

Cinzia Marongiu

Black and Italian Cultures in the Making of Multiethnic America

This study makes “other voices” the point of departure, aiming to find common ground amidst polarized assumptions about the relationship between Italian Americans and African Americans. Through the contemporary literary works of three authors – Kym Ragusa’s memoir *The Skin Between Us*, Mari Bucci Bush’s novel *Sweet Hope*, and Louisa Calio’s poetry collection *Journey to the Heart Waters* – the Italian-African American micro-history of these ethnic minorities, is revisited and analyzed. Thus, transcultural shades and cross-over synergies emerge, shedding light on a literary mixture all too often overlooked in mainstream historical accounts so far.

By transcending the conventional boundaries associated with Italian American literature and African backgrounds, Ragusa, Bucci Bush, and Calio delve into multifaceted themes such as race, belonging, gender, and class. Their exploration not only challenges and reshapes the hybrid discourse that surrounds Italian-African American identity but also enriches it, fostering a deeper understanding that reflects the inherent diversity of American society and the intricacies of multicultural coexistence. The book’s comparative approach offers distinctive perspectives on the Italian American diaspora and the assimilation process in the United States. It demonstrates how American literature, particularly women’s literature, is expanding its horizons beyond its own community, embracing African and Italian culture, thereby crafting a new narrative of the multiethnic experience in America between and beyond literary genres.

The Author

Cinzia Marongiu is a scholar of Italian Literature, with a focus on Diaspora Literature, the Black Mediterranean, Sardinian Literature, and teaching Italian as a second language. She earned her Master’s degree in Italian Literature from Indiana University and later completed her Ph.D. in Italian American Literature from Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz. Currently, she serves as the Coordinator of the Romanic Languages Department at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. She has published articles discussing Kym Ragusa, Igiaba Scego, Italian Literature in Germany, and a didactic book on Grazia Deledda’s *Canne al Vento*.

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The Literary Relationships Between
Italian Americans and African Americans
in the Works of Kym Ragusa,
Mary Bucci Bush, and Louisa Calio



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