Comunicare l'Italia all'estero: A follow-up

Anthony Julian Tamburri (December 09, 2014)



As I arrived back from a seven-day stint in Calabria, I was reminded of Letizia Airos's piece in Italian, "Comunicare l'Italia all'estero," and I mused about it and a few other things...

So, as I said in a comment to Letizia Airos's piece, as long as Italy continues to speak only in Italian and only to those who are registered in AIRE (the official list of Italian citizens living abroad), it will remain a nation in search of admirers... That is, it will remain closed up in a shell, impermeable to those who do not speak Italian, even to those who, regardless of their lack of abilities to engage in a conversation in Italian, nonetheless promote Italian culture and the study of language here in the States. But these Italian living in their tricolore shell have even shut out those who do speak Italian, indeed who promote the language and culture of Italy and its diaspora, if only, one might assume, because they are not listed in the AIRE. And the “Italians” do so together with some Italian institutions here, which have also tried to close out the “non-Italians”.

Airos's piece came to mind today because of a comment I made on Facebook with regard to my most recent stint in Calabria. I stated the following: "Just back from UniCal having followed in the footsteps of Sam, Paul, Peter, and Fred, and all of us having worked with Margherita and Marta, to deliver CLIA (Cultura e Letteratura Italiana Americana). We just completed its first cycle, an historic course added this year to the curriculum for the Laurea Magistrale in Letteratura italiana moderna e contemporanea at the Università della Calabria, the first university in Italy to add such a course. Oh yeah! I doubt that an item such as this — Italian Americans helping bring Italian Americana to an Italian university — will be covered by the Italian press in USA, perhaps i-Italy and La voce di New York, but surely not by America Oggi or any other Italian or Italian/American news outlet. Surely, to boot, not the Italian correspondents in the USA. They're too busy dealing with things such as how we should no longer talk about fuga di cervelli but rather spostamento dei talenti! Vattelapesca!" Indeed, today I saw two analogues to spostamento dei talenti instead of fuga di cervelli: one is “cervelli Made in Italy”; the other, “nessuna fuga cervelli; solo globalità”.

Of course, this raises the old issue of how Italians see Italian Americans. It calls to mind the old writings of those who willy-nilly expressed disdain and disrespected the Italian immigrant and his off-spring in America. I have in mind two writers especially: Giuseppe Prezzolini and Mario Soldati. The insensitivity coupled with an apparent sense of delight in describing as much only helped create a greater gap between the two groups that exists still today, if only by the almost total silence, lack of coverage, on the part of Italian correspondents today in the States who seem to have absolutely no interest in intellectual interrogations by and about Italian Americans. This, in spite of the fact that some of the best studies on Italian literature and cinema over the past quarter century originate in the United States.

So, what's to do? Well, one must simply keep on trucking; keep moving forward with the same desire to contribute to the promotion and promulgation of Italian culture. Alla riscossa, ragazzi, should be the motto, because whoever says “Sempre avanti” does nothing but take steps backward toward a regime-like mode of thought.

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