



Sicilia Parra



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An International Organization that Promotes the Language and Culture of Sicily

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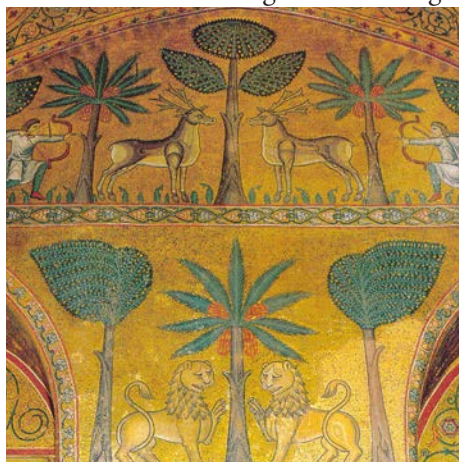
Fall 2017

Arba Sicula's 25th Anniversary Tour

Our 25th consecutive tour of Sicily will depart on June 3 and return to New York on June 15, 2018. It's hard to believe that we have reached a quarter century of uninterrupted tours, but upon reflection, the fact that we have been able to conduct these tours without interruption is in itself a confirmation that the tours have been very successful. Their success is in fact the explanation for their longevity. If they had not been successful we would not have been able to continue doing them.

So our next tour has to be designed to be as memorable, if not better than all the others. That will not be an easy task because we truly try to make each one as unforgettable. I received a note the other day from one of our members who participated in our second tour 23 years ago and she said she still remembers that it was the best tour

she ever took. Having received such accolades through the years, I always try to resist the thought that we ought to change the tour in a drastic way to encourage people to come back. But the thought comes up against the reality that many people who have come with us repeat the experience. Many of them come back bringing their children and their friends along so they can feel the same experiences. In addition I am cognizant of the old saw that if something is functioning



The Mosaics in Roger's Room, Palermo.

Arba Sicula Takes Part in NIAF's Gala in Washington, DC

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) is the largest and most influential association of Italian Americans in the United States. Based in Washington, DC, the organization is an important political voice and every year, in addition to the numerous activities that it sponsors, NIAF holds a weekend Gala event that normally is attended by representatives of the US government, including many Presidents, members of the Supreme Court and large corporations' CEO, as well as entertainers and actors whose names end in a vowel. At the weekend Gala of Nov. 2-5, 2017, in addition to the many dignitaries, the President of Arba Sicula, Gaetano Cipolla, the Vice President, Nino Provenzano, and Member of the Board and Life Member Michael Badalucco, were invited to make a presentation on Sicily. The NIAF event, which this year focused its attention on the region of Sicily, turned out to be a great celebration of Sicelitude. Even the hotel, the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, was decorated with images of Sicilian monuments and sights. The elevator doors in the main lobby were completely covered with images of the mosaics from the *Cappella Palatina* and the decorations in Roger's Room from the Norman Palace that houses the Sicilian Parliament in

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President's Message

Since my last message I have been engaged in a number of activities to promote the objectives for which Arba Sicula was founded in 1979. Let me bring up to date. I travelled to Hamilton, Ontario this past September to attend the unveiling of a statue of Leonardo Sciascia in one of the main squares of Hamilton, a city that has more Racalmutesi living there than in the town of Racalmuto. The event was a wonderful example of how Sicilians manage to succeed once they leave the island. For them the Sicilian proverb "cu nesci, arrinesci" (whoever emigrates succeeds) seems to be most appropriate. I was asked to say a few words about Arba Sicula and our goals during the banquet that was filled with over 600 guests (see the article on p. 5). A second event that was perhaps even more important for Arba Sicula was the three-day celebration of Sicily at the National Italian American Foundation's Gala and Conference held in Washington DC on November 2 -5, to which Arba Sicula was invited, not only to make a presentation but to have a booth to display our books and flag (see the article on p. 4). The event was attended by our Vice President Nino Provenzano and Michael Badalucco. I am pleased to say that we made many friends among the participants who heard our presentation and saw our exhibit. We are grateful to Michael Badalucco and Nino Provenzano for making the connection with the President of NIAF, John M. Viola, who happens to be of Sicilian origin. This was an important exposure before a national audience that was estimated to be about 1200 people, many of whom of Sicilian origin.

Arba Sicula continued to provide interesting programs to its members. Two events were held in October and November. The first was the One-Man Show by Frank Ingrasciotta, *Blood Type Ragù* (See the article on p. 6) and the second was *Rosa La Cantatrice*, by Chiara Verzola who traveled to New York with Flavia Ripa to entertain us at St. John's University (see the article on p. 3).

I have also been working on two other important projects that will contribute greatly to the goal of promoting the Sicilian language in the world. As you know, the continuing success of my *Learn Sicilian/Mparamu lu sicilianu*, which is already in its second edition, has sparked interest not only in the United States (The University of Pennsylvania is using it as textbook) but also abroad. Prof. Alfonso Campisi of the Université de la Manouba of Tunis adopted the book as well. I have decided that an Italian version of the book, that is, a version addressing Italian speakers, would be a good investment, especially since the Sicilian Parliament passed a law that Sicilian should be taught in the public schools. So Professor Campisi and I have been working to adapt *Learn Sicilian/Mparamu lu sicilianu* for Italian speakers. The book is nearly finished and will be published in 2018. Once again it will be people outside of Sicily who will be at the forefront of promoting the Sicilian language and Arba Sicula will be central to it, as we were when we published the first grammars of Sicilian (by J.K. Bonner and by J. Privitera) and the first Sicilian/English and English/Sicilian dictionaries by Joseph Bellestri.



Sicilia Parra

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well, you should not not mess with it. So our twenty fifth tour will be similar to the preceding ones, with just enough changes to keep everyone's interest. We will return to Cefalù again (we skipped it last year in favor of Bagheria) because it is always a delightful excursion in a seaside town that is the most popular resort area in Sicily after Taormina. And we will return to Erice that we skipped in the previous tour because we had a number of people who would not have been able to climb to the center of town on the cobblestone streets. And we will add a number of activities in collaboration with our local friends that contribute so much to the special character of the tours. We do not go to Sicily simply to see the marvelous sights, to admire the wondrous Greek temples and enjoy the spectacular nature; we go to Sicily to get in touch with the people of Sicily, and to get in touch with that part inside of us that harkens to communicate with its ancient roots. I like to say that our tour is basically a journey to the motherland, an inward journey of discovery. So if you are ready to embark on the next adventure, send me a deposit to reserve a place for you. I will be working on the itinerary in the meantime and by the time this newsletter is printed we will have the tour arrangements made. The price for the tour will remain the same as last year's, even though the dollar is not as strong against the euro as it was.

Look at the tentative itinerary on page 20, keeping in mind that some minor adjustments may be made before we take off on June 3, 2018, and send me the deposit to secure a place on this anniversary tour.

Mr. Vincent Ciaramitaro, former owner of Joe's of Avenue U in Brooklyn, has developed a web site that contains many of the recipes used in the famous Focacceria Palermitana.

Check out his site at:
www.siciliancookingplus.com

Rosa, la Cantatrice, with Chiara Verzola and Flavia Ripa at St. John's University

Following the success of Frank Ingrasciotta's *One Man Show* Arba Sicula brought to New York two talented entertainers/performers to present a show on the life and music of Rosa Balistreri, the iconic Sicilian folk singer whose work is still performed by many singers twenty seven years after her death in Palermo at age 63. I am referring to Chiara Verzola who wrote,



Chiara
Verzola

Below: Flavia
Ripa

directed and choreographed her own performance of *Rosa la cantatrice* focusing on a few of Rosa's iconic songs to punctuate the difficult life of the singer, struggling through poverty, violence and abusive relationships until she finally broke free of the environment where she was born to become a well-loved interpreter of the Sicilian experience. She was helped by people like Nobel Prize winner for literature Dario Fo, Leonardo Sciascia, Renato Guttuso and poet Ignazio Buttitta who went on to write the lyrics for some of her songs, like the famous "Pirati a Palermu", which was one of the songs that Chiara Verzola included in her program. Thanks to the help of the liberal intellectuals, Rosa began performing in theaters, recording her songs in several albums and reached a popularity that has not

diminished to date.

Chiara Verzola was ably accompanied by Flavia Ripa on the guitar, who acted also as an interviewer posing question to Rosa. The exchange allowed Chiara/Rosa to react to some of the most traumatic experiences of the singer's life. She recounted her early life in Palermo when she lived with her parents and her siblings in one room apartment and was exposed to things "children should not see". These childhood reminiscences were punctuated by iconic songs that gave the show continuity and provided pathos. Though Chiara's voice and rendition of the songs was more stylized than Rosa's they were nonetheless quite ef-

fective in making a connection with the audience and in eliciting an emotional response. The theatrical performance/concert was greeted with much appreciation by the members of Arba Sicula and their guests.

The concert was followed by the usual refreshment. Arba Sicula is grateful to Joe DiPietro, President of the Federation of Italian-American Associations of Queens, for providing the audio equipment for this performance and for helping to set it up.



