to the 1960s, and to see their distribution in the U.S.A.



**Originally Published:** November 22, 1869

**Artist:** Thomas Nast

<http://www.harpweek.com/09Cartoon/BrowseByDateCartoon.asp?Year=2002&Month=November&Date=22>

As we can see in the cartoon entitled “Uncle Sam’s Thanksgiving Dinner,”<sup>5</sup> immigrants were invited to join the American wealth. American people are depicted as generous and friendly, and the immigrants are allowed to sit at the same table with them. In the background, a painting with the word ‘welcome’ emphasizes the positive and friendly atmosphere. Moreover, if we take a close look at the bottom corners of cartoon, we can read the words “come one, come all” on the left side, and “free and equal” on the right side. These words had a positive encouraging effect on the many European immigrants, and helped to create a mythical image of America as a free, rich and welcoming country. As we can see, every race and ethnic group is sitting at the table with no distinction, and everybody seems to be comfortable with each other, so that racism is not part of this optimistic picture. Equality and justice are guaranteed by the three presidents on the back wall, and by the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment that is inscribed on the ribbon

<sup>5</sup> see Appendix for more examples of political cartoons (Doc 3- Doc 8).

above the presidents. The picture invites immigrants to come to a country where they will be welcome, they will be treated equally and with justice, and where nobody will ever discriminate against them for their different ethnic origins. Because of this, America became a mirage for Italian emigrants, who chose it as their first destination; as Gallo points out in *Old Bread, New Wine*, “the movement to destinations other than the United States during these years became clearer when we consider the fact that the United States absorbed only 17 percent (687,284) of all Italians who emigrated from Italy between 1885 and 1900. The remaining 4,100,415 went to other places. Between 1901 and 1906, the United States received 38.1 percent of all Italian immigrants. The figure was to increase to 39 percent or 1,975,511 people, between 1904 and 1914 ... the flood of immigrants from the Italy constituted one of the great voluntary movements of people in history” (14).

Unfortunately, the reality did not live up to the myth. Italian Immigrants found a hard situation waiting for them. Many of them found discrimination, and nearly all of them initially ended up in ghettos and worked hard for a low wage. In *The Story of the Italians in America*, Michael Musmanno denounces the fact that Italians were particularly discriminated against because of some strong physical and cultural characteristics.

Interesting enough, one of the preconceived ideas linked them to the working class. This happened because of the belief that they could only do hard and dirty jobs:

those who hired Italians on the assumption that they possessed no skill beyond that of performing manual labor not only committed an injustice against the immigrant but also unwittingly deprived themselves of profitable returns which could be theirs. A little inquiry would have revealed to them that the employees they are treating so shabbily were persons endowed with profound intelligence, acute perceptions, and occupational abilities (113).



This is why at the beginning, Italian immigrants were trapped in the working class, and little hope to improve was left for them. In fact, “the Italians were mostly miners, agricultural laborers, [and] fisherman” (*The Italian-Americans*, 13). Moreover, “willing to work long hours and for low wages, the Italians now began to rival with the Irish for much of the unskilled work available in the industrial areas. This sometimes led to hostilities breaking between the two groups of workers. The Italians were also recruited into the garment industry and ... replaced the Jews as the main group in the sweated trades” (Italian Immigrants: web page, 1).

Discrimination existed because many WASP-Americans forgot that they were the descendants of immigrants, too. As Musmanno says, it “is difficult to understand [how] large numbers of people in America forgot that they themselves had once been immigrants, and they looked with jaundiced eye at those who had succeeded them in the Atlantic ferry. The Monday pioneers scoffed at Tuesday’s arrivals” (97).

<http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/imageapplication/Images.cfm?Major=IM&Minor=F>



Roland's Notes about this image	Puck cartoon of shadow of immigrant origins looming over restrictionist American plutocrats.
Citation	<i>American Heritage, American People, p. 248.</i>

As this Puck cartoon shows, the immigrants were not welcomed by the rich American people who felt their safety was threatened by the growing number of immigrants<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, the many cultural, linguistic and religious differences lead to racism and ethnic discrimination among the wealthy Americans, who had forgotten the fact that their ancestors had the same humble origins. By looking at the shadows behind the five restrictionists, we can see that their ancestors were members of the working class. This general attitude toward immigrants was particularly worsened when speaking about Italians, since they “developed a reputation for becoming criminals” (Italian Immigration: web page, 1). For example, “prejudice against Italians and anarchists contributed to the

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix for more anti-immigration cartoons (Doc 9 –Doc 14).

false conviction of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in 1921” (Italian Immigration: web page, 1). In *Old bread, New Wine*, Patrick J. Gallo confirms that “during the Red Scares, Italian Radicals were a special target. Many were imprisoned and deported ... two victims of this repression were Nicol[a] Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti” (105).

So, the myth of America was just a mirage after all, and the life of Italian immigrants in the New World was not as wonderful as they had dreamed it before leaving Italy. However, in America, many immigrants found economic independence and freedom, and this kept the flux of Italian immigrants open up to present time. “An investigation carried out in 1978 revealed that since 1820 over 5,294, 000 people emigrated to the United States from Italy. This amounted to 20.9 per cent of the total foreign immigration during this period” (Italian Immigration: web page, 1).

## Chapter 2: the working-class Italians and their resistance to change.

for my father  
 the dream ended early  
 when his knees were crushed  
 by the weight of steel  
 along some railroad line  
 he was thirty-one there  
 was no insurance then  
 and little interest  
 for the benefits of the immigrant man.

he bends easily at fifty-seven  
 walks with a cane  
 rarely opens his lifeless eyes

the government sends  
 him fifty-one dollars a month  
 in recognition.

Gianna Patriarca, "Dolce-Amaro"  
 (in Gianna Patriarca's " 'Tragic' Thought",  
 in *A Semiotic of Ethnicity*, 103).

America was a mirage and a mythical place for many European people, who were forced to leave their country both for political and economic reasons. Millions came from Italy looking for work and freedom in the country where every dream could become true. But was the reality up to the myth? Unfortunately it was not, and many immigrants immediately became aware of the fact that the America they had heard about was just a mirage, and were soon forced to face a hard reality. In fact, generally speaking Italian immigrants in America were often relegated to a humble social status and tightly linked and limited to the working class<sup>7</sup>. Their miserable situation was surely hardened by racism, prejudice and lack of justice, but also by their own cultural and linguistic limits. In fact, Italians tended to isolate themselves in all-Italian ghettos, where they could keep

<sup>7</sup> See table (Doc 15) in the appendix, which analyzes the Italians work conditions.

speaking their language and following the Italian traditions and values. The love for their culture closed them to change and to progress, so that Italians had a hard time finding their way up the social ladder. Moreover, there was a sort of pride for the average Italian in doing a physical job; a pride that hindered even the future generations, which had to struggle to gain their way out and to become part of the American system.

Twentieth century Italian-American literature deals with many of these problems and underlines how the tricky representation of America attracted to this country a great number of people, who then faced a deceitful reality. In D'Agostino's *Olives on the Apple Tree*, Marco, one of the protagonists, remembers how those emigrants who went back to Italy to see their family described America: "The people who came back and could not stay more than a little while. The money here. The land for everybody. I got drunk with America. New People. From every place in the world, helping to make this country grow. It made my head go around, the idea of America" (162). So, America is pinned down as a wonderful and fascinating country, where everybody can find richness and happiness; but the reality is different. As old-timer Pete narrates in Gardaphé's *Moustache Pete is Dead* (1997), some "paesani signed away the best years of they life for a chance to come over to the freedom and work that America was promising. And when we get over here, all we find is a lot of work for a little money ... we knew that we had become the new slaves" (20). In fact, the jobs for the Italian immigrants were often the hardest, the dirtiest and most mortifying ones, and left the workers little dignity and nearly no economic reward. No wonder that many of them were very homesick and could

not help dreaming of going back to Italy; the immigrant's songs are a clear testament of this nostalgia<sup>8</sup>.

In *Olives on the Apple Tree*, D'Agostino describes the group of Italian immigrants as miserable, poor and dirty, and underlines how the rich people from the village stereotype all of them as ignorant, violent and lazy. In the very first page of the novel, we immediately find a strong sense of superiority in those who live in the village and are wealthy. In particular, the Gardellas, a recently enriched Italian-American family, are proud of having moved away from the hill, where Italian people live. The mother of the family, Giustina, is the one who "saved her own family," when she decided that "they were not going to live with poor Italians on Wop-Roost, but right down in the center of things where there was a chance to take advantage of opportunity and share in the prosperity of the New World" (1). In a colorful paragraph, D'Agostino describes the people living in the Italian neighborhood; their shabby clothes and their hungry look witness their poverty and lack of cleanliness:

The hunters of Wop-Roost had gathered outside Giuseppe's shack to talk over plans for the day. There was Luca with his spaghetti belly buckling and unbuckling his belt. Vincenzo, lean and hungry looking, like a pair of stilts with boots on. Beppo wiping his nose on the frayed cuff of his hunting coat with the dark bloodstains all over it. Tony sucking the end of a corn cob and grinning the grin of a chimpanzee. Giuseppe, small, delicate in build and with the worry always on his face. Marco, tall, healthy and smiling, dressed in clothes loaned him by Nick (*Olives* 92).

Fred Gardaphé underlines the poverty of the Italian immigrants and the effects that their difficult life and hard job have on their physical appearance, but he also points out that "if you work inna dirt the grease anna mud, you be a greaseball too" (*Moustache Pete* 4).

<sup>8</sup> See the napolitan songs "Vurria" and "Lacreme napulitane" in the appendidx (Doc 16 and Doc 17).

The majority of the Italians do not live in the village with the rest of the people, but they created a ghetto, depreciatively called Wop-Roost, where they stay segregated with their numerous families. A long paragraph is also dedicated to the description of the Italian village, which reveals a symbiotic relationship between the immigrants and the place where they live, and underlines the miserable conditions of both:

The shacks of Wop-Roost reached out in irregular pattern ... The large shacks and the small shacks, most of them covered with tar paper held in place by lathing strips evenly spaced in a series of vertical lines as if patient for the plasterer's trowl and the stucco which never seemed to arrive. But there was life, and sound, and movement, an air of living in this little hilltop community of his own people. Here and there the yellow smoke of a rekindled fire in the cookstove curled lazily upward. From a crude shelter adjacent to each dwelling came the cackling of chickens, the bleating of goats and the grunting of hungry pigs. A door opened and a bucket of water sloshed out, leaving a dark stain across the bright surface of the snow. A baby started to wail and a dog barked. An angry masculine voice shouted something in Italian. It was the beginning of a new day in Wop-Roost.  
(*Olives* 37)

Even though this description shows the colorfulness and liveliness of the Italian neighborhood, it mainly denounces both the bad conditions of the Italian immigrants and their responsibility for it, i.e. their lack of cleanliness and order.

Unfortunately, because of the miserable conditions of the Italian neighborhood, and because of their lack of cleanliness, Italians are often stereotyped as dirty and lazy, the second one being supported and aggravated by the fact that the Italian group does not work with constancy and responsibility. Unfortunately, the Italians of Wop-Roost do not have regular and reassuring jobs, but live day-by-day, hoping to find something to do. This precarious condition was common to many Italian immigrants, who were for this reason labeled as 'dagoes'; this derogatory term derives from the expression 'day goes,' since they were paid as the day goes by, i.e. daily rather than weekly or monthly. In *Moustache Pete is Dead*, Gardaphé makes an intelligent use of an Italian popular saying

to demonstrate the precarious nature of the immigrants' jobs: "Viene inverno, va via lavoro", i.e. "when winter come, the job she go" (*Moustache Pete* 27). And this confirms how in certain periods of the year, Italian immigrants were reduced to misery, because of the lack of jobs. As Humbert S. Nelli explains in *From Immigrants to Ethnics: the Italian American*, the Italians' lack of immediate success in the USA was also due to the fact that they underwent the negative effects of the "the depression years" and of the many "cyclical oscillations of employment" (45).

However, in *Olives on the Apple Tree*, the real problem seems to be that Italians cannot be trusted by their employers, since as soon as they have enough money to eat, they stop working. They do not realize that with more constancy, they could make more money, save something and better their precarious living conditions. For example, Giuseppe and Tony look for Luca to go and finish a job for Mr. Gardella, but they find out that "Luca no work today. He go hunt rabbits with Beppo" (42). Giuseppe criticizes Luca's irresponsible behavior, but Tony justifies him, since Luca "has plenty to eat-plenty macaroni and plenty of wine. He no have to worry for the kids" (43). He himself admits that "if was no for the hunt [he] be rich man like Federico [Gardella]. But when come the frost and the leaves fall down and the dog he no can sit quiet no more, what [he] care for the money?" (69). This attitude can be justified by the fact that for the Italian immigrants the hunt is the only possible evasion from their hard reality: "only the hunt make you forget. The nice dog what you have train youself. The friends. The wine. Then you no worry too much. Is this keep the poor bastich Italiano alive" (97). But this attitude may be an obstacle to their upward mobility; to be satisfied with little can be an art of



necessity, but when life offers you the possibility to improve and you do not take advantage of it, that is lack of ambition.

But D'Agostino then makes a very important point. The Italians' laziness and lack of constancy in their jobs is partly justified by the fact that their jobs do not satisfy and reward them. In fact, the mortifying jobs that they are forced to take do not correspond to what they are naturally inclined to do. For this reason, they cannot get involved with and be passionate about what they are doing. First of all, there were only heavy, frustrating and humiliating jobs for Italian people; as Federico Gardella says, when it "comes work for the pick and the shovel, is belong the Italiani up on the hill" (*Olives* 46). Unfortunately, they have to accept every job, just because "the Italiani have the stomach and they must eat too" (*Olives* 46). But the truth is that Italian people's work is wasted in this way, since they are farmers and they cannot be happy working in factories or in any other American business. This is also confirmed by Pete in Gardaphè's *Moustache Pete is Dead*, where the old-timer tells us the frustration caused by his first job in America; he exclaims:

when I start to work diggin a ditch I wasa ready to go back to where I come from. I did work in my life that seven hours could not do. Now doan get me wrong. I don't mind digging, but in Italy I use to dig the land to plant live things: plants and flowers that some day grow to feed and make a man happy. What I wasa plantin wasa dead things: made of crushed stone and dirt. Was no good way to keep a man like me happy ... Felt like I was a slave makin pyramids or something" (*Moustache Pete* 3).

Here again, the productivity and the vitality of the Italian jobs are opposed to the sterility of the American ones.

So, it seems that the Italians' farming origins are an obstacle to the fulfillment of the Italian immigrants in America, since America offers them different kinds of jobs that are not good for them. Marco is aware of this: "Italians are peasants, men of the ground, and they need the ground to make their life full. It is not the pick and shovel, or the digging wells, or selling ice, or the day of work at anything that will make them happy. They need the earth to turn and the things to grow and the feeling inside they are doing what they were meant to do, and what their fathers did, and the fathers before that. It is not possible to throw everything away in the time of one life and have a satisfied man" (*Olives* 165). So, the social limits of Italian immigrants were often determined by the inappropriateness of their jobs, which could not get them passionate about what they were doing. This important point is once more made by Iorizzo and Mondello in *The Italian-Americans* (1971), where they explain the fact that "the sad experience to which these transplanted farmers were exposed in the city, though reflecting the social and economic diseases endemic to industrial society, more often suggested a misuse of talent" (109).

Marco is aware of this important detail, because he himself underwent an experience of failure and frustration due to his first humiliating jobs in America. In a long tirade, Marco describes his negative experience:

"Do you know on what I worked when I first came here? Was a fellow said to me, 'You want to make money? Okay, you make money like me – shine shoes.' For six months I lived with him in one room with his family in the city with the houses one of the top on the other and every day I shine shoes for him in his place. Me, shine shoes! Me, who when I was just a little kid I helped my brothers in the vineyards. Me, who comes from a family where the land and the work of the land is in the blood from the time before anybody knows ... I told it go to hell before I starved. I found somebody knows my family from a long time. In the dress business he was, with a big car and plenty of money. So I go to work in the dress business ... I was moving. But I could not make more then ten dollars. How can I live with ten dollars? ... I worked on the sewing machine! Not me alone. Maybe twenty men just like me and we worked in a line with the women, on the sewing machine. Big fellows! Good for the field and the hard work ... I thought I would go crazy or kill somebody" (*Olives* 30).

