As the chapters move forward, Sergel pauses to look back and jump ahead and reflect on how her conception of her art and activism have changed over the course of the project. She is not at all reticent in noting the difficulties and frustrations of mobilizing this sort of grassroots remembrance.

Finally, the book is noteworthy for its readability. Even though Sergel covers a wide range of topics, she writes in a clear, accessible style. Of the many artists, designers, and memory provocateurs who have focused attention on events like the Triangle fire, Sergel is perhaps alone in writing about her own experiences, motives, and regrets. This is one of the book’s greatest strengths and a reason I hope it will be widely read. It has relevance for recent research on public memory and commemoration but more importantly can help other communities face the issue of remembrance of similarly devastating tragedies once the original witnesses have passed away.

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The Italian Emigration of Modern Times: Relations between Italy and the United States Concerning Emigration Policy, Diplomacy and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment, 1870–1927.
By Patrizia Famà Stahle.
180 pages.

The century-old history of lynchings of Italians across the United States provides a remarkable window into race, justice, violence, social mores, human rights, and the working class in the context of mass migration and rapid industrialization. Patrizia Famà Stahle’s book on this topic is her unrevised dissertation submitted to the University of Southern Mississippi in 2010. In sharp contrast to its exceedingly broad title, this book is really about twelve lynchings of Italians between 1879 and 1910, ranging in location from Florida to Nevada, and the Italian government’s struggles to understand and react to the unpunished communal violence.

Chapters 1 and 2 provide a thin survey of Italian migration from the 1870s to the onset of Fascism, drawing heavily upon Robert Foerster’s classic The Italian Emigration of Our Times (Foerster 1919), which is the basis of Stahle’s title. In her summary of Italian migration, Stahle includes puzzling statements such as, “Although emigration from southern Italy was not late, there were
some differences from that of the North” (17). Chapters 3 and 4 are the heart of this book, discussing the lynchings in detail from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chapter 5 reviews official Italian responses to the incidents and traces the course of diplomatic discourse around lynchings between Italy and the United States.

The core of the book focuses on detailed analyses of ethnic lynchings in America. Incidents of communal vigilante violence, or mobs taking the law into their own hands, were an open secret in American society, even supported by local police and governments as a form of extrajudicial killings. What caused the international incident with Italy, however, was the citizenship of Italian victims. If they were U.S. citizens, they were subject to local law or its absence; if they were Italian citizens, they were protected by the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation of 1871, ratified between the Kingdom of Italy and the United States of America. Steeped in Enlightenment traditions of justice since the time of Cesare Beccaria, liberal Italy was stunned by the abuse of justice in the United States, but particularly offended by the massacre of Italian citizens. In each lynching case, Italian consuls and the Italian ambassador would establish the citizenship of the victims; if they were Italian, the Italian state would pursue an indemnity for the surviving family and try in vain to pursue justice against the anonymous gang of murderers.

Beginning in 1879, the first case of lynching was the shooting of five silver miners, including two Italians, during a strike in Eureka, Nevada. The sheriff and his deputies were exonerated in court, and the Italian consul sought unsuccessfully for indemnities. Next, in 1886 an Italian accused of rape was hanged by a mob in Vicksburg, Mississippi, at the county jail. The New York newspaper *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* urged Rome to better protect its nationals. In 1889, two Italians who had shot their employer were lynched in Louisville, Kentucky: one hanged and one shot. Most dramatically, in 1891, after the assassination of the New Orleans chief of police, a mob hanged eleven Italians accused of the murder, three of whom were Italian citizens. Stahle assumes general knowledge of this event; she states that all eleven were acquitted (109), failing to note that six were acquitted of murder, and three were subject to retrial because of a hung jury (mistrial). She also does not point out that this was the largest lynching in U.S. history.

