

## Feeling Italic ...

Fred Gardaphe (June 09, 2017)



Much of what I think about Piero Bassetti's notion of Italic and the term's relationship to his equally innovative notion of the Glocal, appears in my introduction to his new book "Let's Wake Up Italics! Manifesto for a Glocal Future," published by Bordighera Press. What follows is what I feel about this interesting idea.

Growing up in an Italian/American community, I was not aware of differences between me and others until I left my house in Melrose Park, a Little Italy outside Chicago. We seemed to be as American as



everyone around us, and as Italian too, but we never used the term, Italian American to define our differences. When asked where I was from, which didn't mean neighborhood, I always answered, Italy.

When I finally got to Italy, the first in three generations of my family to do so, I found an Italy that couldn't understand the Italian I thought I was speaking; I found a place never described by my nonni, who had left there in the 1920s. The Italian they taught us was dialect; the images they created of Italy in my mind through their stories were long before many modern conveniences had arrived in [Castellana Grotte](#) [2], province of Bari in Puglia. That trip showed me how un-Italian I actually was.

I returned home confused and determined to sort it all out as I began my career, something that wouldn't happen until I became an Italic myself. The process began with connecting the outside of Italy to the inside of me. I had to master the language; I had to know the history; I had to know Italy's past; and this was all done through years of study and travel, years that resulted in the establishment of my career in research and education focusing on Italian/American studies.

Bassetti writes that the power of uniting business and education can lead to the kind of interaction that is future oriented with the aims of turning us away from nations battling each other and towards nations working for the common good of all humans. In this way his ideas coincide with new developments in Italian/ American Studies such as the establishment of the Italian Diaspora Summer Seminar under the aegis of the [John D. Calandra Italian American Institute/Queens](#) [3] College and the University of Calabria, that has moved Italian/American Studies into the 21st century by establishing new ways of organizing and studying the impact that Italian immigrants have had, not just in the United States of America (the focus of what has been traditionally referred to as Italian/American studies), but throughout the world where Italian immigrants have set up homes in new lands.

This work is echoed by the recent success of the "Transnational Italies" exhibition project, led by [Dr. Loredana Polezzi](#) [4] of the University of Cardiff and Dr. [Charles F. Burnett](#) [5] of the University of Bristol, who have made the [Italian Diaspora](#) [6] experience from many countries speak to today's viewer in both space and time, globalizing the notion of Italian heritage so that it speaks not only to, but also beyond, national borders.

Bassetti's ideas help us to see beyond the quagmire of fear and violence often created by the idea of the nation-state as it strives to defend itself from others even as they absorb them into the populace.

Can we break down the borders in this new globalized world? Can we move away from the chauvinism of national identity to focus on the humanity in and of us all? Can we find ways of connecting to others in the world beyond the idea of geographical locations and national identities?

We can do all that if we start moving away from the myths created by monolithic national identities and toward the knowledge created by glocal interactions that enable us to make the world great together. We can do that by taking the first step of realizing that Italic share the values that can make us all better citizens of the world.

### **Information of the Book:**

[Piero Bassetti: Let's Wake Up italics! Manifesto for a Glocal Future](#) [7]

[Bordighera Press](#) [8](1 April 2017)

\*Fred Gardaphe is Distinguished Professor of English and Italian/American Studies at the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Queens College/CUNY

**Source URL:** <http://www.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/op-eds/article/feeling-italic>

---



### **Links**

[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/fredgardaphejpg-0>

[2] <http://www.grottedicastellana.it/en/the-caves/>

[3] <http://qcpages.qc.edu/calandra/>

[4] <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/people/view/161473-polezzi-loredana>

[5] <https://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi/http%22//http///%3C/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=62499278>

[6] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian\\_diaspora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_diaspora)

[7] <http://www.amazon.in/Lets-Wake-Up-Italics-Manifesto/dp/1939323088>

[8] <http://bordigherapress.org>