In his angry outburst, Marco denounces the waste of energy, ability and talent that occurs when a farmer mortifies himself in a factory. Then, he concludes by underlining why farming is a superior job: "Farming is not a business. It is like a profession. A man does not kill himself on the soil because he thinks he is going to get rich. It is because he loves the ground and from the ground come everything that will keep him alive and happy" (*Olives* 33). This also reveals that the real goal of the Italian immigrants should not be to become wealthy, but rather to seek serenity and happiness. As Gardaphé says in his unpublished essay "The Consequences of Class in Italian/American Culture," for Italian immigrants "work ... never becomes solely a means of transforming self from one class to another, but a way of making meaning out of life" (101). Moreover, the importance of farming and of owning land is underlined by many Italian sayings; Mary Jo Bona gives us a good example in her book entitled *Claiming a Tradition*: "con un pezzo di terra mai si dispera (with a piece of land, one never despairs)" (48).

The poor and miserable conditions of the Italian immigrants are cause of an oppressive sense of inferiority, which could be defined as ethnic fatalism. This is strictly connected to their social status, since "to be without work is to be without clothes ... there is no dignity in a naked man. An a man without job is like a naked man" (*Moustache Pete* 28). In *Olives on the Apple Tree*, prior to Marco's arrival, the Italians of Wop-Roost had a deterministic vision of their status; they had no ambitions and did not believe in the possibility of changing. For example, when Marco proposes to call the police to do justice after a hunting accident in which Doctor Emilio Gardella and his friends kill a deer without license, many Italians are frightened and refuse to participate to this brave act. As Vincenzo points out, "The Italiano no can fight with the people down

below [rich people from the village, like the Gardella family]" (*Olives* 110), showing a sort of ethnic preconceived idea. As a matter of fact, there is the belief that being Italian is like having "poison in [your] blood" (*Olives* 71). But Marco tries to teach self-respect to his new friends, and explains that "it is not because he [Emilio] is a doctor that he can treat the Italians like dirt" (*Olives* 158), and he points out the fact that even poor Italians have their rights, and should not let richer people take advantage of them. Thanks to Marco's help, Beppo, one of the Italians of Wop-Roost, understands that he does not have to feel inferior to anybody, and exclaims: "The wop, Italiano on the hill! ...Salamangonia, we are good like anybody else" (*Olives* 149).

In spite of Marco's positive influence, the Italians' pessimistic view of themselves persists, increased by the heavy and offensive criticisms of wealthy people, who call them many names. The following stanza, from Maria Gillan's poem "The Crow," demonstrates how insults and racist comments mined the Italian self-respect and self-esteem for years:

In our eras,  
a voice,  
connected to us like a cord,  
whispers  
you aren't really very much  
you guinea, you wop,  
so we struggle  
to blot out the sound of the crow

(qtd in Gardaphè, *Dagoes Read* 44)

In *Olives on the Apple Tree*, many derogatory names are used to define the Italian immigrants: "Wops" (5), "greenhorns" (6), "wop, greenhorn, pastafasool" (29), "spaghet" (65) "guinea"(258), "grease ball" (120), "Eyetalians" (121), "paesanos" (169), and "dago" (262). The worst thing is that often Dr. Emilio, who has Italian origins himself,

but denies them, uses these appellatives. Marco is deeply offended by Emilio's prepotency, and underlines how hypocritical he is: "When the fellow who thinks he is American calls you a wop you look at him right in face and tell him to go to hell. When an Italian calls you a wop you spit on him." (*Olives* 142). As Gardaphé points out through his character, these derogatory names were highly offensive, and often the Italian immigrants were not able to defend themselves because of their linguistic limits. In fact, Baffo Beppe says: "they used to call me all kind of names; Dago, wop, guinea, greaseball, meatball, spaghetti bender. Wasa hard thing to listen to those names, why sometime I get mad and punch, but mostly I just smile and pretend I don't hear nothing" (*Moustache Pete* 4). But, when he "learn a little how to talk 'merican," he stated answering back and say "I'm the dago; you the wop. I eat spaghetti; you eat slop" (*Moustache Pete* 4). This confirms that it is "a hard job when you no speak the language and you wan respect" (*Moustache Pete* 6).

The life of the Italian immigrants is further hardened by injustice and prejudice. In fact, because of the common belief that "Italian crime was a product of the social customs which the immigrants brought to the new World" (*The Italian-American*, 159), Italian people are often accused of every illegal act, even though there is no proof. As Moustache Pete found out as soon as he arrived to the USA, "Mista policeman" thinks that all "dagoes carry knives and make trouble" (3). The lack of justice is particularly evident in an episode that Pete remembers with anguish; "long time ago, I think was in New Orleans, they lynch thirteen paesani and some places when they have problem they pick on the Italians, like wid Sacco an Vanzetti<sup>9</sup>. Hey, look at me. When I get a few days of sun on my skin ... I don't look like I'mma white. And back in the old days you can bet

nobody take me for white" (8). In *Olives on the Apple Tree*, the policeman, called by Emilio to denounce the Italian people for the hunting accident that he himself provoked, affirms: "I get a lot of complaints about those Eytalians hunting out of season but never I yet caught them with a damn thing" (121). By saying this, he demonstrates that evidence is not necessary when talking about Italian people. The "injustice suffered by [Italian] people" inspired the Italian-American poet Tusiani, who dedicated many poems, collected in *Gente Mia and Other Poems*, "to assure that their sacrifice will not be forgotten"; in his long poem "Song of the Bicentennial", Tusiani defines the Italian immigrants as "humble and innocent and yet outcast" (quoted in *From the Margin* 323). So, the immigrants' already frustrating living conditions were aggravated not only by poverty and loneliness, but also by racism and injustice.

This is perhaps the reason why the Italian immigrant is often portrayed as a suffering martyr, or even as a crucified man. This association can be found in both the Neapolitan songs analyzed in the appendix, "Vurria" and "Lacreme Napulitane", and also in Fasanella's paintings. Here we can see "Iceman Crucified", but the same theme is portrayed in a detail of "Family Supper" by the same author<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> See **Doc 18** in the appendix for Fasanella's "Family Supper".

"Iceman Crucified", 1958

by Ralph Fasanella (1914-97)

NYS Historical Association, Cooperstown, NY



<http://www.nyhistory.org/fasanella/>

Many other problems related to Italian ethnicity continue to weigh on the Italian immigrants' image and on their lack of success as a group. One of these, denounced by D'Agostino in *Olives on the Apple Tree*, is an apparently innate violence that contributes to the persistence of their miserable status. The Italian violence is portrayed as an explosive rage, often connected to the notion of honor. When Dr. Emilio decides to go

out with beautiful Angelina, Giuseppe's daughter, he forgets that he is dealing with a culture that does not allow clandestine relationships. Warned by his sister Elena about the danger of being forced to marry the Italian girl by her family, Emilio exclaims: "That's in the story books. That was in Sicily a hundred years ago. Wake up, girlie! This is the good old U.S. You don't knife a man because he necks your daughter' (*Olives* 35). But when Emilio underestimates the problem and refuses to marry the girl, he soon finds himself in trouble. Both Angelina's angry father and uncle decide to convince him to marry her, or they will rope him into "a shotgun wedding" (*Olives* 262). Once again, Marco's opinion is the voice of reason; in fact, he tries to convince the two men that it is not "with the gun that [they] will make him marry Angelina!" It is not "with the gun [they] will make the happiness for this girl" (*Olives* 252). He also adds that today's America "is a different country ... and a different time. It is not the blood and the force that will fix anything" (*Olives* 254), but this time Marco's attempt is vain, and the two angry men force Dr. Emilio to face his responsibilities.

So, Italian culture and its strong values did represent a limit to the betterment of the Italian's social status; it could be defined as an unbreakable chain, which kept immigrants trapped in the working class. However, the Italians' stagnant situation was determined by their unwillingness to change rather than by their powerful culture itself, because they actually opposed themselves to 'betraying' the old way of living, and left little room to improvement. Moreover, generally the average Italian immigrant also "refuses to become assimilated, a part of the American way of life. Refuses to mold and shape to the new form of society" (*Olives* 73). In light of this, we can reaffirm that *italianità* represents a limit to improvement. In *Olives on the Apple Tree*, D'Agostino



dedicates many pages to the issue of Deitalianization, or Americanization caused by upward mobility, and the Italian's unwillingness to change and become American is defined as "the stagnant quality which makes the wop looked down upon by everyone else" (*Olives* 132).

This mental closure was often extended to the following generations of Italian-Americans born in America. In fact, the first immigrants were proud of being working-class people, of physically producing something rather than wasting time with theory. For example, in *Olives on the Apple Tree*, Federico Gardella does not see his son's social improvement as positive; so, he exclaims: "Was maybe mistake he become doctor. Was better he no become nothing and help me with the bizaness" (*Olives* 3). This common attitude is reaffirmed by the following Italian saying "fesso chi fa il figlio meglio di lui ... It's a fool who makes his kid better than himself" (*Moustache Pete* 55). There certainly is pride in this resistance to change, but, as Pete tells us in *Moustache Pete is Dead*, there also is a lot of homesickness: "Is a whole new world we come to when we leave Italia. We try to make some things like they was, but is still some thing different ... I doan complain about 'merica. I just some times miss the old country and the way we use to do things" (*Moustache Pete* 14). However, as Richard D. Alba underlines in *Italian Americans: into the Twilight of Ethnicity*, "despite the seeming insulation of many Italians from the influences of the American environment – an insulation stemming from their intention to return to their homeland and strengthened by the protective embrace of the enclave – the immigrants could not escape altogether the impact of their stay in America" (55).

So, after all, the new generations are destined to change and improve their parents' status, since "la Merica is a place where you can no help but become better than you parents" (*Moustache Pete* 55), and since quite a few fathers do understand the fact that there is a need for open-mindedness and change. Above all, parents who allowed the change, renouncing their important cultural heritage, did it because they did not want their children to go through the difficulties that they faced and the humiliations that they underwent. The hope for a better future is expressed by this meaningful tirade: "In Italy you were a farmer? Poogh, for the farm and the wop who stinks from the ground and never get rich! You are in America here! The factory and the machine and the business. Make the money. Nobody cares that you were a good hand to do this and to do that. The money what counts. I am ten thousand dollars better than you. I got the kids in college ... why the hell do I want to remember what I was? I am an American now. My name is no more Angelo Pastrani and maybe my kid will be president someday" (*Olives* 95). This last quotation both demonstrates the beginning of a new mentality among certain Italians and the deep hope for the generations to come, but also the fact that change is necessary to embrace new values that can be in opposition to the old ones.

As Gardaphé points out, the generational gaps are not easily solved, because: "il giovane vuole cambiare il mondo. Il vecchio vuole cambiare il giovane ... the young boy wanna change the world and the old man, he wanna change the young boy" (*Moustache Pete* 15). In *From the Margin*, Tamburri, Giordano and Gardaphé clearly define the antithetic needs and intentions of the different generations of Italian immigrants: "the first generation traveled to find work and to create a better life. The second and third generations travel to establish their place in the American culture and to share their

notions and ideas with the American mind" (*From the Margin* 5). So, the tensions between old and new generations are unavoidable, and it is difficult to determine if the change was for the better or for the worse. In *Moustache Pete is Dead*, Gardaphé asks a legitimate question: "what ways are we better off than them? Sure we got a nice home, and cars to go wherever we want, and money to do things once we get there, but does all this make us better people?" (*Moustache Pete* 55). The process that changed the children of the Italian immigrants into American citizens was long and painful, and, as we will see in the following chapter, cost a high price in terms of loss of culture, language, values and past.

### Chapter 3: Upward Mobility and Deitalianization.

Either you will  
go through this door  
or you will not go through.

If you go through  
there is always the risk  
of remembering your name.

Adrienne Rich, "Prospective Immigrants Please Note"  
(in M. J. Bona, *Claiming a Tradition*, 93)

Even though Italian culture seems to be an obstacle to upper mobility, many Italian immigrants improved their social status and became successful. As a matter of fact, America offered various possibilities of improvement, and those who were willing to take advantage of them grew rich quickly. However, economic change entailed a major cultural change, a demonstration that "class involves a ... complicated set of relationships, relationships expressed not just in possessions or even in more personal attributes – like patterns of speech and dress – but mainly in ways of feeling, thinking, and understanding ... class involves not just what you 'have' or even what you 'are'" (*Literature, Class and Culture* 3). This confirms that "class can be seen primarily as a category of identity" (*Literature, Class and Culture* 7), and anticipates that upward mobility is possible for Italian immigrants only through the acceptance of American rules and the adherence to the American system, i.e. through a process of Americanization or Deitalianization. As Patrick Gallo points out in *Ethnic Alienation: the Italian-Americans*, Americanization is unavoidable and necessary, since "the lack of a structural assimilation [provokes] a greater occupational, educational, and residential differentiation" (89), and since "the Italian" who is not open to it "remains a foreigner" (88) all life long. But in

order not to be a foreigner anymore, the Italian immigrants had and still have to renounce their past, their cultural identity and their traditions. In *Ethnic Alienation*, Patrick Gallo explains that the keys to “the actual process of assimilation are the immigrant’s basic motivations and role expectations and the demands made upon him in the United States. The immigrants ... revealed some level of frustration with Italian society and an inability to achieve or fulfill their aspirations within it. Thus, a feeling of frustration and inadequacy motivates the Italian immigrants” (91). So upward mobility is possible, but it costs Italian immigrants a high price in terms of culture, values and ethnic identity, and brings them into a richer but not necessarily happier dimension. Again Gallo states that “the process of integration of the Italian immigrants entails the learning of new roles,” or worse, it entails “the complete renunciation of the Italian’s culture in favor of that held by the core society” (88). As Joel Spring points out in *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality*, this painful process is a “cultural genocide” and a cause of frustration that undermines the immigrants’ dignity. In fact, “deculturalization is the educational process of destroying a people’s culture and replacing it with a new culture,” and it “demonstrates how cultural prejudice and religious bigotry can be intertwined with democratic beliefs” (4). This proves that, to become middle class, or generally to move up, it is necessary to integrate into the American system and to accept the American rules. This concept is confirmed by Andrew Rolle, who clearly states that “the success of the immigrant involved a subtle repudiation of a previous identity” (*Perspective in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity* 111). The Italian immigrants’ integration is favored, encouraged and concretized by education, which is the main cultural converter. Education teaches the

immigrants (or more likely their children) the new language, the new cultural values, and, above all the power of success and money.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, cultural change affected in diverse ways the different generations of Italian immigrants. People who came from Italy had a very hard time learning the English language and the new rules of the American culture, and could never get really integrated into the American system. But their children, the first generation of US-born Italian-Americans, welcomed change and encouraged their unwilling parents to embrace the new culture, too, sometimes causing familiar conflicts. This tendency is portrayed by D'Agostino in *Olives on the Apple Tree*, where he describes the many difficulties between parents and their children. The generation gap is particularly felt by Giuseppe, who has to deal with an adolescent daughter and cannot count on his wife's help, since he is a widower. Giuseppe is genuinely worried about his daughter Angelina, and complains about the fact that his old values do not fit in the new country:

I guess I getting old now. Everything all mix up. Is hard to tell what is right and what is bad. I try to be good papa, but is hard too. For the kids here the life is no more the same like for the old people. Is everything differenza for them. How then I gonna say for Angelina do this do that when I no onderstand how she feel with my head full Italiano ideas and she have the idea from America and the American school? Is a problem (71-72).

In spite of these frustrating difficulties Giuseppe shows open-mindedness and is open to change for his daughter's sake, but it is very difficult for him to realize what is wrong and what must be changed:

"I try to change – make myself more like American people. Is Angelina I have to think. Is no nice for young American girl have papa old fashion with ideas from the old country. People laugh. In the school the kids make joke with her. It get all mixed up ... is something dying inside. I no feel strong. I no feel sure any more. And is very bad this. Because how a

man gonna live a good life when he no can tell what is the right way for him to be?" (140).

