LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Cari Amici,

Welcome to volume 8.1 of the Calandra Institute’s *il Bollettino*. This issue marks the end of our seventh year publishing this newsletter and the initial period of nine years of my tenure at the Institute as dean.

As I look through this issue, I am reminded of so much we do and have done as an Institute. I am especially pleased at the breadth and depth of research that Institute staff members produce. Page 4 includes Calandra publications that deal with a variety of topics that include politics, Italian-American employment in civil service positions, historic photography, and a much needed dialogue with the Italian intelligentsia. Further still, you will find two non-Calandra publications: one a collection of essays on identity, the other an innovative study on Catholicism and Italians in New York.

Last fall we made history! Through its CUNY/Italy exchange, we signed an agreement with Università della Calabria (UniCal) with regard to teaching and research. This summer we shall make history once more with the first ever three-week seminar dedicated to the Italian diaspora. Ten doctoral students and six professors will be among the participants. The teaching staff, in turn, includes three Calandra staff members.

As we mentioned last time, the Institute opened the Calandra Center for Career Development at its midtown office. See below for details.

We continue to enjoy great support from all. Our colleagues and friends within CUNY are most helpful, and the Italian-American community of the greater New York metropolitan area is extremely encouraging. Much still needs to be done, and our future activities will address many important concerns of our community as we move forward.

As always, we are extremely appreciative of the unyielding support of both Chancellor James Milliken’s Office of CUNY and President Felix Matos Rodriguez’s Office of Queens College. They and their staff continue to facilitate our development as the largest institute of its kind anywhere in the world. Yes, in the world.

Arrivederci a presto,
Anthony Julian Tamburri, Distinguished Professor and Dean
ARIA PRESENTS A MULTICULTURAL EVENT AT QUEENS COLLEGE

Joseph Grosso and Pierre Tribaudi

The Association to Reunite Italian Americans (ARIA) at Queens College is a faculty, staff, and student organization promoting Italian and Italian-American culture. In addition to its core mission, ARIA works with other groups on campus to co-sponsor events and activities of mutual interest.

On Wednesday, November 12, 2014, in collaboration with the Italian American Club and five college organizations, ARIA presented a panel discussion, “Multicultural Traditions, Values and Belief Systems: Celebrating Our Similarities and Differences.” Before and after the formal presentations, an audiovisual slideshow featured details of various cultures.

ARIA co-chairs Alexandra deLuise and Pierre Tribaudi, along with Joseph Grosso, served on the planning committee. The event was funded by the Office of the Provost and co-sponsored by the Calandra Institute.

Provost Elizabeth Hendrey welcomed attendees and highlighted the importance of dialogue between multicultural groups. Anthony Julian Tamburri, Dean of the Calandra Institute, remarked that he grew up thinking he was Italian, but realized he was American when he visited Italy for the first time. Tamburri suggested that issues of family may provide commonality among all groups.

Panelists included: Madhulika Khandelwal, Asian American Center; Christos P. Ioannides, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies; Uri Cohen, Hillel; Fred Gardaphé, Italian American Studies; and John Collins, Latin American and Latino Studies.

Madhulika Khandelwal commented on the term “Asian,” which encompasses an extremely diverse population. Khandelwal discussed India in particular, where eighteen different Indian languages are spoken and every major religion is represented.

Christos Ioannides observed that the Greek community in the United States is experiencing increased intermarriage alongside a decline of its neighborhoods. Ioannides asserted that younger generations are giving rise to a new identity: the dual identification of Greek and Greek American.

Uri Cohen reported that 85 percent of Jews go to college, a higher percentage than those who participate in Jewish religious activities. Cohen observed that Jews have long been a global people, and that Judaism is known for its ideals and values rather than its borders.

Fred Gardaphé ascertained that Italian Americans have typically worked hard, burrowed in, and sought safety in the family unit, thereby limiting their public voice. Gardaphé expressed interest in the contrast between youth’s self-representation and academic views of ethnic culture.

