End of February when a decision has to be made. This is the letter I sent to members whose email address I have: I am reprinting it here in case you do not have an email account:

Dear Members of Arba Sicula,

For the past 25 years we have conducted a tour of Sicily for our members that have earned accolades from everyone lucky enough to have taken part in one of them. Members have come more than once, some of them three, four, and five times. Of course, no one will ever come close to Hindman Doxey Jr. who came 17 times until he passed away.

This year, our 26th tour, inexplicably, is under subscribed. In past years, by this time we usually have had to put people on a waiting list. Some of you may be thinking of joining us in the future, but I can tell you that the tour cannot be repeated indefinitely. If you have been thinking about rewarding yourselves by visiting the island that means so much to you, this is the time. Do not postpone it any longer.

When I said that we would stop running the tours on the twentieth, we were deluged with participants and had to do two tours that year, one after the other. I don't want to repeat the same experience, but if you have been thinking about joining us, this is the right time. We need a few more participants to make the tour viable.

Send me an email and put your deposit in the mail in the next couple of weeks.

Best regards as always
Gaetano Cipolla
President’s Message

As I sit down to write this message which was supposed to be about the plans for the future for Arba Sicula, one major problem that I need to resolve before we can discuss other plans is space for all the items that I have accumulated through the years in connection with the organization. I would like to focus briefly on one problem that can be easily solved with the collaboration of some of our members. When we publish each issue of Arba Sicula we normally print a few more copies than the number of our members so we can have extra copies for new subscribers. Through the year I have accumulated several unopened boxes that contain 50-60 copies of the journal of various issues, some of which go back in time. Naturally, I maintain an archive that has copies of every issue we have produced. The copies I am referring to are basically leftovers. I see two options here: 1) turn the copies into pulp, that is, dispose of them, and 2) try to use them as incentives to interest possible subscribers to our journal. The first option is really a terrible alternative that I would rather avoid. Lots of work went into the creation of each issue and to see them turned to pulp would be painful.

I know that some of you are involved with other organizations and cultural societies. Some of you may have businesses dealing with the public. My idea is for these issues to reach as many people as possible and I would be glad to send them to those of you who can pass them on to others free of charge. You can distribute them to all your associates, friends and neighbors who might be interested in Sicilian culture. You would be performing a service to Arba Sicula and would be instrumental in furthering our goals of promoting our organization. If you think you can distribute these issues of Arba Sicula, drop me a line, and I will be glad to ship them to you. You can also send me an email telling me where to ship the books. Here is my email address: gcipolla@optonline.net

At this time, I don’t have a list of what is left, but I know that I have a good number of boxes with perfectly good journals in them.

Please consider my request. I look forward to receiving your responses. Tanti beddi così a tutti.
You Can Buy a House For 1 Euro in Sambuca di Sicilia

Giuseppe Cacioppo, Mayor of the town of Sambuca di Sicilia, which recently was recognized as one of the most beautiful little towns in Italy, launched a program to try to revitalize the dwindling population by offering houses for sale at the incredible price of 1 Euro. This beautiful little town was founded by the ancient Greeks, and was later conquered by Saracens who turned it into a flourishing trade center. Sambuca is in the province of Agrigento and has marvelous views of the Mediterranean sea and of the fertile countryside. As in many other towns in Sicily, high unemployment and a bleak economic outlook have forced many of the inhabitants to seek work elsewhere in Italy and abroad. Faced with many abandoned houses in need of repair, the mayor came up with an idea that has been used elsewhere in Italy with some success: offering the houses for 1 Euro. The buyers, however, need to invest some money (about $15,000) to restore the houses and must live in them for a period of time. They also need to put up $5,000 that will be returned at the end of their stay.

This story, which was broadcast on a CNN travel program, was responsible for generating 50 thousand contacts for the local Town Hall in the first 48 hours. Many of the calls received were from people in the United States. If you are thinking about retiring in a beautiful place, Sambuca which is known as the “City of Splendor” has a lot to offer.

Prickly Pears

Did you know that Sicily is the second largest producer of the fico d’India in the world? Like some other plants and vegetables that have become part of the Sicilian cuisine, tomatoes and corn, the prickly pear is not a native plant in Sicily. They were imported from Mexico, the largest producer of the fruit. Yet, everywhere you go on the island you see the plant. Sicilian property owners often use the plant which does not require much in terms of maintenance as a boundary line, a natural barrier against human or animal trespassers. The plants thrive especially well in sandy soil. It is most abundant on the south-western slopes of Mount Etna, in the Belice valley and around the town of San Cono. Arba Sicula has visited the area while driving from Piazza Armerina to Siracusa. The prickly pear plants cover miles and miles of land and are produced on an industrial scale. There are several types of fidudinnii, the sulfarina, (yellow), the sanguigna (red) and the muscardedda (white). There is one type called muscatedda which is rose colored. Some of these names will vary depending on where you are. In my home town we call the white one giardara. The prickly pears ripen between August and December. To extend the period of ripening Sicilians knock off the flowers of the plant before they become fruit and the plant regrows another flower that reaches maturity later in the year. These prickly pears are called bastarduni and they are usually larger than the regular pears. Sicilians love prickly pears. They eat them for breakfast sometimes, and they use them to sweeten tomato sauce. But they also know that you can’t eat too many of them at one sitting. The large seeds the pears contain can have untoward effects on your digestive system! I will say it in Sicilian: Nuppanu!

Mr. Vincent Ciaramitaro, former owner of Joe’s of Avenue U in Brooklyn, has developed a web site that contains many of the recipes used in the famous Focacceria Palermitana. Check out his site at: www.siciliancookingplus.com
The Towns of the Madonie Mountains

Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean sea. In terms of size it is almost as big as Belgium, or about a quarter of the size of Cuba. Yet it holds such a variety of scenery that traveling from one side to the other you are tempted to think you are visiting different countries. From the lush dark green vegetation of the eastern coast to the treeless, moonlike scapes in the center, from the thick forests of the Peloritani mountains near Messina to the rugged mountains of the Madonie, from the fluvial valley of the Alcantara and the plain of the Simeto and the Conca d’oro near Palermo, from the endless orange groves near Catania, to the myriad rows of olive trees on the west that are pruned not to grow taller than a man, to the manicured vineyards of Marsala, Alcamo, that seem to be cared for by invisible farmers. If you travel during the daytime you almost never see a farmer tending to the vines or hoeing a garden. As you travel from west to east, the color of the earth changes as well. Although you need to have the sharp eye of an ethnologist to see it, the Sicilian people change as well in their manner of speaking, in their gesturing, even as they walk. And they reflect, while maintaining their individuality, the many people who have come and gone, depositing their genes in the pool out of which Sicilians have emerged.

