

QUADERNO CULTURALE

Queens College Italian Program Newsletter | Numero 2 | Department of European Languages and Literatures | Spring 2013

Guida alla lettura: An introduction to Numero due

Il secondo numero di *Quaderno Culturale*, bollettino del Programma di Italiano del Dipartimento di lingue e letterature europee, contiene informazioni sui corsi di italiano offerti dal Queens College, interviste a docenti e a studenti, un resoconto dal congresso ACTFL ed un articolo su una festa italoamericana. Dell'offerta didattica della primavera 2013 vengono evidenziati il corso sulla letteratura italoamericana del prof. Tamburri, quello sulla cultura dialettale in Italia a cura del prof. Haller e quello realizzato dalla prof.ssa Corradi sul teatro di Pirandello. Il professore dal vivo incontrato da *Quaderno Culturale* è Eugenia Paulicelli, responsabile del Programma di Italiano. La prof.ssa Paulicelli ripercorre le tappe della sua formazione culturale e della sua carriera accademica, iniziate in Italia e sviluppatesi negli Stati Uniti, ci parla dei suoi interessi di ricerca e del suo prossimo libro. In *Career Quest*, Xhesika Shanja racconta a *Quaderno Culturale* le ragioni per cui uno studente di materie scientifiche possa trovare stimolante frequentare corsi di lingua e di cultura italiane.

Del più recente congresso ACTFL si riportano gli interventi sulla lezione di lingua in prospettiva interculturale, in particolare gli approcci metodologici e la selezione dei contenuti della moderna Didattica delle lingue romanze. Il numero presenta inoltre un articolo su un evento italoamericano molto speciale: la Festa del Giglio, che dal 1903 viene ogni luglio organizzata a Williamsburg, Brooklyn, dalla comunità nolana. In queste pagine, infine, appaiono le foto dei monumenti di Manhattan dedicati ad alcuni grandi italiani: Colombo, Dante, Garibaldi e Verdi. Le statue esistono grazie a Carlo Barsotti, fondatore del più vecchio e prestigioso giornale scritto in italiano negli Stati Uniti: *Il Progresso Italoamericano*. Barsotti riuscì tra fine Ottocento e primo Novecento a raccogliere i fondi necessari alla realizzazione delle sculture e si diede un gran daffare per farle collocare in punti assai prestigiosi di Manhattan.

Buona lettura!

This second issue of *Quaderno Culturale*, the newsletter of the Italian Program of the Department of European Languages and Literatures, provides information about Italian classes offered by Queens College, interviews with faculty and students, a report from the ACTFL conference, and an article on an Italian American event. We highlight three Spring 2013 classes: *Italian American Literature* (Prof. Anthony J. Tamburri), *Italy's Dialect Culture* (Prof. Hermann Haller), and *Pirandello's Theatre* (Prof. Morena Corradi). For the section *Professori dal vivo*, we interview Prof. Eugenia Paulicelli, director of the Italian Program. Prof. Paulicelli traces her cultural education and academic career from Italy to the United States. She also talks about her research interests and updates us on her forthcoming book. In *Career Quest*, Xhesika Shanja explains ways in which a science major student can find Italian language and civilization classes rewarding.

Our report from the ACTFL conference focuses on presentations about designing language courses from an intercultural perspective, with particular emphasis on the methodological approaches and content selection of Romance Language educationists. This issue also contains an article about a very special Italian-American event: the *Festa del Giglio*, which the *nolana* community has organized each July in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, since 1903. Finally, we are sharing pictures of Manhattan monuments honoring great Italians: Columbus, Dante, Garibaldi, and Verdi. These statues exist thanks to Carlo Barsotti, the founder of *Il Progresso Italoamericano*, the oldest and most revered Italian-language journal in the United States. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mr. Barsotti not only raised the funds necessary to commission these sculptures but also arranged to have them placed in prestigious locations around Manhattan.

Buona lettura!

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Verdi in
Verdi Square

THE QUEENS COLLEGE ITALIAN PROGRAM

Luisanna Sardu (luisanna.sarducastangia@qc.cuny.edu)

This semester, the Italian Program at Queens College offers 14 undergraduate courses at all levels, from elementary to advanced, and in different subjects: literature, cinema, and history.

Each academic year, approximately 100 students enroll in our elementary/intermediate language courses. While beginners alternate exercises and practice in grammar, reading, and conversation, second-year students sharpen their skills by engaging with a variety of topics, such as food, fashion, and television. Speaking, writing, and reading proficiency are strengthened by students' curiosity and interest in Italian culture.

“The Italian program at Queens College is not limited to courses taught in Italian.”

