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The Writer Suspended between Two Worlds: Joseph Tusiani's *Autobiografia di un italo-americano*

Paolo Giordano

*Two languages, two lands, perhaps two souls. . .
Am I a man or two strange halves of one?
(Joseph Tusiani, Gente Mia, 7)*

*Quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?
(Vergil, Aeneid: 460)*

*Di tutte le lontananze, l'America è la più vera ed esemplare.
(Mario Soldati, America PrimoAmore, 33)*

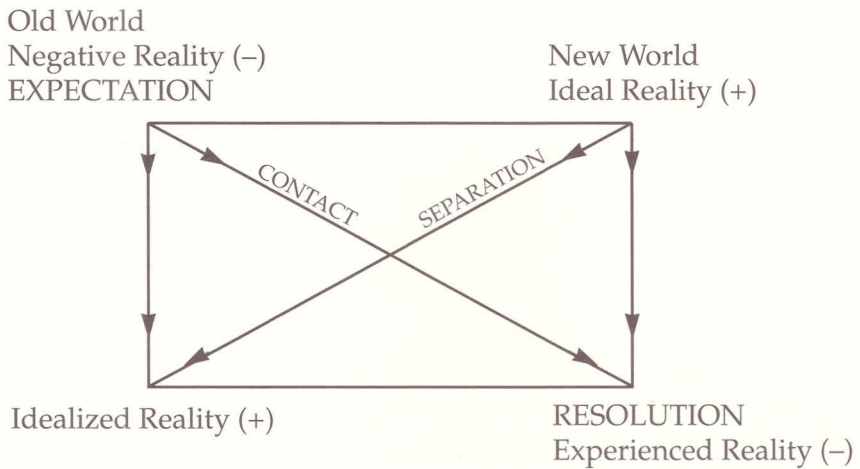
It can safely be said that the majority of writing done by immigrant authors is explicitly autobiographical in nature. In effect, the theme of the immigrant's flight from a culture of poverty and misery, their Italian reality, in search of a better world, the myth of America, the immigrant's version of the promised land, permeates the earliest Italian immigrant writings.¹ These Italian American texts were not considered part of mainstream American literature and much of this writing remained scattered, its literary qualities "naturally overlooked, since the very collective subjects that created their special world view were benignly neglected, buried as most immigrants were in the "black holes" of the American cosmos." (Boelhower, *Immigrant Autobiography*, 18) Fortunately, over the last twenty years the situation has changed. The work of a number of dedicated critics and the publication of a number of studies and anthologies have validated this body of literature, given it a definition, and brought it out of the closet, so to speak, and into the public consciousness.²

In his article "The Immigrant Novel as Genre" (which appeared in the 1981 Spring issue of *MELUS*), William Boelhower makes the following macroproposition:

An immigrant protagonist(s) representing an ethnic worldview comes to America with great expectations, and through a series of trials is led to reconsider them in terms of his final status. (Boelhower, 5)

Moreover, Boelhower continues, this proposition can be formulated with the following diagram:

Topos/World View



This diagram, which explains the emotional and intellectual movement of the immigrant, is grounded by the tension created between the Old World and New World "both as locations and as mental categories." As the immigrant begins the forced journey that takes him away from his native village/city, his family, and all that he has known (Old World), he leaves behind a reality, which, because of all the hardships endured, has acquired a negative meaning, and he sails for the New World, his ideal reality. The three major moments in this journey are, as Boelhower explains, *expectation* (dreams, possibility, opportunity), *contact* (the experiences, trials and tribulations of the newly arrived immigrant) and *resolution* (assimilation, hyphenation, alienation). As the immigrant begins his journey, his expectation is that his new

reality will be an ideal one. With the passing of time, as his status changes from emigrant to that of immigrant and he further experiences the New World (experienced reality) and discovers the real America, his separation from the old world and its customs becomes problematic and sets off an emotional response that will lead the immigrant to reverse the process and idealize the "old ways." The final resolution (experienced reality) is subsequently put into a new de-idealized context.³

The immigrant author who wants to represent his/her life as an "other," and deal with the conflicts brought about by emigration, spiritual, psychological, and physical, has the daunting task of organizing two diametrically opposed cultural systems, a culture of the present and the future and a culture of memory, into a single working model. Joseph Tusiani's trilogy, *Autobiografia di un italo-americano*, does so very successfully.

