November, 2010 Vol. XXVIII, No. 3

poche parole

The Italian Cultural Society of Washington D.C.

Preserving and Promoting Italian Culture for All

www.italianculturalsociety.org

ICS EVENTS

Social meetings start at 3:00 PM on the third Sunday of the month, September thru May (but this year the December meeting, for the Festa di Natale is on the second Sunday), at the Friendship Heights Village Center, 4433 South Park Ave., Chevy Chase, MD (See map on back cover)

Sunday, November 21: Prof. Frank Ambrosio of Georgetown University speaks on "Dante our Contemporary: Reading the Divine Comedy Today" (See page 2)

Sunday, December 12: FESTA DI NATALE

ITALIAN LESSONS on November 21 at 2:00 PM

Movie of the Month at 1:00 PM: "Padre Padrone" (See page 9)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Caravaggio was a master artist and innovator of the Italian Baroque period, and for that alone he is worthy of note, but Professor Richard Spear made it clear that there is much more involved in the "Caravaggiomania" that currently characterizes studies and expositions of this artist. There has been an enormous uptick in academic studies especially beginning in the last third of the 20th century, a century drenched in violence, self-absorption and sexuality and so perhaps ready to accept the intensely absorbed, realistic, and sexually ambiguous figures peopling Caravaggio's canvasses that shocked his contemporaries. From this earthly extreme we move on to the more sublime realms of Dantean spirituality in our November meeting. Of *La Divina Commedia* Professor Frank Ambrosio of Georgetown University says "Reading the poem is a journey of self-discovery, and *My Dante* allows each reader to create a personal record of that journey." He is referring to an interactive digital incarnation of the medieval illuminated manuscript that he has developed: "*My Dante* fosters an entirely new type of contemplative reading experience. *My Dante* encourages readers to experience the poem in a way that is profoundly personal, while at the same time enabling a collaborative experience of a journey shared by a community of readers." For we poor 21st century denizens of the planet, bereft of the concepts of heaven and hell, weakly cognizant, if at all, of the concept of "sin", reading Dante for personal, perhaps moral, profit seems quite a challenge…let's see what guidance Professor Ambrosio has in store for us!►►►

On behalf of the Italian Cultural Society, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Professor Lucia Dalla Monta` to the United States. Professor Dalla Monta` assumes the duties of Education Director at the Italian Embassy here in Washington, replacing Professor Luigi De Sanctis. We wish the new Education Director every success in her mission. Please read more about Professor Dalla Monta` in this issue.

Ron Cappelletti, **president**

Professor Richard Spear

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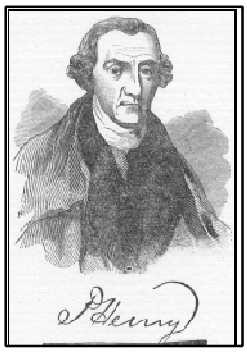
PROGRAM OF NOVEMBER 21

Prof. Frank Ambrosio, of Georgetown University, will explore why the Divine Comedy, one of the greatest classics of the Western tradition, is able to reach beyond its historical situation and cultural context to speak to us today in our time and place, and touch the soul of our humanity. He will focus on how to read the poem for oneself with understanding and personal engagement. Jorge Luis Borges said no one should deny themselves the sheer pleasure of reading Dante. Ambrosio hopes to encourage and guide us in practicing Borges' particular brand of hedonism, providing a good entree to first time readers and some compelling insights to those returning to the text.

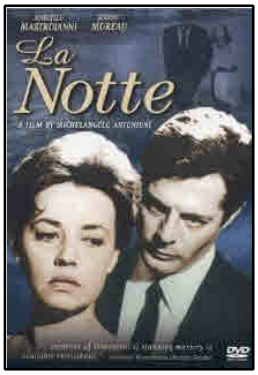
Frank Ambrosio *is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University. He is the founding Director of the Georgetown University "My Dante Project", a web based platform for personal and collaborative study of Dante's Divina Commedia.* (http://dante.georgetown.edu)

"L'esperienze de questa dolce vita"



Libertà va cercando, ch'è si cara…
Come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta"

"La notte che le cose ci nasconde"



ITALIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE MONTH *A PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION*

*I*n the five centuries since Christopher Columbus, a son of Genoa, Italy, first set sail across the Atlantic Ocean, countless individuals have followed the course he charted to seek a new life in America. Since that time, generations of Italian Americans have helped shape our society and steer the course of our history. During Italian American Heritage and Culture Month, we recognize the rich heritage of Americans of Italian descent and celebrate their immeasurable contributions to our Nation.

Bound by enduring values of faith and family, Italian Americans have flourished in all areas of our public and economic life while preserving their proud Italian traditions. Upon arrival in the United States, the Italian American community faced racial, social, and religious discrimination. Yet, Italian Americans have persevered with hope and hard work to reach for the American dream and helped build our great country. As proud service members, they have also defended the liberty and integrity of the United States since the Revolutionary War.

Today, the legacy of these intrepid immigrants is found in the millions of American men, women, and children of Italian descent who strengthen and enrich our country. Italian Americans operate thriving businesses, teach our children, serve at all levels of government, and succeed in myriad occupations. Drawing on the courage and ►►►►►►►► principles of their forebears, they lead in every facet of American life, dedicating their knowledge and skills to the growth of our country.