John Collins emphasized the diversity of Latin America and the critical impacts of conquest, slave trades, and immigration on its history and ethnic identification. Collins also discussed issues of class, gender, and labor markets that affect all people.

Open discussion followed, addressing issues of ethnic identity, generational conflicts, intermarriage, acculturation, and discrimination. A recurring theme was the uniqueness of Queens College’s ethnically diverse population, and its value in understanding and sharing multicultural diversity. There was clear consensus that this event can serve as a launching point for future multicultural events.

For more information visit: www.gracedegennaro.com

Cover artist GRACE DEGENNARO says of her work: Continuum is both the name of my current painting series and the essence of my ongoing aspiration: to convey to the viewer a sense of the unseen structure that supports the universe. My work is informed by my study of ancient uses of pattern, symmetry, and iconic symbolism in traditional forms such as Tantric drawings, Navajo weavings, and Byzantine mosaics, as well as modern interpretations of these vocabularies including geometric abstraction, Carl Jung’s collective unconscious, Josef Albers’s color theory, and Robert Lawlor’s sacred geometry. During the past year I have been particularly fascinated by Sanskrit algorithms that define the Fibonacci sequences, the Golden Mean, and how these philosophical geometries are manifest in the world and in my work. Each of my paintings starts from a central axis that divides the canvas into equal “golden” sections. Starting at the center of a schematic framework, I apply small beads of pigment in a process that combines colors in recurring accretions. The resulting lattice of color on a contrasting ground imparts a gnomonic expansion, much like the symmetric growth of a tree, a sheaf of wheat, or the shell of a nautilus. Each mark begets and relates to another mark, creating a visible record of time as the surface evolves and the past is seen with the present.

For more information visit: www.gracedegennaro.com

Participants at ARIA panel discussion, “Multicultural Traditions, Values and Belief Systems: Celebrating Our Similarities and Differences,” at Queens College.
The interviews in volume 1 of the Maria Federici Series in Politics and Government are transcribed from the Calandra Institute’s Oral History Archive project. It features conversations with New York elected officials Joseph Addabbo Jr., James Alesi, Ron Canestrari, John DeFrancisco, Francine DelMonte, RoAnn Destito, Ginny Fields, Charles Fuschillo Jr., Joseph Griffo, Andrew Lanza, George Latimer, Joseph Lentol Jr., Donna Lupardo, William Magnarelli, Serphin Maltese, George Onorato, Frank Padavan, Diane Savino, Mark Schroeder, and Mike Spano. The book includes forewords by Natalia Quintavalle, Consul General of Italy in New York; Paolo Genco, National President, ANFÉ Italia; and Anthony Julian Tamburri, Dean of the Calandra Institute.

**Transcending Borders, Bridging Gaps: Italian Americana, Diasporic Studies, and the University Curriculum**
Edited by Anthony Julian Tamburri and Fred Gardaphé

This volume is a compilation of essays presented at a 2014 workshop at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center in Italy, where professors from Italy and the United States met to discuss the challenges of developing Italian American Studies at the university level. The volume features essays by Mary Jo Bona, Leonardo Buonomo, Marina Camboni, Ottorino Cappelli, Peter Caravetta, Margherita Ganeri, Fred Gardaphé, Paul Giordano, Donatella Izzo, Djelal Kadir, Cristina Lombardi-Diop, Giorgio Mariani, Graziella Parati, Joseph Sciorra, Anthony Julian Tamburri, Maddalena Tirabassi, and Robert Viscusi.

**Reframing Italian America: Historical Photographs and Immigrant Representations**
Edited by Rosangela Briscese and Joseph Sciorra

*Reframing Italian America* brings to light forty-one historical photographs from the Calandra Institute’s Bernard Titowsky Collection, and it features essays by Dominique Padurano, Joseph Sciorra, and John Turturro. The majority of the 222 items in the Titowsky Collection depict scenes of Italian immigrant life throughout the United States from the first three decades of the twentieth century. A significant number are mounted on now-faded gray paperboard and captioned with ornate calligraphy, presumably part of a previous exhibition. The reframing of these images is an opportunity to discover these obscure visual documents and observe how Italian immigrants refashioned themselves in the process of transforming America.

