

Summer Reading, Italian-American Style?

Marisa Iallonardo (July 31, 2008)



In search of a great, modern-day Italian-American book ...

I just finished reading [Unaccustomed Earth](#) [2], the newest book by Jhumpa Lahiri, the same author who wrote [The Namesake](#) [3] and [Interpreter of Maladies](#). [4] the latter of which I also read. For those of you who might be interested in reading it, the book was great—lots of stories about growing up and moving on, with words that are almost lyrical in the way they flow. Though fiction, most of the stories focus on being Indian-American and what it's like to grow up with parents who are immigrants and a way of life that's caught somewhere in the middle.

Naturally, it got me thinking about Italian-Americans, particularly what it's been like for those of us who grew up—or are growing up—with close ties to the country and culture. I started to realize that



I've read lots of stories on many ethnicities, but strangely, not many about Italian-Americans—particularly modern-day Italian-Americans, fiction or non. Sometime during the winter I finished [Vita](#) [5], a story written by an Italian-born author about a family of immigrants in turn-of-the-century America—which, for the record, did shed a lot of light for me on what that experience must have been like, and what it would have meant had they actually kept those apartments on Prince St. Then, of course, there was [Eat, Pray, Love](#). [6] which follows suit on the many memoirs written by Americans going to Italy to either find themselves or fix up an old house.

Recently, I did a quick search of both Amazon and Barnes and Noble for books about Italian-Americans and came across many written about the 1950s and 60s or the turn of the century. I understand that this is largely because that's when the wave of Italian immigrants was still large, but what about those of us who didn't necessarily grow up at that point in time? Is it possible that there are so few of us? Or, has the Italian-American immigrant experience simply been overshadowed—a been there, done that type of thing?

That being said, I could easily be overlooking some great work of fiction that just didn't happen to cross my screen. So, if anyone has any thoughts in general, or specific books I should be reading (what better place to ask than this?), please do let me know!

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Links

[1] <http://iitaly.org/files/3561books1217517808.jpg>

[2] <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Unaccustomed-Earth/Jhumpa-Lahiri/e/9780307265739/?itm=1>

[3] <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/The-Namesake/Jhumpa-Lahiri/e/9780618485222/?itm=3>

[4] <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Interpreter-of-Maladies/Jhumpa-Lahiri/e/9780395927205/?itm=2>

[5] <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Vita/Melania-G-Mazzucco/e/9780641842535/?itm=1>

[6] <http://www.elizabethgilbert.com/eatpraylove.htm>