The Great Seal of the United States declares "out of many, one." As we forge new futures as a unified people, we must celebrate the unique and vibrant cultures that have written the American story. Many determined individuals have sought our shores as a beacon of hope and opportunity, and their spirit of limitless possibility and example of resolve continues to inspire and guide our Nation. As we honor the long history and vast contributions of Italian Americans, let us recommit to extending the promise of America that they embraced to future generations.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 2010 as Italian American Heritage and Culture Month. I call upon all Americans to learn more about the history of Italian Americans, and to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fifth.

BARACK OBAMA

MEMOIRS OF A SICILIAN BARON AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

by Francesco Scaduto-Mendola

A few years ago, I was surfing the internet in search of information about my "Mendola" family name. The Mendola branch, to which I am related, comes from Favara, in the province of Agrigento, in Sicily. I soon found that Carmelo Antinoro, an architect responsible for the oversight of the cultural resources of the Agrigento province, had written a book about the Mendola family, covering its history from the 17th to the 20th century. I was even more pleased to learn from Antinoro that he was publishing the memoirs of Baron Antonio Mendola. The memoirs, written during 1885-1908 in 14 diaries totaling some 7,000 pages, were dispersed when they were sold together with other books. Eleven of these diaries were rediscovered at an antique books store in Montepulciano, in Tuscany, in 2002. The diaries were purchased by the city of Favara and transcribed and condensed by Carmelo Antinoro.

Baron Antonio Mendola was born in Favara in 1828 and died in the same town in 1908. His life spanned the important historical transition period of the Risorgimento and the unification of Italy. Antonio Mendola lost a 19 year-old son in 1880, killed by pneumonia in a few days while studying at a university in Germany. To overcome his grief, Baron Mendola dedicated much of his fortune for the good of his fellow citizens. He funded an orphanage, a hospice for work accident victims, a nursery school, and the local hospital. He also donated land for the construction of a convent and a church. Baron Mendola built a personal collection of 14,000 books which he donated to the town, together with a small zoological museum. In addition to being one of the country's top experts on wine growing, he also was the first to promote the use of chemical fertilizers in Sicily.

Baron Mendola's memoirs are interesting not only for his reflections about his personal life and of his immediate family, but also because he was an acute observer and he described everything that was happening in his town. Particularly interesting are his detailed descriptions of the religious celebrations, more often occasions for social distraction given the few opportunities for entertainment in the town. The memoirs are also abundant with family scandals: seductions, elopements, adulteries, friars'

MEMORIE DI UN BARONE SICILIANO ALL' INIZIO DEL VENTESIMO SECOLO

di Francesco Scaduto-Mendola

Alcuni anni fa, stavo navigando nell'internet alla ricerca di informazioni sul mio cognome "Mendola". Il ramo Mendola, al quale sono collegato, proviene da Favara, in provincia di Agrigento, in Sicilia. Scoprii rapidamente che Carmelo Antinoro, un architetto responsabile della Soprintendenza per i Beni Culturali ed Ambientali di Agrigento, aveva scritto un libro sulla famiglia Mendola, trattando la sua storia dal diciassettesimo al ventesimo secolo. Sono stato molto lieto di apprendere da Antinoro che stava pubblicando le memorie del barone Antonio Mendola. Le memorie, scritte durante gli anni 1885-1908 in 14 diari per un totale di circa 7.000 pagine, sono state disperse quando sono state vendute insieme ad altri libri. Undici di questi diari sono stati ritrovati in un negozio di libri antichi a Montepulciano, in Toscana, nel 2002. I diari sono stati acquistati dal Comune di Favara e trascritti e condensati da Carmelo Antinoro.

Piazza Cavour, Favara, 1898

Il barone Antonio Mendola nacque a Favara nel 1828 e morì nella stessa città nel 1908. La sua vita è scorsa durante il periodo dell'importante transizione storica del Risorgimento e dell'unificazione d'Italia. Antonio Mendola perse un figlio di 19 anni, nel 1880, colpito da una polmonite mentre studiava presso un'università in Germania. Per superare il suo dolore, il barone Mendola dedicò gran parte della sua fortuna al benessere dei suoi concittadini. Egli finanziò un orfanotrofio, un ospizio per le vittime di infortuni sul lavoro, una scuola materna, e l'ospedale locale. Donò anche terreni per la costruzione di un convento e di una chiesa. Il barone Mendola costituì una collezione personale di 14.000 volumi che egli donò alla città, insieme a un piccolo museo zoologico. Oltre ad essere uno dei massimi esperti del paese sulla viticoltura, fu anche il primo a promuovere l'uso di fertilizzanti chimici in Sicilia.

Le memorie del barone Mendola sono interessanti, non solo per le sue riflessioni sulla sua vita personale e della sua famiglia, ma anche perché Antonio Mendola era un osservatore acuto e descrisse tutto ciò che stava accadendo nella sua città. Particolarmente interessanti sono le sue descrizioni dettagliate delle celebrazioni religiose, più spesso occasioni di distrazione sociale date le poche occasioni di divertimento in città. Le memorie sono anche ricche di episodi di scandali di famiglia: seduzioni, fughe, adulteri, scappatelle di frati.

Il barone Mendola fu particolarmente arrabiato per gli abusi e le porcherie della politica locale, quando infieriva la lotta fra

escapades.