**Meditations on Identity / Meditazioni su identità**
Edited by Anthony Julian Tamburri
Bordighera Press, 2015

The reflections that are here published represent the synthesis of ILICA’s mission: more reality and less rhetoric. Civilization and culture flourish in well-defined cycles, and Italians have a unique history, a symbol in this world which is always more global.

— Vincenzo Marra, President, ILICA

Italian Language Intercultural Alliance (ILICA) is a not-for-profit foundation dedicated to the promotion of the Italian language as an instrument of understanding and study of a culture in continuous evolution, and in constant dialogue with both Americans of Italian origin as well as other ethnic groups that share interest in learning the Italian language as a key to understanding Italian culture within the context of the twenty-first century.

**Built With Faith: Italian American Imagination and Catholic Material Culture**
Joseph Sciorra
University of Tennessee Press, 2015

For more than a century, Italian-American Catholics in New York City have developed a varied repertoire of devotional art and architecture to create sacred spaces in homes and neighborhoods, spaces outside of but in relationship to the consecrated halls of local parishes. Today, yard shrines, domestic altars, presepi (Nativity crèches), extravagant Christmas house displays, and street processions are examples of the vibrant and varied ways contemporary Italian Americans continue to use material culture, architecture, and public ceremonial display to shape New York City’s religious and cultural landscapes. Joseph Sciorra’s ethnographic study examines these forms of lived religious expression in the city from the 1980s to the present day.
In the fall 2014, Italics celebrated its eighth season of four special episodes for Italian Heritage and Culture Month.

The first of the series included Joseph Sciame, of the Italian Heritage and Culture Month Committee, and Columbus Day Parade organizers Frank G. Fusaro, Chairman of the Board of Governors, and Angelo Vivolo, President of the Columbus Citizens Foundation.

The second edition featured Natalia Quintavalle, Consul General of Italy in New York, and John Calvelli, Executive Vice President of both Public Affairs of the Wildlife Conservation Society and National Italian American Foundation.


The final episode of the series highlighted the celebration of Italian Heritage in Manhattan and Staten Island. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio discussed his Italian heritage. The Calandra Institute signed an agreement with the University of Calabria, and ILICA celebrated its tenth anniversary.

On the next episode Italics interviewed Valerie Rousseau, curator at the American Folk Art Museum, about the exhibit “Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget.” Authors Joseph Luzzi and Dolores DeLuce discussed their new works, and Italics previewed Embroidered Stories, with contributors Joanna Clappes Herman and Jo Ann Cavallo and editor Joseph Sciorra.

Next, actor Rocco Sisto explored “Shakespeare’s Italy.” Professor Margherita began teaching the ABCs of Italian. The annual NIAF gala featured a performance by Louis Prima, Jr., and Italics spoke with actor John Turturro. Finally, Bordighera Press celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary.

“Efrem Bartoletti in the Mesabi Range: A Wobbly’s Efforts to Mobilize Immigrant Italian Miners,” by Thierry Rinaldetti

For an industrial union like the IWW, mobilizing workers of diverse ethnic backgrounds into class-conscious movements was a major concern. Particularly hard to organize were the Italians, who were divided, not only ideologically, but along regional lines as well. These issues are addressed here, not from the perspective of Wobbly leadership, but from that of a Mesabi Range miner and IWW activist, Efrem Bartoletti, who fully belonged to the local community that he tried to organize. Unlike for most of his peers, in his case a number of primary sources are available, which makes it possible to hear a voice that is generally not heard. This paper examines the paradox between Efrem Bartoletti’s commitment to revolutionary industrial unionism and the nature of his efforts in the field as he tried to unite divided Italian-American workers by appealing to their sense of Italianness. I argue that this was a paradox in appearance only, as Efrem Bartoletti viewed his repeated calls for national unity as a first necessary step toward a larger goal. His poetry, in particular, can be viewed both as a reflection of the inner conflicts many Italian-American workers must have been experiencing, and as a powerful tool of internationalist propaganda.