And everywhere you travel your eyes catch glimpses of towns that seem to defy gravity as they sit atop of huge mountain peaks. I read somewhere that the Sicani who were one of the first settlers to colonize Sicily were peace-loving people who began to build their towns in locations that were easier to defend against the more aggressive Siculi who arrived after them on Sicily. Building little cities on top of promontories or places that were easily defended was of course a common practice in later times when Algerian pirates and other marauding people of the Mediterranean scoured the coast line capturing and enslaving women and children, causing havoc among the Sicilian population. The fear these pirates spread has remained in the consciousness of Sicilians who still today when something terrible is about to happen, scream “Mamma, li Turchi!” No matter who or why these towns represent a microcosm of the Sicilian civilization. In their isolation they had to rely on their own means to survive. They had to create a society that met the needs of everyone who lived there. People needed shoes: shoemakers provided them; people needed clothes: tailors provided them, people needed to shave or get haircuts; barbers were there for that. They needed entertainment and theatres were build; they needed to pray to God and churches were built. Judging by today’s standards it seems that every neighborhood had its own church in some of these remote mountain towns.

Unfortunately, today these towns are struggling. The modern way of life has changed everything. The economic activity that sustained the population has moved elsewhere. If you need a pair of shoes you no longer go to the shoemaker but to the store and buy a pair made by machine somewhere else. A couple gets

The town of Petralia Soprana

The town of Caccamo with its magnificent Norman Castle dominating the scenery
Sicilia Parra

married and needs a bedroom set. There is no carpenter. Once, driving though these little towns on a Sunday afternoon you’d see a parade of young men and women promenading and showing off in the main street. It was a way to see and be seen, to exchange a furtive glance with someone, and to socialize with friends. There would be hundreds of people walking up and down the main thoroughfare or simply sitting at the coffee bar, shooting the breeze with friends. Today the towns appear deserted even in day time. At night, it seems as if there’s a curfew. Sixty years ago, if someone died, many in town would follow the funeral cortege to the cemetery. If an important person died in town the local school children would accompany the dead to the cemetery, perhaps preceded by the local musical band. Today, the number of children who would accompany the dead has been reduced drastically because fewer children are born. These mountain towns have lost so many people to emigration that some have resorted to offering houses for a dollar on the promise of living in it for a certain period and restoring it. The town of Sambuca, considered one of the most beautiful little towns in Italy: Gangi, Geraci Siculo, Petralia Soprana, among them. But all the towns like Polizzi Generosa, Castelbuono, Isnello, have something special to offer like the manna, a special sap used as sweetener, a variety of cheeses, like the provola, the blond oranges from Isnello, the salt of Petralia Soprana, the special honey produced by black bees etc. They also offer breathtaking views of the mountains and sea. If you look eastward from the higher peaks you can see the majestic Mount Etna capped with snow, the sea before them, wonderful food, genuine products without harmful additives, a quieter environment free of pollution in the air and water and most of all warm and friendly hospitality. These towns being built high in the mountains offer great relief from the sweltering summer heat. In the evening they are often chilly even when in the valley the temperature reaches 90 degrees.

Arba Sicula has visited some of these towns. I recall one occasion when our tour participants were invited by the Mayor of Gratteri to a sumptuous banquet. It was a five course meal and one of the highlights of the tour. While they may be far from the bustling cities of Palermo, Catania, and other major cities, these villages in their remoteness offer many surprises in art, in architecture and civilization. In Gratteri, for example, we visited the local church and we were shown a relic encased in silver and under glass which contained a thorn from the crown in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
Sicilian Citrus Fruits May Fly to China

One of the saddest sights in Sicily, which produces a great quantity of lemons and oranges is to see, as you drive along “la riviera dei limoni,” (the eastern coast line from Catania to Messina is known as the Lemon riviera), is one orange grove after another with ripe fruits hanging from the trees without anybody bothering to pick the fruit. Often several seasons’ worth of fruit hangs from the branches or fall to the ground. Owing to the European Union’s agricultural policies that favor one country over another for the production and marketing of certain fruits, Sicilian oranges and lemons, which enjoyed a world-wide market in years past, arriving even to the United States before the competition from Florida proved too strong for them, have in recent years suffered. If you go to Sicilian supermarkets it is not uncommon to find oranges that are imported from Israel or Spain, an ironic situation considering that Sicilian oranges are just as good if not better than the competition. Certainly, in the case of the well-known sanguinelli, the so called blood oranges, which, according to certain studies conducted by scientists of the University of Catania possess qualities that cannot be reproduced anywhere else in the world. Indeed, blood oranges have been grown in Florida and California, but the end product is no match for the Sicilian oranges grown in the Piana di Catania and elsewhere on the island. It is a combination of climate and soil properties that is difficult to replicate elsewhere. The blood oranges produced in other countries appear anemic compared to those grown in Sicily. They also contain a substance called antocyanin which helps prevent the formation of free radicals in the blood.

At any rate, the economic situation may change according to a report that the Sicilian ministry of agriculture has signed a protocol of understanding with the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce to favor the export of Sicilian oranges to that huge market of one billion and two hundred million people. A Chinese delegation visited Sicily and inspected several sites of production to make sure that the Sicilian product meet certain international standards. It is not surprising that the sanguinelli oranges seem to be the first in line to be exported to China. Sicily produces other types of oranges such as the prized tarocchi and the moro varieties in addition to the sanguinelli. The agreement bodes well for the Sicilian agricultural industry. The island produced seventy percent of the Italian consumption of oranges before. It also produces many other fruits that are regarded as superior such as capers, peaches, prickly pears, pistachios, almonds, lemons, and many other products off the extremely fertile Sicilian soil. Perhaps it’s time to revisit the thought that the greatest wealth Sicily possesses is in its bountiful nature. Better agricultural investments, better care of its natural resources and a stronger defense of its products may yet save Sicily from stagnation and unemployment and provide prosperity and a higher standard of living that its population deserves.

We thank the Consorzio AOP Sicilia of Bagheria for the use of their cleverly arranged collage of Sicilian fruits mimicking the triangular shape of our island.

Attenzioni:
La spedizioni fora di li Stati Uniti divintau assai custusa. Si aviti un indirizzu elettronicu, mannatimillu accussi vi pozzu mannari Arbo Sicula e Sicilia Parra, in furmatu elettronicu (PDF) tramiti la posta elettronica. Mannatimillu a stu indirizzu: gcipolla@optonline.net Si prifiriti la copia cartacea, mannatimi l’abbunamentu di $40.
Tradition and Art in Sicily

Sicilians have always been creative people. It is this talent that has saved them through the centuries, the numerous invasions to which they have had to succumb, and it’s probably what will save them from the stagnation and unemployment. The young people of Sicily today are unable to find jobs and are forced to leave their homeland to seek their fortune elsewhere as their forefathers did in the nineteenth and twentieth century, when well over a quarter of the Sicilian people had to emigrate to the Americas, Australia and northern Europe. But there are some who choose to remain on the island and use their creativity to forge a space for themselves. You can see this in the many young people who dedicate themselves to the exploitation of the natural bounties that the island affords them. Some return to the land, which once was thought to be the only real wealth that a nation possesses, and invest their creativity to produce a better brand of olive oil, or a more refined wine, or introducing unusual new cultivations such as avocados or other products. Not all such projects succeed. Case in point: grapefruits. That was a disaster! Sicilians love sweet things. They could not stomach the sour taste of grapefruits.