To maximize their language experience, Queens College students can major or minor in Italian. Required and elective 200- and 300-level courses give students the opportunity to expand their knowledge. Advanced grammar, translation, business, literature, and culture across periods and gender are just a few of the topics covered in our courses.

The Italian program at Queens College is not limited to courses taught in Italian. Each semester, three

writing-intensive courses taught in English not only allow undergraduates to fulfill the college's Reading Literatures (RL) and European Traditions (ET) requirements, but also familiarize students with Italian literature (in translation), history, and cinema.

Since the best way to achieve fluency in a foreign language is to “breathe” its culture, the Italian Program encourages everyone to participate in study abroad programs in Italy. The Universities of Perugia, Siena, and Chieti-Pescara can be a student's destination for a summer, a semester, or a year.

The MA Program in Italian presents graduate-level courses for students who want to specialize in Italian. Every semester, students can register for two master's courses (700-level). This semester, the program also offers an MA-level track in Italian American Studies as part of the MALS (Master of Arts in Liberal Studies). After earning their MA in Italian, many graduates have been able to effectively pursue an elementary or high school teaching career and/or an academic career as PhD students. In Fall 2012, four graduate courses in Italian American Studies were approved by Queens College and the CUNY Board of Trustees and constitute an option in at least two MA programs at Queens College: the MALS and the MA in Italian.

The courses are Problematics in Italian/American Culture; Italian Americans and Ethnic Relations: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Inter-culturalism; Italian American Literature; Italian/American Cinema: Production and Representation

(<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/calandra/education/courses/italian-american-studies-courses>).

The first MA graduate course in Italian-American Studies, ITAST 703: Italian American Literature, is offered this Spring semester.

(See facing page for details)



Colombo in
Columbus Circle



THE QUEENS COLLEGE ITALIAN PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR SPRING 2013 COURSE OFFERINGS:

**ITAST 703:
Italian American Literature
by Anthony Julian Tamburri
(3 hr.; 3 cr.)**

Italian American Literature is one of the three required courses for the Italian-American Professional Certificate and for a “specialization” in Italian/American Studies within the MALS program; it is an elective for the “minor” for the MA in Italian.

This course examines the literary contributions of Italian Americans from the early twentieth century to the present. Migration, settlement patterns, linguistic hybridity, ethnical/racial consciousness, conflicts between marginal and mainstream cultures, and gender ideology are some of the topics germane to the literature under consideration. The development of secondary criticism and its reflections on Italian American literature is instrumental in defining a canon of texts central to a cultural group. Thus, second-order reflections will be read alongside primary texts in order to examine the strategies taken to offer “protocols of reading” compelling intertextual analysis.

**Italian 704:
Italy’s Dialect Culture
by Prof. Hermann Haller
(3 hr., 3 cr.)**

Italy’s Dialect Culture fulfills one of the two linguistic requirements for the MS Degree. This course is dedicated to a broad discussion of the “other Italy,” i.e., that represented by Italy’s linguistic and cultural expressions in dialect. It studies the forms and uses of the numerous regional languages, from Neapolitan and Sicilian to Milanese, Venetian and Piedmontese, and discusses their transformation through time and their relations with the Standard language from post-unification Italy through the twenty-first century. The course also examines the global presence of Italian dialects owed to emigration, with a focus on North America. It examines the written uses of dialects through a literary production in dialect that is unparalleled in the Western European context. Students will be introduced to a rich dialect heritage in its diversified expressions in music, film, and the mass media, with its gradual transformation in the most recent decades.

**Italian 361:
Pirandello’s Theater
by Prof. Morena Corradi
(3 hr.; 3 cr)**

Pirandello’s Theater fulfills one of the 300-level requirements of the Italian Major. The plays of Pirandello have greatly influenced European theater and have been widely staged to this day.

This course focuses on the main works and phases of his theater, which famously addresses crucial issues of modernity such as identity, relativity, and alienation. By studying major plays such as *Liola* and *Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore*, this course addresses Pirandello’s theoretical works as well as their wider European context. By studying some of his major and most original plays such as *Così è (se vi pare)*, *Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore*, *Enrico IV*, and *I giganti della montagna*, we will discuss Pirandello’s progressive doing away with naturalistic theater and its techniques.