The publication of Joseph Tusiani's autobiography in three volumes, *La parola difficile*, *La parola nuova*, and *La parola antica*, connected by the common subtitle, *Autobiografia di un italo-americano*, is in many ways an historical event in the literature of Italian America. With these books, Tusiani marks another milestone in his career as poet, translator, and scholar.⁴ In the 958 pages of this trilogy, Tusiani not only narrates his life from the day in 1947 when the *Saturnia* docked at New York City and at the age of 23 he met his father for the first time, but also, with his experienced reality of forty years of American life, Tusiani asks us, the reader, to embark on a voyage, an odyssey that has different levels of significance. On one level it is the voyage of Tusiani and his family, specifically his mother, who, besides the author, is the other common denominator of the trilogy, from Italy to the United States; that is, from the reality of the Old World, with all its ancestral rituals rooted in a catholic/rural (cattolico/contadina) culture, to the reality of the New World, constructed on radically different models. It is a linear voyage in time where the protagonist struggles to create a space for himself in America, in academia, and in the world of literature as a poet. Simultaneously it is also a circular journey, where Tusiani, maybe unknowingly, returns "spiritually" to the old world—the world of his mother who is still living. On yet a different level, Tusiani's recounting of his forty years in the United States takes us on an exemplary voyage through the history of Italian emigration to the United States. Many of the people, famous and not famous, that grace the pages of Tusiani's trilogy are the essence of Italian emigration/immigration to the

United States. For the reader that undertakes this voyage, Tusiani's narrative will evoke many emotions, from the tragic to the amusing, but for the most part it is a sad journey full of pathos for the tragedy of immigration.

According to Boelhower, the immigrant autobiographer has the choice of "four axiological procedures" from which to proceed:

The narrator can order his strategy as: 1) a confirmation of the codes of the dominant culture; 2) a variation of these codes, in which case the dominant culture is respected but some of its untested possibilities are tried; 3) a negation of the dominant codes; 4) a substitution of the dominant culture with a counter-cultural alternative. (*Immigrant Autobiography*, 20)

Boelhower uses Constantine Panunzio's *Soul of an Immigrant* as an example of an autobiography that confirms the codes of the dominant culture, Pascal D'Angelo *Son of Italy* as a work where the dominant culture is accepted but a variation of the codes is experimented, *The Autobiography of Emmanuel Carnevale* compiled by Kay Boyle as an example of Italian American literature where the dominant American culture is rejected, Jerre Mangione's *Mount Allegro* as a work where an Italian American "neighborhood" is presented as a counter-cultural alternative. Of the four writers, only Jerre Mangione was born in the United States, the others emigrated from Italy.⁵ Tusiani's *Autobiografia di un italo-americano*, however, does not fit into the neat categories proposed by Boelhower, it is much more complex and seems to overflow from one category to another.

From the very first page, the reader realizes that Tusiani's autobiography is radically different from the ones mentioned above and from the majority of Italian American literature: it is written in Italian.⁶ Italian American writers who are not themselves immigrants generally write in English. That is the road Tusiani took once he arrived in the United States; he became an award-winning poet in the English Language, and a translator of Italian classics into English. But, for Tusiani the question of language has always been of primary importance, not only as a linguistic exercise, as he stated in his Keynote Address given in 1987 at the 20th Annual Conference of the American Italian Historical Association held in Chicago, but as a sociological and spiritual problem facing the newly arrived immigrant. Tusiani knows, as do most of those who were born in another country, that the emi-

gration odyssey takes many forms. First and foremost, s/he must face and come to terms with the actual, physical separation from the country of birth, and from family and friends. This most evident element of the emigration/immigration process is initially the most traumatic. When the immigrant arrives to the new country, the voyage is not finished. S/he will have to undertake other "voyages" in his/her quest to assimilate into mainstream American culture. The most important of these "voyages" is the linguistic/cultural one. S/he must immediately begin the journey from one language, one of the many Italian dialects, to another, American English. Once this process has begun, the emigrant, whose status now is changing to that of immigrant, begins to lose his/her native language and the ideas and cultural values that that language transmits. In other words, a cultural transformation begins to take place, and s/he begins to lose a part of himself/herself. Tusiani first introduced this element so poignantly in "Song of the Bicentennial" through a series of questions:

