



Buried Caesars, and Other Secrets of Italian American Writing (Suny Series in Italian/American Studies)

Robert Viscusi

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Examines the forces that have shaped Italian American writing, from the novels of John Fante to the musings of Tony Soprano.

Robert Viscusi takes a comprehensive look at Italian American writing by exploring the connections between language and culture in Italian American experience and major literary texts. Italian immigrants, Viscusi argues, considered even their English to be a dialect of Italian, and therefore attempted to create an American English fully reflective of their historical, social, and cultural positions. This approach allows us to see Italian American purposes as profoundly situated in relation not only to American language and culture but also to Italian nationalist narratives in literary history as well as linguistic practice. Viscusi also situates Italian American writing within the “eccentric design” of American literature, and uses a multidisciplinary approach to read not only novels and poems, but also houses, maps, processions, videos, and other artifacts as texts.

“Halfway into *Buried Caesars and Other Secrets of Italian American Writing* one begins to feel that this may be the best book written on Italians in America. By the three-quarter mark, one suspects that it may be the best book written on any ethnic group in America or anywhere else ... This is an astonishing, gorgeous work.” — Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Italian Americana*

“...a masterly book, both in its analyses and in its interpretive style, vibrant to the point of advocating the need of a new, wide cultural understanding.” — *Voices in Italian Americana*

“Viscusi draws from a stunning breadth of primary and secondary references: Italian, American, and, indeed, Italian American.” — *American Italian Historical Association Newsletter*

“...Viscusi has proven to be one of the key theorists and developers of Italian-American literary studies, producing essential reading for anyone interested in Italian-American culture and the way language shapes perceptions ... If to know history is to understand the present and better imagine the future, then Viscusi has made it possible for us to do the same, and so help us to see that there is a strong future in Italian-American culture. Bravo maestro!” — *Fra Noi*

“Thoughtful and well researched, the book is notably even-handed in its examination of the cultural significance of *The Godfather* and *The Sopranos*, and it makes a positive case for the respectability and importance of immigrant texts to the American literary canon ... Anyone interested in cultural assimilation and the legacy of the immigrant experience should read this book.” — *CHOICE*

“Avoiding the jargon that often accompanies treatments of language, form, and meaning, Viscusi admits personal experience as well as analytic skill into the toolbox he uses to explore particular texts and social issues. The result is a book that is not only an important look at the role of language in creating and sustaining both the tie to Italy and American self-construction, but also an astute meditation on how cultures can be connected through language.” — Josephine G. Hendin, author of *Heartbreakers: Women and*

Violence in Contemporary Culture and Literature

“Viscusi’s ability to interpret Italian American literature through the lens of classical rhetoric, Greek myth, Dantean vernacular eloquence, and Freudian psychology increases our appreciation of the links between European and American literary cultures.” — Mary Jo Bona, author of *Claiming a Tradition: Italian American Women Writers*

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