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JOHN W. BRIGGS, *An Italian Passage: Immigrants to Three American Cities, 1890-1930*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978. Pp. xxii, 348.

The theme of this book could be succinctly summarized, with only slight parody, as: "These Dagoes weren't so stupid after all." John W. Briggs has written an interpretation of the Italian experience in America which stresses continuity of cultural values between Italy and the U.S., the Italian peasant's thirst for education, and a generally confident, future-oriented outlook on the part of the immigrant. The author concludes: "I have portrayed the immigrants as active agents, capable of initiative as well as of accomodation, and as possessors of a viable culture which shaped their perceptions of their American experience..." (p. 272). The book is, however, so self-consciously revisionist that this reviewer detects a tone of unwitting condescension, as if Briggs really did think Italians were stupid before he started writing the book.

Briggs presents the typical South Italian immigrant as a status-conscious individual from the "upper levels of the working classes" or "the middle range of the agriculturists," possessing extensive experience with voluntary societies in Italy and an intense interest in, but a limited exposure to, education. Once in America, the immigrants found that their individualistic values of self-improvement fit in well with American ideals and they took advantage of economic and educational opportunities.

The book is based on extensive research in Italian communal and provincial archives as well as on the usual range of American sources. Thus the old country background is more detailed than in many studies of immigrants in America. Briggs' discovery of numerous voluntary associations of peasants and workers in Southern Italy is a major contribution, for most previous works have treated immigrant mutual benefit societies as adaptations to American conditions, not as cultural carryovers from the Old World. At the American end of his study, the author, refreshingly, avoids the big city Italian colonies of New York and Chicago and focuses instead on three smaller communities: Rochester and Utica, New York, and Kansas City, Missouri.

Despite the extensive research and some fresh approaches, the book is not altogether satisfactory. The author has a penchant for demolishing straw men and is a bit too ferociously revisionist. In addition, he has a positive passion for minute points of historiography which he pursues relentlessly throughout the text. In style, the book presents a rather extreme example of the quantitative, social science oriented social history which might be termed the "test tube" approach — if I throw x number of tables and y number of sociological theories into a chapter, let's see what happens.

More serious than the awkward, pedantic style is Briggs' seeming uncertainty about the purpose of the book. The author forthrightly indicates in the introduction (p. xvi) that the study, which began as part of a joint research project on immigration, education, and social change, then progressed to a dissertation under Timothy L. Smith at the University of Minnesota, underwent several changes in emphasis. The comparative dimension he hoped to utilize did not materialize, since he found few important differences among the Italian colonies in the three cities. Furthermore, he dropped any explicit treatment of the Italian family because he became more interested in other, allegedly neglected, aspects of the Italian experience.

Yet, the uncertainty of purpose extends farther than the author seems aware. Though the format of the book suggests a reasonably complete analysis of the "Italian passage," the book is actually quite selective. Not only the Italian family, but the Catholic church and the mafia, are omitted from consideration. Business, politics, and residential patterns are treated so briefly and superficially that they would have been better omitted. Essentially, this is a book about the education of Italian-Americans, education being conceived in a broad sense to include not only schools, but the press and self-help societies as well. The author seems dimly aware of his emphasis only at the very end. As the book peters out in a call for further research, Briggs asserts that an exploration of immigrant education might shed new light on the ethnic experience. The author should have re-shaped and re-focused this book around the educational theme in order to begin shedding some of that light.

As it stands, *An Italian Passage* is more a series of loosely-related research and historiographical essays on "selected topics in Italian-American immigration" than a rounded study. It should be consulted by specialists in American immigration for the wide range of interesting questions it asks and the occasionally perceptive answers it presents, but it will be of little interest to a more general audience.

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RALPH MATTHEWS. — *'There's No Better Place Than Here': Social Change in Three Newfoundland Communities*. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1976. Pp. 164.

The quarter century following World War II was filled with optimism that governments could engineer a more prosperous and stable world order. International institutions were established to stabilize exchange rates and regulate international liquidity and world trade; there were expectations that world poverty could be defeated through generous economic and technical aid from the developed countries; and Keynesian fine tuning and built-in stabilizers would control business cycle fluctuations and prevent a recurrence of the 1930s' collapse. In the late 1970s this optimism gave way to a renewed pessimism about man's ability to control and manage his environment. Currencies once again float, and there is rising trade protectionism in the wealthy countries; overseas development aid has contracted, and some countries are dismissed as "basket-cases" that should be allowed to stew in their own misery; and in the advanced economies the free play of market forces is once again hailed as the most effective mechanism for rationing scarce resources for growth, and for allocating rewards among deserving and undeserving claimants.

It is the weak who are the guinea pigs for the fashions of the powerful, and in this century the latter have been urban, well-educated, well-meaning, and patronizing towards those who do not and cannot share their values and styles. In the 1950s and '60s Newfoundland was an obvious laboratory for the economic and social engineers, both foreign and native. It was a country that had failed in the 1930s, and its people were respectful towards those who knew better and seemed to mean well. Accordingly, Newfoundland was incredibly open to social engineering in the postwar decades, and it is likely to be the first casualty of any sudden descent