Do I regret my origins by speaking
 this language I acquired? Do I renounce,
 by talking now in terms of only dreams,
 the sogni of my childhood? What has changed
 that I had thought unchangeable in me? (*Gente Mia*, 5)

In *La parola antica*, the third volume of the trilogy, Tusiani returns to the question of bilingualism and discusses it at length:

Due lingue. La realtà dello sbarbicamento (uso questo termine per indicare lo sradicamento completo) comporta diversi problemi o traumi, prima di tutto quello di un nuovo linguaggio. Progredendo nell'acquisizione della lingua straniera, si corre il rischio, per ragioni di umana vanità, di ritenere inferiore quella materna? . . .

Non si cade in questo pericolo se il fenomeno del bilinguismo lo si considera non come conquista ma come rinnegamento forzato delle proprie origini e di se stessi. Il bilinguismo, cioè, diventa sinonimo di disintegrata unità familiare, per cui una madre non è più in grado di comprendere il proprio figlio. Dal giorno in cui il figlio dice «Mother» per «mamma» e «sky» per «cielo», fra madre e figlio c'è già una separazione spirituale che lo studioso di linguistica non può catalogare. Se le parole sono suoni articolati che simboleggiano e comunicano un'idea, il termine «mamma», a differenza di «mother», il nuovo termine acquisito, simboleggia e comunica un intero mondo di sentimenti che nessuna espressione straniera può comprendere e rispettare. Abolirlo significa rigettare l'esistenza di una fanciullezza intimamente legata a tutti gli episodi, piccoli e grandi, e a tutte le emozioni, importanti e non importanti, con-

nessi ed ispirati da quell'unica parola. Non assimilazione o americanizzazione, dunque, ma ambivalenza, un'ambivalenza di pensiero e sentimento, di dubbio e di certezza, di sogno e realtà. (*La parola antica*, 143-44)

The consequence of this transformation is that the immigrant, by expressing himself/herself in the acquired tongue, translates not only the language but his/her very soul, and in that process of translation s/he slowly and unrelentingly begins to change. S/he now has the language and the culture of two lands: "America e Italia; in quale ordine, però? Non dovremmo dire: Italia e America?" (*La parola antica*, 143). Tusiani poses these questions because he believes that the immigrant cannot ever be totally assimilated into his/her adopted culture:

Posta in termini diversi la domanda è: fino a qual punto l'emigrato può assimilare la nuova lingua e la nuova civiltà, e in che maniera dimenticare e rinnegare se stesso in mezzo alle nuove e impellenti esigenze della sua vita? Anche se la risposta sia priva di validità scientifica, il poeta ci dice che non esiste, e non può esistere, un assorbimento totale, e che non potrà mai esserci un'accettazione totale, cioè *spirituale*, delle tradizioni della nuova terra. (*La parola antica*, 143; emphasis mine)

Tusiani's continuous feeling of "uprootedness" lies primarily within this context of never having fully "spiritually" assimilated into American culture. He said it best in his "Song of the Bicentennial":

Then who will solve this riddle of my day?
Two languages, two lands, perhaps two souls . . .
Am I a man or two strange halves of one?

It is precisely the unsolved riddle, and the feeling of being suspended between two worlds, two cultural systems, that, I believe, pushes Tusiani to return to Italian, the language of his native land, for his autobiography.⁷

Another important reason for writing his autobiography in Italian I gleaned from a conversation that I had with him in the recent past. He commented that he did not think it right to translate the thoughts and words of many of the people that fill the pages of these three volumes into English. These individuals, although they lived for decades in the United States, remained primarily Italian. They only learned the bare essentials of the English language, and they never renounced the "old ways" and

never understood the "new." These are individuals who did not choose emigration, but for whom emigration was "voluto da un capriccio del destino, voglio dire, dall'inumana legge della povertà" (*La parola antica*, 143).

