pervasivi - soprattutto quelli di un tipo di liberismo non progettuale o sgangherato (atteccito facilmente in un paese come l’Italia, dallo sviluppo industriale relativamente recente), da un lato ignorano pause e silenzi, dall’altro costringono al silenzio quanto un tempo era luogo-paesaggio, verso cui si perde la capacità di interpretazione, raccoglimento, ascolto. Come riassume Gallippi, “il paesaggio diventa muto per chi lo abita perché (quasi) nessuno ha più bisogno di interpretarlo” (315).

Il volume curato da Chirumbolo e Pocci è prezioso perché ci invita a sostare, ma allo stesso tempo ad essere consapevoli e reattivi nel rifiuto di questa mutezza assordante. Al contrario, i quindici saggi ci spingono a continuare ad interrogare i paesaggi italiani, anche nelle loro metamorfosi più difficili da testimoniare ed interpretare.

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In the last decade, the study of Italian American culture has steadily gained momentum. For better or worse, shows like HBO’s *The Sopranos* (created by David Chase, 1999-2007) and MTV’s *Jersey Shore* (created by Anthony Beltempo, SallyAnn Salsano, 2009-present) have brought Italian Americans into the spotlight and helped the discipline grow by spurring student interest in courses on Italian American culture. The rising number of volumes devoted to Italian American literature, film, and television is a clear reflection of this tidal change. Alongside the renewed interest also comes the academic responsibility to teach high quality courses, using the latest scholarship and methodologies. For this reason, every instructor of Italian American studies should own and frequently consult the collection edited by Edvige Giunta and Kathleen Zamboni McCormick for MLA’s *Options for Teaching* series, a book that sanctions the much deserved entrance of Italian American studies into the academic mainstream.

In their introduction, Giunta and Zamboni McCormick address some of the main junctures in the history of the discipline, from Gay Talese’s famous 1993 New York Times article, in which he raised the issue of the inclusion of writers of Italian descent in the American literary canon, to Robert Viscusi’s elegantly ironic 1992 poem about the controversial quincentennial of Christopher Columbus’s arrival to the new continent. Far from an inclusive list, the editors’ essay highlights some of the common historical, thematic, and methodological “problems” facing the instructor of a course in Italian American studies. The book’s five-part organization also reflects Giunta and Zamboni McCormick’s pedagogical concerns and suggestions for course design.

The volume’s first part titled “Mapping Italian American Studies” charts a transatlantic critical model that successfully breaks away from the narratives of nostalgia that have weighed down the discipline in the past. This section contains a
noteworthy essay by Viscusi (“The History of Italian American Literary Studies”) in which he organizes theoretical frameworks into “spaces,” implicitly suggesting a methodological approach for advanced seminars and graduate courses. The main bulk of contributions is grouped in the book’s second part, “Considering Italian American Literature,” which is further divided into sections devoted to specific literary forms. Given the volume’s pedagogical focus, the essays that engage directly with classroom dynamics are the most useful. For instance, Rose De Angelis addresses the challenges she faced in designing a course on Italian American Women Writers for a student population high in “Italian American students of either single or double ancestry.” (109) Similar concerns are also shared by David Del Principe, who discusses his approach to teaching memoirs written by Italian Americans to “students who are predominantly first- and second-generation Italian Americans” and who, not surprisingly, “have little formal knowledge of the historical, political, and cultural contexts of immigration.” (141) Also valuable are Louise DeSalvo’s observations on the culturally specific barriers she encountered when teaching students how to write their own memoirs, and her suggestions on how a teacher can overcome them. When addressing omertà—the code of silence that governs Southern Italian social relations—she ponders the question, “how can students break a silence so deeply rooted in Italian American (and Italian) culture if they believe that speaking about their lives is prohibited or dangerous?” (155) Similarly, Marisa Trubiano describes the “time-intensive work that must be done to bridge the gap that often exists between a campus community and the local community” (171) when an instructor prepares to teach a course on the Italian American experience that includes an oral history component, thus relying on the cooperation and support of the community surrounding the academic institution.

Titled “Revisiting Italian American Film and Popular Culture” the book’s third part is, regrettably so, perhaps the least developed. Although penned by the leading scholars in the field, the essays by Anthony Julian Tamburri and Peter Bondanella do little to suggest pedagogical approaches or teaching methodologies, but give a brief historical account of the Italian American presence in American cinema and television. More interested in classroom dynamics and challenges are Giulia Centineo and Courtney Judith Ruffner, who relay their experiences with students with regard to specific topics. Centineo’s piece on language and dubbing focuses on “three noteworthy linguistic conventions: the use of English spoken with an Italian accent, the use of code switching, and the loss of accent.” (223) Ruffner discusses how she addressed cultural stereotyping of Italian Americans in popular TV shows with her class. Unlike those of De Angelis and Del Principe—which were mostly populated by students of Italian background—Ruffner’s “class has a vast makeup of racial and ethnic identities: Caucasian, African American, Asian, Russian, and Hispanic.” (231) Given the enormous importance television has had in influencing the perception of Italian Americans worldwide, a larger section on the issues presented by teaching the above mentioned shows would have been highly desirable. Likewise, new media and social networking sites are also altogether absent from the discussion of popular culture.

Just like the second, the book’s fourth part is also divided into subsections. In
this case, the editors identify possible theoretical frameworks through which the instructor can approach his or her chosen material. For instance, both Jennifer Guglielmo and Kimberly A. Costino use comparative and contrastive models to aid their studies with race and gender issues, whether contemporary or historical. Guglielmo teaches about socialism and anarchism in America juxtaposing “the self-representations with popular and official depiction of anarchists” (245), while Costino provides her “students with a variety of cultures, asking them to consider the role language and moving between languages plays in shaping the protagonists’ identities.” (248). The fifth and final part is a short review of the anthologies available for teaching Italian American studies today.

What emerges from the collection is the necessity to embrace interdisciplinary approaches in teaching minority studies. For this reason, the glaring omission of discussions of visual and plastic arts seems dissonant with the volume’s mission, and we can only hope for a more comprehensive edition in the future.

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