

Summer 2007

“The Passeggiata and Popular Culture in an Italian Town: Folklore and the Performance of Modernity” by Giovanna P. Del Negro

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Recommended Citation

Gabbert, Lisa. “The Passeggiata and Popular Culture in an Italian Town: Folklore and the Performance of Modernity” by Giovanna P. Del Negro. *Journal of American Folklore* 120/477 (2007):369–70.

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those of us who have focused our work on folklore as resistance to, or liberation from, dominant cultural values. The military rituals and practices that Burke investigates clearly have one goal in mind: conformity to a notion of masculinity as it is conventionally and conservatively defined in military culture.

Burke's book also examines what happens to women when they enter the military system of "gender apartheid" (p. x). She asks whether women will ever be treated equally and with respect and whether they will have access to all levels of military service, including intensive combat roles. Burke makes the case that women can be successful and should have the opportunity to advance in all aspects of the military.

This feminist interrogation of the current military system is engaging and compelling. The next step would be to apply Burke's analysis to a broader critique of the military itself, an institution that, at its core, is based on the use of force and violence to impose the will of those in power on those who are less powerful. Burke amply demonstrates how the military, as a social institution, reifies conventional systems of male domination, masculinity, and socialized violence. When we recognize the ways in which social hierarchies are reinforced by the military, bigger questions emerge. Should we have a military at all? Should we encourage anyone—male or female—to participate in it or support it? When Burke asks if women are ever going to be full and equal members of the military (p. 124), I thought about the extensive scholarship of Cynthia Enloe, which demonstrates how militarism is, in itself, a sexist, racist, classist, and imperialist enterprise. While I agree that women must have equal opportunity in all avenues of achievement, Burke's argument for women gaining access to the military made me somewhat uneasy in the same way that "dress for success" workshops do. Is the goal simply to move greater numbers of marginalized people into the existing capitalist and hierarchical systems, or do we need to question and change these systems in their entirety? As we read the daily news about missiles annihilating neighborhoods and cities, killing and maiming thousands of civilians and combatants, do we simply

want a military in which more women can do the killing and send those missiles? The strong and compelling ethnographic analysis that Carol Burke provides in this book offers ample material for asking larger questions.

The Passeggiata and Popular Culture in an Italian Town: Folklore and the Performance of Modernity. By Giovanna P. Del Negro. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004. Pp. 183, acknowledgments, photographs, map, video stills, postcards, notes, bibliography, index.)

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The Passeggiata and Popular Culture in an Italian Town by Giovanna P. Del Negro examines the relationship between the practices of everyday life and the negotiation of modernity in a town (to which Del Negro assigns the pseudonym "Sasso") in the Abruzzo province of central Italy. In her study, Del Negro examines a range of expressive culture from face-to-face events like the evening *passeggiata* (or promenade) and festive games to mass-mediated forms such as a popular soap opera, televised court proceedings, postcards, and reactions to local and national news stories. The result is a clear, accessible, and well-written work that transcends conventional genre and "folk"-oriented approaches to explore the interpenetration of cultural performance, consumerism, the mass media, and modernization.

Del Negro's central idea is that, for Sassani, the *passeggiata* is a means of enacting and thinking about modernity and, more broadly, that dramatic social change does not follow uniformly set Western patterns but is rather culturally specific and historically contingent. The concept of multiple modernities, which, as the phrase indicates, postulates the existence of a variety of modernities, is central to Del Negro's thought. Drawing on performance theory, cultural studies, multiple modernity scholarship, and gender studies, Del Negro argues that modernity is a process of becoming that is negotiated in a variety of communicative prac-

tices, and she explores the multiple ways Sassani use both face-to-face events and the mass media to shape their own version of modernity in this corner of the world. In doing so, she covers a range of topics such as changing gender roles, political scandal, industrialization, emigration and return, and the role of aesthetics in the construction of modern Italian life.

This book has several strengths, only a few of which can be highlighted here. One important contribution is that it focuses on the negotiation of modernity in contemporary Europe. Europe (or at least Western Europe) is often figured as "already modern." Thus, the very location at the center of Del Negro's work calls into question conventional assumptions about modernity and contributes to a body of scholarship critiquing traditional constructions of modernity. Perhaps even more importantly, however, Del Negro ethnographically documents a version of modernity created by and for Sassani, thus adding Sassani thought to the debates.

Further, at heart the book is an analysis of *style*. Sassani are obsessed with fashion and body image; the *passeggiata* puts personal style and taste on display to present the cosmopolitan self. Since stylistic analysis is central to the folkloristic enterprise, this glimpse into how the world of European *haute couture* is incorporated into small-town, everyday life provides information in an area that is usually ignored in our field.

Finally, Del Negro engages her subject reflexively; her mother is from Sasso and Del Negro grew up with stories about the town. She writes, "[t]he Sasso of my mother's narratives was a place where clothing and style mattered. . . . In her stories, powerful politicians were not just powerful politicians but elegant older men taking long and commanding strides in well-cut gray serge. . . . Provocative teenagers overtly flirted with the opposite sex, and no sartorial detail, from the cut of a skirt to an ill mended hem, was ever left unreported" (pp. 3-4). As the daughter of Italian immigrants, Del Negro has a personal stake in her material that she discusses openly and honestly.

As with all publications, there are some weaknesses as well. One minor carp is that the

quality of the images is rather poor. Most are not photographs but rather blurry video stills. Del Negro solicited expert local commentary on her field videos, and by sharing these images she allows readers to see exactly the *passeggiata* events upon which her natively informed analysis is built, but it's a difficult trade-off. As the book in large part is about the artful representation of the self, the mediocre images jar with the topic of discussion; Sassani, who take such care in dress and walk, should be presented as best as possible in publication. A second small grumble is that Del Negro advises the reader that Sasso is a pseudonym, that faces have been blurred for anonymity in the video stills, and that participant identities have been masked. One assumes that Del Negro had good reasons for doing so; however, she does not provide an explanation for her choices. Finally, while the author uses the notion of multiple modernities to suggest that modernity is complex, multifaceted, and emergent, she seems ultimately to embrace the idea of modernity itself, an idea that is highly contested. A discussion of this choice would have been useful.

Overall, however, this book is excellent. Del Negro has situated herself in the midst of a number of important debates and is in a position to become an important theorist and thinker for the discipline. I recommend this book for anybody interested in the relationship of performance and expressive culture to modernity and globalization.

A Singing Ambivalence: American Immigrants between Old World and New, 1830-1930. By Victor R. Greene. (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2004. Pp. xxvii + 215, preface, acknowledgments, introduction, selected bibliography, illustrations, index.)

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The bicentennial celebrations of 1976 provided an impetus for exploring and exhibiting many aspects of American culture, including some that had long been ignored. Theodore C. Gramme's *America's Ethnic Music* (Cultural