The Kingdom of Italy’s ambassador protested to the U.S. secretary of state, demanding justice for the victims of the assassins. The secretary of state, however, protested that murder was a crime under state jurisdiction, and the federal government could do nothing. Italy recalled its ambassador until the U.S. Congress passed a resolution that granted an indemnity to the victim’s families while denying any responsibility. Certainly this was dramatic, but Stahle overstates her case, claiming “it seemed the winds of war were blowing”
Italy’s recalling of its ambassador was not the same thing as preparing for war with the United States.

The Italian American press tended to discredit as “blood money” the established precedent of U.S. congressional payment of an indemnity with a formal denial of any responsibility. However, this was repeated several times as a way for the U.S. government to follow its treaty obligations with Italy, even though money was not the same thing as justice. Proposed laws to establish federal jurisdiction over the lynchings of foreign nationals, introduced in Congress repeatedly until 1933, were defeated in the U.S. Senate by Southern politicians.

The other Italian lynchings Stahle discusses include an accused murderer hanged in Denver, Colorado, in 1893; three Italians accused of murder, shot in Walsenburg, Colorado, in 1895; and three Italians accused of murder and “mafia methods,” hanged in Hahnville, Louisiana, in 1896, followed by five Italians hanged in Tallulah, Louisiana, in 1899. There was even a fictional lynching, reported by the local newspaper but not an actual event, in 1892 in Seattle, Washington. Two Italians were shot to death in Erwin, Mississippi, in 1901, in an organized murder or lynching; and an Italian was killed by a mob in Ashdown, Arkansas, the same year, reflecting ethnic labor competition. Two Italians, who were not members of the local union, were killed when their house was dynamited in Davis, West Virginia, in 1903. Finally, Stahle documents the 1910 premeditated lynching in Tampa, Florida, of a *mafiosos*, who was an American citizen, and his friend, an Italian citizen, accused of perjury since he had falsely claimed to have been born in the United States. With the connivance of the police, the two men were taken from custody by a mob and hanged outside the jail, in the context of tension after a seven-month cigar-makers’ strike. The Italian consul protested the sale of pictures of the cadavers hanging from the gibbet. After the grand jury investigation, no one was even charged as a suspect in the hangings. However, in 1913 the U.S. House of Representatives approved $6,000 as an indemnity, without accepting any liability on the part of the United States.

Within its 180 pages, this book showcases an abnormal amount of repetition. For example, the phrase “which provoked a serious diplomatic crisis and national pride . . . culminating in Rome’s recall of its ambassador,” a fine phrase in itself, is repeated on pages 1, 10, 47, 49, and 139. More attentive editing from Cambridge Scholars Publishing would have greatly benefited the final published product.

One factor in the book’s unevenness is its lack of current sources. The bibliography notes only two secondary sources dated after 2003. However, Stahle does use available archival sources: the Italian Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—Archivio Storico Dipolmatico, Ministero degli
Affari Esteri—including the consular files, series P (United States), and series Z (international incidents). The detailed paraphrasing of these official Italian sources marks this book’s contribution to the scholarly literature.

This book’s archival citations will be useful to scholars writing the local or ethnic history of fin-de-siècle Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and West Virginia. It explores in detail, for an English-language audience, Italian diplomatic efforts in regard to a series of horrific community murders in the United States. However, this book surely represents a lost opportunity for the author to update her arguments beyond the dissertation and to engage with the current work of other scholars. The relevant fields of ethnic studies, diplomatic history, and criminal justice have developed in the past fourteen years, and this history of Italian lynchings could have informed (and been informed by) the ongoing debates over identity, social justice, human rights, and immigration in the United States.

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Work Cited

240 pages.

The murder of Kitty Genovese has seeped deeply into American popular culture and imagination. Many know the basic outlines of the story: how in 1964 a young woman was murdered in her New York City neighborhood while many of her neighbors witnessed but did not attempt to stop the attack or alert authorities. Kitty Genovese became a symbol of urban apathy and of how Americans had become increasingly numb to the plight of their neighbors.

The fiftieth anniversary of her murder saw the publication of three books about the case, as well as a documentary film titled The Witness, which featured extensive interviews with and participation of Genovese’s brother.1 The most scholarly of the books is Marcia M. Gallo’s “No One Helped.” All of the