This course addresses also Pirandello’s theoretical essays as well as the wider European context in which his theater places itself

**To learn more about our program, please visit
www.qc.cuny.edu/italian
or contact us directly:**

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ITALICITY:

Eventi italiani a New York

The Giglio Festival

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Each July since 1903, the Giglio Feast in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, has celebrated a legendary tale of magnanimity and heroism, a story that evokes many of the novellas in the final day of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Around 410 AD, as the legend goes, North African pirates raided the town of Nola, near Naples. The town's bishop, Paolino, made a run for the countryside with a group of children; when he returned, a local widow told him the pirates had kidnapped many of the town's young men, including her son. The bishop felt such compassion for the widow that he offered his own life in exchange for her son's. Paolino and the other imprisoned *nolani* sailed to North Africa as the

pirates' slaves, but in the meantime, news of the event spread around the Mediterranean, reaching the ears of a Turkish sultan. Awed by Paolino's selfless and courageous action, he successfully negotiated with the pirates for the release of all the captives, who sailed home. Finally, as the rescued prisoners stepped off their ship, the *nolani* welcomed them home holding lilies, each (the flower that symbolizes purity and love in Christian piety and gives its name to the festival).

For 12 days in July, Williamsburg's Italian American community, mostly descendants of the first immigrants from Nola, commemorates Paolino's brave gesture and return from captivity, maintaining a centuries-old tradition that also continues with Giglio festivals in Nola and other towns in the province of Naples to this day (always on the Sunday following June 22, the anniversary of Paolino's death in 431 AD). Organized and hosted by the Shrine Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the feast features a street fair with stalls selling *sazicc n peppiz* (sausage and peppers heros), *zeppole* (sweet, fried dough), T-shirts and other wares, as well as numerous rides and games (including a carousel and Ferris wheel). The highlights of the feast are processions carrying the

Giglio and a Moorish galleon. The Giglio is a 72-foot, 20,000-pound tower, decorated with crafted lilies and angels and topped by a statue of San Paolino. The Moorish galleon is a reproduction of the boat that brought Paolino and his fellow captives back to Nola. It bears a teenager—elected from a local family—dressed like a Turkish sultan with a turban and sword, and a few neighborhood children dressed as pirates. Bands that play traditional Italian folk songs and popular American hits stand on platforms that support the Giglio and galleon. Each structure (band included!) is carried by 150 “capi” (heads of local families), who lift them according to carefully choreographed moves under the direction of the “capo paranza” (head lifter). This year, the festival begins on Wednesday, July 10, and concludes on Sunday, July 21. In keeping with annual custom, it also features a “Children's Giglio” (a smaller model lifted by children of the community), a “Night Lift,” and the “Old Timers' Day” on the final Sunday. For more information, visit the official Giglio Feast website:

<http://www.olmcfest.com/>



The festa del giglio procession in Williamsburg



Career Quest

Italian for Science Majors: An interview with Xhesika Shanja

QC: Hi Xhesika. It is nice to talk to you again. Let's start with the first question: Why did you minor in Italian? You were a very busy pre-med student who did not even need to fulfill her language requirements...

XS: I chose to minor in Italian because I thought learning a second or third language is important. When you learn one, learning others becomes easier and it works a part of your brain that learning science does not. I chose Italian specifically because I grew up being familiar with some aspects of Italian culture and language and I thought it was musical and romantic. Many of my favorite films are Italian.

QC: What kind of expectations did you have coming into the program? Were they met?

XS: My expectations were that I would be able to hold a conversation and understand music, books, movies, etc. in Italian without much help. They were absolutely met. When I went abroad to Ugento, I was able to speak not only with the directors of the program, but also with local people who didn't know any English. It was very rewarding and being able to travel to Italy was one of the best experiences of my undergrad education.



Xhesika Shanja: "learning a second or third language is important."

QC: Did you ever regret not choosing a more "useful" language (maybe Spanish or Chinese)?

XS: No, I didn't really change my mind. It probably would have been practical to learn Spanish in addition to Italian, because of the large Spanish-speaking population in New York and the U.S., or French or Mandarin, because they have larger speaking populations worldwide. When I took the dialects class with Dr. Haller, it was a little disappointing to learn that until recently, most Italians spoke primarily in a dialect that hardly resembled standard Italian at all.

QC: As a student majoring in a scientific subject, what benefits did you have, if any, from minoring in Italian?

XS: I don't think it helped much in my undergrad science courses, but it has helped with my graduate work. I am learning the technical vocabulary of medicine and more than half of the words have Latin roots. My knowledge of Italian has made it much easier to learn them.

QC: Would you recommend study of a foreign language/Italian to a freshman who intends to focus on science? Why?

XS: Yes. Science disciplines tend to encourage one specific way of thinking and it can get dull. An undergraduate education should be well-rounded and expand your learning abilities. Learning a language is a great way to supplement that, because it is a completely different process. It is also a lot of fun. Italian in particular is great for anyone who may travel to Italy for scientific research or will eventually go to medical school and need to master the terminology.

PROFESSORI DAL VIVO

An Interview with Professor Eugenia Paulicelli



Prof. Paulicelli: "In the U.S., I found a very different academic environment, one that saved my intellectual life."