Baron Mendola was particularly bitter about the abuses and dirt of local politics, where the fight centered between clericals and anti-clericals. He described the interference of the Church, the Free Masons and the Mafia in the local politics and their intimidations of the local population. Baron Mendola received extortionary letters and lived in fear of being blackmailed by the local bandits. He covered many picturesque events in the town, such as: the dispute between two competing musical bands which crossed each other in the main square while each marching in front of a horse driven hearse; the first automobile in town, which broke down every few hundred yards; the forceful removal of a young woman from a convent by her relatives, to fulfill an arranged marriage, while the nuns and friars were trying to hold on to the arms of the girl.

Despite living most of his life in the town of Favara, Baron Mendola, did have extensive epistolary contacts with many important people in Italy. Particularly interesting was his encounter with Giuseppe Garibaldi in 1860, soon after the latter had liberated the city of Palermo from the Bourbon king of Naples. Baron Mendola, accompanied by some of his town's most important people, brought a money contribution to Garibaldi for the liberation of southern Italy. The Baron describes in detail not only Garibaldi's physical appearance, but also the long conversations he had with the "Hero of the Two Worlds" during his nine day stay in Palermo. Baron Mendola advised Garibaldi not to confiscate the funds of the main bank in Palermo to avoid a revolt of the city's rich people and middle class: Garibaldi posted armed guards to protect the bank. The baron also advised against imposing the military draft in Sicily: It was the harvest season and the removal of the men from the fields would provoke a rebellion in the island. Mendola, instead, suggested to Garibaldi only to call for volunteers. Garibaldi raised an army of 25,000 volunteers which enabled him to liberate the rest of southern Italy.

Baron Mendola also met in 1891 Jessie White, a British widow of Alberto Mario and friend of Mazzini and Garibaldi. Jessie White had been a major fund raiser in Great Britain for the promotion of the Italian unification. Ms. White came to Favara to inquire on the social and working conditions of the sulfur mine workers. She visited the charitable institutions funded by Baron Mendola and had a long discussion with him about Darwin's theory of evolution. Seeing a monkey in Baron Mendola's property, she addressed the animal as if it were man's human ancestor. Baron Mendola remained unconvinced about White's enthusiasm for Darwin. He concluded with the following remarks in his memoirs: "I believe in man as man, not monkey. I adore God as supreme creator".

The baron's memoirs describe a world bygone, but still vibrant for its numerous dramas, celebrations and many other events, personal, family, and collective, of a Sicilian town, rich in culture, passions, and traditions.

Francesco Scaduto-Mendola is a new member of the Italian Cultural Society. He retired a few years ago from the World Bank and lives in Chevy Chase MD.

clericali e anticlericali. Egli descrisse l'ingerenza della Chiesa, la Massoneria e la mafia nella politica locale e le loro intimidazioni della popolazione locale. Il barone Mendola ricevette lettere di estorsione e visse nella paura di essere ricattato dai banditi locali. Le sue memorie narrano numerosi eventi pittoreschi della città, quali: la disputa tra due bande musicali concorrenti che si incrociarono nella piazza principale, mentre ciascuna marciava di fronte a un carro funebre; la prima automobile in città, che si guastava ogni poche centinaia di metri; la rimozione forzata di una ragazza da un convento dai suoi parenti, per soddisfare un matrimonio combinato, mentre le monache e frati si aggrappavano alle braccia della ragazza.

Pur vivendo gran parte della sua vita nella città di Favara, il barone Mendola, ebbe ampi contatti epistolari con molte persone importanti in Italia. Particolarmente interessante fu il suo incontro con Giuseppe Garibaldi nel 1860, subito dopo che quest'ultimo aveva liberato Palermo dal re borbonico di Napoli. Il barone Mendola, accompagnato da alcuni dei personaggi più importanti della sua città, portò un contributo di denaro a Garibaldi per la liberazione dell'Italia meridionale. Antonio Mendola descrisse in dettaglio non solo l'aspetto fisico di Garibaldi, ma anche le lunghe conversazioni che ebbe con "l'Eroe dei due mondi", durante i nove giorni in cui il barone soggiornò a Palermo. Il barone Mendola consigliò Garibaldi di non sequestrare i beni della banca di Palermo, per evitare una rivolta dei ricchi e della classe media delle città: Garibaldi mise guardie armate di sentinella per proteggere la banca. Il barone sconsigliò anche l'imposizione della leva militare in Sicilia: era la stagione del raccolto e la rimozione degli uomini dai campi avrebbe provocato una rivolta nell'isola. Antonio Mendola, invece, suggerì a Garibaldi di fare appello solo a volontari. Garibaldi formò un esercito di 25.000 volontari, che gli permisero di liberare il resto dell'Italia meridionale.

Il barone Mendola incontrò nel 1891 Jessie White, una vedova inglese di Alberto Mario e amica di Mazzini e Garibaldi. Jessie White fu un'importante promotrice in Inghilterra dell'unificazione italiana. La White venne a Favara per indagare sulle condizioni sociali e di lavoro dei lavoratori delle miniere di zolfo. Visitò le istituzioni di carita' finanziate dal barone Mendola ed ebbe una lunga discussione con lui circa la teoria dell'evoluzione di Darwin. Vedendo una scimmia in proprietà barone Mendola, la White si indirizzò all'animale come se fosse uno dei progenitori dell'uomo. Il barone Mendola rimase scettico circa l'entusiasmo della White per Darwin. Egli concluse con le seguenti osservazioni nelle sue memorie: "Io credo all'uomo uomo, non scimmia. Io adoro Dio supremo creatore".