This touching paragraph demonstrates how hard it is for a mature man to give up his culture and accept new values. It seems inevitable that he will undergo a crisis of identity and go through a period of complete confusion. The same happens to our fictional friend Moustache Pete, in Gardaphé's *Moustache Pete is Dead*, when he comes back from his last trip to Italy. For a moment, he cannot speak anything but Italian and he feels like a "stranger in [his] home," and "wasa all confuse for days" (95); once more, the coexistence of the two cultures in an open-minded man, who does not forget his past but also allows change in his future, causes destabilization. Pete understands better his situation and finds the strength to react thanks to a little accident:

"It wasa morning and I was slicing my [Italian] bread. I was thinking today maybe I'll make somea toast. So I try to put the bread inna toaster, and no matter how I slice it, it doan fit in. I was getting real mad so I take a slice and smush it in. Pretty soon the toasta machine start to smoke and the crust of the bread catch afire ... it made me so mad I pull the machine out of the wall and throw it down ...all these years I been trying to fit into this land of La Merica and I livea pretty good, but I was a not made to fit into the way this country was a design. I'mma like that bread and when I get stuck I get all hot and mad and burn up, and no matter how I try I wasa not made for this place." (96)

The sense of uneasiness and inadequacy felt by the immigrants well explains the impossibility for them to really become Americans, and to communicate with their American children!

D'Agostino shows that, the same generation gap and lack of comprehension exist between Federico Gardella and his son Emilio. Federico and Emilio never agree on anything and they often fight about small things. Big quarrels and insults also take place

between the two men: the old Italian who cannot forget his origins and the young American who wants to forget them. This contrast is underlined by Nick, one of the Italians from Wop-Roost, who denounces Emilio's superiority and disdainful attitude by pointing out that "when people is get lilla money they forget where they come. They think right away they high class too" (21). Moreover, when accused of having dirty feet by Dr. Emilio, Nick does not fail to remind the snobbish and ambitious doctor, that "is same kind of feet work with [his] papa in the ditch before he make money and send [Emilio] to school" (22). But Emilio does not want to be related with the Italian working-class people that he despises.

Because of the many negative images connected to the Italian tradition and culture, many Italian immigrants' children and grandchildren were even ashamed of their poor origins, and tried to hide and deny them. For example, many of them refused to learn the Italian language, to carry on their parents' jobs (as one was supposed to do in the Italian culture), and even to be called with an Italian name and last name. Moustache Pete reminisces about what certain immigrants did to get rid of this sense of shame and uneasiness: "you can't even know what we all went through; to become mericans there was so much to do. Some change their names; some lose the old tongue; send their children to schools that kidnap the young; schools that make them embarrassed of their old family; so their all turn away from old Italy" (88). The same necessity to get deitalianized is depicted by D'Agostino in *Olives on the Apple Tree*. Federico Gardella's son, Emilio, now despises Italian people and their humble origins, and tries to hide his Italian heritage of which he is ashamed. He affirms that his father "should have listened to Mamma and change [their last name] a long time ago. Gardell. That's the way it ought



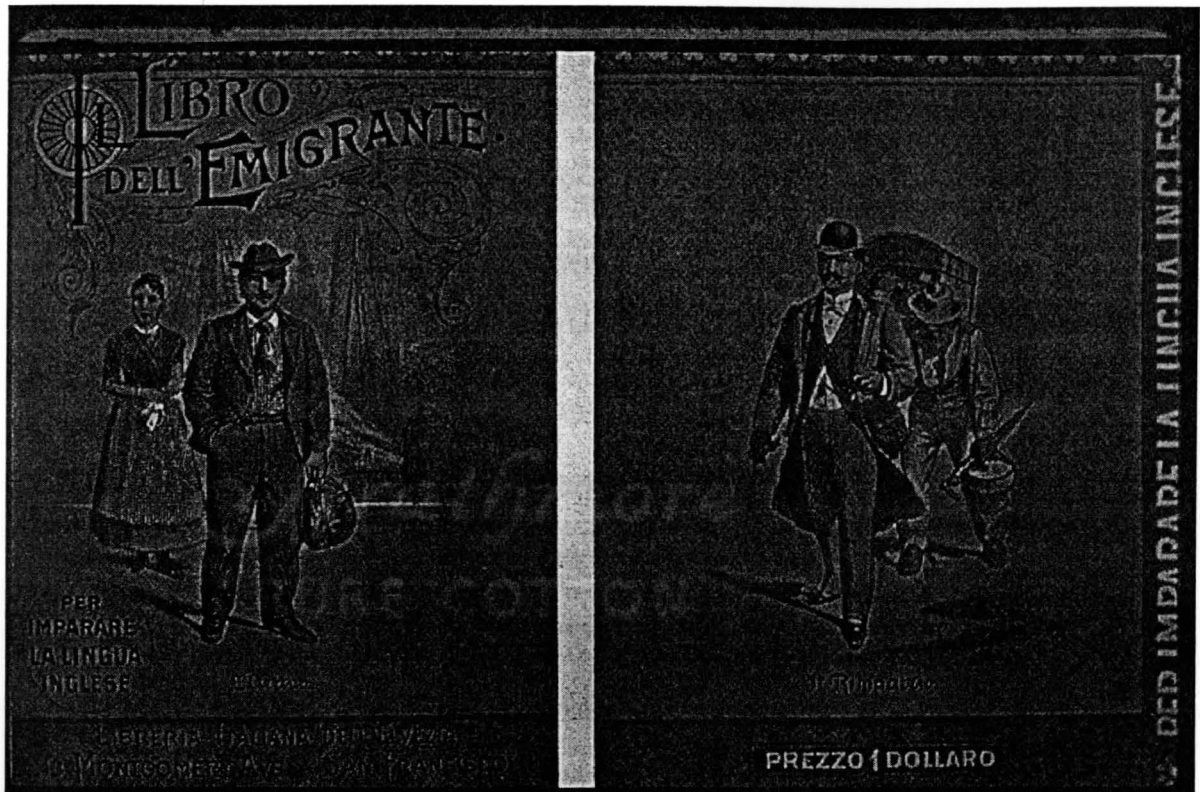
to be. Doctor Emile Gardell” (33-34). By changing the last vowel of his first name and dropping the last vowel of his last name, Emilio denies his culture and affirms his sense of superiority. He also adds, “At the hospital everybody gets into the habit of calling you by your name. Hey Gardella, they say. Makes me feel like a wop greenhorn” (33).

Emilio’s attitude betrays a wish to get deitalianized, or, to use Richard Alba’s words, a wish to favor “ethnicity’s dimming,” which is one of the “indices of assimilation” (*Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity* 132).

Emilio’s worries about his name are not completely unjustified, as the following tirade spoken by one of Emilio’s high-society girlfriend demonstrates: “mother was worried when she first heard your name and I told her you were Italian ... When she visualizes an Italian all she can think of are those poor creatures who live in Park Street where the charity baskets are delivered on Christmas” (*Olives* 81). This paragraph also gives us an example of an outsider’s view of Italians; it seems evident that rich people immediately associate Italians with poverty. This also confirms Michael La Sorte’s point that “Italian Americans have a bad image. Part of it, perhaps, is our [Italians] doing, but much of it has to do with the American public’s fascination with the more unusual activities that have been associated with the Italians. That is, either we’re funny people or we’re criminal people” (*Dagoes Read* 123).

The new generation’s integration need seems to originate at school, where the Italian immigrants’ children are first introduced to American culture and compare it with their parents’ one. In *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality*, Joel Spring defines “the cultural power of schooling,” and explains how at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the US government recognized education as a instrument of deculturalization, and

“belie[ved] in the power of the school to change and control societies” (19). So, education is a change factor and a cultural converter. The following political cartoon, which is also an advertisement for a book that teaches English to Italian immigrants, proves how education could open the doors to success.



Roland's  
Notes  
about this  
image

"Il Libro dell' Emigrante," per imparare La Lingua Inglese. Two scenes: l'Arrivo and Il Rimpatrio: Before and after stages of a success story of which education was the key. Front cover, immigrant shabbily dressed is seen arriving with all his possessions in a carpet bag; on the back, bowler-hatted and prosperous, he departs for his native country, while a porter struggles under the weight of his trunk.

Citation

Daniel Boorstin, *American Civilization*, pp. 180-1.

Education's changing power is mirrored in literature, too. In *Olives on the Apple Tree*, Elena points out, speaking about her brother Emilio, that "the change seemed to come somewhere between the time of going to college and the serving his internship in the city. College did something to him ... he was becoming more and more calculating and hard" (8). Elena, like her father, finds it difficult to accept Emilio's snobbish attitude, because she likes her cultural heritage and working with her father. Emilio accuses her lack of ambition, and he tells her: "this life is good enough for you. That's why you couldn't stay in college" (6). With these words he reaffirms once more the important role of education in life changing. Poor Giuseppe as well blames schooling for his daughter's rebellious attitude: "lilla bit of school and she tell everybody go to hell and do what she please" (59). Moreover, wise Moustache Pete teaches us that generally speaking education was not well seen by Italian farming people, because children were supposed to work in the fields with their father. So, they thought that "school wasa biga waste of time" (*Moustache Pete is Dead* 58), and when school became compulsory it actually constituted one of the causes of Italian emigration. Pete remember this being the case for his family: "when the governo di Italia tell us all we have to go to school my father put his foot down. He say, 'If they goan try to take my kids away from me then, I'm goan to take my kids away from them'" (*Moustache Pete is Dead* 58). In spite of this, Pete recognizes the importance of education and wants his children to be educated; he also underlines how education gives us independence with one of his meaningful proverb: "chi non va a scuola, non mai puo viaggiare solo, ... whoever doesn't go to school can never go anywhere alone" (*Moustache Pete is Dead* 59). He also admits that his hard

working-class life could have been better, "if [he] would have had a good education"

(*Moustache Pete is Dead* 28)

Emilio shows a certain awareness of how difficult it is to renounce your origins and traditions when he admits that he himself had to struggle to forget his Italian past and that education helped him to understand and acquire American culture. He says, "it took me a long time to get wise, I had it knocked into me. I had a lot of things knocked into me" (131). Now that he has understood the way to success, Emilio has a very clear and ambitious project for his future, and he does not allow his being Italian to be an obstacle to them: "I know the things I want. How I'll live. The people I'll associate with. The girl I'll marry. Why should I deny myself these things because I happen to be the son of Italian immigrants? Why should I suffer because of the accident of birth?" (*Olives* 133). These bitter words betray not only Emilio's endless ambition, but also and above all his lack of respect for his original culture.

Emilio's ambitions are supported and even encouraged by his mother, Giustina Gardella. Giustina brought up Emilio with a clear plan in her mind: she wants her son to become a successful and rich doctor. Emilio is actually the means by which she herself succeeds and fulfills her own dream of success. In fact, she truly believes that her family's welfare is solely due to her efforts, and when Emilio optimistically declares his professional triumph, she exclaims: "Dio, grazie! Everything come true. Everything what I dream. Emilio big doctor. Nurse. Fine people in big automobile to see him for operate. Just like in front my brain alla time. So happy I feel" (237). Giustina is proud of her movement up the social ladder, and, lacking modesty or humility, she feels the need to show everybody her recently acquired power and wealth. She eagerly waits Sundays to

go the mass, where she can publicly show her nice dresses, her husband's nice car, and her jewel of a son. She pictures "herself getting out of the big Packard before the austere masonry of the church, Emilio on one side and Elena on the other and the people of the village smiling to her nodding their heads. And then the solemn entry into the church, the genuflection, the seriousness and the importance of it all" (144). In spite of this, she states that "is low class show off how much money you make – the good luck what you have. Is cheap people do things like this" (238). Moreover, she wants her son to marry a wealthy American woman, hoping for a sort of ethnic improvement, blood purification or Deitalianization of her descendants. This colorful church episode confirms an Italian tradition portayed by Fred Gardaphé in *Moustache Pete is Dead*; as Pete narrates, in the old times in Italy, 'we no have what you call mass media, we have media mass. After church alla people would stand outside church an sometin we go to the piazza. Was our version of the evnin news" (22)

The failure of the dream is not acceptable. America is a place where dreams come true, and anyone who does not succeed is a loser. For this reason, when Federico tells Giustina that Emilio has been fooling around with poor Angelina and should now marry her, she refuses this possibility as absurd, and shouts: "when Emilio get marry is with differenza stuff from Angelina, I betcha ... he show me from the girl he go with now. Is high class. Is girl with refine. Is daughter from big man. And you talk from Angelina. You sick upstairs!" (55-56). But Federico tries to explain to his wife that because of Emilio's irresponsible behavior, "good-bye all the fancy bizaness for the high-class people and the big doctor with American wife and everything else what [she] have fix so nice" (56). When the inevitable happens, her husband sadly remarks: "the work for so

many years finish like this. The high-class life you have figure out for Emilio. The American wife. The house in the town with the rich people live next door and say to you, 'Allo, Missa Gardella. You the mamma from Doctor Emilio? Ah, you make the pitch nice for yourself. From lilla baby you begin him with this ideas" (273). The contrast between past and present, between old values and new ones concretizes itself into an open contrast between men and wife into the Gardella's household. Federico refuses to discuss the situation affirming that speaking to his wife "is like the filosofo talk to the wall" (177); while proud Giustina exclaims, "Santa Madre, when I marry him must be the devil wish me bad luck" (226).

Because of the way Emilio was brought up, for him class mobility is not an option, but a must. He affirms that "if you're an Italian you've got to become an American and you've got to become successful" (*Olives* 132), and he openly despises everybody who does not have "any idea of becoming Americanized" (250). But Marco attacks Emilio accusing him of having forgotten good manners and principles together with his origins. Marco exclaims: "tell me if it is American to spit on fellow who is not so fortunate as you. Tell me if it is American to hate everything from the people you represent because it might help you to do what you want to do. Tell me if it is American to look down on the Italian when it is just lucky that you were born here and not on the other side, and live in this house instead of up on the hill" (249). This confirms that the process of Deitalianization is often associated with the loss of good values.

Sure enough, Deitalianization made Emilio into a person without scruples and, together with his origins, he has forgotten common sense and good principles, too. His Machiavellian nature is betrayed by his professional choices as well; in fact, he did not

choose the medical profession because of its rewarding human side. He does not care about his patients and their health. Instead, he decided to become a doctor because of the money he could make in this profession. As he affirms without shame “the money is the thing that counts, and money excuses everything” (132). He also thinks “the self-sacrificing doctor” is “crap you see in the movies” (*Olives* 132), and he prefers to be “damned” rather than “remain a little wop doctor in a one-jerk village all [his] life” (*Olives* 7). He also adds that he did not dedicate “ten years’ hard study and work just to be a doctor to a bunch of dumb wops” (*Olives* 6).

The other important lost value is the one of the family. The unity of the family has always been a characteristic of the Italian culture, and the members are inextricably linked to each other by sharing love, happiness and problems, too. In *Old Bread New Wine* (1981), Patrick J. Gallo dedicates a whole chapter to the explication of the many complex rules that govern the Italian family. He explains that “family still means not only husband and wife and children, but also grandparents, uncles, cousins, and godparents, in short all blood and in-law relatives ... family solidarity gives the family its essential unity and cohesiveness. The behavior of one member of the family is often an item which concerns all family members” (152). This helps us to better understand the difficulties encountered by the Italian fathers and mothers when they had to find a compromise with the American culture and different perception of the family. In *Moustache Pete is Dead*, Baffo Beppe complains about the lack of unity of his family: “the kids move far away from the family to find better life an’ they talk family bizness onna phone stead of face to face” (19). When he realizes that this is actually what he did, together with many other Italian immigrants, he hurries to explain the difference: “when I leave Italy was because

they was no chance to make a good life there. But here in La Merica you can make a good life right next door your family, just as good as goin thousand miles away. I break up my family in Italy so that I can make it better one day for my own family. But now my family is spread out all round this big country” (19). Richard Alba confirms this in *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity*: “loyalty to the family is presumed to be expressed in an unwillingness to move away, so that grandparents, parents, and grown children live within short distances from one another, perhaps even in the same block or in the same house, and visit one another frequently” (132). The Gardella’s case, in *Olives on the Apple Tree*, is even worse. The four members of the family do not share the same values anymore and there is no communication among them; because of this Elena exclaims: “there isn’t anything decent and real in this family. It’s all money and getting ahead and trying to be something we weren’t meant to be” (179). It seems that the value of family is a working-class value, typical of those who need each other to survive, while those who achieved economic independence tend to separate and lose the tight links with their family.