Eugenia Paulicelli is Professor of Italian at Queens College, CUNY; a member of the Doctoral Faculty in the Department of Comparative Literature and in the Women's Studies Certificate Program at the CUNY Graduate Center; and co-founder and director of the Interdisciplinary Concentration in Fashion Studies and of the MA in Fashion Studies in the Liberal Studies Program, both housed at the CUNY Graduate Center.

QC: *What drew you to the United States?*

EP: After completing my undergraduate degree in English and Literary Semiotics at the University of Bari in Puglia, Italy, in 1987, I applied for a one-year lectureship in the Italian Program at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. I had only ever visited the United Kingdom

and Germany, and the United States had always appealed to me for a variety of reasons, both personal and professional. At the University of Tennessee I found a very multicultural and international community of students and faculty, and enjoyed working with my first mentor, Professor Salvatore di Maria. After Knoxville, I won a fellowship to pursue a PhD in Italian in the Department of French and Italian at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where I found a nourishing environment, very collegial in terms of faculty and students. During these years, I was able to pursue my research interests in interdisciplinary fields such as literature, the visual arts, fashion, and critical theory in the French seminars taught by Stephen Winspur and Judith Miller. I already had a solid publication record, and so I was able to complete my PhD in three years. I defended my doctoral thesis in August 1991 and secured a two-year appointment in the Department of Italian Studies at Wellesley College, Massachusetts.

QC: *Do you miss Italy? Are you happy you decided to stay in the United States?*

EP: Of course it is difficult to leave your own country. My family is still there. But I don't regret my decision at all since the U.S. has now become my country. I find the Italian academic climate rather stale, and often far too dominated by nepotism and paternalism. In Italy, in order to advance in your academic career, most of the time, you have to be a photocopy of the professor who supervised your study quoting him/her every time you write something. In the U.S., I found a very different academic environment, one that saved my intellectual life. Here, you also draw on the work of whoever supervises your dissertation, but you can break free. In my view, we have no need to maintain boundaries in the study of literature, film, painting, architecture, fashion, etc. The most important thing is what kind of connections a scholar can make with the material s/he works with. It is exactly this kind of association of domains, details, languages and forms that produces new sensibilities and ultimately new knowledge. So more than ever, a field such as Italian Studies is called on to rethink its boundaries, domains and network of rela-

tionships and branch out to other knowledges. This doesn't happen much in Italy, especially in the field of Italian. I firmly believe, however, that Italianists outside Italy can make a great and important contribution to this debate and ultimately create new constellations from which both students and teachers can benefit. In other words, today more than ever, being an intellectual means to challenge oneself. The question is not whether or not to study literature, but what you do with it and more importantly what kind of other contiguities/semantic/visual fields interact with it and create possibilities for new forms and historical knowledge.

QC: *What brought you to New York City? What has been your experience here at Queens College and at the Graduate Center?*

EP: Throughout my first years in the United States, I traveled frequently, but especially to New York City and Los Angeles. I fell in love with NYC right away! I was offered a tenure-track position at Queens College in 1992; it seemed the perfect fit and so I was delighted to accept! At CUNY, I have found an incredibly rich



PROFESSORI DAL VIVO (continued...)

An Interview with Professor Eugenia Paulicelli

intellectual environment that is congenial to the kind of interdisciplinary work that interests me the most. I don't know of any other academic institution in the US that would welcome two different tracks in Fashion Studies in a multidisciplinary perspective. For this I am very grateful.

QC: How did you become interested in studying fashion?

EP: The roots of my interest in fashion stretch back to my undergraduate studies in Italy, but it was when I came to the United States for graduate work that I had the opportunity to look at Italy and Italian culture through different eyes. This is something that has been a wonderful journey. I re-read the Italian classics from a new perspective. It was also in the U.S. that my interest in early modernity and the Renaissance was really kindled for the first time. I realized I could undertake readings of different moments in Italian history through the lens of fashion and the arts, an approach I continue to find extremely rich for studying the word/image relationship.

QC: Tell us something about your latest book...

EP: In *The Fictions of Fashion* I dedicate a chapter each to early-modern authors who concerned themselves with fashion: Baldassarre Castiglione, Cesare Vecellio, Giacomo Franco, the nun Arcangela Tarabotti, and abbot Agostino Lampugnani. Behind the book is Roland Barthes' *Système de la mode* (*The Fashion System*) and the work Walter Benjamin did on reproducibility, photography and cinema, and the technological revolution. The word "fashion" (*moda*) entered the Italian vernacular in the early seventeenth century, the period in which we begin to see a concern for the clothed body and a growing interest in a specifically national identity. We do not have many objects from the Renaissance, but we have literary texts, letters, images, documents about trade with the Ottoman Empire and Persia, textile production, sumptuary laws, maps, and costume books, which are all associated with specific places and indispensable for studying the period and the emerging debate on the nation. In all of the works I discuss in *The Fictions of Fashion*, there is talk of "Italianness" as distinct from "otherness." Through

this material we can also pinpoint the tensions within society, and between genders and classes. Fashion is a macro-system in which the personal sphere becomes collective. There is no fixed epistemology of fashion. As Barthes said, clothes signify, they are, to quote two critics who together have written wonderfully on this topic, "animated" (Stally-brass and Jones).

