



"An Italian/American State of Mind" - A Rejoinder

Anthony J. Tamburri (November 07, 2007)



Earlier today I posted a response to Tom Verso's thoughts that he posted November 4 on H-Itam. I share them below, albeit slightly modified for our readers of i-Italy.

As I said briefly in response to his post on i-Italy.org which can be found below, I believe what Tom Verso brings to the fore is all part of the same issue/problem within the Italian/American community. Even those involved in the various struggles against all sorts of anti-Italianism, as it is sometimes called, do not take notice of the situations he described in his post. It, too – indeed, especially – needs to be addressed with the same vigor as one addresses the negative imaginary.

With regard to comprehensive sociological studies on Italian Americans, I would join Verso in adding political science studies to a list of priorities. Italian Americana in these two fields seem not to have a



crop of "younger scholars" as do, for example, history, literature, and cinema; and until all fields are on equal ground, we remain at a disadvantage both within our community as well as beyond.

All this, I believe we agree, is part of what Verso calls a "high level of Italian American humanities literacy," something that Italian/American philanthropists (save four that come to mind) have yet to target. This, too, could readily be part of his comparison with other ethnic groups. The rhetorical question, of course, is how many "Italian" names are on libraries and other humanities buildings on college and university campuses throughout the US? How many "Italian" names are behind "think tanks" that deal with Italian Americana?

Tom Verso has begin (re-ignited?) a crucial discussion that others should not ignore. We need for academics in both undergraduate and graduate programs to think in terms of a cultural and intellectual legacy. It is not enough for Italian/American studies to be an intellectual space we visit every once in a while, as some have done, abandoning it, so to speak, for other projects, as some might say, "more serious."

Let's hope others join in on this conversation with both words and actions.

Alla riscossa,

AJT

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