The only value Emilio still cares about is money; it is thanks to money that he was accepted by the richer society in spite of being Italian: “Money. That’s why. My father had money. Ability didn’t matter a damn thing. I was one of them. I acted like one of them and I spent money and they accepted me, in spite of my name ... I learned if you are an Italian you’ve got to become an American and you’ve got to become successful” (*Olives* 132). Because of this, Emilio thinks now that the most important thing in life is money. A man can buy everything and succeed in everything thanks to it, while “if you have no money you are like dirt” (*Olives* 46). And Giustina confirms it by pointing out



that “is the money make Emilio doctor so he no have to work with his hands and have car and nice office and meet fine people. Is the money responsabila for everything” (*Olives* 46). In the church scene, D’Agostino bitterly underlines how even God and Hope can be bought. In fact, concerned about the many problems in his family, Federico wonders if “maybe for one dollar extra God he do something special to fix up the trouble in [his] house” (148). Marco, the voice of reason, underlines the importance of understanding the difference between being rich and being happy with the following wise speech: “hell with money ...people like [us Italians], we will never have money. But we will have a good life. We will work. We will produce. The things we know we will use. And that is better than the money which makes the Italian rich and his happiness poor” (138). Also in *Moustache Pete is Dead*, we find a criticism of the money-centered American society; in fact, Pete explains that “back in bell’Italia we work an get paid by the food we grow. In America, we work an have to buy the food with the little money we make. We went from work for food to work for money. I doan know which was worse” (20).

Unfortunately, as we have seen, Deitalianization is often a synonym for loss of identity and cultural values. So, in the end, it is a loss rather than a bargain. This is well reflected by in *Olives on the Apple Tree*, where Federico Gardalla undergoes a crisis of identity due to his increased wealth and social status. He represents the drama of the many immigrants who found themselves in between two cultures, unable to stick to the first one and unable to understand the second one. Money does not bring happiness to them, since material things cannot give interior peace and satisfaction. Federico realizes that his son Emilio actually lost his happiness because of his lust for money, and he blames his wife for this: “was no for you push alla time the ideas make money and

become high-class American with the bad smell for Italiano, he ...live happy just like anybody. And he be better doctor too. But this animale you have raise!" (237). Federico's drama is accentuated in a beautiful scene in which he is described in his "warm and comfortable house," with the "Saturday papers," a nice and "thick slice of salami," a "full glass of wine," and most of all "the money in his pocket" (213). However, he is not a happy man; he is bored, lonely and unsatisfied. His solitude leads him nearly unconsciously toward Wop-Roost, where he comes from, and where he can "see the Italians seated at their card games, glasses full, laughing and shouting as they slammed their cards down on the table" (214). They are not rich, and they have no money in their pockets, but Federico envies them since they have each other. Federico knows that being part of the Italian community is "something wonderful, and he [feels] pained to be unable to join them" (216). Moreover, a demonstration that once you step away you cannot go back, Federico looks at the Italians at Wop-Roost with a sense of envy and homesickness, but he knows he cannot join them: "there was a sense of strangeness between him on the outside and the men in there built from years of living down below and he couldn't overcome it" (216).

In conclusion, class change corresponds to an identity change. Working-class people have to deculturalize themselves to become middle-class successful people. This passage was painful, confusing and long for many Italian immigrants, who underwent an identity crisis, before finally giving up their past and their good old values to embrace the American culture. Americanization allowed them to become richer, but it often denied their inner serenity and happiness.

#### Chapter 4: is there a solution? The compromise.

Without words, they tell me  
to be ashamed.

I am.

I deny that booted country  
even from myself,

want to be still  
and untouchable  
as these women  
who teach me to hate myself ...  
my anger spits  
venomous from my mouth:

I am proud of my mother  
dressed all in black,  
proud of my father  
with his broken tongue,  
proud of the laughter  
and noise of our house.

Remember me, ladies,  
The silent one?  
I have found my voice  
and my rage will blow  
your house down.

Mazziotti Gillan  
(in *Beyond the Margin*, 42)

As we have seen, some traits of the Italian culture seem to be a limitation or even an obstacle to the Italian immigrants' upward mobility, and because of this Italians are likely to remain in the working class. It is difficult for them to move up without assimilating into American culture, without losing their past and their identities, but this step is necessary to become part of the middle class. Those who refuse to change experience social segregation and do not attain success, while those who radically change lose their ethnic background. So, change is a must and it involves not only the material sphere but also, and above all, the cultural one values, beliefs and traditions. In *Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity*, S. M. Tomasi explores "the high price

that is paid in the process of assimilation [and] the psychological consequences that result from the numerous choices one must make in a life time, between assimilating and maintaining an ethnic group identity” (10). But is there the possibility for a compromise? Is it possible to grow up in America and retain one’s Italian heritage? Can an Italian immigrant, or his descendants, move up from the working class and become middle class, without undergoing a process of deculturalization, without losing his identity? According to Gallo, “the American political system tended toward the integration or exclusion of the ethnic group” (*Ethnic Alienation* 190), so a compromise seems to be improbable. As a matter of fact, the suggested solution requires finding a perfect equilibrium between past and present, between old and new, and between the memory dimension and the present reality. But a compromise can be found, by respecting the traditions without closing the doors to innovation and progress, and by teaching the generations of Italian-Americans to be proud about their origins.

First of all, we do need to be open-minded and let the new enter our lives. Closure and narrow-mindedness are enemies of happiness, while acceptance is the first step toward understanding and integrating in American culture. The immigrants tend to be afraid of what is new, just because it is different. In *Olives on the Apple Tree*, Marco tries to underline what is different but positive in the American culture: “here you do your work and you have time to think and the time to enjoy other things too. There is more balance to the life. And the woman is free, and that is another good thing. Over there is the family behind, pushing and forcing the marriage they think is best. Here the girl marries the man she likes – and the happiness is greater because it is free” (139-140). Moreover, Marco admits the weak points of his home country by pointing out that Italy

forces many people to a bitter exile, since its political and economic situation takes away their dignity and freedom. These are the reasons why he came to America: "I thought I could find here what was no longer possible for me over there. A free life to live without anybody to tell me what to do and what to think. And land. To have land that is mine to plant what I want to feel with my fingers. Simple" (161). This last word reminds us the fact that happiness is not necessarily a synonym for richness or success. A simple life can be more rewarding than a luxurious one. The importance of this point is underlined also by Moustache Pete in *Moustache Pete is Dead*, when he affirms that in "La Merica ... you doan stay happy with leetle things ... everything got to be improve" (39). So, the satisfaction of the immigrants stays partially in appreciating simple and small things; but this does not mean that they cannot aim to better their social status.

As we saw, change is necessary to socially integrate and to move upward in the American society; however, Italian people, who are by definition "not highly mobile" (*Old Bread, New Wine*, 260), cannot forget about their past all of a sudden and become someone else. The cultural shock would be too big. So, change must be slow. Those who want to become rich in a hurry easily lose their values, since wealth destabilizes those who are not used to it. A sudden change is an imposition and forces immigrants to accept some things they are not ready for; moreover to accept the new things the old ones must be forgotten and lost. On the contrary, a slow change gives the time for a gradual integration, where the old values and the new ones can coexist. In literature, America is portrayed as the place where everything must happen fast. Moustache Pete complains about the fact that "fasta cars, fasta food, what do they bring you but accidents and acida. I think people have forgot how to wait. Back in the old country was no problem to wait

for things. Waiting give you time to think. When you rush you never get something good.” (7). Then he gives us another wise proverbial sentence: “‘presto maturo, presto marcio’: quick to ripe is quick to rot” (7). This explains why a fast change brings suffering, confusion and loss. Also D’Agostino in *Olives on the Apple Tree* underlines the importance of gradual exposure to the new culture. When speaking about change Marco says: “Slow, slow. Not too fast. For the Italian there is a wonderful life in America. But he must go easy. If right away he tries to tumble down everything, then he is lost. He is not strong any more. America is not for him. He will die” (*Olives* 140). Then he adds that if “the minute you land here you wan to rush to become American, then little by little you kill yourself – and you cheat the land that gives you a home because what you brought with you from your own country to make it richer and better you have thrown away and forgotten. You have come just to grab” (*Olives* 141). This is what happened to the Gardella family, who lost values and ethnic identity in the attempt to get rich as quickly as possible. No wonder that the result was a failure from both an ethical and a social point of view.

So, there must be a delicate balance between past and present. Italians should never forget about their origins and about the skills that they brought with them from Italy; at the same time, they should also accept the new American rules and values, and allow themselves to change and adapt to them. As S. M. Tomasi says in *Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity*, some Italian –Americans still show the inner struggle and the difficulty to totally change and integrate; for example, “even Italian Americans who become upwardly mobile and move out of the neighborhood carry [some] cultural bond with them ... successful Italian Americans tend to reflect deeply ingrained values

related to the family and extended family, yet they avoid any significant affiliation in their public and political behavior that centers around the Italian American interests” (10). As Marco says in *Olives on the Apple Tree*, the immigrant who seeks a serene life should not follow the example of those “people who just come to take the money and the easy life. [Nor of] the people who hurry up to get rich because they believe it is this what makes them American” (116). Marco tries to teach this to his Italian friends, too, and when Nick eagerly asks him if they will “make plenty [of] money” (137) with their new job, he answers: “hell with money ... people like you and me and Giuseppe, we will never have money. But we will have good life. We will work. We will produce. The things we know we will use. And that is better than the money which makes the Italian rich and his happiness poor” (138). However, even though Marco invites his Italian friends to do the job of their fathers and never forget their origins, he also admits the need to change, to accept the differences of the new world and deal with them. This is a necessary step, or the direct consequence is isolation and failure; but change must be slow and gradual or it will destroy the Italian immigrants.

The balance between past and present is very difficult to find, since immigrants tend to idealize their home country and remember the old times in Italy. This traps them into an extemporal dimension. Remembering is good, but it is wrong to live in the past. Unfortunately, many Italian immigrants even tried to bring the past back and created some small isolated reality where they would feel like in old Italy. By doing that, they fossilized the Italian culture typical of their historic moment and lived in a surreal dimension without space and time that does not exist anymore even in Italy. These Italian immigrants will never integrate, since they think that to Americanize is to betray the past,

and that “there can be no happiness, no real joy of the life for the man who is traditori to the past” (*Olives* 141). For a homesick Italian it is really simple to get carried away by memories, the many songs about immigrants witness the strong feeling of homesickness, the many difficulties, and the need to go back. For example, in *Olives on the Apple Tree*, Marco admits that he likes to go to church because “[he] like[s] to remember. It is easy there in the quiet” (161); there “it is happiness that [he tries] to remember. Like the man who grows old looks back to when he was young. For somebody [his] age that is bad” (161). With these words Marco admits the negative effects of remembering. In fact, living in the past keeps the immigrants from fully living in the present, and integrating in the new reality. D’Agostino emphasizes the necessity to remember without getting trapped by the past dimension: “it is the change. It is the New World. Many of the things we remember from the old life we must forget” (139). Gardaphè agrees that it is necessary “to give up many of the old ways, but never the old values” (*Moustache Pete* 11), suggesting perhaps that we have to find a temporal compromise, by keeping “one eye on the future as [we] turn [our] other towards the past” (*Dagoes Read* 38).

What we cannot forget is that what we are today is due to what we were yesterday. So, Italian-Americans do not have to forget their origins, and they must be proud of being Italian. Marco has a strong character and is not confused by the new culture and values exactly because he knows where he is from: “he’s an Italian, and proud of it” (73). He confirms his pride by saying, “it is here I will stay and stay like I am – Italian. And I will grow” (116). Then he explains to Giuseppe the importance of not losing the ethnic background:

There is only one thing that counts. That is never to forget you are Italian and to never be ashamed. People like you and me! We will never become real American. There is too much behind for us to change. But we can be part of



America. We can give to it just as much as the people who call themselves American because it is here that they were born and they have the flag waving outside the window. We bring the blood and the life and the energy that from the beginning made this country something. All the rest of the people who come from the other side of the word! Italian, Frenchman, Polish, Swede – there is no differenced. They all belong to America – and the Italian just like anybody else. We marry and the blood is in our children. Our children marry and there is the mixture of the blood. And the race becomes stronger and better (141).

Marco's speech shows open-mindedness. He is aware of the fact that the situation of the Italian immigrants is common to many other ethnic groups, and he does not feel superior to any of them. While trying to keep his Italian values, he also opens his mind to a more complex reality where different cultures coexist. Then, when speaking about Italian people Marco underlines what their good values are; he says that 'the good Italian [is] the simple man. The honest man ... the man without the sickness to make more money than he can use. The man with the pride in his work and the happiness in his family' (163).

The feeling of pride and the revival of the origins must be transmitted to the coming generations, too. It is very important to teach them not to be ashamed of their ethnic heritage in order to help the Italian culture to survive in America. In Mazziotti Gillan's "taking Back my Name," we can witness a cry of liberation, a newly restored pride that is still rather rare:

I celebrate my Italian-American self,  
 Rooted in this, my country, where  
 All those black/brown/red/yellow  
 Olive-skinned people  
 Soon will raise their voices  
 And sing this new anthem

Here I am  
 And I'm strong  
 And my skin is warm in the sun  
 And my dark hair shines,

And today, I take back my name  
 And wave it in their face  
 Like a bright, red flag.

Fred Gardaphé spends many pages on the importance of transmitting the Italian heritage to the new generations and its sense of dignity too. For example, through his fictitious character Pete, he says that “no matter how good we have it, we should raise our kids with some sense of hard work and with a taste of what is like to work with their hands. If we don’t then they will never appreciate life” (*Moustache Pete* 21). Then, in a wonderful short story, Baffo Beppe tells us about the Fortunatis, an Italian-American family who forgot how to make soup. By using a meaningful metaphor, he explains how roots are an essential ingredient to give flavor to an Italian ‘minestra.’ The attentive reader will understand that knowing your origins is essential to give meaning to your life. This reaffirms that to know who we are today we need to look back at who we were yesterday. Speaking to the new generations of Italian-Americans Moustache Pete says: “I’mma who you come from. You can be better than me only because someone like me go through a whole lotta trouble so that you can be born here. If you wanna forget is your business. I can no forget. Maybe when we die you can pretend we never were here, but what you goan do about our ghosts? [sic]” (Preface, IV).

In conclusion, to retake our initial metaphor, “the olive that jumps to the apple tree. The olive that shouts that it is an apple. There is the mistake. There is the whole trouble ... Easy. Easy. The worry of the immigrant is not to be American. The worry is to work, to produce and that is what makes you an American” (295). Today Italian-Americans are “solidly middle class,” but the tendency shows that “as we [Italians] become more middle class ... we will start to look back at our heritage and our background and more willing to talk about it in a straightforward manner” (*Dagoes Read*,

124). It seems that the compromise has been met, but the issue is not solved and there still is a lot to do to make Italian-Americans proud of their origins.

## Appendix.

### (Doc 1)

#### The Old Italians Dying

For years the old Italians have been dying  
all over America  
For years the old Italians in faded felt hats  
have been sunning themselves and dying  
You have seen them on the benches  
in the park in Washington Square  
the old Italians in their black high button shoes  
the old men in their old felt fedoras  
with stained hatbands  
have been dying and dying  
day by day

You have seen them  
every day in Washington Square San Francisco  
the slow bell  
tolls in the morning  
in the Church of Peter & Paul  
in the marzipan church on the plaza  
toward ten in the morning the slow bell tolls  
in the towers of Peter & Paul  
and the old men who are still alive  
sit sunning themselves in a row  
on the wood benches in the park  
and watch the processions in an out  
funerals in the morning  
weddings in the afternoon  
slow bell in the morning Fast bell at noon  
In one door out the other  
the old men sit there in their hats  
and watch the coming & going  
You have seen them  
the ones who feed the pigeons  
cutting the stale bread  
with their thumbs & penknives  
the ones with old pocketwatches  
the old ones with gnarled hands  
and wild eyebrows  
the ones with the baggy pants  
with both belt & suspenders  
the grappa drinkers with teeth like corn  
the Piemontesi the Genovesi the Siciliani  
smelling of garlic & pepperonis  
the ones who loved Mussolini  
the old fascists  
the ones who loved Garibaldi  
the old anarchists reading *L'Umanita Nova*  
the ones who loved Sacco & Vanzetti  
They are almost all gone now

They are sitting and waiting their turn  
 and sunning themselves in front of the church  
 over the doors of which is inscribed  
 a phrase which would seem to be unfinished  
 from Dante's *Paradiso*  
 about the glory of the One  
                                     who moves everything . . .