Continues from p. 1

Palermo. Going down to the Sicilian Expo, people saw a large reproduction of Sicilian mosaics. Sicilian Flags were everywhere and there was a dearth of Sicilian products from olive oil to special sauces, from *gelato siciliano* to Tony De Nonno's "Pupi Siciliani", from Turitrip (tours of Sicily organized by Turi) to "Cooking with Nonna" with Rossella Rago. Arba Sicula had its own booth and displayed most of the books on Sicily published by Legas, including those of Nino Provenzano who was present to sign autographed copies of his three books including *Footprints in the Snow*



Provenzano and to Sicily. But earlier in the day, Arba Sicula made a presentation that was well attended, focusing on its objectives in promoting the Sicilian language and culture. Gaetano Cipolla spoke about the goals of the organization and read part of his booklet *What Makes a Sicilian* and then introduced Nino Provenzano and Michael Badalucco who recited in Sicilian and in English some of Nino's poems. The session was introduced by the President of NIAF, John M. Viola, who spoke of his Sicilian heritage and expressed his appreciation for Arba Sicula's efforts to keep the Sicilian language alive, saying also that he had purchased two copies of professor Cipolla's *Learn Sicilian/Mparamu lu sicilianu*. Mr. Viola's appreciation of his heritage was unambiguously demonstrated when on the night of the Gala, while everyone else was wearing black tuxedos, he showed up with a cream-colored jacket decorated with symbols of Sicily. It made quite an impression.

Arba Sicula is very happy that NIAF chose Sicily as the theme for its 42nd Gala. It afforded the many Sicilians in the United States to take pride in their heritage. Arba Sicula's efforts to shine a light on our beautiful island are being recognized. Sicily will not remain the "best-kept secret," much longer, as people are shown its true face.

Pirati supra la nivi. Nino ran out of all his books and Arba Sicula and Legas did very well too. We had brought a whole carton of the last issue of the *Arba Sicula* journal and gave them gratis to the many people who stopped by our booth. But the special regard that the people of NIAF had for Arba Sicula was made evident when at the beginning of the Gala, before a crowd of 400-500 guests, one of the poems from Nino's anthology was recited by Nino in Sicilian and by Michael Badalucco in Gaetano's translation. The poem was heard while large screens in the hall displayed beautiful images of Sicily, integrating them with the content of the poem. I attach a link to the video so you can see for yourself: <https://youtu.be/i7dBDJWuOLU>

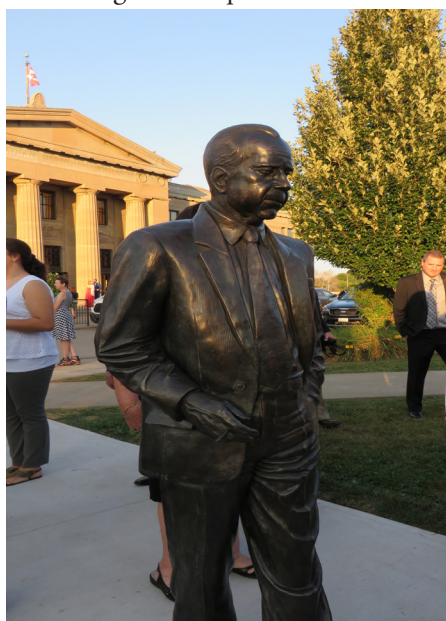
It was a wonderful homage to Nino



Above: NIAF's President, John M. Viola with Vincenzo Arcobelli;
Middle: Nino Provenzano, Gaetano Cipolla and Michael Badalucco at the presentation;
Below: An old NYU college friend, Dr. Eliot Sorel, visited with Florence and Gaetano at the Arba Sicula booth.

Leonardo Sciascia's Statue Unveiled in Hamilton Ontario

We know that Sicilians are everywhere, so it was not that surprising to see about six hundred of them gathered in Hamilton, ONTARIO on September 22 for an event that began at 5:00 PM and did not end until midnight. What was surprising was to see so many Sicilians hailing from the same town gathered in one place. The town in question was Racalmuto in the province of Agrigento which established a “gemellaggio” with Hamilton many years ago because so many of its citizens had chosen the Canadian city as their residence when they emigrated to Canada. Today there are thirty thousand people of Sicilian origin in Hamilton and there are more Racalmutesi there than in Racalmuto! It is not surprising also that in one of the main squares known as “Immigration Square” of Hamilton



The statue sculpted by Giuseppe Agnello is a replica of the statue that stands in Racalmuto.

there are statues commemorating some Sicilian people who contributed to the growth and development of the city. The event that I attended at the invitation of the organizers of Sicilia Canta, Joseph Baiardo and Sam Cino, focused first on the unveiling of a replica of a life-size



The unveiling of Leonardo Sciascia's statue in Immigration Square with master of ceremony Charles Criminisi and dignitaries that included the Mayor of Hamilton.

bronze statue of Leonardo Sciascia, the well-known writer from Racalmuto, sculpted by Giuseppe Agnello, the same artist who made the original statue that stands in Racalmuto. The statue was commissioned by the local citizens of Hamilton not only to show pride in one of their fellow townsmen but also to strengthen the ties between the Racalmutesi and their Canadian counterparts. Thirteen people from Racalmuto traveled to Hamilton for the occasion, including the Vice Mayor and members of the town council and representatives of the Sciascia Foundation.

Following the unveiling of the statue, the people moved to the building that was originally the railway station where immigrants arrived, which has now been converted to a civic center. Once the large crowd settled down, there were many speeches between the entertainment provided by local folk dance group and singers and by the organizers Baiardo and Cino, who acted as presenters but also did a very funny rendition of the famous Abbot and Costello skit, “who's on first” in Sicilian, which the crowd clearly enjoyed. Baiardo also performed his song “Chi nni sacciu iu.” Prof. Cipolla was invited to say a few words and he spoke briefly about Arba Sicula and its goals to save the Sicilian language. Filmmaker Mark Spano spoke briefly about his documentary “Sicily: Land of Love and Strife” which will be

presented in full sometime in June while Charly Chiarelli spoke about his full feature film which will be released soon. Trailers of their films were shown. Other speakers from the Sciascia Foundation spoke in Italian about Leonardo Sciascia and the significance of his work.

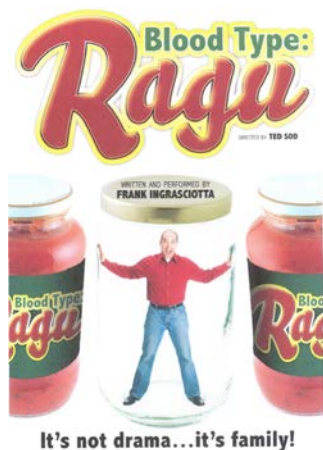
The evening was very enjoyable. It was remarkable to experience such a



sincere appreciation of sicelitude, that arises from knowing that you belong to a group with which you share beliefs, traditions and history. Joseph Baiardo and Sam Cino as well as the other organizers of the event deserve our vote of gratitude for the work they did to foster the values of our heritage.

Frank Ingrassciotta Performs His One- Man-Show Blood Type Ragù At St. John's University for the Second Time

On the evening of October 14, 2017, before an enthusiastic audience of Arba Sicula members and their guests, Frank Ingrassciotta performed his One-Man-Show "Blood Type: Ragù". This was the second time that Mr. Ingrassciotta has performed for the Arba Sicula members, some of whom may have seen the show the first time he came to St. John's. The show, which has been performed many times in various venues Off Broadway in the Metropolitan area and elsewhere, was received by the audience with the same joy as the original performance: a credit to Mr. Ingrassciotta whose meticulous attention to detail and professionalism was evident throughout the performance that lasted almost two hours without interruption. It was a veritable *tour de force*, which delighted the audience that was transported by Frank's incredible energy on a rollercoaster ride of emotions. The show was very funny, but it also had some reflective moments. It had what historians of Italian theatre have dubbed "aceto italiano" (Italian vinegar) that can turn a comedy into tragedy and viceversa at any time. The delighted audience followed Mr. Ingrassciotta in his journey through memory and understood.



"Blood Type: Ragù", which Mr. Ingrassciotta wrote, is a monologue that incorporates vignettes from his life as a Sicilian-American growing up in Brooklyn. It features over 20 characters who have somehow touched the author's life. As would be expected from a good Sicilian from Mazara del Vallo, the family occupies a central role in the show, with the mother's having a more important role in "Frankie's" life, followed by the father and then by an assemblage of relatives and neighbors, whom Ingrassciotta evokes throughout the show changing voices and demeanor in a *tour de force* of pantomime. These twenty different characters take the stage through Ingrassciotta's believable and effective impersonations: from the "schetta arraggiata" (the angry spinster) to Uncle Gaetanu who makes ricotta whose voice seems to come out of a cavernous hole, the father's new woman who pronounces *mozzarella* as *muorz arèl*, and *manicotti*

as *manee cuott*, the dying Sicilian grandfather whose face contorts into some incredible and believable shapes as he mouths incomprehensible words on his death bed, the woman with the "coscie aperte" (open thighs), and many others. The show interweaves moments of high comedic energy with poignant recollections of some of the difficult junctures in the author's life, such as his parents' separation after 40 years of marriage, his father's death from a heart attack.

The audience clearly understood what Ingrassciotta was talking about. They obviously identified with his issues and recognized them from their own experiences.