Le memorie di Antonio Mendola descrivono un mondo scomparso, ma ancora vibrante per i suoi numerosi drammi, celebrazioni e molti altri eventi, sia personali che familiari e collettivi, di una città siciliana, ricca di cultura, passioni e tradizioni.

Francesco Scaduto-Mendola è un nuovo socio della Italian Cultural Society. E' da alcuni anni in pensione dopo una carriera con la Banca Mondiale e vive a Chevy Chase, nel Maryland.

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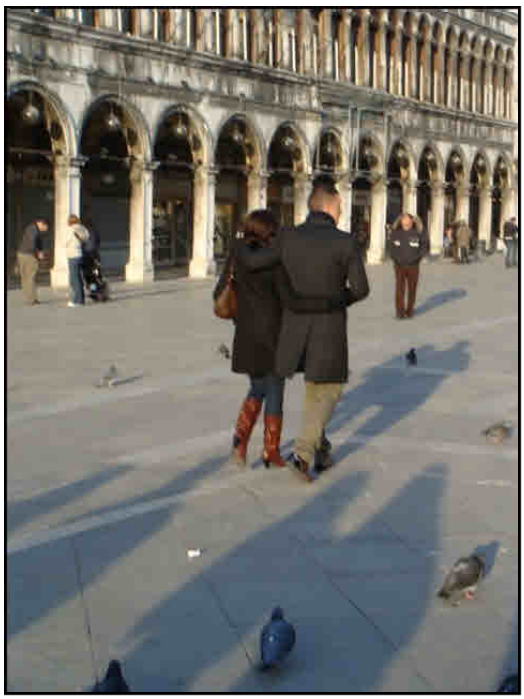

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I GIORNI DI CABIRIA

dI Anna Maltese Lawton

Tutti conoscono Torino come “prima capitale del Regno d’Italia” (di grande attualità nell’anno che viene), o come “la città’ dell’automobile” (ora un po’ in degrado con la FIAT sulla via della globalizzazione), o come la sede delle ultime Olimpiadi invernali. Ma non tutti la conoscono come “città del cinema,” titolo che le compete, perché all’inizio del ventesimo secolo fu il centro italiano più importante dell’industria cinematografica.

Tra il 1907 e il 1915, a Torino sorsero 21 case di produzione che facevano concorrenza agli studi romani e si imponevano in Italia e all’estero non solo per la creatività artistica, ma anche per l’organizzazione commerciale e finanziaria. È a Torino che il cinema diviene industria. Ed è a Torino che nasce un modello di “fare cinema” adottato poi in tutto il mondo.

Per rendersene conto, basta visitare il Museo del Cinema, inaugurato nel 2000 nell’edificio della Mole Antonelliana, un luogo bizzarro, coinvolgente e fantasmagorico, in cui sono conservati i documenti e gli artefatti dell’Età d’Oro del cinema torinese. Ma non solo. Il museo offre una ricostruzione di tutto il percorso del cinema mondiale, dalle lanterne magiche in poi. E per sostare, e sognare, dopo la lunga camminata nell’immaginario, ci si può sdraiare su soffici chaise longues nell’enorme atrio centrale e godere della proiezione di pellicole vecchie e nuove sulla volta dell’edificio.

Tra i tanti padiglioni situati attorno all’atrio, uno in particolare attrae l’attenzione del pubblico. Il suo ingresso è protetto da un orrendo mostro, una colossale statua del dio Moloch con le fauci di fuoco spalancate e pronte al sacrificio della prossima vittima. Chi supera la paura ed entra nel padiglione può vedere il mostro in azione negli spezzoni del film *Cabiria* (1914), concepito e diretto da Giovanni Pastrone.

Non c’è forse figura più rappresentativa di Pastrone per descrivere il cinema di quegli anni. Dotato di un ingegno multiforme, in gioventù si dedicò all’arte, alla scienza e al business in egual misura—si diplomò in violino al conservatorio, si dedicò alla costruzione di modelli aeronautici e conseguì un diploma in ragioneria. Quando scoperse il cinema, riunì le sue conoscenze ed intuizioni e le applicò alla nascente industria cinematografica.

All’inizio fu assunto come contabile dalla Società Carlo Rossi, che importava pellicole dall’estero. Ma impadronitosi del mestiere (facilitato anche dalla conoscenza del francese, tedesco e inglese), in breve tempo rilevò la ditta e, nel 1908, fondò la casa di produzione Itala Film.

Lo studio era situato in Corso Quintino Sella, sulla collina torinese, e ricopriva un territorio di ventidue chilometri quadrati. I suoi capannoni erano stati disegnati per sfruttare al massimo la luce del sole, perché Pastrone era un grande innovatore. Sperimentò con effetti di luce diffusa e riflessa e

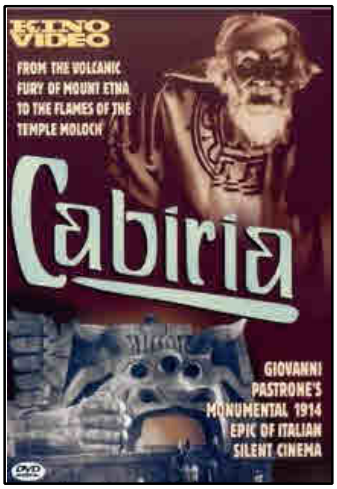
THE DAYS OF CABIRIA

by Anna Maltese Lawton

We all know Torino as “the first capital of the Kingdom of Italy” (of great importance for next year) or as “the automobile city” (somewhat degraded, with Fiat on the road to globalization) or as the site of the last Winter Olympics, but not everyone knows Torino as “the movie city”, a title which it deserves because at the start of the 20th century it was the most important center of the Italian film industry.