The old men are waiting  
 for it to be finished  
 for their glorious sentence on earth  
                                     to be finished

the slow bell tolls & tolls  
 the pigeons strut about  
 not even thinking of flying  
 the air too heavy with heavy tolling  
 The black hired hearses draw up  
 the black limousines with black windowshades  
 shielding the widows  
 the widows with the long black veils  
 who will outlive them all  
 You have seen them  
*madre di terra, madre di mare*  
 The widows climb out of the limousines.  
 The family mourners step out in stiff suits  
 The widows walk so slowly  
 up the steps of the cathedral  
 fishnet veils drawn down  
 leaning hard on darkcloth arms  
 Their faces do not fall apart  
 They are merely drawn apart  
 They are still the matriarchs  
 outliving everyone  
 the old dagos dying out  
 in Little Italys all over America  
 the old dead dagos  
 hauled out in the morning sun  
 that does not mourn for anyone  
 One by one Year by year  
 they are carried out  
 The bell  
 never stops tolling

The old Italians with lapstrake faces  
 are hauled out of the hearses  
 by the paid pallbearers  
 in mafioso mourning coats & dark glasses  
 The old dead men are hauled out  
 in their black coffins like small skiffs  
 They enter the true church  
 for the first time in many years  
 in these carved black boats  
                                     ready to be ferried over  
 The priests scurry about  
                                     as if to cast off the lines  
 The other old men  
                                     still alive on the benches  
 watch it all with their hats on  
 You have seen them sitting there  
 waiting for the bocci ball to stop rolling  
 waiting for the bell  
                                     to stop tolling & tolling  
 for the slow bell  
                                     to be finished tolling  
 telling the unfinished *Paradiso* story  
 as seen in an unfinished phrase  
                                     on the face of a church  
 as seen in a fisherman's face  
 in a black boat without sails  
 making his final haul

(Doc 2)

TABLE 1  
ITALIAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES BY YEARS

Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1820	30	1845	137	1870	2,891	1895	35,427	1920	95,145	1945	213
1821	63	1846	151	1871	2,816	1896	68,060	1921	222,260	1946	2,636
1822	35	1847	164	1872	4,190	1897	59,431	1922	40,319	1947	13,866
1823	33	1848	241	1873	8,757	1898	58,613	1923	46,674	1948	16,075
1824	45	1849	209	1874	7,666	1899	77,419	1924	56,246	1949	11,695
1825	75	1850	431	1875	3,631	1900	100,135	1925	6,203	1950	12,454
1826	57	1851	447	1876	3,015	1901	135,996	1926	8,253	1951	8,958
1827	35	1852	351	1877	3,195	1902	178,375	1927	17,297	1952	11,342
1828	34	1853	555	1878	4,344	1903	230,622	1928	17,728	1953	8,434
1829	23	1854	1,263	1879	5,791	1904	193,296	1929	18,008	1954	13,145
1830	9	1855	1,052	1880	12,354	1905	221,479	1930	22,327	1955	30,272
1831	28	1856	1,365	1881	15,401	1906	273,120	1931	13,399	1956	40,430
1832	3	1857	1,007	1882	32,159	1907	285,731	1932	6,662	1957	19,624
1833	1,699	1858	1,240	1883	31,792	1908	128,503	1933	3,477	1958	23,115
1834	105	1859	932	1884	16,510	1909	183,218	1934	4,374	1959	16,804
1835	60	1860	1,019	1885	13,642	1910	215,537	1935	6,566	1960	13,369
1836	115	1861	811	1886	21,315	1911	182,882	1936	6,774	1961	18,956
1837	36	1862	566	1887	47,622	1912	157,134	1937	7,192	1962	20,119
1838	86	1863	547	1888	51,558	1913	265,542	1938	7,712	1963	16,175
1839	84	1864	600	1889	25,307	1914	283,738	1939	6,570	1964	12,769
1840	37	1865	924	1890	52,003	1915	49,688	1940	5,302	1965	10,874
1841	179	1866	1,382	1891	76,055	1916	33,665	1941	450	1966	26,449
1842	100	1867	1,624	1892	61,631	1917	34,596	1942	103	1967	28,487
1843	117	1868	891	1893	72,145	1918	5,250	1943	49	1968	25,882
1844	141	1869	1,489	1894	42,977	1919	1,884	1944	120	1969	27,033

[218] THE ITALIAN-AMERICANS

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *A Statistical Abstract Supplement, Historical Statistics of the U. S. Colonial Times to 1937*, 56-57, and U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the U. S. 1963* (84th annual ed.), 100 and U. S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service 1962*, 44; 1966, p. 57; 1969, p. 63.

TABLE 2  
DISTRIBUTION OF ITALIAN-BORN IMMIGRANTS BY DECADE AND STATE

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
Alabama	90	187	118	114	322	862	2,696	2,732	2,140	1,699	1,436	1,151
Arizona	—	—	T12	T104	T207	T699	1,531	1,261	822	715	1,600	2,450
Arkansas	15	17	30	132	187	576	1,699	1,314	952	791	670	525
California	228	2,805	4,660	7,537	15,495	22,777	63,615	88,504	107,249	100,911	104,215	102,366
Colorado	—	T6	T16	335	3,882	6,818	14,375	12,580	10,670	8,352	6,329	4,797
Connecticut	16	61	117	879	5,285	19,105	56,954	80,322	87,123	81,373	74,270	65,233
Delaware	—	4	5	43	459	1,122	2,893	4,136	3,769	3,464	3,031	2,914
District of Columbia	74	94	182	244	467	930	2,761	3,764	4,330	4,913	4,422	3,086
Florida	40	75	56	77	408	1,707	4,538	4,745	5,262	5,138	8,087	16,217
Georgia	33	47	50	82	159	218	545	700	712	536	638	750
Idaho	—	—	T11	T35	509	779	2,067	1,323	1,153	892	633	420
Illinois	43	219	761	1,764	8,035	23,523	72,163	94,407	110,449	98,244	83,556	72,139
Indiana	6	92	95	198	468	1,327	6,911	6,712	6,873	6,309	5,508	4,756
Iowa	1	26	54	122	399	1,198	5,846	4,956	3,834	3,461	2,908	2,254
Kansas	—	15	55	167	616	987	3,520	3,355	2,165	1,654	1,214	1,024
Kentucky	143	231	325	370	707	679	1,316	1,932	1,589	1,302	1,067	911
Louisiana	915	1,134	1,889	2,527	8,437	17,431	20,233	16,264	13,526	9,849	7,678	5,470
Maine	20	49	48	90	258	1,334	3,468	2,797	2,359	2,268	2,008	1,568
Maryland	82	220	210	477	1,416	2,449	6,969	9,543	10,872	10,119	9,942	10,454
Massachusetts	196	371	454	2,116	8,066	28,785	85,056	117,007	126,103	114,362	101,458	86,921
Michigan	12	78	110	555	3,088	6,178	16,861	30,216	43,087	40,631	38,937	36,879
Minnesota	T1	45	40	124	828	2,222	9,669	7,432	6,401	5,628	4,496	3,541
Mississippi	121	114	147	260	425	845	2,137	1,841	1,613	1,294	1,023	923
Missouri	124	554	936	1,074	2,416	4,345	12,984	14,609	15,242	13,168	10,695	9,033
Montana	—	—	T34	T64	734	2,199	6,592	3,842	2,840	2,265	1,767	1,055

Tables [219]

In Luciano Iorizzo and Salvatore Mondello, *The Italian-Americans*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1971. Page 218-219.

(Doc 3)



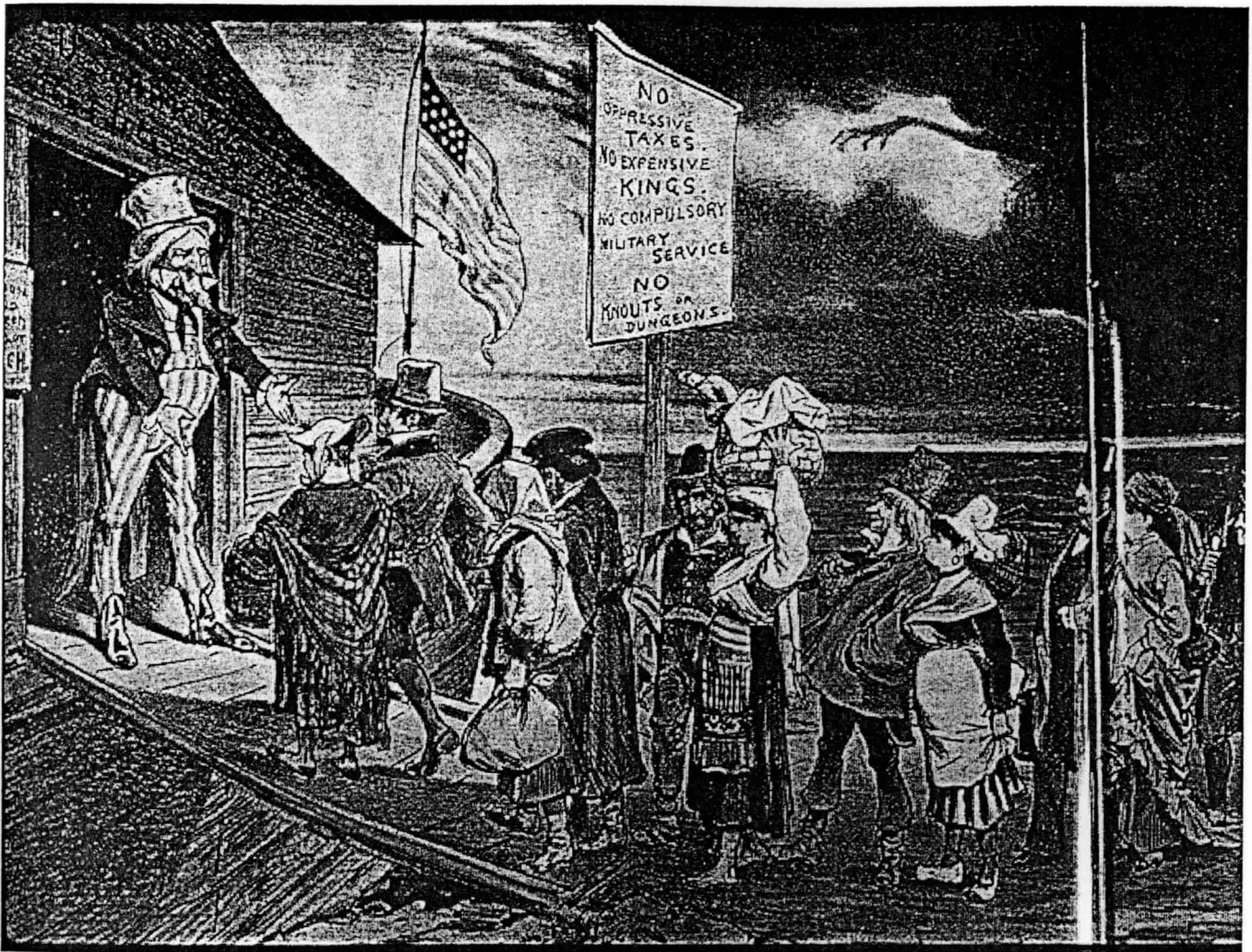
[<<-previous image](#)    [next image->>](#)

<p>Roland's Notes about this image:</p>	<p>This 1887 cartoon, called "America's Hearty Welcome to the Innocent Emigrant", shows the gauntlet of fraud that immigrants had to run upon arrival in New York City. This line of swindle and theft often extended from before the immigrant arrived until either he was impoverished or reached his final destination. Captions in cartoon: Bogus Expressmen, Heavy Charges, Bogus Employment Agency, \$10 Week Salaries, Fraudulent R.R. Tickets, Baggage Seizer, Pretended Relation, Boarding-House Runner, Confidence Operator, Female Swindler, Custom House Extortions.</p>
<p>Citation:</p>	<p>Wayne Moquin, ed., <i>Makers of America</i>, Vol. 3, William Benton, Publisher, 1971, p. 14.</p>

[Return to Roland's Major Categories](#)

[Return to the subcategories for Immigration](#)

(Doc 4)



<<-previous image      next image-->>

Roland's Notes about this image:	"Welcome to All!" This Puck cartoon of 1880 expresses the American's image of his country's immigration policies. Caption above Uncle Sam: U.S. Ark of Refuge. Caption on small sign: Free education, free land, free speech, free ballot, free lunch.
Citation:	Wayne Moquin, ed., <i>Makers of America</i> , Vol. 5, William Benton, Publisher, 1971, p. 10.

[Return to Roland's Major Categories](#)

[Return to the subcategories for Immigration](#)



(Doc 5)



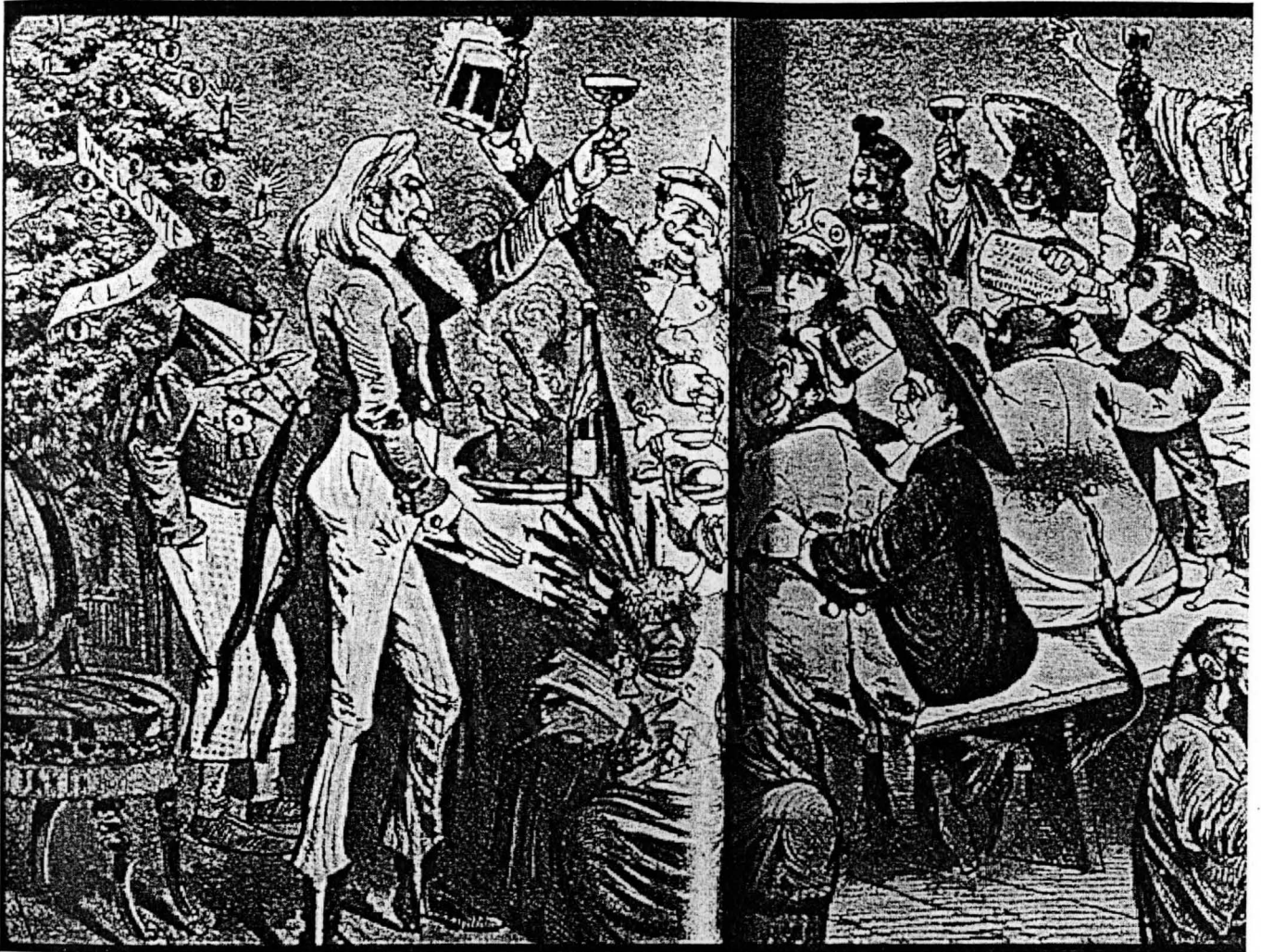
<<-previous image      next image->>

Roland's Notes about this image:	"The Modern Moses," date unknown. Light on the right hand side is labelled "Western Homes".
Citation:	<i>Campbell, The Pen not the Sword, p. 99.</i>