Others who remain turn their talent to the arts, to painting, sculpting, cinema, and music. I recently learned about a young photographer from Taormina who has already made a name for herself. She is Lidia Bolognari who has turned her love for her hometown into art. We know well that Taormina is an artist’s paradise that has been immortalized by painters and photographers for the last two centuries. But Lidia’s photographs of Taormina have been turned to art by printing them on gorgeous silk foulards as you can see in the one we reproduce on this page. The foulard represent a view of Taormina with Mount Etna in the background and the bay of Giardiini Naxos below. It is an iconic scene that all who have visited Taormina cannot forget. Lidia says that wearing her foulard is like “absorbing the vital energy of our beloved Sicily. It is an accessory that we wear around our necks as a link to our often lost and forsaken roots.”

Bolognari now has combined her talent with another artist from Siracusa, Maria Puliatti, and they have created an object that combines tradition and art in an interesting and elegant way. They created an elegant accessory for women that combines the traditionally made coffe, a flexible carrying basket that Sicilian women used for shopping in the supermarket with reproduction on silk of Bolognari’s foulard (scarf). The coffe are made by hand by weaving leaves of dwarf palm trees and decorated with the silk scarf of photos, creating at once a refined mix of ancient manufacturing and modern iconography.

These coffe are very elegant and obviously not made to carry groceries, but they make a striking accessory as you stroll down via Umberto, the main street of Taormina!
The Death of Giufà

By Gesualdo Bufalino

Translated into English by Gaetano Cipolla

I know many tales about Giufà. The one about the time he sold a piece of Holland cloth to a statue... and when his mother told him before she went to mass to cook two fava beans he took her request literally and put two fava beans on the fire. Then to taste if they were salted properly, he ate them... and when while he was standing watch one night in the grain warehouse against thieves, he put them to flight by talking to himself, making it sound as though there were a whole battalion of policemen on horseback...

I will relate his death...

Giufà closed his eyes. That was his way of reducing the pangs of hunger. He had learned the secret to make hunger fall asleep since he was a boy, when he had come to recognize its intrusion in his body like a beast, a little fox that gnawed him inside. All he needed then was a whistle to make it stop, a whistle or singing himself to sleep with a lullaby:

Giufà, sleep, Giufà, fall asleep

This child is handsome and so wants to sleep...

Until the weightiness of sleep fell on his head like a cape of black pitch, worn out here and there by flashes of a vision: it could be a bowl of fava beans, or a salted anchovy or a prickly pear he caught in the air, avoiding the spines, with his quick hand that was calloused on his head like a cape of black pitch...

So he went on for years and years, living on air. But now Giufà was old for real. There was no mirage that could deceive the gray fox gnawing at his stomach...

What are you waiting for, Giufà? Did you not just hear the squawking from the hen house nearby, behind that retaining wall? Did you not hear the enticing cackling rising from the shadows? Giufà slid down from his refuge. Darkness was still deep, according to what he could see from the little window of the hay loft. It was the hour when everyone's asleep in the farm, favorable to chicken thieves, but Giufà moved slowly, one step behind the other, straining his knees; it was hard to catch his breath. This life as a vagabond, climbing and descending, scraping the ground and breathing the dust of country lanes, drinking water from troughs like a pig, weighed him down for so long: sleeping by chance, not knowing when it begins and when it might end, cut short at the best moment by a peasant's pitchfork. How many years? He gets mixed up counting on his fingers. It must have been more than three times twenty. He was still a boy when Garibaldi passed though... He had not begun to shave when he witnessed the shooting of the giant Salibba among the corks. He held a little cherry cane in his fist and a dog next to him licking the blood off of his face... And yet, when all was said and done, it had not been a bad life, living it as he did from season to season, through rainy and sunny days, through warm and cold days, through threshing fields and narrow alley ways.

He recalled many men's voices whispering familiarly in his ears. What a loving sound the human voice has! What a loving concert life was, performed by an orchestra with a thousand instruments and more, beatings of wings, rustling of streams, night wind between the houses... a concert of crackling sounds, growling, of sighs, yelps, a concert of men and beasts, of earth, air and sea, but which was in the end the ineffable music of life... Only the stars did not make noise, shining up there like the jewels of the Sorrowful Madonna when she was lifted up and wobbled above the heads of the people in mourning like a trawler out at sea.

People say that Giufà was a fool, but it's not true, or it's only half true. The thing was that he believed in the evidence and the innocence of words: if people describe a thing that is what it was, no more no less. Without the vitiated draperies that men have put on them through centuries. Therefore, when someone told him to cook two fava beans, he only cooked two fava beans; when someone told him to pull the door behind him as he left the house, he dutifully obeyed and pulled the door from its hinges and carried it on his back...

It was the same thing regarding cause and effect of which he only saw contiguous knots and not the full plot. If he brought the donkey to drink and saw the moon reflected in the pool and then he noticed how the moon had disappeared, he blamed the donkey for having drunk the Moon out of the fountain and proceeded to beat the animal until the Moon reappeared. “I knew” he boasted then, “that I would make you spit it out!”

A cruel and ironic youth! These are fables that girls told one another to have a laugh, sitting on the threshold of attics as they spun esparto threads to weave on chairs. And when they saw the old man pass wearing his tattered uniform of a soldier without a flag, they called him and teased shamefully about kissing and love, giving him at the end a piece of cubbaia or a honey pie, enough to feed him for one evening, but not enough to spare him from resuming his ancient war of fraud against farmers and watchmen. But farmers and watchmen by then just made believe they did not see Giufà's little acts of thievery, allowing him to freely roam through the benevolent blindness of the night.

Like last night when everyone was
awake waiting for the passing of the Great Race, the one that those who knew how to read could see on every plastered wall between Termini and Buonfornello. The frightening signs demanded that no calf be allowed in the street untethered nor any child without supervision. The signs warned people to watch out as the cars came out of the curves, and asked to prepare bandages in case of accidents, and to provide support with bread and wine to the Bersaglieri Corps on bicycles.

Giufà did not know how to read. He knew nothing of the Race. His mind was focused on the fat hen and a warm egg in the dark. He slithered on the ground towards the coop, painfully, stopping more often as he got closer to it. Suddenly when the shape of a man loomed against the sky, an unforeseen ghost dressed as a hunter with a rifle on his arm and a canteen across his chest, Giufà’s heart began to beat like a drum.

Thirty minutes passed and Giufà seemed to be playing a game of cops and robbers. Then the farmer moved away riding a mule. He had to act quickly then, taking advantage of the armistice. A faint blue finger appeared on the horizon announcing that the night was almost coming to an end. He had to move quickly. Giufà took a few more steps but the last one seemed eternal while feeling exhausted and relieved at once. The deed was done now, his fingers knew how to do it quietly, deadly and swiftly.

