

The Land of our Return. Diasporic Encounters with Italy

(April 19, 2009)



For Virgil's Aeneas, Italy was "the land of our return"... The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute's second annual conference addresses the theme of "return" during its three-day event (April 23-25, 2009)



For Virgil's Aeneas, Italy was "the land of our return" (in Robert Fagles' 2006 translation), the place his ancestor Dardanus left generations earlier. The Aeneid is thus an epic recounting of the Trojan hero's return, or *nostos*, to Italian soil. This poetic conceit offers numerous possibilities to explore the political, economic, social, and cultural impact of historical and contemporary travel and communication by Italian emigrants and their descendants to Italy.

Italian emigration was the largest movement of free labor in world history with over twenty-six million people emigrating from the 1870s to the 1970s. Italian emigrants' objective was, for the most part, to make enough money and return home. Close to half the emigrants traveling to the Americas returned to Italy between 1905 and 1920. According to historian Donna Gabaccia, "The paese (town) had created its diaspora, but the diaspora in turn transformed the paese." What was the impact of returning emigrants and their descendants on the home society?

The political dimensions of return are evident in the transnational movement of anarchists, as well as Risorgimento and later anti-fascist refugees. Religious belief and practice have long been a critical aspect of emigrant return, with remittances sent as donations pinned to the processed religious statue and post-World War II laborers visiting the hometown during the annual festa.

After World War II, Italian Americans journeyed to Italy increasingly as tourists and by the 1970s travel agencies began catering to this "ethnic roots" market. There, Italian Americans experienced the disparity between personal connections to an ancestral paese and the ever changing reality of the larger nation. In recent years, a growing number of descendants of Italian emigrants are reclaiming their Italian citizenship.

The imagined and actual "return" has historically been a source of creativity in all artistic genres, from comedian Eduardo "Farfariello" Migliaccio's 1917 song "Pascale e' Turnato d'all'Italia" to author Helen Barolini's 1979 novel *Umbertina*, to director Frank Ciota's 2002 film *Ciao America*.

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Thursday, April 23, 2009

6:30-8:30 PM Welcome and Reception

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

James Muyskens
Queens College, CUNY

Francesco Maria Talò
Consulate General of Italy in New York

Friday, April 24, 2009

9-9:30 AM Coffee and Pastries

9:30-10:45 AM
Conference Room: Italian/American/Jewish/Israeli
Chair: Dawn Esposito, St. John's University

Comparative Experiences from Different Parts of the Diaspora I
Cristina Bettin, Ben Gurion University



Comparative Experiences from Different Parts of the Diaspora II

Maria Mazziotti Gillan, Binghamton University, SUNY

You Want to be Americano?

Robert Zweig, Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY

11 AM-12:15 PM

Conference Room: Routes of Return

Chair: Donna Chirico, York College, CUNY

“Took a Bird to the Boot”: Hip Wop and the Digital Diasporic Consciousness

Joseph Sciorra, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY

No Longer Innocents Abroad: Ethnic Tourism’s Influence on American Leisure Travel

Maria Lisella, journalist

Fuori in Italia: A Gay Grandson Encounters la madrepatria

George De Stefano, author

La Galleria: Language of Return

Chair: Maria Enrico, Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY

Returning with Standard Italian and the Question of Italian Linguistic Diversity

Christina Tortora, College of Staten Island, CUNY

Study Abroad Programs: Language and Identity as an Experience of Return

Elisabetta Convento and Laura Lenci

Writing on Water: The Non-existing Language of an Italian-American Would-be Intellectual

Peter Carravetta, Stony Brook University

12:15-1:30 PM

Lunch on your own

1:30-2:45 PM

Conference Room: Return Migration and the New Politics of Belonging in Italy

Chair: Christine Gambino, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY

Governing Diasporas: The Italian Case

Guido Tintori, FIERI, and Francesco Ragazzi, Science Po

Film: Merica (2007)

Federico Ferrone, Michele Manzolini, and Francesco Ragazzi, directors

Film: Orizzonti e Frontiere (2007)

Ernesto Morales, director

La Galleria: The Textuality of No Return

Chair: Anthony Julian Tamburri, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY

Forms of Return as a Process of Creativity

Vincenzo Pascale, Rutgers University

On the Impossibility of Return

Paolo Giordano, University of Central Florida

Immigrant versus Emigrazione: A Tale of Laceration in

Tommaso Bordonaro’s *La spartenza*



Giulia Guarnieri, Bronx Community College, CUNY

3-4:15 PM

Conference Room: Re/claiming Italian/European Citizenship

Chair: Robert Viscusi, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Why Italian Americans Should and Must Reclaim Italian Citizenship