Between 1907 and 1915 21 film production companies emerged that competed with the studios of Rome and gained the upper hand in Italy and abroad not only through artistic creativity, but also through commercial and financial organization. It was in Torino that movies became an industry, and it was in Torino that a model for “making movies” developed and was then adopted worldwide.

To find out about this, just visit the Museo del Cinema, inaugurated in 2000 in the Mole Antonelliana, an odd, involving, phantasmagorical place where the documents and artifacts of the Golden Age of Torinese cinema are preserved. But not only that. The museum displays a reconstruction of the whole gamut of cinema worldwide, from the magic lanterns onward. And to pause and dream, after a long walk in this imaginarium one can lie down in soft chaise-lounges in the enormous central atrium and enjoy the showing of old and new movies on the wall of the building.



Among the many pavilions situated around the atrium, one in particular attracts the attention of the public. Its entrance is protected by a horrendous monster, a colossal statue of the god Moloch, with his fiery throat wide open and ready for the sacrifice of the next victim. If you can get by the fright and enter the pavilion, you can see the monster in action in cuts from the film *Cabiria* (1914), produced and directed by Giovanni Pastrone.

There is probably no more representative example than Pastrone for cinema in those years. Gifted in many ways, in his youth he dedicated himself to art, science, and business in equal measure – he received a diploma in violin at the conservatory, he dedicated himself to the construction of aeronautical models and obtained a degree in accounting. When he discovered cinema, he combined his knowledge and his intuitions and applied them to the nascent film industry.

Initially he was hired by the Societa’ Carlo Rossi, an importer of foreign films. But he mastered the trade (aided by his knowledge of French, German, and English), in a short time he took over the company, and in 1908 he founded the production company Itala Film.

The studio was located on Corso Quintino Sella on the hills of Torino and extended over 22 square kilometers. Its buildings were designed to take maximum advantage of

si cimentò anche con un rudimentale sistema di sonorizzazione e colorazione della pellicola. Ma l'invenzione che segnò una vera svolta nel modo di far cinema, e rese Pastrone famoso in tutto il mondo, fu la tecnica del carrello. Questa tecnica stabilì il principio secondo cui la macchina non era più un occhio stazionario davanti al quale si svolgeva la scena, ma un agente dinamico dell'azione. La macchina "raccontava" la storia, aggiungendovi punti di vista ed emozioni.

Pastrone trovò soggetti adeguati alle nuove tecniche, che permettevano di sfruttare vasti spazi, scenografie grandiose e scene di massa. Fu l'inventore del "colossal" con centinaia di comparse e complesse azioni di battaglie e catastrofi. Ma insieme all'artificio, Pastrone conservò l'elemento realistico per dare verosimiglianza all'immagine. Per esempio, per il suo primo dramma storico, *La caduta di Troia,* fece costruire un enorme cavallo di legno. Non si accontentò di un modellino. E nel suo capolavoro, *Cabiria,* oltre alla superba scenografia del tempio di Moloch, introdusse effetti speciali per la rappresentazione dell'eruzione dell'Etna, portò elefanti veri sulle Alpi per girare la scena della calata dell'esercito di Annibale in Italia, e realizzò un enorme specchio esagonale sfaccettato per l'episodio di Archimede che manda a fuoco la flotta Romana. Per promuovere la campagna pubblicitaria, Pastrone si servì di nomi celebri. Affidò le didascalie a Gabriele D'Annunzio (pagandolo la strabiliante somma di 50.000 lire) e commissionò lo spartito musicale di accompagnamento a Ildebrando Pizzetti. Invece, come sceneggiatore e regista risultava un certo Piero Fosco (lo pseudonimo che Pastrone ha sempre usato per sé stesso).

Cabiria ebbe una grande risonanza al di qua e al di là dell'oceano—è noto che anche D.W. Griffith si ispirò a questo film per un episodio di *Intolerance*. Hollywood si interessava ai lavori di Pastrone, sia per le tecniche di ripresa e di montaggio che per l'organizzazione industriale. Pastrone, infatti, gestiva la Itala Film come un'industria; alla produzione aveva aggiunto una rete di distribuzione e una catena di sale cinematografiche. Non è escluso che "la struttura integrata verticale" degli studi hollywoodiani sia stata suggerita dal modello italiano.

Dopo *Cabiria*, il "colossal" cominciò a declinare come genere cinematografico, fino a scomparire del tutto durante la Grande Guerra—fu poi ripreso con gran successo negli anni cinquanta e sessanta, sia in Italia che negli USA.

Ma un personaggio del cast di *Cabiria* continuò a vivere sullo schermo per altri dieci anni: il nerboruto Maciste, schiavo e guardia del corpo del patrizio romano protagonista della storia. L'interprete, Bartolomeo Pagano, uno scaricatore del porto di Genova, fu ingaggiato da Pastrone per quella parte grazie alla sua gigantesca statura e una muscolatura da Mr. Universo. La lunga serie dei film di Maciste non aveva nessuna relazione con *Cabiria*, né con Pastrone che si ritirò dall'attività nel 1919. Le avventure variavano e così pure le epoche (per esempio: *Maciste Alpino*, 1916; *Maciste all'Inferno*, 1925), ma il nome e la figura dell'eroe che lotta per il bene e la giustizia avevano sempre una grande presa sul pubblico.