The night was gone, but it was not day yet. Out at sea, rounding the promontory of Scorsone point, large sails were unfurled in the twilight like the pale wings of an archangel. The eye barely noticed them, so dirty with brine and fog as they skimmed the surface of the water. Giufà was resting behind a mulberry bush with three eggs in a handkerchief and the weight of a dead guinea hen swelling the front of his chest. While he was resting, he recalled far away images of girls he saw in his youth, as they walked two at a time wearing their little capes and whispering like little sparrows, and some others, more mature ones whose glances were piercing like the leather slicing knife shoemakers use, through the chink of their shawls. The Arcidiacono widow, for example, came to mind, on the night when she asked him to cut down the weed grass before her gate and at the end pulled him by the hand inside the house and over her, giving him even afterward a silver ounce. A naked and white devil she was. Giufà still quivered as he recalled her, though with a pleasurable languor, on the bed, naked and majestic against the cut of the moon shining through the skylight as he closed his eyes. Sleep Giufà, go to sleep, while she kept kissing his face, stammering and striking him lightly with her fist upon his back.

There was a moon over Girgenti that night, such a Moon…

Now the old Giufà was lying behind a hedge and did not know what to do, having passed before his eyes the jubilee of his life. As he waited for dawn the road behind the hedge was not visible, but it seemed inhabited, shaken by weird hooves. He did not understand what it could be, a heavy thing that shook him intermittently. Giufà had heard about steel wagons that run on four wheels without a horse or mule to pull them; and they were noisy and emitted flashes of light. He had seen one of them, once at a fair, as it descended at breakneck speed through the curves of Biddini, a dusty flaming attack that carried inside of it a head with glasses and crowned with leather: the devil? Who else, if the not the devil?

Giufà now thought he heard and saw the same kind of noise and lights as he put his ear to the ground and peered through the leaves. Lately, however, he did not trust his eyes and ears much, he who knew, when springtime came, how to recognize the sound of growing grass while lying on a field, he who could hit a fast-moving lizard with a rock. But the days roll on and disappear, his beard had changed to white, losing heat against his chest. To pluck the hen and to cook it he needed a knife, some dry leaves to burn and two sticks forming a cross to make a spit. These were ingredients that the old man, though slow of mind, knew how to find: in the abandoned roadman’s house, in front, on the other side of the main road. He got up, somewhat sleepy and started to walk. He went over the hedge, planting his barefoot feet on the roadbed. But suddenly he froze, blinded by two headlight indents emerging from the curve unexpectedly that seemed to aim for him. He understood that he needed to run and for an instant he wanted to, but he felt sought out, wanted by those eyes. So, he ran toward the enemy and did not understand why; he ran toward the devil with his open arms (Giufà stop, where are you going? That steel machine does not pertain to you, others invented it against you, against your rustic happiness…) he ran toward the devil without crossing himself, he felt with anger and astonishment the four hooves rear up over him and fall on his chest, breaking his bones, tearing apart his ribs together with the booty of a hen hidden in his chest.…. It was the sixth of May, 1906, the day of the first Targa Florio,* but how was Giufà to know?

The Targa Florio was the first sports car race in the world promoted by the Florio Family. Originally its circuit was all of the Island but later it was held in a shorter circuit in the Madonie mountains.

Reprinted with permission from Lumie di Sicilia from Bufalino’s collection L’uomo invaso.
**The Annunziata of Antonello da Messina Won’t Travel to Milan**

On February 21, 2019 the Royal Palace of Milan will host an exhibition of the works by Antonello da Messina, the Renaissance painter who introduced oil painting in Italy. One of his major works, the famous Annunziata that is permanently housed in the Abbatellis Museum in Palermo will not be allowed to travel to Milan. The work, which one of the prized possession of the Museum is barred by decree issued by Maria Rita Sgarlata, former Sicilian minister for culture, to be removed from the premises. The precious painting was blocked from traveling to Milan by Nello Musumeci, President of the Sicilian Region, overruling the current minister for culture, Sebastiano Tusa who was in favor of the loan. Musumeci’s decision has ignited a controversy and criticism. Particularly vociferous was the response by Claudio Fava who accused Musumeci of being too provincial in not allowing the Sicilian artist’s work to be seen by a larger audience that would likely visit the Milan exhibition. Allowing such masterpieces to travel often results in financial losses to the museum if the work of art represents an important reason to visit the museum. The little museum of Motya for example saw attendance drop when they decided to loan their prized statue of the Youth to travel abroad. Still many more thousands were able to admire the work as it traveled to other museums resulting in a greater appreciation of the cultural patrimony of Sicily. Without siding with anyone, it seems to me that the more people see how great that artistic and cultural patrimony is, the better.

**Buy All Past Issues of Arba Sicula on a CD**

This is to let you know that we still have a number of CDs containing all the 33 issues of the *Arba Sicula* journal, published from 1979 to the present, in an indexed and searchable PDF format that everyone with access to a computer can read. Since we lowered the price to $50.00, some of our members have bought copies. We still have about thirty of them and I would like to sell them to make room for the updated CD I am planning to produce in the near future. The new CDs will include the two new issues of Arba Sicula published since we produced the CD plus an update index. So, if you want to have the history of Arba Sicula that won’t take up much shelf space buy the CD. The $50.00 price includes shipping and handling, too. To order your CD, send a check for $50.00 to:

Arba Sicula P. O. Box 149, Mineola, New York 11501
Sicilian and Other Stereotypes

By Uncle Floyd Vivino

In the issue of Jan 24, 2019, Floyd Vivino who writes a regular column for the Italian Tribune addressed the question of stereotypes that have been passed on from generation to generation without questioning their veracity. He complained specifically about the people who hail from the region of Calabria as having a "testa dura" that is, having a predisposition for stubbornness. Mr. Vivino went through some of the stereotypes and then he wrote at length about one general misconception about Sicilians: the assertion heard often, even from Sicilians, that they are not Italian.

We thank Buddy Fortunato, the editor of the Italian Tribune, for permission to reprint the column.

(Note from the Editor)

Many times when I am with my fellow Italian Americans, someone will announce—"Oh, Vivino... he’s Calabrese." Immediately following that someone will say, "Testa dura" (hard head) and then proceed to make a fist and bang it on their own head. I am so familiar with such attempts at humor that the pathetic slight or joke is meaningless. I have heard this all my life. It matters not that I am half Calabrese, a quarter Cilentano and a quarter Casertano—most Italian Americans classify me as Calabrese. Interestingly, when I speak Italian to people from Italy they assume that I am Neapolitan because my language skills have an obvious accent of family from Campania, especially Salerno, or as we call it, ‘u dialetto nostro.

I have heard all the jabs and comedic insults Italian Americans here hurl at each other. With time, during my own lifetime, much of this juvenile behavior has subsided. Young Italian Americans today, those in their 20s, 30s and 40s, for the most part do not subscribe to mocking Calabrians, Neapolitans, Romans, Pugliesi, Lucani and all the other regional Italian locals as people of my age bracket and who are still holding Italian roots.

How ridiculous the things I heard growing up as a kid in an Italian neighborhood—"Everyone north of Rome is German," "Neapolitans only love to sing and eat fish," "The Pugliese make too many kinds of taralle"... and it goes on and on. While such vanishing commentaries are senseless and trivial at best, there remains one slur I simply cannot allow to slip by in my presence, that being, Sicily is not part of Italy or the extremely ignorant claim that Sicilians - in Sicily or America – are not Italian. Statements as such, made by fools, are insensitive and lacking in any knowledge whatsoever about the history of Sicily and the Sicilian people.