This was a most enjoyable evening for the members of Arba Sicula. The audience continued to talk about the show even as they enjoyed the abundant food and refreshments which, as always, follows all events sponsored by Arba Sicula.

Arba Sicula's Tour Twenty-four

F. Anthony D'Alessandro

As I thought about Arba Sicula's Twenty Fourth Sicilian tour, words from the movie, *Field of Dreams* echoed. "If you build it they will come." Waiting to fly to my ancestral homeland, I glanced around Kennedy's bustling airport guessing which of the travelers scurrying nearby planned to visit Sicily. When Dr. Cipolla called for his band of travelers, my brother and sister Sicilians intending to explore Persephone's

strangers; but by the time we flew home from Rome's DaVinci Airport, we'd become friends.

A mythical Shoeless Joe Jackson summoned baseball aficionados to a Kansas farm. On a busy June morn, on the shores of Jamaica Bay, Dr. Gaetano Cipolla assembled those of us who'd yearned to see Sicily. When my wife Adele and I arrived at a Kennedy Airport dressed up for its endless day, I grinned ear-to-ear realizing that I'd soon be stepping onto whiny jet plane heading to Sicily.

For years, I'd longed to leap the Big Pond with this group to experience my roots. A high school teaching schedule

I am happy to note that despite our ambitious tour, I wasn't "stanco morto" again until our return flight to the USA. There was no room in our Arba Sicula discovery days to permit the incursion of that tired feeling.

We met our driver Mario. By the end of our excursion, I'd concluded that, based upon his driving mastery of pencil thin roads and his squeezing his bus into parking spots in stingy streets twisted like rubber bands, he must have shared Mario Andretti's DNA. Mario's bus provided Diana a stage. Daily, she proved a captivating raconteur while describing the panorama unraveling outside our bus windows. In the closing



The last day of the tour we visited Gaetano's cousins, Rosetta and Peppino Giamboi for cocktails before going to the farewell dinner.

Isle stood up and circled the *professore*. They came.

They came from all corners of the USA: the Empire State, Sunshine State, Golden State, Garden State, Bay State, Great Lakes State, Keystone State, old Dominion State and others. Our group ranged from 18 to 95 years of age. At Kennedy Airport, we assembled as

that ended a month after this tour's annual departure always blockaded this dream holiday. Retirement stepped in and rescued me.

After touching down in Sicily, our guide Diana, sporting a springy step, shepherded us toward our tour bus, noting my tottering pace, Diana asked, "How are you?" "Stanco morto," I said.

days of our journey, I realized that the bus ride's continual echoing laughter transformed long drives into pleasurable adventures.

After our arrival at our first luxury hotel, Dr. Cipolla mentioned that we were free to walk Palermo's clattering roads and explore this city dripping in history.



The group posing in the Greek Theater of Taormina with Etna in the background.

A lifetime *chiacchiaruni*, I limit myself to describing only a small portion of the wonders observed. While walking to our restaurant for our arrival dinner, Professor Cipolla lead us thru a noisy and whimsical street sprinkled with vendors, singers, students and tourists. As I stepped up into our eatery an epicurean scene massaged my eyes. This quaint restaurant, smaller than my garage, plastered with library-like shelves sat blanketed by heaps of assorted mouth-watering foods. We feasted on a truly delightful dinner at the Casa del Brodo Restaurant, *sans* soup. Parading back toward the Mario's bus, some of us joined the street celebrants strutting and boogieing.

The next day, I stood mouth agape admiring the magnificent architecture of Palermo's Cathedral. Afterward we strolled thru Palermo's City Hall where we were treated like VIP's by beaming dignitaries.

Eventually, we motored to the storied Guttusu Museum, home of Renato Guttusu, Sicily's famed painter. I felt as if I'd been transported within the pages of the famed Gattopardo novel. Immersed in gaudy grandeur, and surrounded by baronial grounds, I wondered how many intrigues those pastoral gardens and flaking walls witnessed. Later, we attended the Sicilian play, "Un Dutturi pi davvieru." That outdoor playhouse

stood surrounded by modified high rise apartments that flaunted dripping wash that formed a two-story curtain of wet cloth. That drying scene did not distract, since the audience roared and appeared to roll with non-stop laughter.

Sipping savory *cappuccino* on Day Five's delayed daybreak, I confessed to friends about difficulties with stubborn Sicilian showers. They required an exorcist, appearing possessed when they twisted, turned, defied me and splashed and soaked several of my hotel rooms. I was not alone. A perceptive friend said, "It's hard to believe that a nation that produces Ferrari cannot create obedient showers. I questioned our stop at the Stagnone Lagoon Salt Works. Again, my skepticism proved wrong. Sure, I'd frivolously purchased enough salt to melt the ice from my January New York driveway. More relevant, however, we stood captivated by the septuagenarian bard, Peppe Genna, the poet of the Salt Works. He recited his memorized rhyme, dedicated to woman while simultaneously

gesturing like a passionate Toscanini at the Met.

We boarded the bus for Agrigento's Valley of the Temples. At that temple site, I heard multiple lecturers simultaneously. I trudged toward those monuments to history. My mind wandered off again. Sitting on an ancient stone and staring at a burnt Temple of Juno, I wondered. Was the red I detected on columns the bloodstains of ancient Sicilians? Had Hannibal, in Houdini style, invaded this spot with his elephants? I saw my group moving and scrambled to catch up.

In Syracuse, I hollered and howled at the human ear shaped Ear of Dionysius. I imagined Dionysius eavesdropping on the plans of his prisoners. That site swelled with secrets.

Finally, I visited a church that I'd dreamed of seeing for years, *La Madonna Delle Lacrime*. A miracle of Blessed Mary's tears inspired the construction of a stirring teardrop church. Thanks to the wealth of construction knowledge possessed by our fellow tourists, I sat in an *ad hoc* mini classroom in a Cathedral corner learning how this architectural marvel was built.

Our last few days were spent in the shadow of the world's most beautiful tiny hamlet of Taormina. Fortunately, we had access to that city and to its pebble populated beach below. I had shared Caster Salemi celebrated his 95th birthday at our farewell dinner in Gaggi by dancing with Maria Santalesa and offering a Sicilian cassata to the members of the tour.





A few of the courageous members who answered the challenge to reach the highest point in the Greek Theater of Taormina.

a history with Taormina. Several rainy seasons past, while at our Taormina hotel my wife and I befriended opera legends. Velveteen voiced opera diva Francesca Patane invited us to watch her dress rehearsal of *Turandot* at the Greek Theater. Afterward, I realized that I enjoyed that rich sampling of culture more than any football playoff game. I relished revisiting this *paradiso* called Taormina.

The tour's final days treated us to a stop at Dr. Cipolla's softly murmuring childhood stream followed by a few pleasant hours at his cousin's estate. Both unique and familiar cuisine teased our taste buds, while carrying wine or soft drinks in each hand we strolled flowered grounds that deserved a place in horticultural magazines. We shared a delightful afternoon with a native and most hospitable Sicilian family. What a treat!

Throughout our journey, whenever we followed our leader Gaetano Cipolla, along with 95 year old World War Two hero Caster Salemi, and octogenarian Benedetto Ciminata, videos of Olympic gold medalist Pietro Minnea flashed across my mind. These men, despite senior status speedily led our expedition, actually triggering the summer air to shimmer. I felt that I weakly brought up a slow-motion rear of our spirited tour team.

On several evenings, we sat next to

stained, sweaty and weary walls. We commandeered tables and revealed our discoveries, impressions, and epiphanies. Caster and Benedetto proved prolific contributors to the discourse based upon their brilliant nearly 200 combined years of observing. As my dad used to say, "Facemu quattru chiacchiari."

Scholarly swordplay always followed *pesce spada* during our conversations on those lingering Sicilian summer days. The *Professore* and his sensitive and brilliant wife Florence, always accessible, joined us and enthusiastically handled our avalanche of questions.

Despite our varied life experiences,

despite some initial uptight behaviors, despite the fact that some of us were wounded by life, our friendships flourished as we discovered ourselves in Sicily. Gaetano, Florence and our fellow travelers melded us into an easygoing extended family similar to the essence of Persephone's Isle.

After our return to the US, I spoke with Caster. He wisely observed, "I miss the daily camaraderie that we shared each day of the tour." Benedetto noted, "Our people were kind, sensitive, and respectful, we always felt that we were looking out for each other." I told Adele, "I know that we'll be visiting with a few friends from Arba Sicula Twenty-Four this winter."

Hopefully, we'll see some others returning for the Silver Anniversary Arba Sicula's *Viaggio*. Immediately, she hugged me as hard as a carpenter's vice.

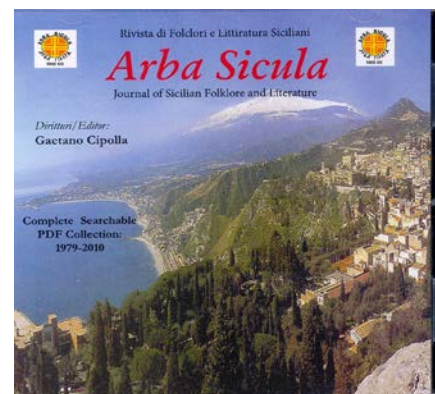
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Si prifriti la copia cartacia, mannatimi l'abbonamentu di \$40.