Un altro genere che fruttò grandi incassi alla Itala Film fu "la comica." In questo settore la concorrenza era accanita, sia in Italia che all'estero. Ma Pastrone ebbe un'altra geniale idea:

sunlight, for Pastrone was a great innovator. He experimented with diffused and reflected light and took risks with a rudimentary system for sound and for coloring the film. But the invention that pointed to a real change of direction in how to make movies was the "trolley'. This technique established the principle whereby the camera is no longer a stationary eye before which the scene took place, but rather a dynamic agent of action. The camera would "tell the story", adding points of view and emotions.

Pastrone found subject matter that suited the new techniques, which allowed the use of vast spaces, grandiose sets, and crowd scenes. He was the inventor of the "colossal", with hundreds of extras and complex scenes of battles and catastrophes. But along with the artifice, Pastrone retained the realistic element to make the image look real. For example, for his first historical drama, *The Fall of Troy*, he had built an enormous wooden horse. He was not content with a small scale model. And in his masterpiece *Cabiria,* beyond the superb scenography of the temple of Moloch, he introduced special effects to represent the eruption of Etna, he brought real elephants to the Alps to shoot the scene of the descent of Hannibal's army into Italy, and he created an enormous faceted hexagonal mirror for the episode in which Archimedes sets fire to the Roman fleet. To promote the film in the advertising campaign Pastrone used celebrities. He entrusted the titles to Gabriele D' Annunzio (paying the astonishing sum of 50,000 lire) and commissioned the score to Ildebrando Pizzetti. However, as screenwriter and director there was a certain Piero Fosco (the pseudonym that Pastrone always used for himself.)

Cabiria had great resonance on both sides of the Atlantic – it is well known that even D. W. Griffith was inspired by this film for an episode of *Intolerance.* Hollywood was interested in the works of Pastrone, both for the techniques of shooting and montage and for industrial organization. Pastrone in fact ran Itala Film as an industry; to the production he had added a distribution network and a chain of movie theaters. Not to be excluded is the idea that the "integrated vertical structure" of the Hollywood studios was suggested by the Italian model.

After *Cabiria*, the "colossal" began to decline as a cinematographic genre, to the point of disappearing altogether during the Great War – it was then taken up again with great success in the fifties and sixties in both Italy and the USA.

But one character in the cast of *Cabiria* continued to live on the screen for ten more years: the muscular Maciste, slave and bodyguard of the noble Roman protagonist of the story. The actor, Bartolomeo Pagano, a dock worker at the port of Genoa, was engaged by Pastrone for his gigantic stature and Mr. Universe body. The long series of films on Maciste had no relation to *Cabiria*, nor with Pastrone, who retired in 1919. The adventures varied as did the epochs (for example: *Maciste the Alpino*, 1916, *Maciste in Hell,* 1925) but the name and the image of the hero who fights for the good and for justice always left a big impression on the public.

Another genre that yielded much revenue to Itala Film was "the comic". In this area the competition was fierce both in Italy and abroad. But Pastrone had another clever idea: he stole a star of French cinema, André Deed, and transformed the very popular character of "Boireau" into "Cretinetti". Deed

rubò una stella del cinema francese, André Deed, e trasformò il popolarissimo personaggio di "Boireau" in "Cretinetti." Deed ritornò in Francia dopo due anni, ma in quel periodo la Itala Film produsse più di cento film di Cretinetti che ebbero uno staordinario successo.

Non fu mai chiarito perché Pastrone decise di ritirarsi nel 1919. Due anni dopo ritornò brevemente per rivitalizzare la Itala Film. Dopodiché non si occupò più di cinema. Si dedicò invece a studi di medicina, alla ricerca dell'origine e della cura del cancro. Morì nel 1959.

Torino perse la prerogativa di capitale del cinema dopo la prima Guerra Mondiale, a causa dell'ascesa di Roma. Gli studi romani prosperarono nel periodo fascista al servizio del regime. Nacque la nuova stella di Cinecittà. Ma Torino mantenne ugualmente un ruolo speciale durante il ventennio. Infatti, la casa torinese FERT, la più grande ed attiva, assunse un'attitudine anticonformista. A differenza delle case romane, non produsse neanche un film di apologia del regime, e fece del disimpegno politico la sua ragione di sopravvivenza.

Alla fine degli anni quaranta, anche la FERT chiuse i battenti e si concluse così uno dei capitoli più interessanti della storia del cinema italiano.

Prof. Anna Maltese Lawton insegna studi di cinema e di cultura visuale alla Georgetown University.

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Chi vuol far l' altrui mestiere

fa la zuppa nel paniere.

returned to France after two years, but during that period Itala Film produced over one hundred Cretinetti movies that had extraordinary success.

It was never made clear why Pastrone decided to retire in 1919. He came back two years later briefly to revitalize Itala Film. After that he no longer was involved with film. Instead he dedicated himself to medical studies, in researching the origin and cure of cancer. He died in 1959.