These Italian individuals who lived in the Arthur Avenue section of the Bronx, "il cuore della piccola Italia," are very important to this autobiography. Through them Tusiani explores the whole phenomenon of Italian emigration to the United States, especially that Italian emigration that came to an end after World War II. Their stories, their lives filled with memories, and their attempts to hold on to the "old ways" enlighten Tusiani about the tragedy of emigration. We meet his uncle Joseph Pisano who entered the United States clandestinely from Canada in search of work. Uncle Joseph who, in his own way continued to love Italy but never returned, and when told of the "boom economico" of postwar Italy, refused to believe it because it would have meant that all of his sacrifices would have been useless. The Italy he loved was "l'Italia dei suoi ricordi, l'Italia terra di pietre e cardi" (*La parola nuova*, 132). We meet the architect Nicola Giusto, who was relegated to menial jobs in the new world because he could not learn English and vented his anger and frustration by having a sign placed over the front door of his house "Qui non si parla il maledetto inglese." Among others we also meet "l'artista" Onorio Ruotolo, the author Francis Winwar (Francesca Vinciguerra), friend and companion of Tusiani, the poet and labor activist Arturo Giovannitti, and Cocò.

Of the individuals that the reader encounters in these three books, the story of Marco Cocò, known affectionately as Cocò, is the most interesting and, for Tusiani, the most symbolic of Italian immigration. He is introduced in the first book, *La parola difficile*, as "il nume indigete di Belmont . . . ormai presso i novant'anni. Ritto robusto energico, eccolo lì, un tantino confuso. . . ." Cocò emigrated to the United States before the turn of the century, and later went back to Italy to fight for his native country during World War I. He then returned to the United States where he died at the age of 103, never having renounced his Italian citizenship.

Cento e tre anni di vita, novantatré di emigrazione. Mi sembrava impossibile che un ragazzo di appena dieci anni non fosse riuscito a impadronirsi della lingua inglese fino a sentirsi americano come tutti i figli di italiani, bollati e passati lungo le transenne di Ellis Island. O era un caso speciale il nostro Cocò? Della sua patria

conosceva soltanto il nome di San Marco in Lamis; eppure quando qualcuno gli disse che l'Italia era in guerra, invece di benedire la sorte che lo aveva allontanato dal pericolo, fu tra i primi volontari a raggiungere il suolo natio. Si era tornato in America, ma, se non ci fosse tornato, non era forse il suo dovere morire per la patria? Ed eccolo, di nuovo, nel Bronx, il giovane Marco Cocò, ora più che mai convinto che nessun'altra esperienza può valere la gioia di aver servito la patria: oh no, non si farà mai cittadino americano, lui, perché—"Ma è mai possibile che gli altri non lo capissero?"—non si può servire due patrie. (*La parola antica*, 151)

For Tusiani, Marco Cocò, whose life spanned the years of mass immigration from Italy, becomes the symbol of immigration and of all the struggles and injustices that the immigrants had to endure.

The *Autobiografia di un italo-americano* is also the story of two generations of the Tusiani family in America. The first book of the trilogy, *La parola difficile*, offers the reader a grand tour of Italian American history, the birth of his American brother, and traces Tusiani's life from his arrival in New York to the year he won the Greenwood prize for poetry. In addition to the factual array of events, *La parola difficile* is, of greater poignancy, about the developing relationship of a man who meets his father for the first time when he arrives in America at the age of twenty-three. The father had immigrated to America when, unknown to him, his wife was pregnant with Joseph. Tusiani finally utters the difficult word, "papà," but it takes the almost near-death of his father for Tusiani to be able to resolve his conflict. The second volume, *La parola nuova*, is the story of Michael, the American brother. Born one year after his mother arrived in the United States, Michael speaks a different language and grows up with a world view that is thoroughly different from that of his "Italian family," the brother who grows up to be President of a major petroleum company. This volume addresses the conflicts, misunderstandings, and difficulties that arise when these two cultures collide. Michael's announcement to his mother that he is getting married and that the date has been fixed illustrates well this cultural collision:

—Maichì, disse quella stessa sera a casa, hai già fissato la data del matrimonio per l'11 luglio, e va bene. Sei ancora troppo giovane per sposarti, e va bene. Hai voluto fare di testa tua senza ascoltare né genitori né fratello, e va bene. Ma . . . alla dote hai pensato? Quali sono le usanze dei . . . dei siciliani in America.