Few places on this planet have been attacked, conquered, destroyed, plundered, marauded, invaded and raided as has Sicily. Few people are aware of how many times ‘slave ships’ from foreign, faraway places took, captured and kidnapped innocent Sicilian women and children, making them hostages and eventually forcing them into bondage or slavery in an unknown land. Sicily has suffered cruelties of unbelievable proportions for many centuries.

It was severely bombed during World War II by the Allies to rid the Nazi occupation there. Many people, from military officers to the citizens of Sicilia, still question why. They reason that the Allies could have easily invaded Calabria instead, which offered little resistance by way of military force, instead of bombing and killing innocent Sicilians who really had nothing to do with the war, generally speaking. While the historians and military argued this point the Sicilian people suffered the consequences—unfortunate and horrific as they were. I find it curious that I never hear Sicilian Americans point this out or discuss this.

How could anybody—especially an Italian American—say that Sicilians are not Italians? Have they no heart? Obviously they have not a ‘brain.’ Although it is now impossible because of intermarriage here in America to get an exact amount on the number of Italian Americans with ancestry in Sicily, roots in Sicily. Most people will agree that Sicilians still constitute the largest single ancestral group among Italians here in America. That includes as well, Canada, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Australia and Puerto Rico.

To put it another way, can anyone possibly imagine what our Italian American experience on this continent would be like without our Sicilian brothers? I’m not referring to Di Maggio and Sinatra, but every single aspect of our American life - from broccoli to the battlefields.

In my own travels, I visited with a television technical crew, the old Little Italy in downtown Patterson, New Jersey. Once home to a large thriving Italian immigrant population (both my parents lived there during the 1930s), it has now become known as Peru Square, home to mostly immigrants from Peru. I walked around the old quarter and interviewed people on the sidewalk. This was shown on 'Be Terrific' internet systems. In talking with several Peruvians they pointed out to me that they were Italian. I sincerely inquired how so. They all told me that although they were born and raised in Peru, their grandparents were Italian immigrants to Peru. I asked what part of Italy their grand parents immigrated from and I was told - Sicily!

I’ll let people call me a ‘Testa Dura’ and shrug it off as a juvenile joke in which there is no importance in discussing it further. But I will not remain silent when someone makes crude comments about Sicily and her people.
On the Character of Sicilians

By Clive Cussler

A few years back someone sent me a page xeroxed from a novel by Clive Cussler, a well-known writer of detective stories, without identifying the novel or the context. The envelope in which it was contained had no name so I don’t even know who sent it, at this point.

The page was a dialogue between two people who are trying to understand how a character named Antonio Branco thinks. The writer offered some interesting insights into the character who happened to be a Sicilian, making some general observations on Sicilians that I thought might be of interest to our readers. If anyone can identify the quotation, I would be grateful if you share it with me.

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"Let me ask you something. What drives a Sicilian?"

"A hundred invasions. Countless tyrants. They’ve triumphed by their wits for three thousand years. Why do you ask?"

"I’m reckoning how Antonio Branco thinks. ‘Sicilians think for themselves—only themselves.’"

"When I asked Tetrazzini on our way to San Francisco, she called them ‘bumpkins from down south. ‘Primitive peasants.’’"

"Never!" Caruso roared, laughing. "Tetrazzini’s from Florence, she can’t help herself. Sicilians are the direct opposite of primitive. They are sophisticated. Strategic. Clear of eye, and unabashedly extravagant. They see, they understand, they act—all in a heartbeat. In other words—"

"Never underestimate them," said Bell. "There isn’t a law written they don’t despise." "Good," said Bell. "Thank you."

"Good?"

"Now I know what he’ll try next." "What?" asked Caruso.

"Some unsuspecting bigwig is about to get a Black Hand letter. And it will be a Black Hand letter to end all Black Hand letters."

Archie hurried into the bar. Peering through the gloom of Caruso’s cigarette smoke, he spotted Bell, and whispered urgently,

"Research says Branco owns the shell company that controls the shell company that owns the tenement next door to his grocery."

“NOPAQUIE”

By Adolfo Vaguarnera

On the left door of the Saint Agatha Cathedral in Catania you can still read a mysterious sign that says “NOPAQUIE”. The meaning of the inscription may be understood by recalling a popular legend about Saint Agatha and Emperor Frederick II. To punish the inhabitants of the city that had revolted against him in 1232, Frederick II decided to literally destroy the whole city and the kill all of its inhabitants. The poor citizens of Catania were granted, however a last wish before the execution of the order. Their wish was to attend a mass in the Cathedral of their beloved Saint. The Emperor granted their wish and insisted on being in the church during the mass. When Frederick II opened the book to follow the mass he found a mysterious sheet on which the word “NOPAQUIE” was written. To understand the message it contained, Frederick asked everyone, but no one could explain its meaning until an old Benedictine monk approached the Emperor and explained that the word was a Latin acronym taking the first letter of the following eight words: “Non offendere Patriam Agathae Quia Ultrix Iniuriarum Est,” which means “Do not offend Catania, the Homeland of Saint Agatha because she will avenge the offense.” Frederick II, faced with such a threat, decided to reconsider his decision. He allowed the inhabitants to live but raised only the second floor of the buildings and then built the Castello Ursino where he put a marble icon that shows the imperial eagle strangling the Catanese lamb. The people of Catania in memory of the extraordinary miracle of their patron Saint, transcribed the mysterious inscription on the door.

(Courtesy of Lumie di Sicilia)
The Rarest Christmas Tree Is in Sicily:
Andrea Di Piazza

Translated and Reprinted with Permission

This is a Sicilian story that is worth relating: about the rarest Christmas Tree in the world: the spruce of the Madonie Mountains that was believed to be extinct, but still exists as an endangered species.

Since time immemorial the spruce tree has been the emblem of pagan and religious celebrations performed in December. Its quality as an evergreen gave the tree its strong symbolic value. Its ability to maintain its green leaves during the cold months of the year was seen by the northern population as magic.

Regarding this tree we have a Sicilian story worth telling.

In 1957 while canvassing the territory of Polizzi Generosa, a group of botanists discovered a few trees that had been regarded as extinct until that time. Twenty trees of the species known as *Abies nebrodensis*, (spruce from the Nebrodi area) were discovered in a small stretch of land in the Vallone Madonna degli Angeli in the mountains 1550 meters above sea level. It was considered a sub species of the more common *Abies Alba* (White spruce), but the spruce of the Madonie is actually a different species altogether.

Present in Sicily since the Tertiary geological period, the tree was so widespread on Sicilian mountains that the considered a species in critical danger of extinction, and included in the list of the fifty botanical species most in peril in the Mediterranean area, the Spruce of the Madonie Mountains is at the center of a “Life nature” project conducted by the Madonie Park Organization between 2001 and 2005.