Torino lost the prerogative of capital of cinema after World War I, because of the ascent of Rome. The Roman studios prospered during the fascist period in the service of the regime. The new star Cinecitta' was born. But Torino continued in a special role during those twenty years. In fact the Torino company FERT, the biggest and most active, took on a non-conformist attitude. Unlike the companies in Rome it produced not a single film in deference to the regime and made political disengagement its very reason for survival.

At the end of the 1940s FERT finally closed its shutters, and thus concluded one of the more interesting chapters in the story of Italian cinema.

An episode dealing with Pastrone and his studio can be found in the novel Album di Famiglia by Anna Maltese, available through www.ibs.it, or orders@newacademia.com. See www.albumdifamiglia.net

WELCOME TO NEW ICS MEMBERS

It is with great pleasure that I introduce those Members who have joined us recently. As I welcome them I hope that they will take advantage of all that the Society has to offer and that they will contribute with their knowledge and expertise to the success of the Society's mission: *Benvenuti !*

Paul E. Kelly, Donna Calacone, Alice Mattice,Paola Moore
Immacolata Fiorentino, Tiziana Moretti, Estefania Halperin
Jennifer Maroney Tripodi, Elizabeth Tripodi, Carla Morelli
Carmela Mammino family, Mee Eun Jeon, Anne Maginnis
John Manall, Joseph and Asma Zaccack, Teresa Hynes
Charlotte Smith, Stephanie Switzer, Moira Byrne
Janine and Kasper Moghaddam, Roberto Bommino
Mary Odyniec, Carol Green,Gloria & Ralph Friedgen
Francesco Scaduto-Mendola, Rhoda Feigenbaum
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THE ITALIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY WELCOMES LUCIA DALLA MONTA', EDUCATION DIRECTOR AT THE ITALIAN EMBASSY

Ms. Dalla Monta' brings to her new position a wealth of experience in a wide variety of education activities, from music and English teaching early in her early career to her most recent assignment serving as director of the Italian school (primary through Liceo) in Madrid on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ms Dalla Monta' was born in Vo' near Padova and has spent most of her career in Veneto. She has both a Diploma from the Istituto Magistrale in Padova as well as a degree in Pedagogy from the University of Padova. Her work has included serving as expert in general pedagogy in the psychology department of the University, teaching and editing numerous training courses for early childhood education, middle and high schools, particularly involving integration of foreign students and equal opportunity, participating in the European Union projects "Preparing schools for a multicultural learning society" and "Certification and evaluation of students". She has directed a middle school in Veneto, planned and directed a course for "cultural mediators" for immigrant communities, helped to implement education reform in Veneto, and has been engaged in other activities involving diverse educational experience such as in a hospital, and in an after school program for foreign students in music, sport, and intercultural orientation.

Ms. Dalla Monta's complete biography, in Italian, can be viewed at www.italianculturalsociety.org

MOVIE OF THE MONTH

The Italian Cultural Society film of the month is Padre Padrone. This uplifting movie is based on the book by Gavino Ledda. His autobiography recalls the struggle of a Sardinian shepherd boy to overcome the cruel traditions of his patriarchal society. Omero Antonutti (El Dorado, Miracle at Santa Ana) turns in a tremendous performance as the merciless, abusive father who drags six year old Gavino (Fabrizio Forte) out of school and enslaves him to tend their flock in isolation. Fourteen long years pass until one day Gavino (Saverio Marconi) is ordered to do heavy labor for a village religious procession when someone passes an idea along that Gavino thinks will lead to his freedom. Will he break free to discover the outside world and his place in it?

The Taviani Brothers

Directors Paolo and Vittorio Taviani marvelously capture the beautiful landscape of Sardinia. Padre Padrone won best picture at the 1977 Cannes Film Festival and the Association of Italian Film Critics Silver Ribbon Award for best new actor (Saverio Marconi). In Italian with English subtitles.

THE ITALIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY DA IL BENVENUTO A LUCIA DALLA MONTA', DIRIGENTE SCOLASTICA PRESSO L' AMBASCIATA D' ITALIA

Lucia Dalla Monta' porta al suo nuovo incarico di Dirigente Scolastica una vasta esperienza in una grande varieta' di attivita' nel campo educativo dall' insegnamento della musica, e dell' inglese, all' inizio della sua carriera, all'insegnamento nelle scuole elementari e medie, fino alla suo piu' recente servizio come preside dell' Istituto Comprensivo Statale (K-13) di Madrid, inviata dal Ministero degli Affari Esteri, dove restera' per cinque anni, prima di essere nominata Dirigente Scolastica presso l'Ambasciata d'Italia a Washington.

Lucia Dalla Monta' e' nata a Vo', provincia di Padova , e ha svolto la maggior parte della sua carriera nel Veneto. Si e' diplomata presso l' Istituto Magistrale "Amedeo di Savoia duca d'Aosta" della città del Santo e si e' laureata a pieni voti in Pedagogia presso l'Università di Padova.

