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Vendetta by Rose Romano

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Vendetta

Rose Romano

San Francisco: Malafemmina Press, 1991

It was three years ago. After a few dozen multicultural books, I was starting to wonder if besides a few beat poets, were there any Italian American poets out there who talked about being Italian American.

I was browsing in a gay/lesbian bookstore when I saw it: *Vendetta* by Rose Romano. The word vendetta means revenge. And in this 48 page chapbook, Rose Romano takes revenge for all sorts of sins committed upon Italian Americans including our own sin of silence (*omertà*).

It's not easy being an angry poet
when you come from a culture
whose most profound statement of anger
is silence

She talks about the question of whether Italian American culture is patriarchal. On one side, there are the men talking about politics, economics and bocce ball. On the other side, there are the women in charge of the home and the family.

Doesn't the woman
announce what will be done, only
waiting graciously until the man
finds a way to make it look like
it was his idea

Romano imagines an Italian American lesbian household. Her vision is clear; the old Crone or Nonna, the Mother and the Maidens sit and eat, feeding themselves and all around them. It is the image of the future of the ancient mother.

She is proud of the image of her grandmother in black, boxes of pasta and votive candles. And she caught her nonna's voice:

She said what trouble, eat, enjoy
look at the sauce.

These poems are about bread, dieting, olive skin, survival, pain and love. These poems are honest, passionate and powerful. They demand inclusion into the multicultural canon.

VITTORIA REPETTO

Valentino and the Great Italians

According to Anthony Valerio

Toronto: Guernica, 1994

The very first observation concerning this book is whether to call it Fiction in the high modernist sense of the term, a story or stories narrated on the basis of certain widely accepted formal rules and rhetorical devices, and not rather something else, a literary construct, a writing that makes you think of an autobiography, creative journalism, or semiserious *scherzi* worthy of the highest journal tradition, pictures drawn through words, frames of life. The title of the book, at the typographical level even, creates a perplexity. I cannot decide where the title actually ends, so I must posit interpretations almost like scientific hypotheses. I have at least two possible meaningful evaluations: A) *Valentino and the Great Italians*, by Anthony Valerio, where the "by" is the convention for something like "Anthony Valerio is the author," a social entity or category detached from its construct, from its product." Hypothesis B) would instead read like this: *Valentino and the Great Italians According to Anthony Valerio*, where I introduce two things: "according" as an intended alternative to "by" in that it signals a more pointed direct rapport between the writer (the person) of the text (of the book) and the subject