QC: What are some of the cultural events you have organized related to fashion at CUNY?

EP: At the GC, I organized the first academic conference that approached fashion from a multidisciplinary perspective: "Italian Fashion: Identities, Transformation, Production" was funded by the Italian Trade Commission and the Italian Cultural Institute in NYC in 2002.

Following the success of this conference, I wanted to explore the concept of fashion, identity and material culture in the wider context of globalization. I was aware that Queens College had a clothing and textile archive, so, putting our forces together, we organized the first exhibition at Queens College. "The Fabric of Cultures:

Fashion, Identity, Globalization," held at the college's Godwin Ternbach Museum, was extremely successful, and featured lectures, a graduate student conference at Queens and an international conference at the GC. We published a catalogue and a book of the conference proceedings with Routledge. The exhibit traveled to the Museum of Craft and Folk Art in San Francisco the following year. I organized another multimedia exhibit on the 1960s at the GC's James Gallery, in collaboration with the Centro Cinema in Cesena, Italy, in 2010. The major focus was on Italian film, culture, and costume as it was the 50th anniversary of films such as *La dolce vita*, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* and *L'Avventura*. Another international conference co-organized with the University of Stockholm saw the participation of major film scholars, as well as Adriana Berselli the costume designer who worked on Antonioni's film *L'Avventura*. These exhibits were accompanied by courses at Queens College and the GC, and some of the students have published their work and found teaching positions in fashion schools in NYC.

PROFESSORI DAL VIVO (continued...)**An Interview with Professor Eugenia Paulicelli**

QC: *How do you integrate your teaching and research interests, and how have students responded to courses on fashion culture?*

EP: Students at Queens College have shown that they are very interested in the intersection of fashion, culture and the arts at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Fashion lends itself to an interdisciplinary approach, so it is essential to enter into dialogue with colleagues who work on similar thematics and involve them when we develop new course curricula. Creating new syllabi is one of the most enjoyable and satisfying aspects of administrative work for me. Last May, I participated in seminars on Italian language and culture pedagogy organized by the Italian Consulate, and I offered examples on how to integrate elements of fashion into language courses. The response of high school teachers was very good.

QC: *You teach cinema in addition to fashion. How do the two interests overlap?*

EP: My work on cinema is also at the intersections of word and image, and the verbal and the visual—this was the subject of my first book, a much reworked version of my doctoral dissertation, *Parola e immagine: Sentieri di scrittura in Leonardo, Marini, Foscolo, Calvino*.

When I came to Queens, cinema courses had not been offered for some time. Fashion and cinema have much in common and their histories intersect a great deal, not only in terms of aesthetics. The twentieth-

century launch of Italian fashion came thanks to cinema, so it is important to stress this historic conjuncture. Up until the post-WWII economic boom, Italy was seen as a backward country but after—thanks in no small part to the emerging high-fashion industry—it came to be seen as the country of design and style in a general sense, not just in the field of fashion.

QC: *How do you work – how do you develop the germ of an idea into, for instance, a book-length project?*

EP: I usually begin with a conference paper that develops into an article or chapter. I remember that when I wrote my first paper on fashion theory, I was in a French graduate seminar taught by Stephen Winspur at the University of Wisconsin. I found myself on very slippery ground: I did not have one particular text on which to focus, I felt a little scattered and I realized I would have to read a lot! The dialogue with Winspur helped to clarify my ideas a great deal.

With time, I have learned to be more systematic and disciplined, to narrow down my focus more quickly. What is difficult with research is to circumscribe the field of study, we feel bombarded with information and have to direct the traffic, figure out what is useful to create our own trajectory and constellation. Writing is always a process of re-writing, a form of labor, not just an intellectual effort. There are different phases; you write many different drafts for

one piece. It is tiring and absorbing, but rewarding.

QC: *How do you balance work and life – your family, your interests and obligations outside your career?*

EP: It was really a stroke of luck, to meet David (Ward), my husband. We have a daughter, Anna, who is now 15. David and I collaborate a lot. We have a constant dialogue, and are both very disciplined so we are able to create priorities and stick to them. We have balance, but it's not a given, we have to work on it.