Buy All Past Issues of Arba Sicula on a CD

This is to let you know that we still have a number of CDs containing all the 33 issues of the *Arba Sicula* journal, published from 1979 to the present, in an indexed and searchable PDF format that everyone with access to a computer can read. Since we lowered the price to \$50.00, some of our members have bought copies. We still have about thirty of them and I would like to sell them to make room for the updated CD I am planning to produce in the near future. The new CDs will include the two new issues of Arba Sicula published since we produced the CD plus an update index. So, if you want to have the history of Arba Sicula that won't take up much shelf space buy the CD. The \$50.00 price includes shipping and handling, too. To order your CD, send a check for \$50.00 to:

Arba Sicula P. O. Box 149, Mineola, New York 11501



In Memoriam

It is with sadness that I announce the passing of two good members of Arba Sicula: Mario A. Marano and Jennie Guarisco.



Mario Marano passed away on August 16, 2017. He was born in Acireale in 1944 and maintained contacts with the city of his birth even though he lived

in New Jersey. Mario was very active in community affairs and was inducted into the Italian American National Hall of fame. He was named *Cavaliere della Repubblica Italiana* in December 2009 and was the recipient of many awards like the Golden Baton of the Garden State Philharmonic Symphony Society and a few months before his death he was made an Honorary Citizen of the City of Acireale, an honor that I am sure he greatly appreciated.

Mario was especially helpful to Arba Sicula when he arranged for the members of the Arba Sicula tour to meet the Mayor of Acireale on several occasions. The Mayor and the Vice Mayor organized a reception during which they served everyone the ice cream for which the town is justly famous.

Knowing how ill he was he wrote the following message published in Facebook:

"Dear friends of Facebook, near and far: when you read this note, I will have left this world, going to what will be my place of rest. I charged my niece to post this message because she or Mary may not be able to contact everyone here and in Italy. I tried to live my life in the best way possible, placing my trust in my family, my friends and God. For years I have tried to fight against my illness to the best of my knowledge, ability to resist and courage. In the end the illness won. I have few regrets mainly of leaving my wife alone. I think I have lived a good

life, generally reaching peaks I never imagined possible for an immigrant. Therefore I say good bye to everyone knowing that we will see each other in the future."

His motto in life was "Sempre avanti". In behalf of Arba Sicula, I express our condolences to Mary, his wife of many years.

Jennie Lynn Guarisco was a participant of one of the tour conducted by Arba Sicula and she was joined by other members of the Guarisco family. That year the tour was composed of people who became close friends and actually visited each other on several occasions. In fact, even our guide Diana Mazza when she visited the United States included a visit to New Orleans to have a reunion with Jennie, Johanna Lynch and others who had been on the tour. Arba Sicula mourns her passing.

Jennie Lynn Guarisco, 62, passed peacefully on August, 21, 2017 among family in her home in New Orleans, LA after a courageous three-year battle with pancreatic cancer.

Jennie dedicated her time and talents to the New Orleans Saints organization for fifteen years leading up to and after the Superbowl XLIV victory as Executive Assistant to the Owner Mr. Tom Benson. To be in Jennie's presence was to feel unconditional love. So great it could not be contained; befittingly departed and began her new life during the solar eclipse, a rare, grand and unique moment that stands in testimony of her. For family and friends, she co-created a world of love, strength and intent with triumphant resolve. So grateful to have had Jennie in our lives we lovingly accept this greatest gift and are left shadowed in her greatness, humbled and honored.



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If you have access to a computer, send us your E-mail.*

Angelo Coniglio, author of *The Lady of the Wheel*, (Legas) is an experienced genealogical researcher of Italian immigrants and records from their ancestral towns. He will answer many questions without charge, or provide paid services if you are interested. Contact him at genealogytips@aol.com

Arba Sicula's 30th anniversary pin is still available. Send \$ 6.00 to:

Arba Sicula
Post Office Box 149
Mineola, New York 11501

Attention:

*Has your subscription expired?
Look at the address label on p. 20.
Please send your Dues!*

Sicilian Creativity: *Mio's Dolls*

It is well established fact that Sicilians in addition to the qualities attributed to them by Cicero—“an intelligent race, but suspicious and endowed with a wonderful sense of humor”—are also talented and creative people who have hands of gold, as the saying goes. They create all kinds of interesting objects that require skill, dedication, and a desire to leave their mark on matter, shaping it into the object that they can clearly visualize in their mind's eye.

I am not referring to the famous people that Sicily has produced throughout its 3000 years of history. I am talking about people who create beautiful objects just to express their creativity. I can name a number of these Sicilians. Filippo Bentivegna comes to mind, a self-taught artist who sculpted hundreds of heads from boulders on his property in Sciacca that became “The Enchanted



Castle,” an open air museum. I am thinking of a man who collects old olive trunks and shapes them into haunting human figures displayed in front of his house on the road to Francavilla (Messina Province). These people did not attend the Academy of Beaux Arts. Their artistry comes from persistent learning and adapting, from sweat and hard work, from finding the right form that suits their imagination and a desire to create.



And I am talking about another Sicilian whose work I have come to appreciate and admire. Her name is Antoinette Romano known as Ninetta to her friends, and her passion is dolls. She makes dolls, she designs and makes their clothes, she styles their hair, she makes their shoes, she paints their faces and she poses them. She even colors their fingernails. She has developed a unique look for them and they are unmistakably recognizable as her work which goes under the name of *Mio*—the name her granddaughter called her when she was a baby. While the dolls are made from the same basic figure in terms of size and height, each one is really one of a kind, entirely manufactured by hand through meticulous attention to every detail. Each piece has a unique name which then determines the kind of treatment she will receive in terms of her clothes and make up.

Ninetta Romano developed her hobby when she retired after running a Wedding Gown Center in Brooklyn for 25 years. In her boutique, Ninetta personally fitted the gowns and made all necessary alterations to make sure that every detail was handled in a most caring manner. The brides who were lucky enough to purchase a wedding gown from her still remember her with

affection. With time on her hands and as a true Sicilian who cannot stand still for too long, she began to make dolls for her grandchildren. As a clothes designer and as someone who uses the sewing machine with artistry, it was not long before she created a gallery of dolls that are amazing. While they all start from the same basic figure, each doll grows into a one of a kind personality in which every piece of her attire is coordinated with the image the creator had in mind. Each doll requires many days of painstaking work involv-

ing many skills. The dolls' hair must be shaped appropriately, her clothes must reflect who she represents, and everything



about her must ring true, as you can see in the doll above dressed in a colorful Sicilian costume. The dolls are really a labor of love and creativity. Ninetta has made so many of them that she needs to make room for the others who are still in her head. The dolls can be purchased online at www.Etsy.com, for \$129.00 each. Search for “Fashion Dolls by *Mio*”

Lasting Love...Sicilian Style

F. Anthony D'Alessandro

I gaped at a once buzzing store squatting on its mountaintop lair.
 I'd strolled here just five summers ago.
 Rumors spread that for scores of years, this store,
 impeccably attired for its visitors,
 flourished beneath Mount Etna's gun metal shadows.
 Today, the building looked different, like a ghost town,
 abandoned by humanity.
 Droplets of tears fell from my brow and I began to tremble,
 feeling bullied by the building's deteriorating, dress down appearance.
 While walking up to the wide angled store window,
 its battered welcome sign appeared encircled by a jungle of masking,
 "Sorry, are closed" posters.
 I squinted thru the tiny hand-sized gap between signs.
 I faced a clutter of cobwebs, noticed food- free scattered shelves,
 overturned tables, three legged chairs in the barren landscape
 that once housed a bustling business.
 I smiled unexpectedly when images of two former bouncy,
 hand-holding, hard-working nonagenarians with goal post smiles,
 and surprisingly bone crunching hugs made a cameo appearance
 in the wilderness of my mind.
 Nowadays, all seemed swept away by unrelenting cruelty of the calendar.
 My eyes drained again, goose bumps assailed my arms and I tasted salt.
 Engaged, once again my mind retreated to my first visit.
 This grocery store then brimmed with children scampering like chipmunks,
 wearing ice cream on faces, while brassy adults chatted l
 ike an excited school chorus.
 The laughter of children everywhere.
 A proud and seasoned woman in black defied her limp to reach out to custom-
 ers despite rude impediments that blockaded sound from whispering in her ears.
 A doting, stooped gentleman stutter-stepped by, placed a shaky claw-like hand
 on my shoulder while simultaneously staring at his wife with fervent eyes and an
 ear-to-ear grin.
 The man softly joined his spouse and said, "*La me bedda mughieri, sittanta
 cincù anni* (My beautiful wife, seventy five years)."
 His pride regarding her beauty somehow sparkled across his craggy face.
 He clutched her hands, caressing and kissing each limp, gnarled, and tired finger.
 They hugged; no half-hearted hugs here.
 The essence of lasting love filled that grocery as the lazy moon blinked coyly
 and slipped off to sleep among the clouds.
 Together they strolled thru their store greeting each and every customer with
 twinkling smiles.
 Suddenly, I felt jolted and bumped by a wide-bodied walker on that strip of
 sidewalk that appeared no wider than an arm's length, outside the tattered store.
 Shaken from my reverie, I trudged on.
 My soul smiled joyfully, certain that this couple
 now occupying my memories embarked on the next leg of their journey,
 arm-in-arm and heart-to-heart into something greater
 than either could ever imagine.