Karen Tintori, author, and Lawrence S. Katz, attorney

Just Visiting: Issues Arising from Reclaiming Italian Citizenship

Lindsay A. Curcio, attorney

La Galleria: Canadian Voices

Chair: Joseph Sciorra, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY

The Disappearing Sicily

Maria Francesca LoDico, author

On Leave Takings and Monuments

Darlene Madott, author

Of Death and the Immigrant: A Journey

Michael Mirolla, author

4:30-5:45 PM

Conference Room: Absence and the Emotions of Separation across Time and Distance

Chair: Donna Gabaccia, University of Minnesota

Longing for Kin and Country: Family, Nostalgia, and Nation through the Practices and Processes of Long Distance Caregiving

Loretta Baldassar, University of Western Australia

When the Letter was the Only Tie to their Love: Exploring the Connections between Longings, Separation, and Imagination in Postwar Italian Migration to Canada

Sonia Cancian, University of Minnesota

Bridging Emotional Distance Through Television: The Montreal's Teledomenica Experience

Bruno Ramirez, University of Montreal

Longing, Loss and Love among Rural Italian Migrants at Home and Abroad, 1880-1920

Linda Reeder, University of Missouri

Saturday, April 25, 2009

9-9:30 AM

Coffee and Pastries

9:30-10:45 AM

Conference Room: Textual Returns: Celluloid and Paper

Chair: Mary Jo Bona, Stony Brook University, SUNY

Italian-American Persephone in a Sicilian Setting: Susan Caperna Lloyd's *No Pictures in My Grave* (1992)

Theodora Patrona, Aristotele University of Thessaloniki

The Poetics of Migration Houses: Return, Land, and Architecture in Camilleri's *Maruzza Musumeci*
Teresa Fiore, California State University Long Beach/New York University

The Odyssey of Ideal: Lamerica/Litalia



Nicoletta Delon, College of Staten Island, CUNY

11 AM-12:15 PM

Conference Room: Religion, Politics, Commerce

Chair: Nancy Carnevale, Montclair University

The Soul of a Stranger: Italy, America, and Italian-American Protestants

Dennis Barone, Saint Joseph College

Italian Merchants and Consumption during the Age of Mass Italian Migration

Lizabeth Zanoni, University of Minnesota

The Political Dimension of Return Migration

Stefano Luconi, University of Rome "Tor Vergata"

La Galleria: Metaphors of Return

Chair: George Guida, New York City College of Technology, CUNY

Fumetti as a Vehicle of Return to Italy

Gil Fagiani, The Italian American Writers Association

"We don't have enough men to dance": In Search of Our Music and Dance Roots

Celest DiPietropaolo, independent scholar

The Tenacity of Heritage: The Promise of Festival Foods and Parish Cookbooks as a Return to Italy

Susan M. Rossi-Wilcox, independent scholar

12:15-1:30 PM

Lunch on your own

1:30-2:45 PM

Conference Room: Memory and Imagining Home

Chair: Paolo Giordano, University of Central Florida

Memory, Nostalgia, Geography: Looking at the Homeland from a Distance

Patrizia La Trecchia, University of Florida

Imagining the Home Country: Intersecting Memories of Class, Generation, and Gender

Christa Wirth, Harvard University

Le Piemontesi in Argentina between Memories and Visits Home

Maddalena Tirabassi, Centro Altretalie

La Galleria: The Poetics of Return

Chair: Vincenzo Milione, Calandra Institute

Poets of Return: Emanuel Carnevali and Joseph Tusiani

Daniela Gioseffi, author

The Quest for Home

Joanne Tangorra, High/Scope Education Research Foundation

3-4:15 PM

Conference Room: Reclaiming/Reinventing

Chair: Edvige Giunta, New Jersey City University

Returning, Retaining, Reinventing the Homeland

Patricia D. Valenti, University of North Carolina



An Essay on Reclaiming, Reconnecting and Giving
Robert DiGiulio, Johnson State College
Presented by Matthew DiGiulio

“Bells to Saint Michael”: A Short Story
Tiziana Rinaldi Castro, author

La Galleria: Seeing and Performing Return
Chair: Fred Gardaphé, Queens College, CUNY

Observing Contemporary Italy as a Semi-Insider
Blaise Tobia, Drexel University

Return as Artistic Performance
LuLu LoLo, performance artist

4:30–5:45 PM
Conference Room: Ethnographic Approaches to Return
Chair: Anthony Julian Tamburri, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY

“Io mi considero tambien argentina”: Returning Emigrants and New Immigrants in Campania
Laura E. Ruberto, Berkeley City College

“When they all came home”: The Experience of Return Migration on the Amalfi Coast
Ailhlín Clark, Lancaster University

Between Italy and Argentina: Parents and Children’s Departures and Returns
Laura Gambi, independent scholar

6–6:35 PM
Closing Comments

All presentations are free and open to the public.
SEATING IS LIMITED.

For further information see our Web site www.qc.edu/calandra [2] or call (212) 642-2094.
The Calandra Institute is a university institute under the aegis of Queens College.

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