[Return to Roland's Major Categories](#)

[Return to the subcategories for Immigration](#)

(Doc 6)



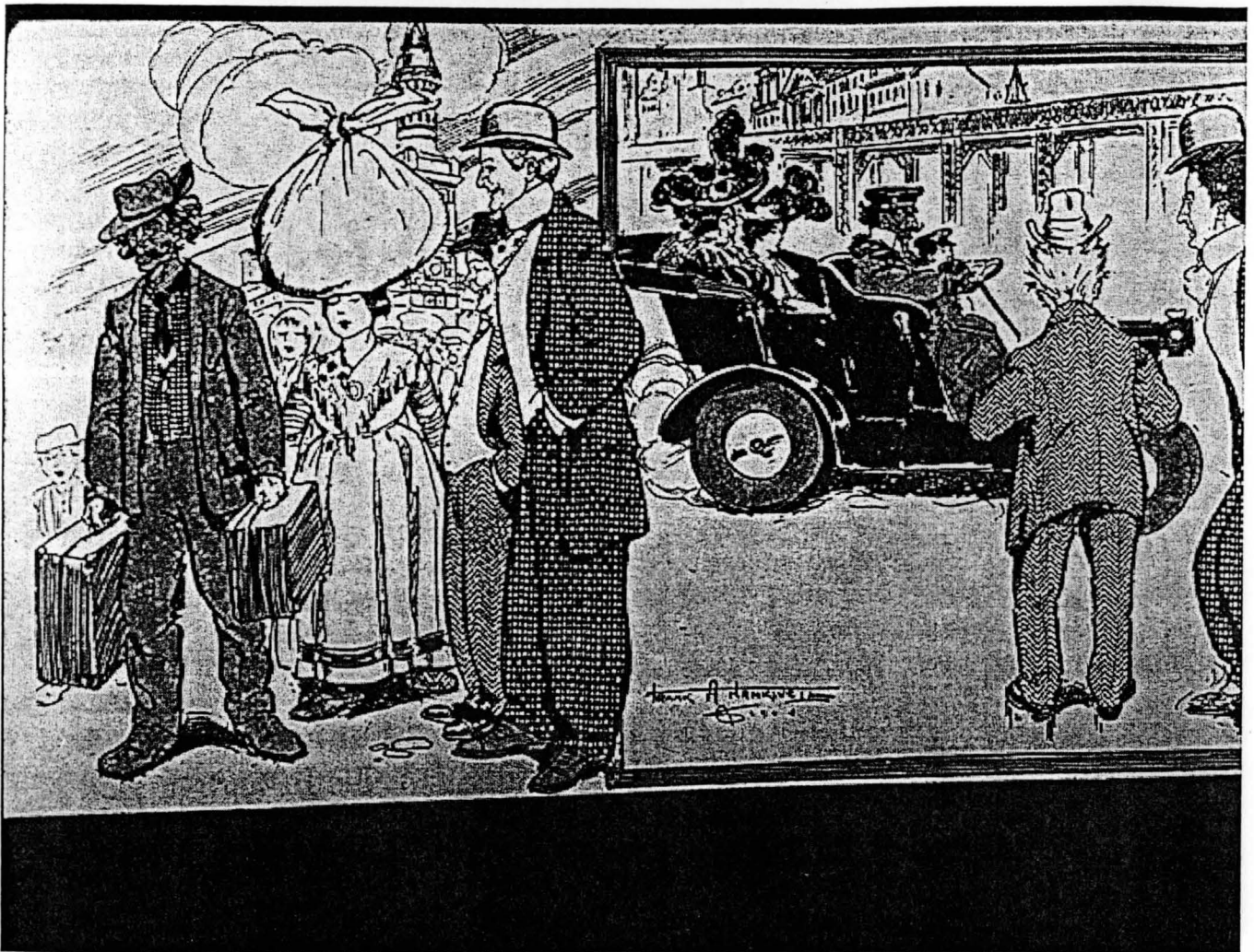
<<-previous image    next image->>

Roland's Notes about this image:	Puck cartoon of Uncle Sam hosting Christmas dinner with all nationalities.
Citation:	<i>American Heritage, American People, pp. 194-5.</i>

[Return to Roland's Major Categories](#)

[Return to the subcategories for Immigration](#)

(Doc 7)



[<<-previous image](#)      [next image->>](#)

Roland's Notes about this image:	"It is happening every day," a Puck cartoon of 1906. Skepticism about the immigrants' ability to make a decent living changes to surprise.
Citation:	Wayne Moquin, ed., <i>Makers of America</i> , Vol. 7, William Benton, Publisher, 1971, p. 223.

[Return to Roland's Major Categories](#)

[Return to the subcategories for Immigration](#)

(Doc 8)



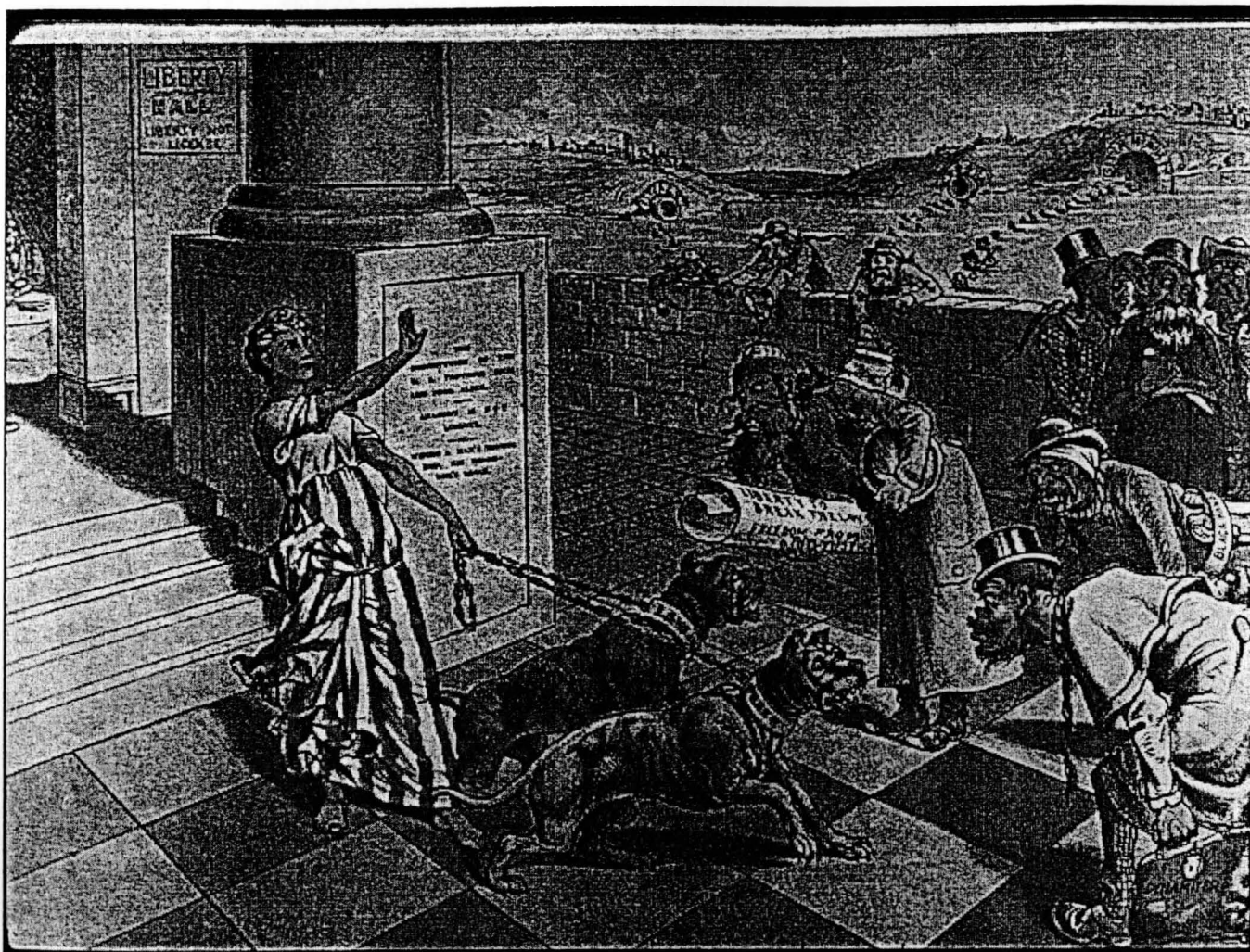
<<-previous image    next image->>

<p>Roland's Notes about this image:</p>	<p>"Il Libro dell' Emigrante," per imparare La Lingua Inglese. Two scenes: I'Arrivo and Il Rimpatrio: Before and after stages of a success story of which education was the key. Front cover, immigrant shabbily dressed is seen arriving with all his possessions in a carpet bag; on the back, bowler-hatted and prosperous, he departs for his native country, while a porter struggles under the weight of his trunk.</p>
<p>Citation:</p>	<p><i>Daniel Boorstin, American Civilization, pp. 180-1.</i></p>

[Return to Roland's Major Categories](#)

[Return to the subcategories for Immigration](#)

(Doc 9)



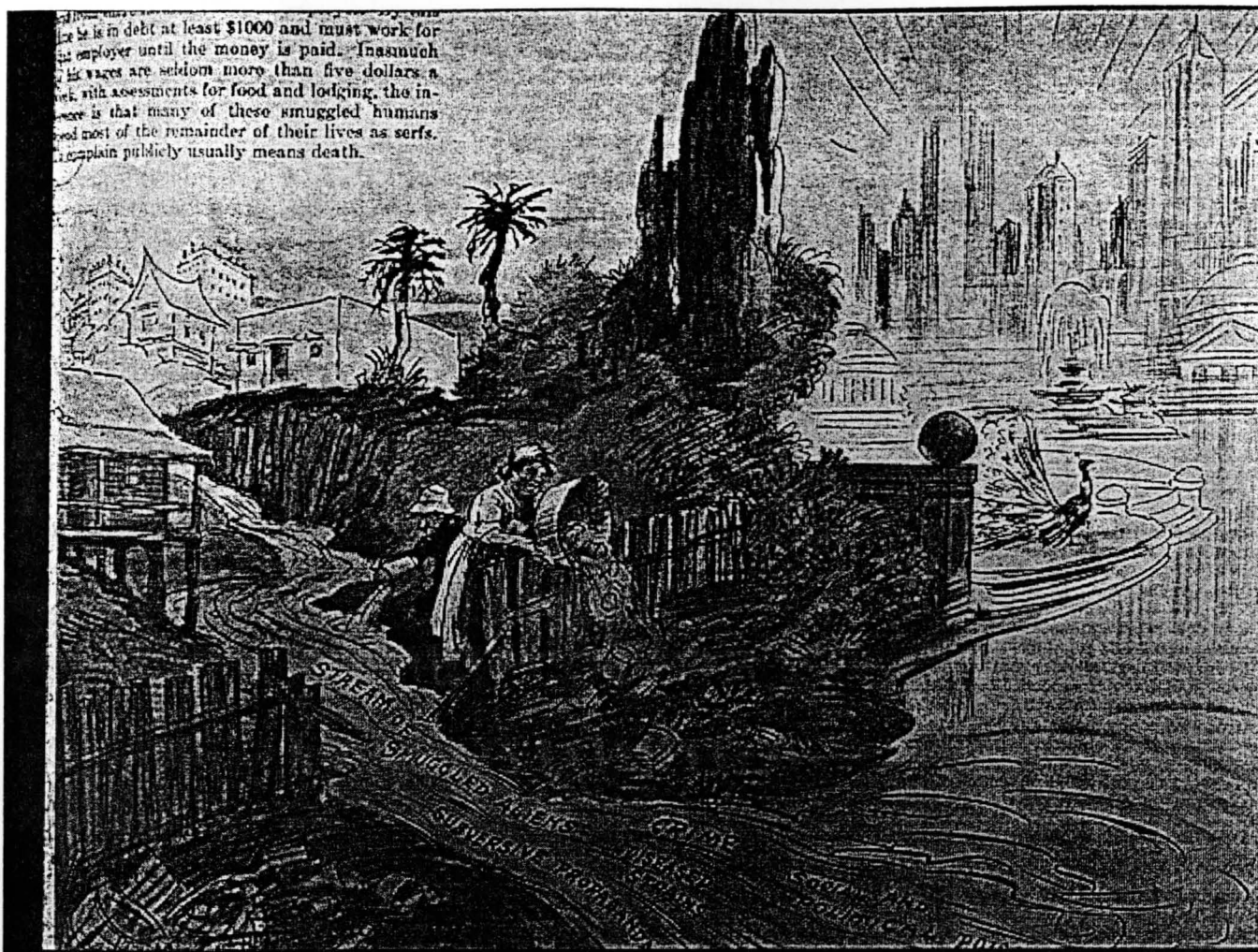
<<-previous image      next image->>

Roland's Notes about this image:	"Columbia's Unwelcomed Guests." F. Beard cartoon from The Judge, date unknown. Caption on pillar: The Constitution of the U.S. protects rich and poor alike. Anarchy is not liberty. Where a man's rights end, his neighbor's begin.
Citation:	Mary and Gordon Campbell, <i>The Pen, Not the Sword</i> , Aurora Publishers, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, 1970.

[Return to Roland's Major Categories](#)

[Return to the subcategories for Immigration](#)

(Doc 10)



[<<-previous image](#)      [next image->>](#)

<p>Roland's Notes about this image:</p>	<p>"Our Back Yard." Political cartoon against immigration. Picture of idealized city beautiful in the background, with beams coming forth from its splendor; fountains, Greek monuments, skyscrapers, like Great White City. In foreground, into the bay of this city, dream of smuggled aliens, with words: crime, diseased strains, subversive propaganda, social and political poisons; slovenly man and woman throwing out garbage and pouring polluted water into the stream.</p>
<p>Citation:</p>	<p><i>Saturday Evening Post</i>, May 25, 1935, p. 11.</p>

[Return to Roland's Major Categories](#)

[Return to the subcategories for Immigration](#)

(Doc 11)



### THE IMMIGRANT: THE STRANGER AT OUR GATE.

EMIGRANT.—Can I come in?