Marty, a film and television classic, has enjoyed a robust afterlife on the stage. The material was performed as a musical play in 2002, and the original television script was staged as an invitation-only live stage reading hosted by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in 2012. This essay provides critical analyses of the representations offered by each production. Additionally, through original interviews, it offers a backstage look at the production process of the stage reading and a descriptive analysis of the event, which is especially notable since copyright constraints prevented any recording of the performance. Taken together, the musical and the stage reading have provided an ongoing commentary about the social meaning, rhetorical use, and cultural significance of Italian-American ethnicity. The musical offered little comment on the original, preferring instead to resurrect a beloved 1950s character. This kind of nostalgic embrace laments a supposedly less complicated past and serves as a critique of the multicultural present where ethnic neighborhoods and ethnic identities are not as isolated and easily defined as they once were. The live stage reading moderated the play’s ethnic Italianness to emphasize issues that cross ethnic boundaries and carry the potential to build multiethnic alliances.
Anthony LaRuffa, professor at Lehman College, passed away on September 20, 2014.

Dr. LaRuffa earned his undergraduate degree at the City College of New York, and his master’s and Ph.D. from Columbia University. He is recognized for significant contributions to teaching, research, writing, and service to the college and broader community. Dr. LaRuffa’s areas of academic specialization were extensive: They included religion, ethnicity, social stratification, and evolutionary biology.

A highlight of his academic career was collaborating with colleagues in developing, implementing, and teaching in a unique interdisciplinary major: the Italian American Studies program. Through his dedication to teaching and mentoring, he helped thousands of students achieve their dream of earning a college degree. He derived great personal and professional satisfaction from developing seminars for the Lehman Scholars Program. In keeping with his deep concern for adult students having access to classes, Dr. LaRuffa offered evening anthropology courses every semester and taught in the Adult Degree Program at Lehman. He also served as the Lehman College Ombudsman for three decades.

An affable man, with a calm demeanor and without pretention, he was very well liked. For over forty years, some of Dr. LaRuffa’s happiest hours were spent in his single-engine plane, flying to various destinations in the Northeast. He was a voracious reader, with Tolstoy, Darwin, and Dawkins among his favorites. Dr. LaRuffa took great pleasure in listening to Beethoven and spending time in upstate New York, where he found awe-inspiring sunsets. He enjoyed the Hudson Valley’s trees, fields, and farms, and eating in the local diners.

Anthony L. LaRuffa is survived by his wife, Phyllis Rafti, three children, and four grandchildren.

(This article was excerpted from http://wp.lehman.edu/lehman-today)
My maternal grandmother, Rosa Giugliano, was a woman of great strength, perseverance, and sweetness who above all else valued family. This always came through whenever we visited her. She grew up during the 1920s and '30s in Italy, in the town of Afragola, Naples. She struggled as many others did to raise six children on my grandfather's (Raffaele Laezza) salary (he was a construction worker). Rosa was known for her bargaining skills and always tried to get the best deal; with eight mouths to feed it was a must. She was also famous for being the social butterfly of the neighborhood and the love-letter writer. Not many in the town during those times knew how to write, but she did and she would write out dictated love letters for the women who had sweethearts in the army. No matter how difficult things were she always had a smile on her face. Although she died young and I only met her a few times (and regrettably she never met all of her sixteen grandchildren), I know she would be proud of all of us (well, maybe not all of us). This is what I remember about my grandmother Rosa: her always happy and smiling, and the warmth of her love that I felt when she embraced me.

— ROSARIA MUSCO

The Calandra Institute is accepting abstracts for its ninth annual conference, “Migrating Objects: Material Culture and Italian Identities,” which will take place on April 28-30, 2016.