QC: *Professor Paulicelli, thank you for speaking with us about your career – we look forward to reading **The Fictions of Fashion** soon!*



Dante in
Dante Park



Dal Congresso ACTFL di Filadelfia—La lezione di lingua in prospettiva interculturale Tiberio Snaidero (tsnaidero@qc.cuny.edu)

Tra il 16 ed il 18 novembre 2012 si è svolto a Filadelfia il congresso dell'ACTFL, l'*American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages*. Alcuni strands del congresso facevano esplicito riferimento all'insegnamento della cultura nella classe di lingua, ed allo sviluppo della competenza interculturale come obiettivo fondamentale della lezione.

In un ambiente scolastico, l'obiettivo finale dell'educazione linguistica in prospettiva interculturale è far conoscere e comprendere agli studenti le caratteristiche della loro propria cultura, far maturare dunque un consapevolezza della relatività della stessa. L'approccio, i contenuti e gli obiettivi variano però in funzione della "linguacultura" insegnata e del contesto educativo. Nel caso dello spagnolo, soprattutto se insegnato in una scuola secondaria di un'area degli Stati Uniti con una trascurabile presenza di ispanofoni sul territorio, l'obiettivo principale della lezione sarà quello di estirpare cliché e smascherare pregiudizi. Mary Joy Lewis insegna spagnolo alla *William Fleming High School* di Roanoke, West Virginia, uno stato nel quale gli ispanici rappresentano meno dell'1% della popolazione, a fronte di una percentuale nazionale che si aggira sul 17%¹. Al terzo

anno di spagnolo la signora Lewis ha deciso di sviluppare la competenza interculturale dei suoi studenti impostando il suo corso sugli stereotipi. Per conseguire l'obiettivo si è servita di materiali autentici ed ha sposato l'approccio alla didattica della cultura sviluppato da Claire Kramsch², anche se accanto a testi letterari ha impiegato anche film e canzoni. I materiali autentici sono stati selezionati da Lewis in base al criterio di rappresentanza della "*cultural diversity within the Spanish-speaking world*" (cfr. Lewis/Shrumin

<http://flvateacheredanddvlp.pbworks.com/f/FLAVA2011LewisShrum%2BPP.ppt>).

Le tre unità didattiche in cui ha suddiviso un modulo della durata di due mesi si intitolavano rispettivamente: 1) *Geographic/historic diversity* (through readings), 2) *Racial/ethnic diversity in Latin America and Spain* (through a song) e 3) *Diversity of legal status of Spanish-speakers in the U.S.* (through a movie, a song and an interview) (ibidem). All'inizio del corso, grazie ad un'attività di *brainstorming* è emerso che nel gruppo-classe la conoscenza della maggior parte degli studenti si nutreva di numerosi stereotipi: gli ispanofoni hanno tutti lo stesso aspetto (pelle scura e capelli neri); tutti giocano molto bene a calcio,

lavorano nell'edilizia e viaggiano in gruppo; bevono tutti molto alcol, si sposano in modo fastoso ed ascoltano solo *reggaeton*³. Nella prima unità didattica (*Geographic/historic diversity*) la classe è stata suddivisa in piccoli gruppi, a ognuno dei quali è stato assegnato il compito di riassumere e visualizzare su un poster importanti dati geografici, storici e lessicali caratterizzanti una specifica area dell'*Hispanidad*. La seconda unità didattica (*Racial/ethnic diversity in Latin America and Spain*) si è basata sull'analisi linguistica e culturale del testo della canzone *En lo Puro no Hay Futuro*, del gruppo musicale spagnolo *Jarabe de Palo*. I materiali impiegati nella didattica della terza parte del modulo (*Diversity of legal status of Spanish-speakers in the U.S.*) sono stati il film di Patricia Riggen *La Misma Luna* - sulla storia di un "clandestino" -, la canzone *Vivan los Mojados* del gruppo "di frontiera" californiano *Los Tigres del Norte* e, infine, un'intervista a José Rodriguez Lechuga, il marito messicano dell'insegnante, che ha raccontato la sua propria storia di immigrazione. Al termine del modulo gli studenti hanno scritto un saggio che si riferiva a tutte le fonti adoperate a lezione, e sono state riverificate quelle conoscenze che due mesi prima si erano rivelate tanto impregnate di stereotipi. I risultati sono stati eccellenti: il lavoro di riflessione linguistica e culturale sui materiali autentici ha permesso a Lewis di ridurre

¹ Dati tratti da <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?rgn=50&ind=6>.

² Secondo Kramsch lingua e letteratura sono inseparabili, e i testi letterari devono essere al centro del lavoro dell'insegnante in classe. La cultura è dunque una caratteristica della lingua, e il lavoro sul materiale linguistico (letterario) permette di accedere a una comprensione della prospettiva culturale "altra". Il testo letterario deve essere selezionato in funzione della sua capacità di far emergere posizioni conflittuali, che devono essere rese esplicite all'interno della classe di lingua (cfr. Claire Kramsch, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press, 1993).