The immediate objective of the project was to stabilize the remaining population and to create new trees, testing the rate of survival through ex-situ programs (in nurseries on in nature). During the project, important results have been achieved that bode well for the future of the delicate plants. First of all, 155 new specimens have been generated and have been added to the 32 trees already present in the main area. The new plants, however, are still sexually immature. There are many projects that foresee the planting of the spruce outside the natural area of growth of the plant, which involves producing plants through fertile seeds of certain plants. The State Agency for Forests has been able to create about three thousand plants that further strengthen the existing population and improve the chances of survival for the entire species.

Another project followed this one. It was financed by CIPE (Conservation of the *Abies nebrodensis* and the reestablishment of the turbaries of Geraci Siculo) with the objective of extending the area of distribution of the precious spruce, trying to take note of the genetic characteristics through collecting the pollens that are present in the turbaries of Geraci Siculo that go back in time to ten thousand years ago.

If you wish to pay homage to our extremely rare Christmas tree, without decorations and strictly free to live in its natural habitat, arm yourself with boots, lunch pack, wind breaker and climb to the station above Polizzi Generosa with one of the official guides of the Park of the Madonie Mountains. If you are not in good shape, you can always admire two ancient specimens of the tree in the Villa Lanza in Gibilmanna that were spared from the deforestation onslaught of our predecessors.
Puisia siciliana

Lu Presepiu
Di Giuseppe Turriciano

“Talìa stu panurama maistusu”
dissi lu nonnu a lu niputèddu,
mustranu d’un presepiu susu e ghiusu
e un pasturi cu ’n capu n’agneddu.

Chistu cu amuri vinia e cu premura
può putiri adurari Gesuzu beddu
curcatu nudu na la manciatura
cu lu vòi a lu latu e lu sciccareddu.

La Maronna e San Giuseppe c’unioni
vigghiuvanu lu fighiu appena natu
tantu amuri e tanta divuzioni
vinni vòi sarvari lu criatu.

Lu niputèddu taliava ammiratu:
li casuzzi, li muntagni, li ponti,
un puzzu granni c’un catu tiratu
li casuzzi, li muntagni, li ponti,
Lu niputèddu taliava ammiratu:
chì vinni pi’ sarvari lu criatu.

Lu Signuri passava una matina
di Gèrico, città d’a Palistina.
Zaccheo, un riccuni (dì l’esatturia),
vulla taliau, ma ’un ci arriniscia,
un pocu pi la fudda ‘ncapu d’Idddu,
tanticchia - assai - picchì era curturiddu.

Allura, pi vidillu, curriu avanti;
s’arrampicau nta un arbulu, a l’istanti
s’aggiucca tra li rami ‘i ’dda latata,
sì ferma u Signuruzzu … ’na taliata:
“Zaccheo, scinni di didocu ca nni tia
vògghiu scurari”. E iddu si ni prìa.

Zaccheo lassa lu ramu unni si afferra,
e sata cu prunitzza: … e scoppa ‘nterra!
La fudda, sempri a stissa, murmurìa:
“Ma chiddù è un piccatùri! ‘Un lu sapà?”
Zaccheo ’un ci duna cunnu (è chi’ì l’amurì!):
“Ai purveddì dugu, o me Signuri,
metà di la me robbà, e s’aiu arrubbatu,
ci dugu quattru voti u me piccatu!”
(Zaccheo nun è ziccusu e ’un sta a pinzari
… si cci arréstanu l’occhi pi taliari)
U Signuri è cuntenatu ’i sta pinzata,
ca è benì pi Zaccheo e p’oa scasa.

(Ca p’un attu d’amuri Iddu mmizzighia
tantu cu ci lu fa c’a so famigghia!) Nun vinni pi li giusti lu Signuri:
vinni pi mia e Zaccheo, pi i piccatùri!
Venì a me casa e restaci, Gestì…
cà … piccaturi ‘un ci nni sunnu cchiù!

Mama
Di Carmelo Ciro

Mamà, hannu passatu tant’anni
e tutti li peni chi passasti,
tutti li lacrìmi chi virsasti,
m’accumpagnanu anchì di ranni.
La guerra, la fami, lu duluri,
la miseria e la morti,
lì sentu tantu ma tantu forti
la miseria e la morti,
Amuri pi’ chidda fratellanza
chi lu tempu pigghia e cancìa,
cancia l’omu e la società.

U fattu ‘i Zaccheo
Di Giovanni Bianchini
(d’u Vangelu ‘i S. Luca … secunnu
Giuванni)

Mi duni ogn’uра morti duci e amena,
Antonio Veneziano

Mi duni ogn’uра morti duci e amena,
cu l’attrattìvi toi modi e infìdi;
sì canti, si graditissima Sirena;
scìati, un Basiliscu all’occhi annidi;
sì canti, si graditissima Sirena;
lu vulgu nenti chiù chi asinitati.
Lu grossu nasu di un parrinu
di l’abbati Melchiore

Lu grossu nasu di un parrinu
di l’abbati Melchiore
Sicilian Poetry

Translated by Gaetano Cipolla

The Nativity Scene
By Giuseppe Turriciano

“What a majestic panorama,” said the grandfather to his grandchild, showing the upper and the lower parts where a shepherd bore a lamb on his back.

The shepherd, filled with love and haste, was going to adore the new-born Jesus, who was reclining, naked, in the manger near to the ox and to the little donkey.

There the Madonna and Saint Joseph, moved with great affection and sincere devotion, were watching over their new-born child who had come down to earth to save mankind.

The grandchild looked with awe and wonder at the little houses, the mountains and the bridges at the great well, from which a pail was drawn that poured some limpid water in the fountain.

There was a large and starry dome that acted as the sky above the scene, there was a very bright and shiny star that was the sign for the coming Magi Kings.

The old grandfather explained to the grandchild how the Magi had traveled from far away to come adore the new-born child, each bearing in his hand a gift to him.

“I too have something here for you,” said the grandchild to the grandfather. “It is a postcard I designed myself in honor of this wonderful occasion.

It is not something that costs money, because I’m small and do not have any, but it’s a way for me show to everyone how much I truly love you.”

The grandfather was moved so much he struggled not to start to shed a tear and proceeded to embrace the child who was for him a gift from heaven.

“There are some gifts,” the grandfather then replied “that are so special and mean so much more Than those who have the means to buy them For everything is measured through the heart.”

The Story of Zacchaeus
By Giovanni Bianchini*
(From the Gospel of St. Luke)

The Lord one day was passing through Gericho a city in Palestine. Zacchaeus, who was a wealthy man (a tax collector) wanted to look at him but could not do it, a little because there was a large crowd and also because he was short in height.

So, in order to see him he ran ahead and quickly climbed and sat upon a tree facing where Jesus came to stop: one look: “Zacchaeus, come down from there for I want to spend the night by you.” Zacchaeus rejoiced.

Zacchaeus grabbed the branch that held him and quickly jumped, landing on the ground. The crowd, ever the same, started mumbling, “But he’s a sinner! Doesn’t he know that?”