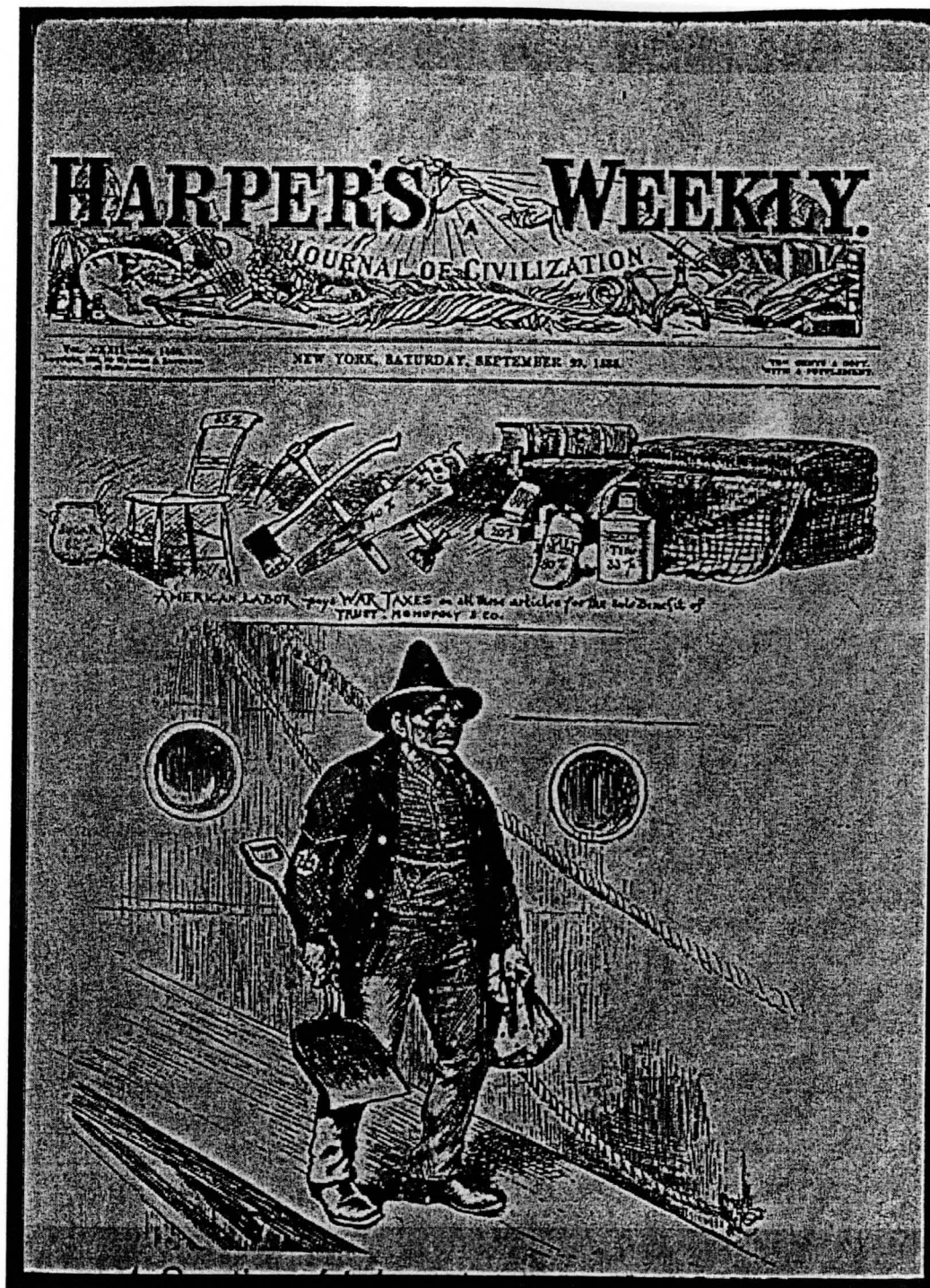
UNCLE SAM.—I 'spose you can; there's no law to keep you out.

DURING four hundred and more years this continent has been the melting pot for the population of the Eastern hemisphere. For three-fourths of that time the yearly infusions of raw metal was so slight that it was not hard to compound them with the native stock and preserve the high character of American citizenship. But when alien immigration pours its stream of half a million yearly, as has been frequently done during the last decade, and when that stream is polluted with the moral sewage of the old world, including its poverty, drunkenness, infidelity and disease, it is well to put up the bars and save America, at least until she can purify the atmosphere of contagion which foreign invasion has already brought.

Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word: Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. *Jer. 7:2-3.*

Scanned from *Fifty Great Cartoons* (Chicago: The Ram's Horn Press, 1899) unpaginated. This cartoon is part of the collections of the Cartoon Research Library of Ohio State University.

(Doc 12)

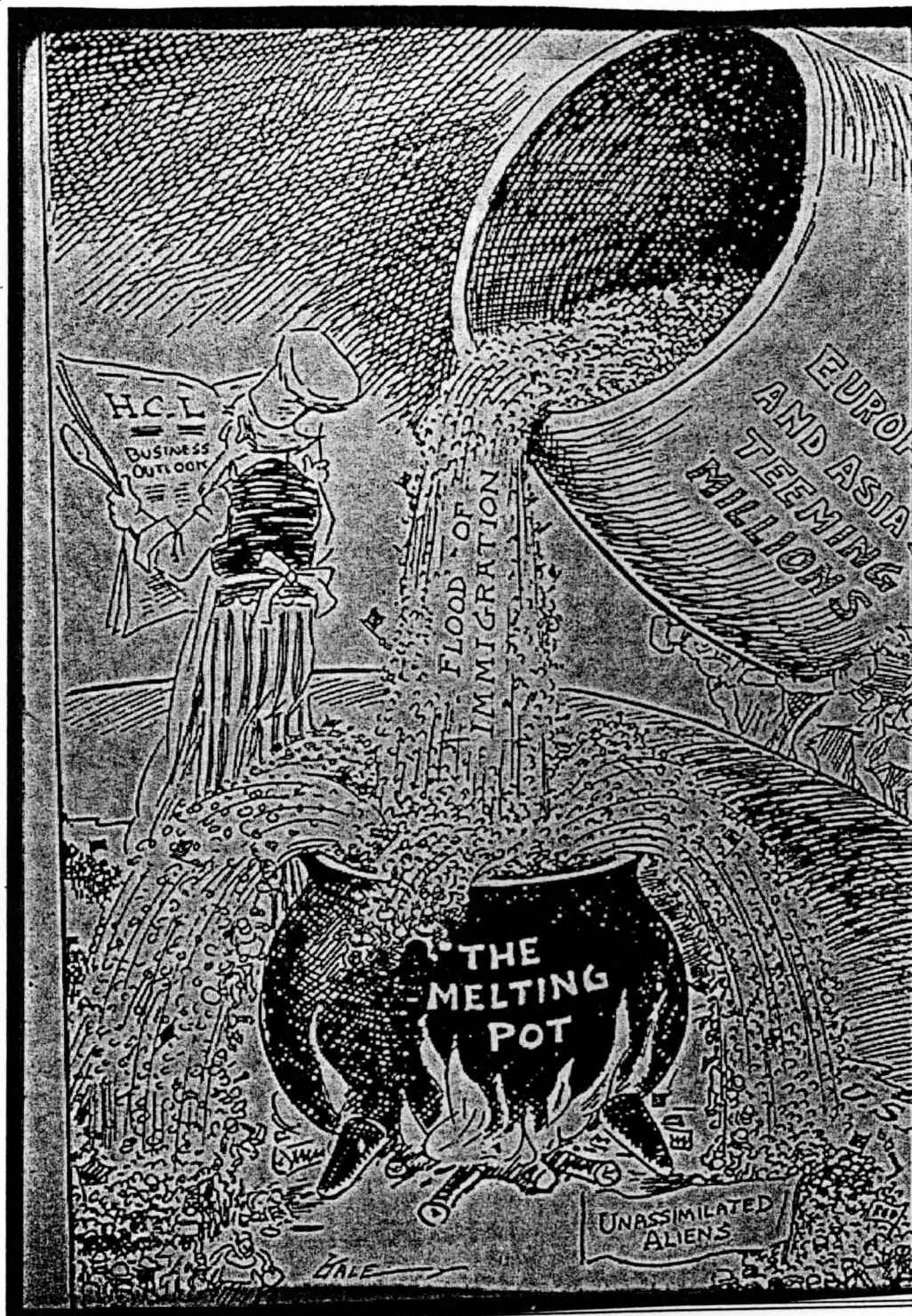


Roland's Notes  
about this  
image:

"A Question of Labor." An anti-Irish immigration illustration.  
Harper's Weekly, 1888.



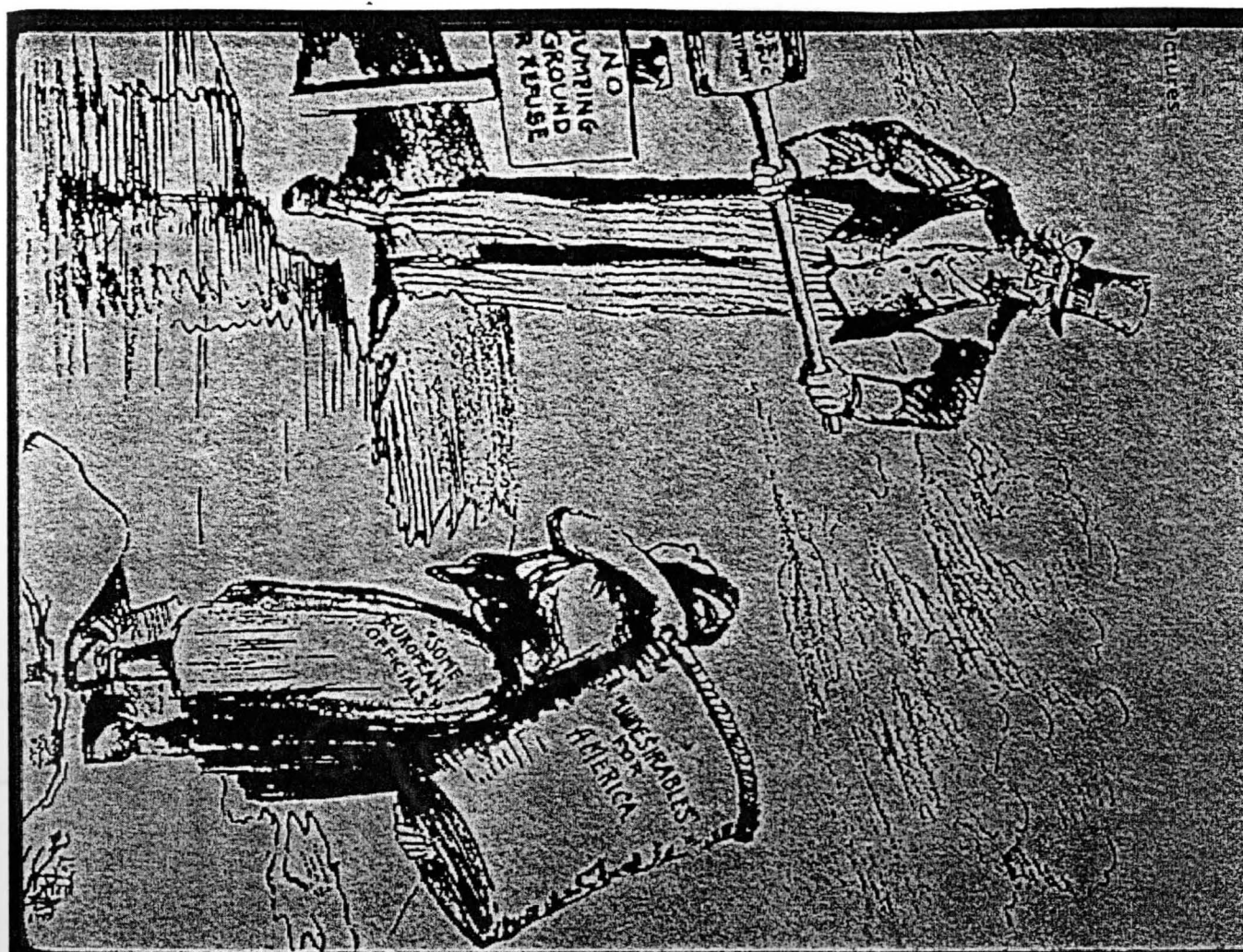
(Doc 13)



Roland's Notes  
about this  
image:

"Spoiling the Broth!," a Gale cartoon of 1921.

(Doc 14)



[<<-previous image](#)    [next image->>](#)

Roland's Notes about this image:	"That immigration problem again!" A Lute Pease cartoon from the Newark News, 1921. Caption on sign: No dumping ground for refuse. Caption on hammer: U.S. public sentiment. Caption on barrel: "Undesirables" for America. Caption on dress: Some European officials.
Citation:	<i>Wayne Moquin, ed., Makers of America, Vol. 8, William Benton, Publisher, 1971, p. 18.</i>

[Return to Roland's Major Categories](#)

[Return to the subcategories for Immigration](#)

## (Doc 15)

TABLE 5-4 The Occupational Attainment of Italian Americans in the Late 1970s (Restricted to Individuals Older than Twenty-Two)

	PERCENTAGE HIGH WHITE COLLAR	PERCENTAGE BLUE COLLAR <sup>a</sup>	AVERAGE PRESTIGE	DIFFERENCE FROM WASPS <sup>b</sup>	DIFFERENCE ADJUSTED FOR AGE, PLACE <sup>c</sup>	DIFFERENCE ADJUSTED ALSO FOR FAMILY BACKGROUND <sup>d</sup>
BOTH SEXES						
<i>Overall</i>						
WASPS	34.7	37.9	42.5	-	-	-
Italians	23.6	46.2	38.8	- 3.7*	- 5.5*	-1.1
<i>Ancestry type</i>						
Wholly Italian	20.6	49.4	38.0	- 4.5*	- 6.1*	-1.2
Partly Italian	36.4	32.7	42.0	- .5	- 2.8	-.2
<i>Generation<sup>e</sup></i>						
First	20.0	65.0	34.3	- 9.0*	-11.0*	-5.3
Second	22.5	53.9	36.8	- 6.4*	- 8.0*	-3.0*
Third and fourth	28.8	39.0	42.5	- .7	- 2.6	-.4
<i>Birth cohort</i>						
Before WW I	11.8	66.7	33.5	- 9.1*	- 9.4*	-2.3
1914-29	18.1	51.8	36.5	- 5.3*	- 6.9*	-1.6
1930-45	33.7	33.7	42.6	- .5	- 2.4	2.3
After WW II	26.2	40.0	40.5	- 2.0	- 4.1*	-2.0
MEN ONLY						
<i>Overall</i>						
WASPS	37.0	46.3	43.2	-	-	-
Italians	34.5	51.8	40.4	- 2.8*	- 4.8*	-1.2
<i>Ancestry type</i>						
Wholly Italian	31.2	55.0	39.4	- 3.9*	- 5.8*	-1.9
Partly Italian	46.7	40.0	44.1	.9	- 1.0	1.7
<i>Generation<sup>e</sup></i>						
First	33.3	66.7	38.3	- 5.2	- 8.4	-4.5
Second	37.8	59.5	38.9	- 4.6*	- 5.9*	-2.1
Third and fourth	35.7	53.6	42.3	- 1.2	- 2.5	-.8
<i>Birth cohort</i>						
Before WW I	20.0	70.0	35.7	- 7.7*	- 6.5*	.2
1914-29	30.2	55.8	38.4	- 5.1*	- 6.3*	-2.4
1930-45	48.8	39.5	44.6	.3	- 3.2	.4
After WW II	30.3	51.5	40.3	- .9	- 2.8	-1.0
WOMEN ONLY						
<i>Overall</i>						
WASPS	32.6	30.1	41.8	-	-	-
Italians	13.4	40.9	37.3	- 4.5*	- 6.4*	-1.1
<i>Ancestry type</i>						
Wholly Italian	11.3	44.4	36.8	- 5.0*	- 6.6*	-.6
Partly Italian	24.0	24.0	39.5	- 2.3	- 5.4	-2.9
<i>Generation<sup>e</sup></i>						
First	9.1	63.6	30.9	-12.0*	-13.9*	-5.2
Second	11.5	50.0	35.3	- 7.6*	- 9.9*	-4.1*
Third and fourth	22.6	25.8	42.7	- .2	- 2.5	-.1
<i>Birth cohort</i>						
Before WW I	6.5	64.5	32.1	- 9.9*	-11.0*	-3.4
1914-29	5.0	47.5	34.5	- 5.8*	- 7.6*	-.9
1930-45	19.6	28.3	40.8	- 1.1	- 2.0	3.6
After WW II	21.9	28.1	40.7	- 2.9	- 5.0	-2.7

<sup>a</sup>Service occupations have been included in the blue-collar category.

<sup>b</sup>In all cases but that of birth cohorts, the comparison is with the overall figure for British Protestants. In the case of birth cohorts, the comparison is with the average occupation of WASPs in the same cohort (the WASP figures by cohort, however, are not shown in the table to conserve space).

<sup>c</sup>The variables for which adjustments have been made include age, region where raised, current region, size of place where raised, current size of place.

<sup>d</sup>In addition to the age and place variables, adjustment has been made for father's and mother's educations and father's occupation.

<sup>e</sup>The generation variable is restricted to the survey years 1977-80, and for this reason the overall WASP figures are slightly different from those reported in the table.

NOTE: Asterisk (\*) indicates statistical significance.

SOURCE: Tabulations from NORC General Social Survey, 1975-80.