Scena tra putiaru e clienti

di Amedeo Re

Clienti: Rosa; Putiaru : Don Ciccio

*Rosa: Bon giurnu, Don Ciccio! Quantu
 costa un paru di mutanni?*

*Don Ciccio: Milli e tricientu liri,
 Rosuzza!*

*Rosa: E sta cammisa riccamata,
 quant'è?*

*Don Ciccio: Ottucientu liri, scia-
 tuzzu miu!*

*Rosa: Va, finimula cu stu scherzu! I
 priezzi sunu auti e vussia m'avi a fari nu
 scuntu.*

*Don Ciccio: Siccomu mi fai geniu,
 Rosa mia, facimu accusi: i mutanni milli
 e centu liri e a cammisa milli liri, picchi
 sì tu!*

*Rosa: Va, va, Don Ciccio! Chi modu
 esti chissu di trattari i cristiani?*

*Vossia mi isa a camisa e mi cala i
 mutanni.*

Scene in a Clothing Store

by Amedeo Re

Customer: Rosa; Owner: Don Ciccio

*Rosa: Good morning, Don Ciccio! How
 much is this pair of panties?*

*Don Ciccio: A thousand three hundred
 lire, my dear Rosy.*

*Rosa: And this embroidered blouse,
 how much?*

*Don Ciccio: Eight hundred lire, my
 sweet Rosy.*

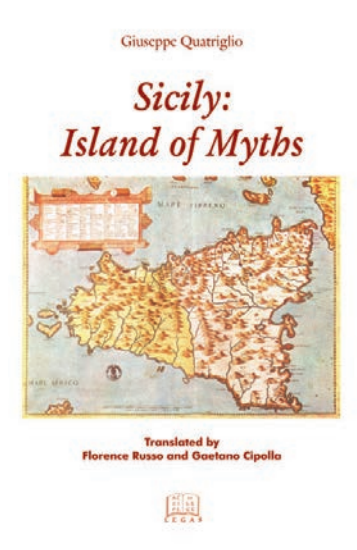
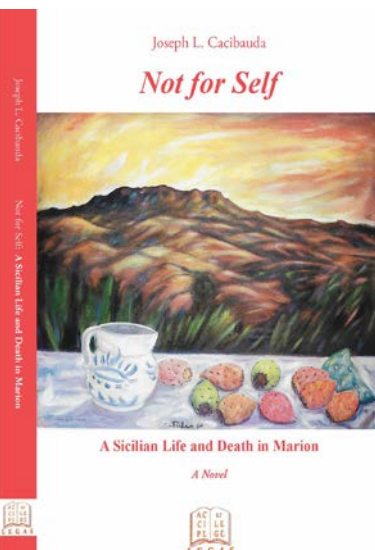
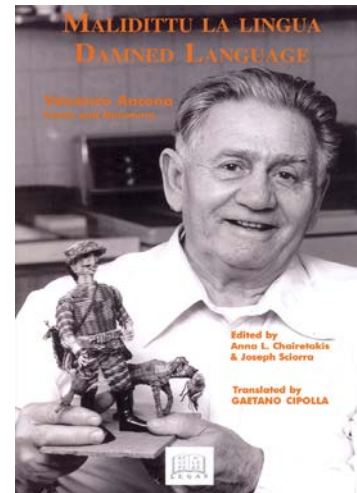
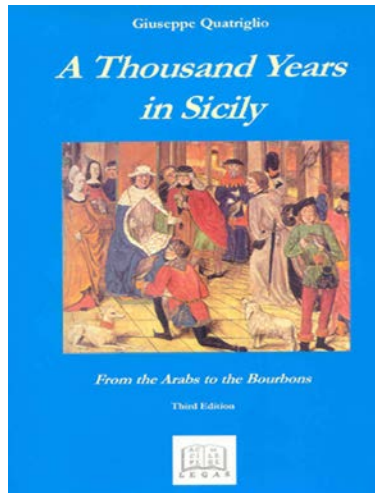
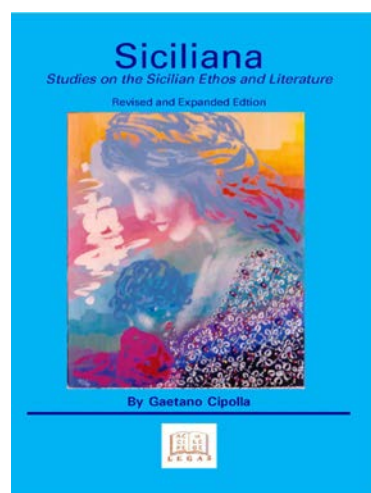
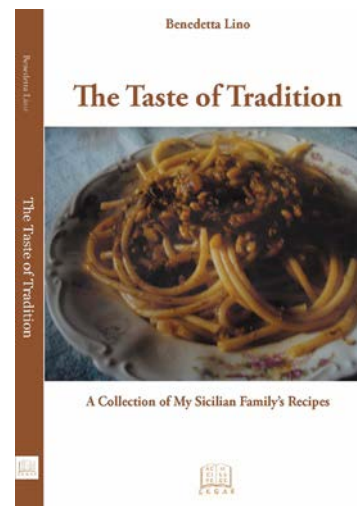
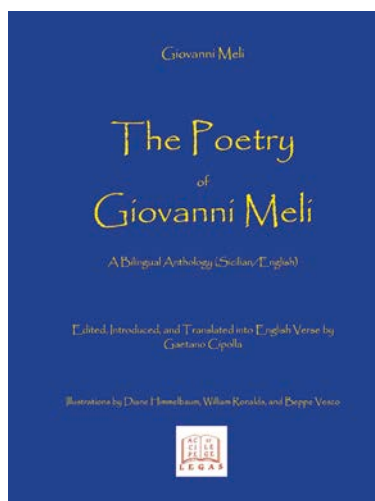
*Rosa: Go on, let's stop this game. The
 prices are too high. You have to give me
 a discount.*

*Don Ciccio: Because I like you so much,
 Rosy, let's make a deal: the panties a
 thousand one hundred and the blouse
 a thousand, but just because I like you!*

*Rosa: Go on, Don Ciccio! What way of
 treating customers is this? You're raising
 my blouse and lowering my panties!*

Special Sale

Arba Sicula and Legas are committed to the idea that books are the best way to share our Sicilian heritage with our children and grandchildren. With this in mind we continue to offer a 20% discount to our members. **(SEE BOOKS page 19)**



Puisia Siciliana

Jorna pirduti di Teresa Riccobono

Trasi un ciatu di gesiminu
dâ finestra
e tuttu nsemmla
i vuci nescinu di lu scuru
e scuppianu comu muniti d'oro.
M'arriportanu lu tempu luntanu,
quannu ccu na corda
e na pupidda ni sintevamu
patruni di lu munnu
e ddu' ligna
erano spati ppi battagghi
ntra li linzola stinnuti
ca svintuliavanu
a li grida di vittoria.
Nun s'addumannava tannu
unn'è ca nascia lu mari
era dintra a l'occhi
di na jatta mistiriusa
o nta na pitruzza cilesti.
Ora ca l'occhi sunnu muti,
ora câ vita è
senza cantu di cicali,
sulu li spirdi mi vennu a truvà
e ccu li nocchi d'ossa
tuppulianu â porta,
ma iu rrestu
nta n'agnunidda
vicinu ô fuculari,
ntô me nidu di stiddi,
nta la quieti
di li me jorna pirduti.

I dubbi di n'addevu si Orazio Minnella

N'addevu prontu a scinniri ntô munnu
ci dissi ô Patri Eternu prioccupatu:
-Dimmi comu haiu a viviri ddà n funnu
senza ccu mi proteggi nta stu statu?

-Hai n angilu ccu tia sempri vicinu
tutti li santi jorna n sintunia
ca ti cuntrolla puru u pannulinu
e poi, ti canta sempri a litania,

nsignannuti i paroli e a camminari.
-Si iu t'hau a parrari comu fazzu?
-Ntrizza li to manuzzi ppi priari.
-Sacciu ca l'omu è tintu e vilinazzu.

-Cu' ti sta attagghiu sapi comu â fari
pi tèniri lu tintu alla luntana,
rischiannu, puru di non chiù campari,
tinennuti ddà d'intra a na campana.

-Poi non ti vidu cchiù, chi ti nni pari?
Arrestu tristi d'intra u cori miu.
-L'angilu to', di mia ti sta a parrari
nsignannuti quant'è a rannizza i Diu-

Ma nta dd'istanti ô munnu fu mannatu
e mentri chi ieva avanti stu prugramma,
-Comu si chiama l'angilu assignatu?
Rispuñni Diu:-ù poi chiamari Mamma.

Chiavi senza porta di Alerx Caldiero

Aiu na chiavi
ca nun avi porta.

'A tegnu chiusa
ntôn casciolu.