³ Si tratta di una forma musicale nata a Panama e a Puerto Rico alla fine degli anni Ottanta e derivata dal *reggae* giamaicano.

Dal Congresso ACTFL di Filadelfia—La lezione di lingua in prospettiva interculturale

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nettamente i pregiudizi e di dotare gli studenti un'una conoscenza critica delle culture che si sono sviluppate in lingua spagnola.

A differenza dello spagnolo (e pure dell'inglese e del francese), l'italiano rimanda immediatamente ad uno spazio geografico e culturale ben preciso. Grazie al mezzo della lingua italiana si può avere accesso ad una specifica letteratura nazionale, e si possono conoscere in originale i tanti prodotti culturali veicolati dal medium linguistico. Informazioni su eventi storici o biografie di personaggi illustri possono anche venire trasmessi nella lingua di studio degli apprendenti, e il ricorso ad immagini e a suoni può naturalmente contribuire all'apprezzamento dell'arte e della musica italiane. Il fine dell'insegnamento della cultura in una lezione di italiano è però soprattutto quello di guidare gli studenti alla conoscenza ed alla comprensione dell'Italia contemporanea, un paese che negli ultimi decenni è mutato profondamente. Riflettere sui fenomeni migratori, sullo scompaginamento del quadro politico, sul rapporto dialettico con gli altri stati europei permetterà non solo di avere un'idea aggiornata, e non mitizzata od obsoleta, dell'Italia attuale ma pure di sviluppare un approccio critico all'interpretazione della società statunitense nella quale lo studente vive. La lezione di italiano può dare il suo contributo alla formazione di un cittadino consapevole, dotato di strumenti di decodificazione della cultura sia della società di cui fa parte sia di quella di cui studia la lingua. Per conseguire questo fine risulta decisiva la selezione dei temi da didattizzare. Chi viva in Italia, legga i saggi di autori come Carlo

Donolo, Massimiliano Capati, Luca Sofri, Marco Revelli, o soltanto consulti l'annuale *Rapporto Italia* a cura dell'Eurispes, sa che quello un tempo conosciuto come il *bel Paese* vive da qualche decennio una profonda crisi politica, economica e sociale. Manca una politica pubblica per un'adeguata istruzione secondaria e universitaria e l'evasione fiscale, l'economia sommersa e quella criminale, la lentezza della giustizia, la diffidenza nei confronti della forza pubblica sono ormai tratti che caratterizzano l'intera penisola. Nell'Italia contemporanea tutto appare degradato a merce, al punto che il luogo fisico dell'identità italiana non sembrano più le piazze – oramai deserte la domenica pomeriggio – ma i grandi centri commerciali, gli *outlet*. La televisione sembra aver trasformato l'Italia in una "videocrazia", e l'idea che non siano necessari né il lavoro né il talento per fare carriera nel mondo dello spettacolo (e della politica) è diventata una convinzione sempre più diffusa. Il fenomeno dell'immigrazione, infine, è sottovalutato e gestito malissimo.

Nel loro contributo *Social Issues and Cultural Awareness in Language Teaching* Veronica Vegna (University of Chicago) e Chiara Fabbian (University of Illinois) hanno riportato esempi di corsi di italiano nei quali la selezione di temi "scomodi" ha loro permesso di far luce su episodi della storia d'Italia poco lusinghieri o su aspetti critici della società italiana contemporanea. Grazie ad attività didattiche incentrate su temi controversi è stata sollecitata negli studenti la capacità di riflettere e si è contribuito a sviluppare una consapevolezza critica (inter)culturale.

Tra gli esempi portati da Fabbian segnalano le attività sulle "leggi razziali" approvate in Italia nel 1938, grazie alle quali viene sottoposto a verifica critica il mito degli "italiani brava gente". I materiali usati sono vignette e foto d'epoca, un brano tratto da *Se questo è un uomo*, di Primo Levi, un video con un'intervista allo stesso Levi realizzata nel 1984 dalla RaiEdu e rintracciabile su *youtube* ed un documentario di Francesco Linguiti per RaiTre (*Correva l'anno: La difesa della razza. Il fascismo e gli ebrei*) anch'esso pubblicato sullo stesso sito web. Questionari, esercizi di comprensione e completamento, saggi brevi vengono assegnati per ampliare il vocabolario degli studenti e nel contempo informarli su una pagina oscura della storia italiana. L'invito alla riflessione e al giudizio sui fatti presentati appare costante, e tale approccio critico agli eventi potrebbe pure svilupparsi in una sollecitazione ad esaminare episodi controversi della storia americana. Veronica Vegna ha invece portato ad esempio un modulo sull'immigrazione in Italia, nel quale ha didattizzato canzoni (*Pane e coraggio*, di Ivano Fossati), libri (*Io, venditore di elefanti*, di Pap Khouma; *Regina di fiori e di perle*, di Gabriella Ghermandi) e video tratti da *youtube* con immagini degli sbarchi a Lampedusa, interviste agli immigrati appena arrivati in Italia, documentari sull'emigrazione italiana di inizio Novecento nelle Americhe e *clips* dal film di Emanuele Crialese *Nuovomondo*. Anche le lezioni di Vegna hanno puntato a fornire agli studenti informazioni aggiornate sulla società italiana contemporanea, invitandoli a riflettere criticamente sui modi in cui gli italiani – stato, associazioni, gente comune – hanno reagito al repentino