—La . . . che cosa?

—La dote. Ho detto la dote.

- E cos'è la dote, Ma?
 —Vuoi sposarti e non sai cos'è la dote?
 —No, non lo so. Dimmelo tu?
 —Fattelo spiegare da Giose. In Italia si pensa prima alla dote e poi al matrimonio. (*La parola antica*, 250)

After it is explained to him what a trousseau is, Michael, with his thoroughly American point of view, explains:

In questa terra non c'è, grazie a Dio, la povertà che tu ricordi. Qui c'è il lavoro: ecco perché non esiste quella che tu chiami dote, ed ecco perché un ragazzo di nome Maichino può sposare una ragazza di nome Beatrice senza pensare ai giorni neri di cui ho sentito parlar da quando sono nato. Mi hai dato una professione, e che altro vorresti darmi? . . . Penseremo a tutto noi due. (251)

But the dialogue that follows shows that the mother does not understand this line of reasoning. It is a view of the world that is foreign to her way of thinking because she, like other immigrants of her generation, has remained anchored in the culture of her small Italian town:

- Ma io debbo fare come si faceva in Italia, lo interruppe mia madre, La mobilia te la farò io, la più bella e ricca da fare invidia tutti i paesani. . . . Devi fare una figura che non ha fatto nessuno. Una volta ci si sposa. . .
 —In America c'è il divorzio, Ma.
 —In casa mia non dire mai più questa parola.
 —Scherzo, mamma bella, scherzo.
 —A me questi scherzi non piacciono, Maichì.
 —Ma la mobilia, io e Beatrice non la vogliamo bella e ricca; la vogliamo moderna e poco costosa perché, dopo quattro o cinque anni, intendiamo farcene un'altra, e poi un'altra ancora, e poi . . .
 —Ma figlio mio che ti hanno messo in testa questi siciliani? La mobilia deve servire per tutta la vita, e poi così pure la cucina . . .
 —Qui siamo in America, Ma; non siamo a San Marco in Lamis. . . . Non pensare a queste cose. La mobilia ce la sceglieremo noi, io e Beatrice.

Mia madre non parlò più. L'America non l'aveva mai capita, ma ora, più che mai, le sembrava terra incomprensibile e malvagia. Buono e intelligente com'era, quel figlio americano cominciava a trafiggerle il cuore. (251-52)

Mother and son are growing apart, the two cultures, so different from one another, have no middle ground from which to negotiate a common language. They are destined to misunderstanding. But what is also significant here is the mother's two-lay-

ered cultural collision. We see in her conversation with Michael the incompatibilities of her Italian culture with his United States culture. However, within this same conversation we see how she, having left her small Italian town, also feels herself in cultural discord with her son's future in-laws "che ti hanno messo in testa quei *siciliani*" (emphasis added).

La parola antica, which concludes the trilogy, signals the end of immigration. The word has become ancient because Italian immigration has come to an end, and the cultural conflicts that marked the relationship between Michael and his mother, between Michael's children and their grandmother, will disappear within a generation. For the Italian American, finally on the threshold of assimilating into American society, Italy has little if any meaning at all. It has become just a place where his ancestors came from, a possible tourist attraction. For Tusiani, instead, "la parola antica" becomes stronger and spiritually pulls him back to the land and culture of his birth. His progressive, linear voyage in American society and culture is over and he longs for a return. The problem is that forty years of experienced American reality cannot be erased, they have had a profound effect on his life and on his work as a poet, translator, and scholar. In the last episode of the book, Tusiani, on his way back from Italy, dreams that he finds himself alone with his mother in a long corridor bathed with a blinding white light, with many doors on the sides and one door on each end; one which said "Exit," the other, "Entrance." They begin walking towards the door marked "Exit." When they arrive, he notices that it now says "Entrance" and that the sign on the door at the opposite end of the corridor has changed accordingly to "Exit":

Arrivai sotto quella scrittura e lessi «Entrata». Mi voltai e vidi, lì dov'era mia madre la parola «Uscita». . . . Rifeci il cammino, ma quando raggiunsi mia madre, in alto, al posto di «Uscita» lessi nuovamente «Entrata». . . . E per quaranta volte, affannato, ansioso, con la speranza e la disperazione che mi spingevano e guidavano, corsi da un'estremità all'altra di quell'enorme corridoio. . . . (308)

