

Scianna's focus on the conduct of the political-military high command and the experiences of the front-line troops neglects the fact that a large part of the Italian contingent operated in the rear. The Regio Esercito occupied and administered sizeable parts of eastern Ukraine with a great deal of autonomy, despite being subordinated to the Wehrmacht. Italians ran cities and villages, exploited local resources, lived off the land, influenced local groups, modified the landscape, and tried with little success to set up a Fascist outlook and way of life.

Second, the author makes little use of the Archivio dell'Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito (AUSSME), which houses dozens of boxes containing the official war diaries of the units that fought in the Soviet Union. Scianna rightly underlines that the archive is difficult to access and he laments 'the loss of many Italian primary sources' (p. 329). In any case, to dismiss in such a way the principal source for anyone working on the Italian Army gives the misleading impression that no further research is possible, whereas military papers housed at the AUSSME still have much to offer.

Third, Scianna likewise dismisses Italian memoirs on the 'Russian Front' as formulaic distortions of the facts (pp. 267–8). But the massive body of memoir literature produced since the war offers researchers a mine of potentially infinite data. Scianna neglects the variety within this literature and, above all, the fact that many memoirs were not written to make readers believe a certain idea or truth about the campaign. Italian memoirs from the Eastern Front – produced by soldiers of every rank, social extraction, and political leaning – also provide technical and apolitical facts that can corroborate, explain, enrich, or even contradict what the archival documents tell us. In any case the claim that Italian-based researchers have used these memoirs uncritically, without considering their political implications, should be rejected (p. 292).

Scianna thus attributes to Italian historiography the characteristics and above all the defects of the public image of the campaign since 1945 (pp. 284–5). This does a disservice to the likes of Giorgio Rochat or Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, whose scholarship has often challenged 'official truths' about Italy's wartime experience and highlighted the basic victim complex marking many accounts of the conflict on the Eastern Front, especially the horrific retreat of winter 1942–3.

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**Italians and Food**, edited by ROBERTA SASSATELLI, Cham (Switzerland), Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, v + 279 pp., £79.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-3-030-15680-0

*Italians and Food* comprises nine chapters on the relevance of Italian food culture within national borders and in the global context. In her introduction, the editor provides an excellent theoretical framework to the understanding of 'Italianness', Italian food practices and culture, in the global and national food contexts. All the chapters in the volume deal with particular aspects of this central topic.

The book opens with a very topical chapter by Fabio Parasecoli that addresses the reasons for the international popularity of Italian food in the contemporary world. Parasecoli looks at how

tradition and authenticity have impacted on the transformation of the concept of Italian food from a symbol of immigrant destitution at the beginning of the twentieth century in America, to the sophisticated and desirable image it projects today. Tradition is seen in terms of a cultural dialogue between present and past, determined by the material cultures and practices of a social group; authenticity is associated with both artisan skills and simplicity. Tradition and authenticity have acquired crucial importance in the globalised world as a form of resistance to the 'threat to local uniqueness' (p. 22). For Parasecoli, the worldwide success of Italian cuisine is due to concomitant factors: the image of relaxed family life, sense of community and emotional connectedness have been coopted by media communication strategies which, both in Italy and the United States, have embraced the discourse of tradition and authenticity to consolidate the position of Italian cuisine in the world.

Simone Cinotto, by analysing in particular Italian migration to the United States, but also to Belgium, Germany, Argentina, and Australia, takes us on a fascinating journey that investigates the reasons why, in the Italian diaspora, food represented a favourite code of identity expression and formation. The focus of his research is migrants as consumers, and their desire for social improvement as citizens of a new country. For this reason, he bases his study on seven broad concepts that illustrate the historical development of Italian diasporic identities through food. The first is the invention of an Italian identity when, towards the end of the nineteenth century, immigrants to the US encountered the food traditions of other Italian regions, which helped them to create what others saw as 'Italian cuisine', a concept that did not exist in Italy at the time. Later, in the first decades of the twentieth century, speciality Italian food that Italian immigrant families were able to access through newly established import businesses and a well-established home food culture allowed Italian families of modest means to enjoy the satisfactory feeling of having improved their social condition. Thanks to the traditions of street parties and food stalls, immigrant districts were transformed from urban enclaves into a new 'multisensual landscape' (p. 56). Food import businesses and later the establishment of American companies producing Italian food using American ingredients, together with the role that Italian restaurants played in consolidating an image of Italian food as exotic and pleasurable, all contributed, in Cinotto's analysis, to the formation of a successful Italian immigrant identity.