Zacchaeus paid no mind to them (love’s greater):

“I will give to the poor, my Lord, half of my wealth and if I have stolen, I will give them four times my sin!” Zacchaeus not a miser and does not stop To think… If he still eyes to see). The Lord is happy with this thought for it is good for Zacchaeus and his kin.

(That for an act of love he coddles so much that he does so with his family).

The Lord did not come for those who are righteous, He came for me, for Zacchaeus, for sinners. Come to my home, Jesus, and stay there. Here … there are no more sinners.

Mama
by Carmelo Ciro
Second Part
Mama, many years have passed and all the woes you suffered, all the tears you shed, accompany me now as a grown man. The war, the hunger and the sorrows, the poverty and death, I feel them still so strongly that I’m filled with disgust and love at once: disgust as when you eat something that upsets your stomach, love for the brotherhood that time changes, altering man and society as well. We feel more independent, perhaps even more indifferent with all the comforts and goods we have. We are the ones who create society and change all the values; we accumulate treasures and then we blind humanity we forget the suffering and poor people. We look at father, mother, death with indifference that is an evil thing that paralizes feelings, reducing us to nothing, less than a herd of beasts.

But all you need is to resume thinking, turn off the tv, looking inside the heart to find a sea of love for the true things, love for that dear hand that nourished you at her breast. In haste, let us return to Nature, so we can be watered like half dried up trees we need pure water, and you’re pure water, o Mother, you are the source of earth, clear, fresh and nourishing.

With Your Seductive and Dishonest Ways
by Antonio Veneziano

With your seductive and dishonest ways you cause me sweet and pleasing death each day; a welcome Siren you are when you sing, a crocodile that kills me when you cry, and when you breathe you have a panther’s zest within your eyes a basilisk made its nest All this is nothing. Know you why I grieve? You see me dying and do not believe.

The Donkeys and Aesop
by Giovanni Meli

There were two donkeys whose necks formed a cross, scratching each other. Common people read a proof of asininity in this, but Aesop looked and said: “O empty heads! This is a lesson mankind should not miss. Interdependence is in fact the thread that holds society in balanced pitch by letting people scratch each other’s itch.”

Ode to a Priest’s Big Nose
by the Abbot Melchiore

If turning from the corner you should see a nose that’s big and long and eaglelike, that’s like the rudder of a ship at sea, that nose belongs to a good priest I know, a nose that serves as staircase to the eyes, forming a baldaquin above the mouth, and can be used both to let out some gas or as suppository in the ass!

* In the last issue of Arba Sicula we published the poem, “Priamu” sent by Joe Tambe, who did not know its author. We received a letter identifying the poet. His name is Giovanni Bianchini.
Book Reviews

Bitter Trades: A Memoir, by Giovanna Miceli Jeffries, Mineola: Legas 2018, $18.00

Review by Filomena Fuduli Sorrentino

Bitter Trades is a book that tells the story of a Sicilian immigrant child in 13 short stories. It describes the life of a child who grew up in a poor Sicilian town where little education, farm work, and the challenges of family loyalty were all part of a cultural boundary. In her memoir Giovanna Miceli Jeffries, born in Ribera (AG), recalls her childhood and adolescence years before she finished high school and emigrated to the USA from Sicily, an island that was ravaged by poverty and war. The book reflects also on Italian emigration in the post-war period when many were forced by poverty and unemployment to leave their homeland and seek a more decent life elsewhere, following the millions that had left in previous waves of emigration in an exodus that saw one quarter of the Sicilian population leave the island. They left often not knowing what to expect, facing all kinds of difficulties, that included not knowing the language, not knowing the customs of the new country and not knowing what to expect, or is little known to the new generations of Italians, as well as the new generations of Italian Americans, all of whom have no idea of what life was 100 years ago in Sicily and in the States. The book helps readers understand how much suffering and sacrifice were faced by the second wave of Italian immigrants who were forced to leave Italy 60-70 years ago. Certainly the people who arrived to the United States had a much better experience than those who had arrived at the end of the nineteenth and the first decades of the Twentieth century. Still it was not easy to be uprooted from one way of life into another. But the author’s story, who is now a retired professor emerita from a prestigious university in Madison, Wisconsin, can be regarded as a success story, compared to what previous immigrants had to go through. Giovanna Miceli Jeffries, through hard work, study and dedication accomplished in one generation what has taken previous generations of Italian-Americans two or three and sometimes four generations to accomplish, going through the stages of achieving financial and economic independence first, becoming part of the middle class, sending children to college, etc. Prof. Miceli Jeffries went through these stages in her lifetime.

One of the 13 stories the author relates is the one that provides the titles to the collection “Bitter Trades” which may be understood as representative of the author’s prevailing attitudes toward her experiences that coexist in the feeling of nostalgia for a life that is no longer there and the acceptance of the changes that emigration occasioned. The story is a touching recollection of how young girls in Sicily, including the author’s own mother, grew up with the idea of creating a marriage trousseau spending two or three years learning how to embroider linens and pillowcases under the supervision of nuns. When the family emigrated to Canada and then to the United States, the author, where trousseaus are not part of the preparations for marriage, the author found herself without a proper trousseau. The mother and father insisted that they could not let their daughter marry without bringing to the marriage what all Sicilian brides brought, a set of hand embroidered bed sheets, pillowcases, table cloths, towels etc. So they traveled to Sicily to commission such a trousseau and needing the money they sold the only piece of land they still possessed.
which included the ruins of a castle once owned by the Count of Luna, called the Castle of Poggiodiana dating back to the XIV-XV century. The father did not appreciate the historical importance of the ruined structure and sold it for the equivalent of $700.00 that went to pay for the *trousseau*. This was the cost of the bitter trade referred to in the title. Her parents had bartered the castle of the Count of Luna to provide a trousseau for their daughter. Ironically years later, the author read in a magazine that the town of Ribera intended to restore the castle and turn it into an archeological park. The price they paid for the ruins was $39,000. Clearly Giovanna had no special attachment to the castle per se but to everything that was associated with it. This is what she wrote:

“I could not predict or imagine when I left my hometown that the castle and its land would eventually become the symbol of my emotional and structural void. The castle was not the object of my longing and yearning in my first years of immigration, especially in Montreal. It was the view of the sea from uphill, the beach in the summer, the strolls, the holidays, the feast days on September 8, March 19, Easter especially.... I would not experience and celebrate them again. The castle stood for both the precariousness and stubbornness of my roots: the attachment to something whose value and historical importance I came to know as an adult abroad. Not knowing and then knowing that my immediate family owned the castle structure, not just the land, muddles my self perception and sets in motion an array of questions, of “what ifs,” of altered scenarios of immigration, financial outcomes, modified lives. Had my parents kept the castle property and then sold it to the city, they would have been tangibly and symbolically compensated for all they lost; they could have easily retired and lived comfortably in our home town, bought a house, some land again with almond trees, reversed their journey.

Many times, as a schoolgirl, I had found myself with my friends pointing in the direction of the castle, from an overlook at the edge of my hometown. In those moments, I would swallow my urge to announce, “Look, all of you, that is MY castle! We harvest its almond trees every year.” But I did not want to be ridiculed. I thought my family merely owned the land, while all the rest still belonged to the defeated Count Luna. Others will sell and buy the castle, but it will always belong to Count Luna. He keeps its castle. I keep my biancheria as my almond tree: a bitter bargain—my inglorious, deciduous metamorphosis.”