On the brink of being overtaken by panic, Tusiani notices that the corridor has doors along its sides. On each door is written the name of a person that has had a profound impact on his life: Francis Winwar, Cocò, Onorio Ruotolo, l'architetto Giusto, Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, Louise Townsend Nicholl, Arturo Giovannitti, Martin Luther King, Antonietta Lombardi, an immi-

grant neighbor, and Father Walsh, a Jesuit mentor. He knocks on all their doors but no one answers. Finally, bathed by the light he sees the shadow of his father who had died a few years earlier:

«Papà! Papà!» gli dissi, andandogli incontro, «ci siamo perduti io e mamma; non possiamo trovare l'uscita.»
 «Sei proprio un bambino,» mi rispose mio padre, sorridendo.
 «So io dov'è l'uscita: venite con me.» Cominciavamo a seguirlo . . .
 (309)

The dream ends abruptly when Tusiani is suddenly awakened by the flight attendant announcing the imminent landing at Kennedy Airport. No one can help him find the exit; it is an existential problem to which only he can supply an answer. The book, and the autobiography, ends with this short paragraph:

Andando verso il Bronx, nella limousine della Poten [the petroleum company of which his brother is president], notai un altro particolare: i tergicristalli, strusciando da destra a sinistra, da sinistra a destra, sembravano dire Entrata-Uscita, Uscita-Entrata, ma non sapevo più che cosa significassero quelle due parole, né a chi fossero rivolte. (310)

If the reader does a superficial reading of the last paragraphs/he would probably conclude that Tusiani does not find an answer to his dilemma, and may conclude that he is more confused than ever about his identity. But a (closer) more reflective reading tells us, I would contend, that Tusiani has, after forty years of American life, come to a resolution of his "problem". The resolution is his awareness of being suspended between two worlds, his acceptance of his biculturalism, for which, instead of seeing himself as not belonging to either one or the other world, he can accept himself as being the man of "two languages, two lands, [. . .] two [socio-cultural] souls," which he had previously questioned in his poetry:

Then who will solve this riddle of my day?
 Two languages, two lands, perhaps two souls . . .
 Am I a man or two strange halves of one?

After forty years the riddle has been solved. The questions posed in "Song of the Bicentennial" have now become statements.

Notes

1. For more in-depth studies on Italian immigrant autobiography see Boelhower, *Immigrant Autobiography in the United States* and Gardaphé's article "My House is Not Your House: Jerre Mangione and Italian-American Autobiography" in *Multicultural Autobiography American Lives*, edited by James Robert Payne.

I would like to clarify that, within the context of this paper, when I refer to Italian American literature, I am limiting myself to the literature produced by Italian immigrants, and not to that body of literature produced by first, second, and third generation Italian Americans.

2. The first book-length study on Italian/American literature was Olga Peragallo's *Italian American Authors and Their Contribution to American Literature* (New York: S. F. Vanni, 1949). Fifteen years later Rose Basile Green published *The Italian-American Novel: A Document of the Interaction of Two Cultures* (Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1974), where she classifies the history of Italian/American narrative into four stages: 1) The need for assimilation; 2) "revulsion"; 3) "counterrevulsion" and 4) "rooting." Since then a number of studies have appeared, the most important being Robert Viscusi's "De vulgari eloquentia: An Approach to the Language of Italian American Fiction," (*Yale Italian Studies* I, 3, 1981: 21-38); William Boelhower's three studies, "The Immigrant Novel as Genre" in *MELUS* (8, 1: 1981, 3-14), *Immigrant Autobiography in the United States* (Verona: esedue, 1982) and *Through a Glass Darkly: Ethnic Semiosis* (Oxford UP, 1984); Helen Barolini's *The Dream Book: An Anthology of Writing by Italian American Women* (Schocken, 1985); Paolo Valesio's "Writer Between Two Worlds: Italian Writing in the United States Today." (*Differentia* 3-4, 1989: 259-76); *From the Margin: Writings in Italian Americana*, edited by Tamburri, Giordano and Gardaphé (Purdue UP, 1991); Fred Gardaphé's "My House Is Not Your House: Jerre Mangione and Italian-American Autobiography," in *Multicultural Autobiography American Lives* edited by James Robert Payne (U Tennessee P, 1992: 139-77); and *La letteratura dell'emigrazione. Scrittori di lingua italiana nel mondo*, edited by Jean-Jaques Marchand (Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1992). Anthony J. Tamburri, *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate*, Montréal: Guernica, 1991; Peter Carravetta and Paolo Valesio, eds. *Poesaggio. Poeti italiani d'America*. Treviso: Pagus, 1993; Luigi Fontanella and Paolo Valesio, eds., "Italian Poets in America," *Gradiola* (SUNY/Stony Brook), Vol. 5, No. 1, 1992-93. Also, the resumption of publication by *Italian Americana*, the establishment of *VIA: Voices in Italian Americana* and *la bella figura* bear witness to the continued rise in interest in the critical study of Italian/American culture.