Moving to the analysis of food culture in contemporary Italy, Chiara Rabbiosi's chapter looks at how tourism in Rimini and its surrounding area has created multiple meanings for Italianicity. Considering tourism as worthy of analysis beyond just economics, Rabbiosi offers examples of how, in its intersection with food, tourism establishes numerous levels of Italianicity, in addition to the local, the national, and the global. Carole Counihan analyses the effectiveness and limits of Slow Food's activism by focusing on ethnographic fieldwork in Tuscany and Sardinia. By bringing together research carried out throughout her whole career, Counihan argues that food activism can be understood through its link to food consumption. Hence, borrowing De Certeau's concept of tactics, that is consumers' 'resistance to hegemonic practices and ideologies' (p. 104) through their own redefinition of consumption, she demonstrates how commensality, taste and locality are the three elements characterising activism in the Slow Food chapters she investigated. Despite the limits of Slow Food in providing cross-cultural and cross-class experience, Counihan concludes with a positive evaluation of its tactics: bringing people together through meals and taste education is, in her view, a first step towards food democracy. Other forms of conviviality are examined in the chapter by Federica Davolio and Roberta Sassatelli. In their empirical research collating 400 hours of interviews, they study how hospitality is experienced at dinner parties by northern Italian middle-class families.

In his insightful chapter, Lorenzo Domaneschi discusses Italianicity focusing on the role of regional commercial cooks (rather than renowned chefs). Through his ethnographic research in

Liguria, Domaneschi demonstrates that for commercial cooks, the meaning of authenticity and simplicity is to be found in their personal experience, well-rooted in the territory, and in their knowledge of local ingredients. The cooks are seen as ‘embodied cultural capital’, in Bourdieu’s terms, able to translate the knowledge of the territory and their personal experience into regional gastronomic authenticity. In the following chapter, Elisa Arfini and Roberta Sassatelli analyse the local seal of quality DegustiBo, created by the province of Bologna, to discover that, for producers, emotion, passion and creativity rather than territorial boundaries constitute the idea of locality. The volume concludes with Agnese Portincasa’s study of the construction of Italian culinary identity through cookbooks, and Sebastiano Benasso and Luisa Stagi’s discussion of gastro-nationalism in the recent social media debate on *pasta alla carbonara*.

*Italians and Food* provides stimulating points of reflection on the relevance of Italianicity at local, national, and global levels – and on all their multiple intersections. The volume is enriched by Donna Gabaccia’s foreword and Massimo Montanari’s afterword that are in themselves two insightful pieces for the contextualisation of local, national and global dynamics. To this reviewer, some chapters, in particular the essays by Cinotto and Domaneschi, stand out in terms of critical depth and acumen; as a whole, *Italians and Food* certainly makes a significant addition to the interdisciplinary discussion of Italian food studies.

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**La Mamma: Interrogating a National Stereotype**, edited by PENELOPE MORRIS and PERRY WILLSON, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, vii + 248 pp., €93.59 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-137-55986-9

This book stems from a series of interdisciplinary workshops and public events organised between 2012 and 2014 in the framework of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) project of the same name. The interdisciplinary nature of the project is evident in the range of contributors – historians, literary scholars and sociologists.

The book’s content and objectives are set out by the editors in their introduction. Bearing in mind the distinction between the lived realities of mothers and the cultural constructions of their role, Morris and Willson explain their interest in motherhood as an idea that has shaped how women consider themselves and how the rest of the population view them. They deliberately engage with the stereotypes associated with being a mother in order to understand how Italian gender roles are perceived both in and outside the country. In particular, great attention is devoted to *mammismo*, the ‘idea of the “*mamma italiana*” and her dependent, spoilt, offspring’ (p. 2) as the most widespread and recognisable perception of Italian national character. The editors recall how Italian historian Marina D’Amelia traced the origin of the term *mammismo* back to a 1952 essay by the writer and journalist Corrado Alvaro.

The past and present uses of that stereotype are the focus of Silvana Patriarca’s chapter, in which the author remarks that ‘*mammismo* seems a way of blaming the mother figure for the ills of society at large’ (p. 29). According to her, the stereotype had ‘more to do with the crisis