Tra le varie attivita' svolte: "cultrice della materia" di Pedagogia Generale presso la facoltà di Psicologia dell'Università di Padova; partecipazione in qualità di relatore o direttore di corso a numerosi corsi di formazione per insegnanti di scuola dell'infanzia, di scuola elementare, scuola media e scuole superiori, occupandosi particolarmente dell'inserimento degli alunni stranieri e delle pari opportunità, partecipante nei corsi della UE "Preparing schools for a multicultural learning society" e "Certification and evaluation of students". Ha servito da dirigente di una scuola media, nel Veneto. Ha progettato e servito come direttore di un corso per "mediatori culturali" nelle comunita' straniere, Ha servito da Ricercatore-Esperto nel Progetto "R.I.So.R.S.E." rivolto alla scuola secondaria di primo grado nel cui ruolo svolge l'azione di monitoraggio di applicazione della Riforma e in altre attivita' nel campo educativo come in un ospedale, e in un programma di doposcuola per studenti stranieri nella musica, lo sport, e l' orientamento.

www.italianculturalsociety.org

LOCAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

National Gallery of Art: Arcimboldo 1526-1693, Nature and Fantasy, an exhibit of paintings by the artist famous for his portraits of people made of fruits and vegetables. Thru January 9, 2011.

Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society: Wine tasting. Amateur winemakers offer their products. Sunday, Nov. 21 at 1 PM in Casa Italiana.

Washington DC Italian Language & Culture Meetup Group: Social gatherings every Monday & Friday at Vapiano restaurant. See www.meetup.com/DCItalian

TONY MACRI'-SINOPOLI

an autobiographic profile

Tony's birthplace is a little town about ten miles from the Ionian coast in the Province of Catanzaro, Calabria Region. From his town, on a clear day, one could see the Gulf of Squillace, named after Squillace, the ancient Greek city "Skyllation," which, legend has, was founded by Ulysses, shipwrecked on the Ionian coast.

The names Macri` and Sinopoli attest to a Greek ancestry dating back to the time when Calabria was part of Magna Graecia. Tony would like to think that his DNA traces him to Pythagoras or Archimedes; more likely he is a distant relative of some hardscrabble farmers who migrated to Calabria thousands of years ago bringing with them the Greco Bianco grapevines, figs and olive plants.

Tony migrated to New York State at 19. Service in the U.S. Army and a GED allowed him enter college. In 1964, he graduated from Cornell University's College of Agriculture. After college his employment was with the Federal Government, principally as a Public Information officer with the Office of Naval Research (ONR), the Navy agency that funds basic scientific research at academic institutions. After retiring from ONR, he formed a company that imported and distributed educational materials for the Montessori system of education. His son took over the company a few years ago, and he 'retired' again.

Tony now divides his time performing long-neglected repairs to his house, organic gardening, small landscaping projects and participating in activities of "Green" Montessori schools, and of course in his work as ICS board member. He also spends a few days a month at "Our House," a group home for adolescents at risk, in Olney, Maryland. One of his wishful projects is the establishment of an organic vineyard or orchard on the land owned by Our House

Tony and his wife, Pat, a Montessori teacher with advanced training in Bergamo, Italy, live in DC. They have a son and a daughter, both adopted at infancy in El Salvador.

ANTONIO MACRI'-SINOPOLI

Un profilo autobiografico

Tony nacque in un piccolo comune a circa dieci miglia dalla costa ionica nella Provincia di Catanzaro, Regione Calabria. Dal suo paesino, quando fa bel tempo, si puo' vedere il Golfo di Squillace, che prende il nome dalla citta' della Grecia antica ("Skyllation") la quale, secondo la leggenda, fu fondata da Ulisse, naufragato sulla costa ionica.

I cognomi Macri' e Sinopoli affermano un lignaggio greco dai tempi quando la Calabria fece parte della Magna Grecia. Tony vorrebbe pensare che il suo DNA lo collega a Pitagora o ad Archimede, ma e' piu' probabile che sia parente remoto di laboriosi contadini che sono migrati nella Calabria migliaia di anni fa, portando con loro le barbatelle del Greco Bianco, i fichi, e le piante di olive.

Tony immigro' nello stato di New York a 19 anni. Il suo servizio nell' esercito degli Stati Uniti e un diploma GED gli permise di iscriversi all' universita'. Nel 1964 si laureo' nella facolta' di agricoltura della Cornell University. Dopo l' universita' fu assunto dal governo federale presso l' Ufficio di Ricerca Navale (ONR), l' agenzia della marina militare che da fondi per ricerca scientifica di base alle istituzioni accademiche. Pensionato dall' ONR, formo' una ditta che importo' e distribui' materiali di istruzione educativa per il sistema scolastico Montessori. Suo figlio rilevo' l' azienda pochi anni fa e Tony si "ritiro'" di nuovo.

Tony divide il suo tempo tra il fare riparazioni trascurate da lungo tempo nella sua casa, l' orticultura, piccoli progetti di giardinaggio artistico, e partecipando nelle attivita' delle scuole Montessori "verdi". Impiega anche pochi giorni al mese in "Our House", una casa per adolescenti a rischio, aD Olney, nel Maryland. Uno dei suoi progetti a cui tiene tanto e' di stabilire un vigneto o frutteto organico nel terreno di Our House.

Tony e sua moglie Pat, una maestra Montessori di istruzione avanzata a Bergamo, abitano a Washington DC. Hanno un figlio e una figlia, tutti e due adottati dall' infanzia in El Salvador.

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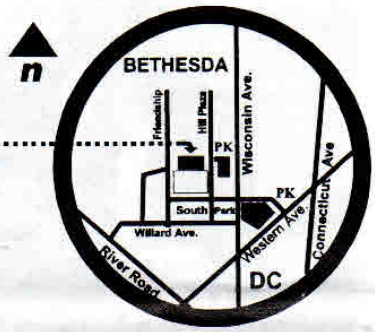

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