Assimigghia a l'ossu
di n armali ca nun esisti chiù.

Ogni tantu
â taliu.

Viu na strata.
Viu na casa.

C'è a scrivania
ca fici me nannu.

Rapu u casciolu
e ci trovu na chiavi.

Spiu: unn'è a porta?
Ma nuddu m'arrispuñni.

Tegnu a chiavi
ntâ chianta dâ manu.

Ntuttuna,
sacciu unn'ajâ jiri.

Comu passu
davanti ô specchiu,

mi n'addugnu
c'aiu l'occhi chiusi.

Scruciu ri ventu di Maria Teresa de Sanctis

Scruciu ri ventu,
scruciu ri notti,

scruciu ri sogni
nta lu me cori.

Mi insunnu a ttia

e chiddu infernu

di milli guerri mai
arrisettati.

E intantu lu mari
mi abbrazza forti

e anchi li stiddi
sunnû cu mmia.

Ma iu lu sacciu
ca 'unn'aiu risettu

si a lu me latu
tu un ci sù...

Un celu di sira di Lidia Chiarelli adattamento in sicilianu di Marco Scalabrino

Era duci
lu ciauru di ddi siri
quannu allungavanu
li pidatozzi nostri
li trazzeri nna li jardina di la stati

quannu li lampiuna
s'addumavanu jesi jesi
e ammattennu cu la luna e cu li stiddi
azzizzàvanu pènnuli di luci
supra li petri cuvi di li viola.

La vita
appena tannu ncuminciata
paria allèstiri
sulu pi nuatri
un celu fasesu di culura.

Fiuri senza numaru e fini
(sghiddi di ricordi luntani)
chi stiornu
s'accucchianu
e si scucchianu
nna lu mulineddu stancu
di la menti.

Zagari di Maria P. Badalucco

Si vicinu a chistu ciuri
chiuri l'occhi e poi l'adduri:
di la to terra tu vidi lu suli.
E l'amuri di la genti chi ti dici
di luntanu, semu sempri a tia vicinu
cu lu cori nta li manu
e stu ciuri sicilianu.

Sicilian Poetry

Lost Days

by Teresa Riccobono

The breath of jasmine enters
through the window
and all together
the voices emerge out of the darkness
and burst like golden coins.
They take me back in time
to when with a little rope
and with a little doll we felt we were
mistresses of the universe
and when two wooden sticks
were swords waging battles
between sheets hanging out to dry
billowing in the wind
echoing our screams of victory.
We did not ask then
where the sea was born,
it was inside the eyes
of a mysterious cat
or in a little bluish stone.
Now that the eyes are silent,
now that life is
without cicadas' song,
only the ghosts come visit me.
They knock at my door
with bony knuckles,
but I remain
in my own little corner,
in my nest of stars,
in the quietude
of my lost days.

The Doubts of a Child

by Orazio Minnella

A child who was about to come down
to earth
was worried as he said to the Eternal
Father:
"Tell me, how am I to survive down there
without someone who can protect me?"
"You have an angel who will stay with you
forever. He will always be with you.
He'll even change your diaper and will
sing,
teaching you how to speak and how to
walk."
"If I should need to talk to you, what will
I do?" "Join your little hands in prayer.
I know that man is evil and quite mean.
The one who stands by you knows how to
keep
the evil people far away from you,
risking at times grave injuries or death

keeping you safe inside a shielding bell."
"But then I won't be seeing you, and that
will make me sad inside my soul."
"Your angel will be talking about me,
about the greatness of the Lord."
But as the child was ready to descend,
he asked the Lord: "What is my angel's
name?"
The Lord replied to him, "Just call him
Mother."

Doorless Key

by Alex Caldiero

I have a key
that has no door.

I keep it locked
inside a drawer.

It resembles the bone
of an extinct animal.

Now and then
I look at it.

I see a street.
I see a house.

There's the writing desk
my grandfather built.

I open the draw
and find a key.

I ask: Where's the door?
But no one answers.

I hold the key
in the palm of my hand

Suddenly,
I know where I must go.

As I pass
in front of a mirror,

I notice
my eyes are closed.

The Noise of Wind

by Maria Teresa De Sanctis

Noise of wind
noise of night
noise of dreams
inside my heart.

I dream of you
and of our hellish
thousand wars
never resolved.

Meanwhile the sea
embraces me with force
and even the stars
are here with me.

But I know
that I won't feel at peace
if you are not
lying beside me...

An Evening Sky

by Lidia Chiarelli

The perfume of those nights
was sweet
when
our footsteps invented long tracks
in the gardens of summer

When
the street lamps were kindled
and competing with the moon and the
stars,
formed parabolas of lights
upon the dark stones of the paths.

Life
had just begun then
seemed to reveal to us alone
a sky of unreal hues

Innumerable images
shards of distant memories
that today
recompose and break apart
in the tired kaleidoscope
of the mind.

Zagari

by Maria P. Badalucco

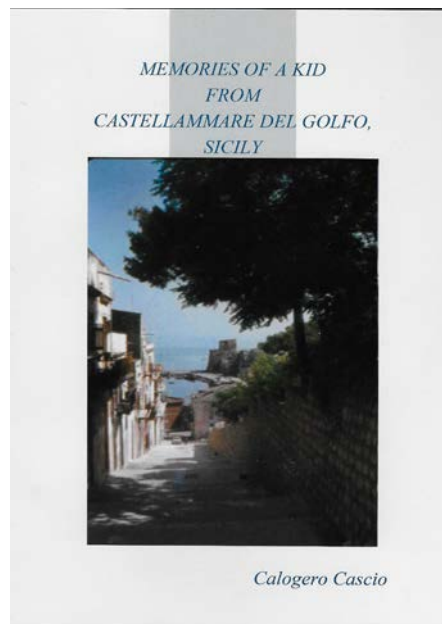
If you stand near to this flower,
close your eyes and smell the perfume,
you will see the sun of your homeland
and the love of the people that says
from far away. we are always by your side
with our hearts in our hands
and this Sicilian flower

Book Reviews

Memories of a Kid from Castellammare del Golfo, Sicily by Calogero Cascio, 2011.

A few years ago Giuseppe Turriciano sent me a book entitled *Memories of a Kid from Castellammare del Golfo, Sicily* by Calogero Cascio, and as is my habit I looked at it and put it aside, hoping to be able to read it in the future. Unfortunately, time passes and I can't catch up with all the things that deserve my attention. I recently had the chance not only to look at the book carefully but to read it. My original impression that Calogero Cascio had written reminiscences of his growing up in Castellammare del Golfo that would be of interest only to his family and friends was definitely off the mark. In reading the narrative of how things were as Calogero was growing up we come to realize what a great transformation has occurred in Sicily in the last sixty years. The town of Castellammare which had 24,000 inhabitants had been reduced 13,000 in 2011 when Calogero first wrote his reminiscences. I am sure that the number has been reduced even more today. The changes that he describes, the introduction of electricity, gas for cooking, telephones. Radio and Television, automobiles, have occurred throughout Sicily altering the way of life everywhere. The greatest loss of all seems to be the break up of the extended families that once held Sicilians together. The interaction with the town's people has also been reduced radically. Seeing a large group of men sitting outside their favorite caffè is very rare now and youngsters do not play in the streets as once they did. Calogero's words, for those of us of a certain age, bring back memories we have forgotten, but for the new generations they must seem like ancient history. Joseph Turriciano, wrote the following comment on the book and I am glad to reprint it as well as an excerpt of Calogero's own narrative about "The noise of Via Zingaro", one of the streets of Castellammare that gives the flavor of how things were then.

"Memories of a Kid from Castellam-



mare del Golfo, Sicily" is a wonderful narration of the author's memories, that span from his early childhood and emigration to the United States, to his return visits to his native town. When I first read his manuscript, I became so emotionally involved that I felt as though his stories were part of my life as well. The memories of his town, his grandparents, his relatives and trades are interlaced with his anecdotes, pictures, proverbs, religious songs, and idioms—all in a Sicilian dialect—that makes the entire experience a joyful reading.

It would have been a shame if this book, which was initially written for his immediate family, was not shared with a larger audience. For this reason, I invited Calogero to have his book published. The book's contents will renew the childhood experiences of many immigrants as well as provide all those of Sicilian origin with insight on the lives of their own ancestors.

With a touch of simplicity and love, the author dedicates the book to his grandchildren "for making it easy for me to remember that despite everything, it's still a wonderful life"

Giuseppe Turriciano

"The noise of Via Zingaro"

Via Zingaro could be quite noisy aside from my father's hammers and anvils. Occasionally there was music too: street singers passing by or a man with a street piano (on wheels) with a particularly haunting

sound. There were also many people buying and selling goods from street to street: fishermen, often barefoot as they just got off their boats, 'abbanniavanu' (used to cry out in a kind of singing way) 'Aiu pisci pigghiati r'ora!' (I have fresh fish!), or people selling eyeglasses 'Occhiali fine p'a vista! C'e 'l'occhiala '!' (Fine eyeglasses! The eyeglass vendor is here!) and there was a man selling newspaper, at times yelling 'Articoli di Castellammare!' He was known as 'Scimia' (Monkey). Speaking of Scimia, in town we also happened to have someone nicknamed 'Tarzan'. We had people sharpening knives and scissors, people fixing chairs, a 'stagnataru' (tin-smith) who tin-plated frying pans, and we even had a renowned dish surgeon that occasionally came around to breathe new life into broken dishes and rejuvenate cracked ones. Of course, the 'Annumina vinturi' (fortune-tellers) could also be seen from time to time. I remember one who had a parrot in a cage trained to pick up small cards with its beak. The card it picked for me said I am going to live until the age of 85. Or was it 86? Then it picked the same, exact card for two other kids. That bird didn't have a honest face. 85 or 86? Now I don't know when exactly I am supposed to start worrying.