## (Doc 16)

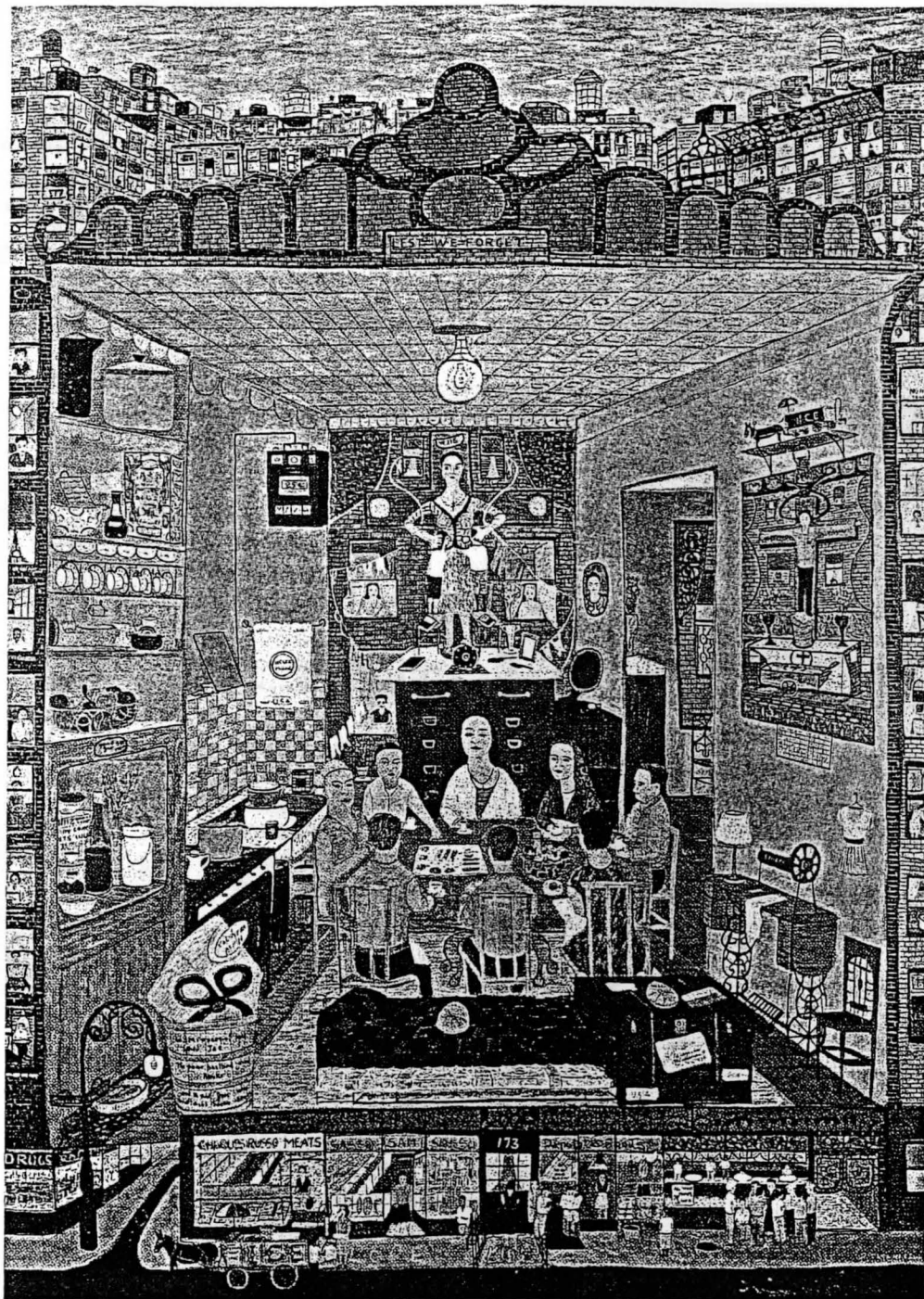
Vurria	I would like
<p>Dint'a na stanzulèlla fredda e scura, addó' na vota ce traseva 'o sole, mo stóngo io sulo...e tengo na paura ch'a poco a poco, mme cunzuma 'o core...</p>	<p>In a small, dark and cold room, where once there was the sun, I stay alone ... and I fear that my heart gets consumed little by little ...</p>
<p>Paura ca mme struje 'sta malatia senza vedé cchiù Napule, senza vedé cchiù a te...</p>	<p>I fear that this illness will kill me without seeing Naples without seeing you ...</p>
<p>Vurria turná addu te, pe' n'ora sola, Napule mia... pe' te sentí 'e cantá cu mille manduline... Vurria turná addu te comm'a na vota, ammore mio... pe' te puté vasá, pe' mme sentí abbracciá... 'Sta freva ca nun mme lassa maje! 'sta freva nun mme fa cchiù campá...</p>	<p>I would like to come back to you, for just one hour, my Naples ... to listen to you with a thousand mandolins ... I would like to come back to you as in the past, my love ... to be able to kiss you to feel your hugs this fever that never goes away this fever doesn't allow me to live...</p>
<p>Vurria turná addu te pe' n'ora sola, Napule mia... Vurria...vurria...vurria... ma stóngo 'ncróce!</p>	<p>I would like to come back to you For just an hour My Naples ... I would like (x3) But I stay here <b>on the cross</b></p>
<p>II</p>	<p>II</p>
<p>Stanotte, dint'o suonno, si' turnata... Mm'accarezzave, chiano, 'sta ferita... Aggio sentuto mille serenate, aggio sentuto Napule addurmata... Po', 'mmiez'a tanta nebbia, só' caduto... senza vedé cchiù Napule, senza vedé cchiù a te!...</p>	<p>Tonight, in my dreams you came back, You caressed, softly, my injury I've heard a thousand serenades I've heard Naples sleeping ... Then, I fell in the middle of the fog ... Without being able to see Naples any more, Without being able to see you any more!</p>
<p>Vurria turná addu te .....</p>	<p>I would like to come back to you .....</p>
<p>Pugliese - Rendine</p>	<p>Pugliese- Rendine</p>

## (Doc 17)

Neapolitan tears. (Bovio, Buongiovanni)	Lacreme napoletane (Bovio, Buongiovanni)
<p>My dear mother, It will be Christmas soon, And staying far away is bitter for me ... How I would like to light two or three candles How I would like to listen to the hornpipe ...</p>	<p>Mía cara madre, sta pe' trasí Natale, e a stá lontano cchiù mme sape amaro.... Comme vurría allummá duje o tre biangale... comme vurría sentí nu zampugnaro!...</p>
<p>Prepare the Nativity for my daughters And put my dish on the table ... When it is Christmas Eve Do as if I was among you too...</p>	<p>A 'e ninne mieje facitele 'o presebbio e a tavula mettite 'o piatto mio... facite, quann'è 'a sera d" a Vigilia comme si 'mmiez'a vuje stesse pur'io...</p>
<p>How many tears America costs To us Neapolitans!... Because here we miss Naples' sky, How bitter is this bread!</p>	<p>E nce ne costa lacreme st'America a nuje Napulitane!... Pe' nuje ca ce chiagnimmo 'o cielo 'e Napule, comm'è amaro stu ppane!</p>
<p>My dear mother, What is, what is money? For those who miss their homeland it is nothing! Now I have a few dollars, but it seems to me That I have never been so miserable!</p>	<p>Mía cara madre, che só, che só 'e denare? Pe' chi se chagne 'a Patria, nun só niente! Mo tengo quacche dollaro, e mme pare ca nun só' stato maje tanto pezzente!</p>
<p>I dream every night of my home And I hear the voice of my children ... But I dream of you as a 'Virgin Mary'... With swords in her breast, <b>in front of her son on the cross!</b></p>	<p>Mme sonno tutt'e nnotte 'a casa mia e d'e ccriature meje ne sento 'a voce... ma a vuje ve sonno comm'a na "Maria"... cu 'e spade 'mpietto, 'nnanz'ò figlio 'ncroce!</p>
<p>How many tears America costs To us Neapolitans!... Because here we miss Naples' sky, How bitter is this bread!</p>	<p>E nce ne costa lacreme st'America a nuje Napulitane!... Pe' nuje ca ce chiagnimmo 'o cielo 'e Napule, comm'è amaro stu ppane!</p>
<p>You wrote me That Assuntella calls Who left her and is still far away ... What can I say? If the daughters want their mother, Make that 'lady' some back.</p>	<p>Mm'avite scritto ch'Assuntulella chiamma chi ll'ha lassata e sta lontana ancora... Che v'aggi" a dí? Si 'e figlie vònno 'a mamma, facítela turná chella "signora".</p>
<p>Not me [? Or I don't] I don't return ... I stay away And I stay to work hard for everybody. I, who have lost country, home and honor, I'm meat for the butcher: I'm an emigrant!</p>	<p>Io no, nun torno...mme ne resto fore e resto a faticá pe' tuttuquante. I', ch'aggio perzo patria, casa e onore, i só carne 'e maciello: Só emigrante!</p>
<p>How many tears America costs To us Neapolitans!... Because here we miss Naples' sky, How bitter is this bread!</p>	<p>E nce ne costa lacreme st'America a nuje Napulitane!... Pe' nuje ca ce chiagnimmo 'o cielo 'e Napule, comm'è amaro stu ppane!</p>

(Doc 18)

## THE DOMUS: THE "SCENA MADRE"



Ralph Fasanella: Family Supper, 1972

Oil on canvas, 50 by 72 inches

Ellis Island Immigration Museum—permanent exhibit

Ralph Fasanella's "Family Supper" in Pellegrino D'Acerno, *The Italian American Heritage*, New York and London, Garland Publishing, 1999. Page 555.

(Doc 19)



Well, who's Radicci? Or, what's Radicci? Created in 1983, Radicci was a synthesis of the Italian immigrant in the new world. Small, paunchy, a lazy and wine lover, he's a Brazilian-Italian who has won people admiration with his strong temper and his aversion to bath and other things called normal. He has a regional characteristic but is known universally. The producer and the biggest consumer of wine and funny histories, he's a yokel who succeed around the world as also did, for example, Hagar, Asterix, W. Bush.

Radicci is a kind of alter- ego of the Italian immigrants, and his family is formed by his wife, Genoveva, an obstacle between he and a bottle of wine, and who is also a typical Italian "Mamma" after the wash machine invention. Besides her, there's Guilhermino, the son, who is the opposite of his father. While His father is a born hunter, Guilhermino is an ecologist who can surpass the Greenpeace Foundation representants. A kind of "Woodstock's fragment", Rock and Roll lover, his politics positions goes from the red Che Guevara to the green marihuana. Hence, he has all the explosives ingredients concentrated to argue with a conservative father who believes Mussolini was the worthy politic in the world.

And not to be good enough, there's also the Nono. Patriarch of all, he's the link between past and present, half insane and completely smart. A veteran from The Second World War, he was a pursuit plane, but can't remember for what side he'd fought for. He's a motorcycle and a girlfriend and also says he's still can pilot.

**Bibliography:**

Alba, Richard D., *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Ethnic Groups in American Life, 1985.

Allen, Beverly and Russo, Eds., Mary, *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Amfiteatrof, Erik, *The Children of Columbus: an Informal History of the Italians in the New World*, Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1973.

Barolini, Helen, Ed., *Chiaroscuro: Essays on Italian-American Culture*, W. Lafayette, IN: Bordighera, 1996.

Barolini, Helen, *More Italian Hours & Other Stories*, Boca Raton, FL: Bordighera, 2001.

Beverly Allen, and Mary, Russo, *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Bona, Mary Jo, *Claiming a Tradition: Italian American Women Writers*, Carbonate and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999.



- Bryant, Dorothy Calveti, *Miss Giardino*, Berkeley, CA: Ata Books, 1978.
- Cateura, Linda Brandi, *Growing up Italian*, New York: William Morrow, 1987.
- Carravetta, Peter Ed., *Differenzia Review of Italian Thought*, Lafayette, IN: Differentia Ltd, and Bordighera Inc, Spring-Autumn, 1999.
- Christopher, Renny, and Whitson, Carolyn, "Toward a Theory of Working Class Literature", in *The New Higher Education Journal*, p. 71-81.
- Cicarelli, Andrea, and Giordano, Paolo, *L'Esilio Come Certezza*, West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera, 1998.
- Cordasco Francesco and Salvatore La Gumina, *Italians in the United States: a Bibliography of Reports, Texts, Critical Studies and Related Materials*, New York: Oriole Edition, 1972.
- D'Agostino, Guido, *Olives in the Apple Tree*, New York: Doubleday, 1940.
- Del Giudice, Luisa, *Studies in Italian-American Folklore*, Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1993.
- Di Donato, Pietro, *Christ in Concrete*, New York: Signet, 1993.

Ficile, Enzo, *Storia degli Italiani di New York*, New York: Italian-American Center for Urban Affairs, Inc., 1975.

Gabaccia, Donna R., and Ottanelli, Fraser M., *Italian Workers of the World*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2001.

Gallo, Patrick, J., *Old Bread, New Wine: A Portrait of Italian-American*, Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1981.

Gallo, Patrick, J., *Ethnic Alienation: the Italian-Americans*, Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1974.

Garaphé, Fred, *Dagoes Read: Tradition and the Italian/American Writer*, Toronto, New York: Lancaster, Guernica, 1996.

Garaphé, Fred, *Italian Signs, American Streets: the Evolution of Italian American Narrative*, Durhan and London: Duke University Press, 1996.

Giordano, Paolo A., and Tamburri, Anthony Julian, *Beyond the Margin: Reading in Italian Americana*, Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, London, Associated University Press, 1998.

Giovanetti, Alberto, *L'America degli Italiani*, Edizioni Paoline, 1975.

---, *The Collected Poems of Giovannitti Arturo*, New York: Arno Press, 1975.

Haller, Hermann W., *Una Lingua Perduta e Ritrovata: l'Italiano degli Italo-Americani*, Scandicci (Firenze): La Nuova Italia, 1993.

Hobbie, Margaret, Compiler, *Italian-American Material Culture*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992.

Iorizzo, Luciano J., and Mondello, Salvatore, *The Italian-Americans*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971.

Jackman, Mary, and Jackman, Robert, *Class Awareness in the United States*, Berkely: University of California Press, 1983.

Johnson, Colleen L., *Growing Up and Growing Old in Italian-American Families*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985.

Kessner, Thomas, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigration Mobility in New York City 1880-1915*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Kessner, Thomas, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrants Mobility in New York City 1880-1915*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Lauter, Paul, and Fitzgerald, Ann, *Literature, Class, and Culture: An Anthology*, New York: Longman, 2001.

Mangione, Jerre and Ben Morreale, *La Storia*, New York: Harper-Collins, 1992.

Mantsios, Gregory, "Class in America: Myths and Realities" in *Regarding America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle, Eds., New York: Bedford Books, 1992, p. 72-85.

Miller, John J., *The Unmaking of Americans: how Multiculturalism undermined America's Assimilation Ethic*, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore: The Free Press, 1998.

Musmanno, Michael A., *The Story of the Italian in America*, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965.

Nelli, Humbert S., *From Immigrants to Ethnics: the Italian Americans*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Panella, Vincent, *The Other Side: Growing up Italian in America*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979.

Parati, Graziella and Lawton, Ben (Eds.), *Italian Cultural Studies*, Boca Raton, FL: Bordighera, 2001.

Peragallo, Olga, *Italian American Authors and Their Contribution to American Literature*, New York: S.F. Vanni, 1949.

Richards, David A., *Italian American: the Racializing of an Ethnic Identity*, New York and London: New York University Press, 1999.

Sacchini, Joseph Louis, *The Italians of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley, Ohio*, Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press, Inc., 1997.

Spring, Joel, *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality*, New York: Mc Graw Hill, 2001.

Tamburri, Anthony Julian, *A Semiotic of Ethnicity: in (Re)cognition of the Italian/American Writer*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

---, *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate: The Italian-American Writer: an "Other American"*, Montreal: Guernica Editions, 1991.

Tamburri, Anthony Julian, Paolo Giordano and Fred L. Gardaphé, Eds, *From the Margin: Writings in Italian Americana*, West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1991.

Tomas, S.M., *Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity*, New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977.

Tusiani, Joseph, *Rind and All: Fifty Poems*, New York: The Monastine Press, 1962.

---, *Gente Mia and Other Poems*, Stone park, IL: Italian Culture Center, 1978.

Vanneman, Reeve and Lynn, Weber Cannon, *The American Perception of Class*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987.