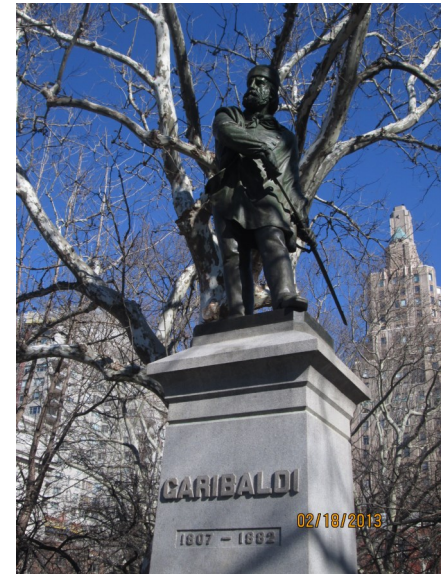
La lezione di lingua in prospettiva interculturale

trasformarsi del *bel Paese* in una società multiculturale. Non mancano i riferimenti al passato colonialista dell'Italia – vedi ad esempio la scrittura diasporica dell'italo-etiope Gabriella Ghermandi – e sono state istituite delle relazioni, e sviluppate delle discussioni, sui modi più o meno riusciti in cui lo stato e la società statunitensi hanno a loro volta organizzato nel corso del tempo l'accoglienza e l'integrazione dei nuovi venuti. Le attività di comprensione e di ampliamento lessicale si sono dunque anche in questo caso incentrate su contenuti e materiali che hanno favorito la lettura critica del fenomeno preso in esame: la migrazione.

Dalle esperienze portate ad esempio possiamo concludere che, per dare a un corso di Italiano Lingua Straniera un'impronta interculturale, è necessario programmare una serie di Unità di Apprendimento nelle quali i

testi – intesi in senso lato: dunque anche film, canzoni, disegni – siano culturalmente ricchi, capaci cioè di far emergere posizioni conflittuali e mettere in discussione i valori degli studenti attraverso la comparazione. Per accedere a una comprensione della prospettiva culturale “altra” è necessario che il lavoro sul materiale linguistico e culturale impostato nella prima lezione dell'UA si armonizzi coerentemente con gli obiettivi del modulo e dell'intero percorso. I contenuti selezionati devono essere elementi basilari dello sviluppo economico, politico e sociale della cultura *target* e devono prestarsi ad essere problematizzati, favorendo la contrastività col contesto culturale in cui ha luogo il corso. Le attività proposte dovrebbero idealmente coinvolgere gli studenti anche sul piano affettivo ed emotivo, in modo da favorire due nozioni cardine dell' *intercultural learning*: l'empatia e la defamiliarizzazione, che rappresentano il viatico per una (auto)consapevolezza critica della cultura familiare, di quella della

società in cui ci si trova a vivere, e di quella della linguacultura che si studia a scuola.



Garibaldi in
Washington Square Park

*I contributi al congresso ACFTL di Filadelfia
(16-18 novembre 2012)
cui fa riferimento l'articolo sono i seguenti:*

Chiara M. Fabbian (University of Illinois)/Veronica Vegna (University of Chicago):
Social Issues and Cultural Awareness in Language Teaching

Mary Joy Lewis (William Fleming High School):
Immigration, Cultural Diversity, and My Spanish Class

Tiberio Snaidero (Queens College, CUNY):
Sviluppare la competenza (inter-)culturale nella lezione di Italiano

Manhattan monuments honoring great Italians:

Columbus, Dante, Garibaldi, and Verdi.

These statues exist thanks to Carlo Barsotti, the founder of *Il Progresso Italoamericano*, the oldest and most revered Italian-language journal in the United States. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mr. Barsotti not only raised the funds necessary to commission these sculptures but also arranged to have them placed in prestigious locations around Manhattan.



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