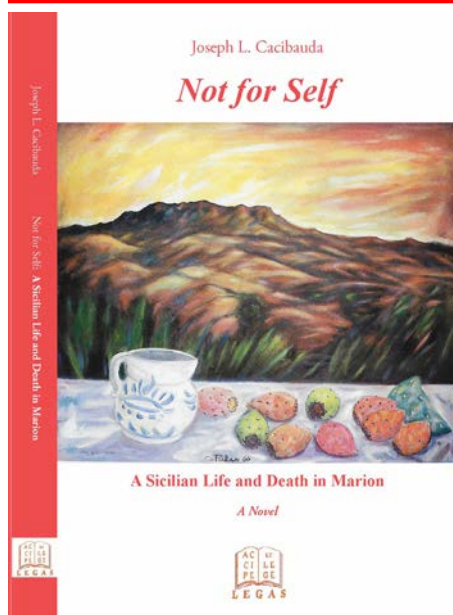
Joseph Cacibauda, *Not for Self: A Sicilian Life and death un Marion*, a Novel, Mineola, NY: Legas \$16.00, 2017.

Reviewed by **Laura Newman***

Jake Valenti's cause of death: By gunshot wounds by the hands of Cliff H. Justifiable Homicide.

The whole of a life compressed into two sentences.

Author Joseph L. Cacibauda came across this death certificate while researching for a different novel. Jake Valenti was his distant cousin, an immigrant from Sicily, coming to America in the early 1900's. Perhaps if the death was listed as natural causes, Cacibauda would have moved on with his research. But there was something about gunshot wounds and the word justifiable that sent him searching for Jake.



The 1920's were turbulent times in America. Jake settled in Marion, Illinois, lured by the promise of work in the coal mines and the hope of purchasing farming land. He lived in a time of conflict: unions against mine owners, prohibition sidestepped by bootleggers, morality espoused and enforced by the Ku Klux Klan. It was not a clear cut line between hoodlum and innocent.

Not for Self is a highly researched historical dig into the cross-fire of ideologies, greed, and anti-immigrant sentiments. It is the personalized story of an America that enticed immigrant labor with a glossy vision for a better future. For Jake this vision ended in his murder. But was he an innocent?

With *Not for Self*, it's as if Cacibauda has taken a series of sepia photographs of the past, colorized them and brought them to unforgettable life. Historical fiction at it's best.

* Laura Newman is a Reno, Nevada writer. Her book *Parallel to Paradise*, a collection of short stories about drug addiction and relationships, has won a number of literary awards. She is currently working on a new book, *Tourettes of the Heart*.

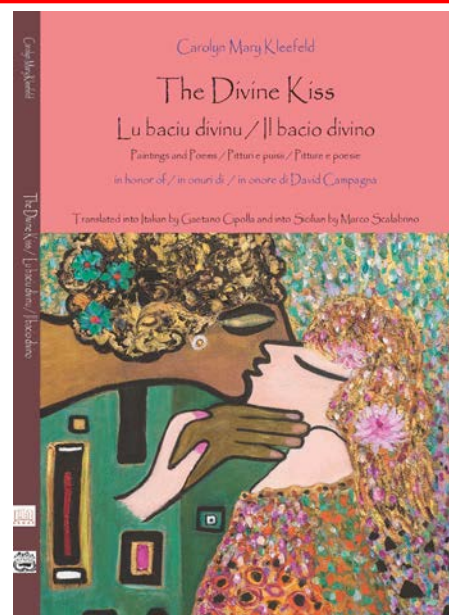
Carolyn Mary Kleefeld, *Lu baciù divinu / The Divine Kiss / Il bacio divino*, Legas & Cross-Cultural Communications, 96 pages, \$20.00

Reviewed by **Gaetano Cipolla**

This is the second trilingual book that members of Arba Sicula will receive gratis. The first was *Simenzi di l'arma / Soul Seeds / Semi dell'anima*. We are happy to publish Gaetano Cipolla's comment on the book that will be sent shortly to all members in good standing.

Carolyn Kleefeld's poetry is not Wordsworthian in nature. It is not emotion recollected in tranquility. Indeed, it is entirely the opposite, for the emotions Carolyn experiences are quintessentially risky, extreme, challenging and dangerous. In the poem "Hunger of the Wilds," for example, she appeals to her lover to come to her with the primeval and untamed hunger of the species. The metaphors she uses to describe the passion she seeks in her lover are imbued with the extreme opposites of Eros and Thanatos, love and death, for the lightning that strikes its beloved tree destroys it, as does the volcano that sings the earth with its quivering caresses. She seeks to be loved with the hunger of the wilds to reach a higher plane of emotion, to soar into a realm that humans are not allowed to enter without jeopardizing their safety. To reach that moment of supreme enjoyment that can be considered an anagnorisis, a supreme revelation of the mysteries of life, she is willing to expose herself to all kinds of dangers, even death. Carolyn is well aware of the dangers that her search for the absolute involves. Nevertheless, she does not give up. In the poem "Have Mercy, Eros," she acknowledges that unbridled passion can be destructive: "The void seems to mock me / for I have become / a wild creature / gripped by the leash / of a feverish passion, / eagerly awaiting / our next encounter". The only hint of her frailty comes when she begs Eros to have mercy on her. Hers is basically a search for the absolute that you can see at every level. She seeks to transcend her peculiar time and place to become one with all the creatures of the earth and to synchronize her emotions with the rhythm of the stars.

The paintings that were included



in this exhibition contain many visual clues that echo the concepts expressed in the poems. While I do not think that they were made as a visual support for the poems, it is evident that they were born out of the same frame of mind. One example will suffice. The painting entitled *Eros and Aphrodite* is placed on the page facing the poem "Hunger of the Wilds," establishing some points of contact between text and painting. The two figures who are locked in an incandescent embrace can be viewed as a reference to the "volcano / that erupts with molten fire—, / singeing the earth / with quivering caresses." Look at Eros. His face is contorted in the ecstasy of the consummation, his eyes are looking inwardly more than they are focused on Aphrodite, while his right arm, painted with the color of the flames that shoot out of his head—which is surely a visual representation of the hunger of the wilds—nearly encircles the body of his beloved, whose face shows the beginning phase of her abandoning herself to the sway of the senses. Her mouth is opened, and her passion is just beginning to flare as the flames shooting out of her head demonstrate. Her eye though is still wide open, almost in disbelief as she contemplates the transformation that is occurring in her.

While it is not easy to translate Kleefeld's images into a logical narrative that makes sense in the light of reason—because those images seem to

emerge out of unfathomable depths—they do convey through a combination of colors and shapes deep emotions that can be understood in their raw power at a visceral, semiconscious level, which is basically what great art does: it connects with the unspoken and unspeakable in the secret language of the species.

Joseph A. Amato, *Diagnostics: Poetics of Time* (Bordighera Press), 2014

Reviewed by Dana Yost

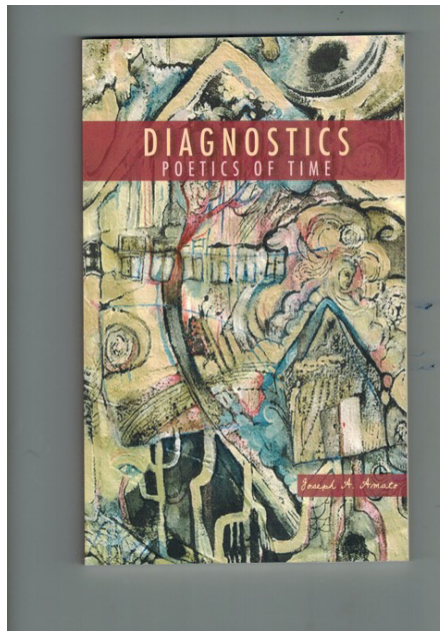
Late in his writing career, Joseph A. Amato has become a prolific poet. His new book, *Diagnostics: Poetics of Time* (Bordighera Press), is his third published collection of poetry since 2014.

An academic historian by training and profession, Amato has written, sometimes with a co-author, twenty-nine prose books—intellectual histories, personal history, local history. In many of those works, death, dying and serious illness have never been far from the page, if not directly on it. In fact, one of his earliest history books, from 1985, is simply called *Death Book*.

In that book he said there is much about death that could not be explained, and he deliberately stopped short of “establish[ing] a thesis of death.” But with the new poetry collection, he takes a deeper plunge. He aims to “make poetry and prayer the gathering of the living and the dead.” The book becomes a sort of diagnostic procedure itself, exploring and seeking to explain not only illness and dying, but how we *live* with the processes and emotions of aging, illness, and dying.