This is a well written, sensitive book that so many of us who have lived the experience of emigration can identify with. But Giovanna Miceli Jeffries, has combined her personal experiences relating them to timeless things. In reference to the lines quoted about “her deciduous metamorphosis,” she related in the preceding paragraph the ancient myth of Phyllis and Demophon that is worth reading:

“In Greek mythology the almond tree is represented by the beautiful Thracian princess Phyllis (leaf) who is in love and betrothed to Demophon, son of Theseus. When Demophon does not return on the agreed day from his trip to visit his family in Athens, Phyllis hangs herself on a tree at the very spot where they were supposed to meet. The place is called *Ennea Odai* (Nine Roads) since Phyllis returned there nine times that day to see if Demophon had arrived. When Demophon does eventually return (he had only been delayed in Athens), he clings to the tree in desperation, only to see that the tree is suddenly covered in leaves and bursts into white bloom. In one of those sympathetic and compassionate metamorphoses, the gods transform Phyllis into an almond tree, a symbol of hope.”

This is a fundamental book told with passion, honesty, and humor. The author accepts her biancheria and gives up her almond tree. It is not up to us to judge whether the exchange was fair, but the author seems to be at peace with it. A thoughtful and entertaining read that shines a light on something all of us as immigrants have had to face.
from and returned to, in a first tour with Arba Sicula in 2006 and then, again, in a final research trip in 2017.

There Mark found the town was destroyed by an earthquake but restored in a parallel village. There he found relatives from Giuseppe’s other marriage and family. But it was while walking through the ruins of Santa Margherita di Belice that the answer to the mystery seemed to appear and disappear before him, like the shadows between the ruins.

Ultimately, Mark leaves it up to the reader to answer the enigma as to his great-grandfather Giuseppe Tardi’s motive for returning to Sicily.

In a way, Mark’s saga of discovery for me recalls a haiku by the Japanese poet Arakida Moritake (1473–1549):

A fallen blossom
returning to the bough, I thought—
But no, a butterfly.

Thus, this is my answer as one of Mark’s readers as to just why Giuseppe Tardi, Mark’s maternal great-grandfather, after, leaving what some have called the terra bruciata, a land of poverty, at the time, the turn of the 20th century, making the long horrific journey in steerage to America, then, after a relatively short time in Brooklyn, criticized by all over many years, for leaving his family in America to return to Sicily:

Like the blossom returning to the bough, Mark’s maternal great-grandfather Giuseppe Tardi had to return, in a sense transformed, reborn from cross-continental experiences, like Moritake’s butterfly, to go back to his ancestral home, whose roots were never quite torn out.

And, Mark Hehl, after this physical and literary exploration, learns that he, too, can go home again.

Walking around in Sicily you see some strange things! Here is a bronze angel with a broken wing on the ground in the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento.
Arba Sicula’s Tour 26 Itinerary. June 3 to June 15, 2019

This is the itinerary I propose for our 26th anniversary tour of Sicily. We may make minor changes to the itinerary in the coming months. The price is $3,500 and includes airfare, airport taxes and fuel surcharge, four-star hotels, Deluxe transportation, and all meals, except lunches. Flights are confirmed. I don't have confirmation for all the hotels yet, but they will be 4 stars hotels. The single supplement is $450.00, which can be avoided if you share a room with someone. Please send a non-refundable deposit of $200.00 per person to Arba Sicula, P. O. Box 149, Mineola, New York 11501. Full payment is due on April 1, 2019. If you need additional information, you can write to prof. Cipolla at gcipolla@optonline.net.

June 3 - Monday DAY 1 - Departure from J. F. Kennedy Airport, New York on Alitalia AZ603, 5:45 P.M. Arrive Rome 8:20 AM

June 4 - Tuesday DAY 2 - Connect with AZ1779 departing at 12:00 AM which arrives in Palermo at 1:10 P.M. Transfer to Hotel Excelsior. Afternoon free to rest. Welcome dinner at La Casa del Brodo Restaurant.

June 5 - Wednesday DAY 3 - Morning guided tour of Palermo that includes the Cathedral, the Norman Palace, and other important sights. In the afternoon, we will visit Monreale. We will travel to Santa Flavia for dinner with local members of Arba Sicula.

June 6 - Thursday DAY 4 - We will drive to Cefalù in the morning and visit the beautiful cathedral as well as the Museo Mandralisca. After lunch we will return to Palermo and we will have dinner at our hotel.

June 7 - Friday DAY 5 - Palermo to Marsala. We will visit the city center, the Duomo built by the Normans and the Archeological Museum. We will have lunch in Marsala and visit the salt pans in Marsala before going to our hotel, the Baglio Oneto. Before dinner with some of our local friends we will have a wine tasting at the hotel.

June 8 - Saturday DAY 6 -Marsala to Agrigento via Mazara del Vallo. After the visit to the city we will have lunch in Mazara. After lunch we will proceed to Agrigento's Valley of the Temples. We will check into our hotel Kaos and before dinner we will be entertained by the Vald'Akragas group.

June 9 - Sunday DAY 7 - After breakfast we will drive to Piazza Armerina to see the Villa del Casale with its beautiful mosaics. We will stop for lunch in San Cono and proceed to Siracusa. After we check into our Hotel (the Villa Politi), we will proceed to the Greek theater for a performance of a Greek tragedy. We will have a pizza party after the performance.

June 10 - Monday DAY 8 - After breakfast we will visit the Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Lagrime, the Paolo Orsi Archeological Museum and then drive down to Ortigia to visit the cathedral and other sights. You will have free time to have lunch in a local restaurant and we will meet again to return to the hotel. After dinner we will be entertained by Salvo Bottaro and his friends.

June 11 - Tuesday DAY 9 - Morning drive to Catania. Visit the Cathedral, the Via Etnea, and other sights. Lunch on your own. In the afternoon we will drive to our hotel in Giardini Naxos, the Caesar Palace which will be our hotel for the last four nights. Buffet dinner at the hotel.

June 12 - Wednesday DAY 10 - A short morning drive to Taormina to visit the Greek-Roman theatre, free time for shopping and lunch. We then return to our hotel for relaxation at the pool or the beach. Dinner in our hotel

June 13 - Thursday Day 11- After breakfast we will go to Mt. Etna. We will return to our hotel early in the afternoon to relax by the pool or do some shopping. Dinner in our hotel.

June 14 - Friday DAY 12 - Morning free to shop or relax by the pool. In the afternoon we will drive to Francavilla di Sicilia for cocktails and then to our Restaurant for the farewell dinner.

June 15 - Saturday DAY 13 - Transfer to Catania. The return flight is on Alitalia AZ1724, at 11:05 am, arriving in Rome at 12:25, connecting with Alitalia 610 to New York at 2:50 PM. It will arrive in New York's J. F. Kennedy Airport at 6:35 PM of the same day.