

The Value of Worthless Lives: Writing Italian American Immigrant Autobiographies, 2007, 234 pages, Ilaria Serra, 0823226786, 9780823226788, Fordham Univ Press, 2007

There are many good books on Italian immigration to the United States, including success biographies, field researches and historical investigations. What is lacking however is an account of the immigrant experience from a "grassroots" point of view. This book tells the stories of a normal people, the great majority of the immigrant population, through their own, sometimes almost illiterate, words. With this book I aim to contribute to this country's story of immigration with these first-hand accounts of those who lived it, first-generation immigrants. It was said once, by Giuseppe Prezzolini, that Italian immigration left tears and sweat but not "words." The material of this book proves such arrogance wrong. I tried to be as thorough as possible in my field research looking for such "words" on both sides of the Ocean. I consulted Italian and American archives, I looked for books out of print, and scavenged for unpublished ones in private houses and forgotten drawers. What I found fills a silence and gives a wider spectrum of the immigrant experience, from the miner to the tailor, from the janitor to the professor. The book will interest scholars of Italian immigration because it adds information from within the protagonists' self. Their tales may be average, their memory may be inaccurate but their drive toward a new life and their immigrant "philosophy," made of grinding teeth and hope, is all there in its most fresh features. The book will also interest scholars of the autobiographical genre because it adds a new facet to the autobiographical voice. There are only a few studies on the life writing of the lower class (which come from France and England, not the US). I have tried to formulate new concepts that describe the autobiographical "I" of these works, conc

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The Italian Americans Through the Generations: Proceedings of the, Volume 15 Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the American Italian Historical Association, Held at St. John's University, New York, October 29-30, 1982, American Italian Historical Association. Conference, 1986, Social Science, 263 pages. .

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Italian Americana, Volume 7 , , 1982, Italian American, . .

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