In Helen Barolini’s multigenerational, women-centered novel Umbertina (1979) the journey of a woven bedspread is a key motif. Umbertina commissions the coperta matrimoniale and treasures it as she emigrates to the United States. The brilliantly hued matrimonial cover, with its intertwined embroidered floral designs, offers the young wife and mother solace amid the squalor of tenement life. But poverty forces the destitute immigrant to sell the coverlet, and decades later it is displayed at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, its origins and complicated migration story forgotten and lost.

Barolini’s fictional migrating object is an emblematic subject for the 2016 conference theme. Material culture, broadly defined, includes all objects and things modified by humans, from hand-crafted to factory-made objects, including the visual arts, architecture, and landscapes. Objects exist, circulate, and are interpreted within different regimes of value. How objects are used to communicate, store memories, and elicit narratives are the concern of the conference.

Material culture is inextricably tied to social identities, which are negotiated, reproduced, or contested through spatial and temporal shifts. Material culture studies recognizes how objects are made and subsequently move from one environment to another. The migration and recontextualization of things provide opportunities for transvaluation, when new and evolving meanings are ascribed to inanimate objects at the same time that pre-existing ideologies linger in new places.

This interdisciplinary conference focuses on material culture in the contexts of Italy, its colonies, and its diasporic communities, with particular interest in new approaches to the analysis of material culture that draw from the social sciences and the humanities. The deadline for submitting paper or panel abstracts for consideration is September 18, 2015. Complete submission instructions are available at www.qc.edu/calandra.

In March of 2015 the Calandra Community Book Club rounded out its first year of meetings with a discussion of John Fante's 1939 novel Ask the Dust. Fante’s famously bleak portrait of prewar L.A. was the third in the list of classics of Italian-American fiction that the group undertook to read and study together. The previous two novels the club read were Tina De Rosa's Paper Fish and Piero Di Donato's Christ in Concrete. The book club was convened by Calandra Institute staff member Siân Gibby, who wanted to build up her knowledge of Italian-American masterpieces of fiction. If you are interested in joining the book club, contact Siân at sian.gibby@qc.cuny.edu.
ITALIAN AMERICAN REVIEW

The Italian American Review (IAR) features scholarly articles about Italian American history and culture, as well as other aspects of the Italian diaspora. The journal embraces a wide range of professional concerns and theoretical orientations in the social sciences and cultural studies. The IAR publishes book, film, and digital media reviews and is currently accepting article submissions.

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1 includes:

• “Efrem Bartoletti in the Mesabi Range: A Wobbly’s Efforts to Mobilize Fellow Italian Miners,” by Thierry Rinaldetti
• “The Afterlife of a Classical Text: Representing Ethnicity in the Stage Productions of Marty,” by Jonathan J. Cavallero

For more information, go to qc.edu/calandra. Under the publications menu, click on Italian American Review.

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FALL 2015 PUBLIC PROGRAMS

PHILIP V. CANNISTRARO
SEMINAR SERIES
IN ITALIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Thursday, October 1, 2015 at 6pm
An Unlikely Union: The Love-Hate Story of New York’s Irish and Italians, PAUL MOSES, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Monday, October 26, 2015 at 6pm
Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America, KENYON ZIMMER, University of Texas at Arlington

WRITERS READ SERIES

Thursday, September 17, 2015 at 6pm
MARY JO BONA reads from I Stop Waiting for You (Bordighera Press, 2014)
LOUISA CALIO reads from Journey to the Heart Waters (Legas, 2014)
GEORGE GUIDA reads from The Sleeping Gulf (Bordighera Press, 2015)

Wednesday, December 2, 2015 at 6pm

DOCUMENTED ITALIANS
FILM AND VIDEO SERIES

Monday, December 14, 2015
Way Down in the Hole (2010), 40 min., Alex Johnston, dir.

EXHIBITION
Reframing Italian America: Historical Photographs and Immigrant Representations
GALLERY HOURS: MONDAY–FRIDAY, 9AM–5PM

All events are free and open to the public.
All events are held at the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, 25 West 43rd Street, 17th floor, New York NY 10036.
RSVP by calling (212) 642-2094. Please note that seating is limited and seats cannot be reserved in advance.