The catalyst for *Diagnosis* was a shattering cancer diagnosis received by Amato’s wife of fifty years, Cathy. In response to that news, Amato studied the different meanings of diagnostics and especially medical diagnostics, and mined his extensive academic learning as well as the rich ethnic-immigrant heritage of his family.

The result is a serious work. A graceful, attentive, thoughtful, prayerful,



often-moving volume. The poems are accessible and well-crafted: often concise, with well-deployed but not excessive use of alliteration and end rhyme, and ample in meaning and metaphor. Emotions from joy to grief; childhood memories; family love; faith; and courage in the face of suffering and difficult diagnoses give these poems meditative strength and personal relevance.

When a writer seeks to make poetry of death and dying, he risks producing a book full of unruly emotions: wide-open angst, tear-filled concern, fist-shaking contempt at medicine and God. There is, certainly, a fair amount of emotional openness in *Diagnostics*, including Amato’s admiration for Cathy’s strength. Anger over the diagnosis and at failing, ailing bodies in general, sometimes shows. But, largely, the book’s declarations of emotions are restrained, a reflection of Amato’s decision to lean on his study and writing discipline—to rein himself in and let writing *Diagnostics* become an outlet for some of his worry and fear. That leads to better poetry, with emotions revealed through the work itself: images and settings, metaphors and specific characterizations.

The middle of the book contains a fine series of poems about Cathy and her treatment. A sequence of four poems follows the Amatos on long drives to the Mayo Clinic—drives that themselves can bring up the “dark and somber,” but nevertheless lead them the Mayo, “our

isle of hope / sanctuary of best therapy.” (Cathy’s cancer is now in temporary remission.) In another, “A Fruit Market Puzzle in the Waiting Room,” Amato captures the feel of a room of strangers, gathered, passing the time, while they or a family member await treatment. After noticing a child’s farm-scene puzzle’s “big brown barn [and] green garden,” of many colorful vegetables, Amato observes: “*Out of words, / We kill time watching / A mother and daughter kill time. / We wait for the red and white cell count / Of hematology, / Hoping in a higher mercy— / A diagnosis predicting / A quick healing.*” Other poems are set in the outdoors, where he finds joy in memory (“At Aunt Mabel’s Cottage,”) and hope in the present (“Wake Up, Spring Will Come”). Many explore death and dying through Amato’s memories and influences of his parents, grandparents, other relatives (“Uncle Sam’s Fly,” a plaintive “O God, Where is My Brother?” among them.). The last section of poems build around prayer and religious thought as Amato, a devout Catholic, seeks assurances in his faith.

In a prose final section, Amato develops a lengthy essay on diagnosis, where he writes about the cures and relief provided by modern medicine, in which he sees “unprecedented” hope. But since this book is a collection of poetry, one of his poems should have the last word. These are the final lines from “Give Yourself to Medicine:”

*Again travel free from the kingdom
of symptoms, / From the recurrence
of omens, / To a place not clouded by
worry, anxiety, and augury, / Ambigu-
ity and equivocation, / To a distinct
landscape of fresh running waters, /
High grassy knolls, / In light winds,
/ Under open skies / With eyes enrapt-
ured, / Riding the tips of balancing
and gliding wings.*



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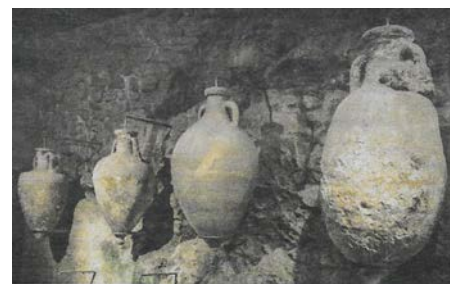
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6000 Year Old Wine Discovered in Sicily

We have always known that Sicily, which occupies a central position in the Mediterranean, has been inhabited since prehistoric times. Thanks to the archeologists who are unearthing more information every day, we know more about the Sikans, the Elimians, and the Siculi who came after them, but not much is known about those who were in Sicily before them. Apparently, however, the people who lived there before recorded history knew how to make wine. Recently a team of archeologists from the University of South Florida carried out a test on an ancient jar found on Mount Cronio, near Sciacca, which contained traces of wine dating back to 6000 years ago. The finding shines a new light on the history of wine-making in Italy. The oldest Italian wine residue found up to that point had been in a winepress near Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia. Those residues were estimated to be 3000 years old. Thus, the Sicilian wine was twice as old as the Sardinian wine. This finding does not come as a surprise to Sicilians who have always believed that their island had a special relationship with wine and with oil, as they were considered gifts from the gods: wine was a gift from the God Dionysus whom the Romans eventually called



Ancient jars used to transport oil and wine.

Bacchus, and the olive tree was a gift from Athena. But this discovery pushes the date of the first wine-making in Sicily further back into history to 3000 years before the arrival of the Greeks. The first Greeks arrived in Naxos (Giardini/Taormina area) in 735 BC.

ARBA SICULA

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Arba Siculo's Tour 25 Itinerary. June 3 to June 15, 2018

This is the itinerary I propose for our 25th anniversary tour of Sicily. We may make minor changes to the itinerary in the coming weeks. The price for the tour remains: \$3,500 and includes airfare, airport taxes and fuel surcharge, four-star hotels, Deluxe transportation, and all meals, except lunches. Some hotels are not confirmed. The single supplement is \$450.00 which can be avoided if you share a room with someone. Please send a non-refundable deposit of \$200.00 per person to Arba Siculo, P. O. Box 149, Mineola, New York 11501. Full payment is due on April 1, 2017. You can reach prof. Cipolla at gcipolla@optonline.net

June 3 - Sunday DAY 1 - Departure from J. F. Kennedy Airport, New York on Alitalia AZ609, 4:50 PM. Arrive Rome 6:30 AM.

June 4- Monday DAY 2 - Connect with AZ1785 in Rome at 10:00 AM, arrive in Palermo at 11:10 AM. Transfer to Hotel Excelsior. Afternoon free to rest. Welcome dinner at La Casa del Brodo Restaurant.

June 5- Tuesday DAY 3 - Morning guided tour of Palermo that includes the Cathedral, the Norman Palace, and other important sights. In the afternoon, we will visit Monreale. For dinner we will travel to Santa Flavia for dinner with local members of Arba Siculo.

June 6- Wednesday DAY 4 - We will drive to Cefalù in the morning and we will visit the beautiful cathedral as well as the Museo Mandalisca. After lunch we will return to Palermo and we will have dinner at our hotel.

June 7- Thursday DAY 5 - Palermo to Marsala. We will stop for *cassatelle* in Castellammare del Golfo and then proceed to Erice. You will be free to have lunch on your own in this charming medieval city. Then we will visit the salt pans in Marsala before going to our hotel, the Baglio Oneto. Before dinner we will have a wine tasting at the hotel, and enjoy dinner with some of our local friends.

June 8- Friday DAY 6 -Marsala to Agrigento via Sciacca. We will have lunch by the beach in Porto Empedocle and proceed to Agrigento's Valley of the Temples. Before dinner we will be entertained by the oldest Folk group in Sicily: the Vald'Akragas group at our Hotel Della Valle.

June 9- Saturday DAY 7- After breakfast we will drive to Ragusa via Naro. We will stop for lunch in Naro and proceed to Ragusa where we will visit the baroque town before settling into our Hotel Mediterraneo. Reception with local authorities. Dinner at hotel.

June 10- Sunday DAY 8 - After breakfast we will drive to Siracusa. We will visit Modica on the way and have lunch at a famous trattoria. We will proceed to Palazzolo Acreide to visit the town and afterwards we will drive to Siracusa where we will be entertained by our friend Salvo Bottaro and company after dinner at the hotel.

June 11 - Monday DAY 9 - We will visit the archeological area of Siracusa in the morning and move down to the island of Ortygia where we will have lunch. We will visit the Sanctuary of the Madonna delle lagrime and attend a performance at the Greek Theatre at night, followed by a pizza party. We will see a Greek tragedy.

June 12- Tuesday DAY 10 - Morning drive to Catania. Visit the Cathedral, the Via Etnea, the Bellini Opera House. Lunch on your own. After lunch we will proceed to Giardini-Naxos by way of Acicastello, Acireale where we will stop for an ice cream. We will proceed to our hotel and relax at the pool. The Caesar Palace Hotel will be our hotel for the remaining 3 nights. Buffet dinner at the hotel.

June 13- Wednesday Day 11- A short morning drive to Taormina to visit the Greek-Roman theatre, free time for shopping and lunch. We then return to our hotel for relaxation at the pool or the beach. Dinner in our hotel.

June 14- Thursday DAY 12 - Morning free to do shopping. In the afternoon we will drive to Francavilla di Sicilia for cocktails and then to our Restaurant for the farewell dinner.

June 15- Friday DAY 13 - Transfer to Catania. The return flight is on Alitalia AZ1710, at 10:20 am, arriving in Rome at 11:40 AM, connecting with Alitalia 610 to New York at 2:45 PM. It will arrive in New York's J. F. Kennedy Airport at 6:20 PM of the same day.