3. For more on this, see my essay "From Southern Italian Immigrant to Reluctant American."

4. Tusiani is internationally known for his translations of Italian classics, among which are *The Complete Poems of Michelangelo*, Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, *From Marino to Marinetti*, and the recently published *Dante's Lyric Poems*. His translation of Luigi Pulci's *Morgante* will be published by Indiana UP in 1994.

He is the author of three collections of poems, *Rind and All*, *The Fifth Season* and *Gente Mia and Other Poems*. Furthermore, his poems in English have appeared in such prestigious journals as *The New Yorker*, *Yale Review*, *The Poetry Review*, and *Spirit* among others. In 1956 his poem "The Return" was awarded the Greenwood Prize from the Poetry Society of England (the first time this honor was bestowed upon a poet from the United States), the Alice Fay the Castagnola Award from the Poetry Society of America (1968), and the Spirit Gold Medal from the Poetry Society of America (1969).

Tusiani is also internationally known for his Latin verses. He has collabo-

rated with and published in *Latinitas* (Vatican), *Vita Latina* (France), *Vox Latina* (Germany), and *The Classical Outlook* (United States). Also, he is the author of four collections of Latin verses: *Melos Cordis*, *Rosa Rosaru*, *In Exilio Rerum* and *Confinia lucis et umbrae*.

Most recently, he published two books of poetry, one in his native dialect of the *gargano* region of Italy, *Bronx America*, and one in Italian, *Il ritorno*.

5. Chapter 2 of Boelhower's book analyzes Panunzio's *Soul of An Immigrant*, chapter 3 deals with Pascal D'Angelo's *Son of Italy*, chapter 4 considers *Carnevale's* view of America, and chapter 5 looks at Mangione's *Mount Allegro*. On Jerre Mangione, again see Gardaphé. Interestingly, in his book, Boelhower does not deal with the autobiography of Rosa Cavalleri as told to Marie Hall Ets, *Rosa, the Life of an Italian Immigrant*, one of the most problematic of Italian American autobiographies; see Gardaphé, 143-46.

6. When one looks through the creative works section of the extensive bibliography in Rose Basile Green's ground breaking volume published in 1974, *The Italian-American Novel: A Document of the Interaction of Two Cultures*, one finds only six books written in Italian. These books were written by Bernardino Ciambelli. In 1893 he published *I misteri di Mulberry* and *I drammi dell'emigrazione, seguito ai misteri*. These were followed by *I misteri della polizia: il delitto di Water Street* (Frugone e Balleto, 1895), *I misteri di Becker Street* (Frugone & Balleto, 1899), *I sotterranei di NY* (Società Libreria Italiana, 1915), and *La trovatella di Mulberry Street: Ovvero la stella dei cinque punti* (Società Libreria Italiana, 1919).

7. Although my statement is technically correct, Italian is the language of Italy and Tusiani was born in Italy. Yet Tusiani's native tongue, the language that is full of cultural significance and remembrances, is, in effect, not Italian but the dialect that is spoken in San Marco in Lamis. We know that during Tusiani's youth, living in a small town meant growing up speaking the local dialect as your first language, Italian was a language that was acquired in school.

8. Tusiani first addressed this conflict in the poem "The Difficult Word" in *Gente Mia and Other Poems*.

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