Inventing "Little Italy"[1]

by Donna R. Gabaccia, University of Minnesota

Digitized texts open new methodologies for explorations of the history of ideas. This paper locates the invention of the term "Little Italy" in New York in the 1880s and explores its rapid spread through print and popular culture from police reporting to fictional portraits of slumming and then into adolescent dime novels and early film representations. New Yorkers invented "Little Italy" but they long disagreed with urban tourists about its exact location. Still, from the moment of its origin, both visitors and natives of New York associated Little Italy with entertainment, spectacle, and the search for "safe danger." While the location of Little Italy changed over time, such associations with pleasure and crime have persisted, even as the neighborhood emptied of its immigrant residents.

Google the phrase "Little Italy,"[2] and your computer will tempt you with 5.8 million hits for perusal. Number one on the long list is the "official" New York City webpage featuring restaurants along Mulberry Street and pictures of the 2004 San Gennaro festival. In fact, well over half of Little Italy webpages and almost all webpages containing the words *piccola Italia* take readers to information about restaurants or food. Roughly a quarter of a million (or about 4 percent) discuss crime, mafia, murder, and criminals; among these, the "official" New York webpage offers a Soprano's tour.

In this paper, I argue that Little Italy and the phenomenon of urban tourism—specifically the search for a particular kind of safe danger as a form of casual entertainment—were fraternal twins, born in a complex linguistic embrace more than a century ago.[3] This association is entangled in complex ways with the racialized "Italophobia" of English speakers that I emphasized in a recent look at the global geography of the phrase.[4]

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[1] Thanks to Alan Lessoff for our years of conversation about editing, about the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, and about this article. Thanks also to my research assistant Lisong Liu, who helped keep this project on track. Giorgio Bertellini graciously read an earlier version, shared his own thoughts on the picturesque in North Americans' encounter with Italy, and shared with me the image that appears as illustration 4 in this paper. Giorgio's insights into transatlantic film exchange, production, and reception have long been an inspiration to me.

[2] I have chosen not to litter the page with recurring quotation marks around the many terms I seek to problematize in this analysis. I do on occasion, however, call attention to the ways in which those quotation marks have been used for the terms historically.

[3] On urban tourism, I've been influenced by Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915* (Berkeley, 2001), ch. 6, and Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, 2004). Although both Cocks and Koven, in quite different ways, refer to tension between safety and danger, I am more indebted to a recent discussion of the cultural dynamics currently linking middle-class white suburbanites and today's black ghetto youth; see Michael Stephens, "Safe Danger & Virtual Slumming: Gangsta Rap, Grand Theft Auto & Ghetto Tourism," *Popmatters*, June 17, 2005, <http://www.popmatters.com/columns/stephens/050617.shtml>.

[4] "A Global Geography of 'Little Italy': Italian Neighbourhoods in Comparative Perspective," *Modern Italy* 11 (Feb. 2006): 9-24.

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Constantly evolving, the associations of Little Italy with both pleasure and danger survived the end of the mass migrations from Italy. By tracing the invention, early diffusion, and changing meanings of the phrase Little Italy, this paper demonstrates the rich possibilities for linking the mobility of people (more typically the focus of social historians) to the mobility of ideas (more typically the concern of intellectual historians). How do ideas travel? Some are carried along with the people who invent or use them. Others travel through disembodied media—newspapers, filmed and photographed images, and most recently the internet. My short history of this simple phrase seeks to demonstrate how these modes of transmission might matter.

A history of the invention and use of a single phrase such as Little Italy immediately encounters two problems, one philosophical and one methodological. Hostile questioners usually wonder whether or not it matters how we label a phenomenon. Philosophers have written extensively on this issue, and no contribution from an historian is likely to add much. Here, I contend that the terms people apply to phenomena do matter. First, very few labels face no competition. Second, each alternative label for a phenomenon resonates with different associations. Finally, the meanings of terms change over time. Humans, not deep semantic structures or physiological hard wiring, made Little Italy the most popular among many labels for urban neighborhoods of immigrants from Italy. In considering Little Italy, its alternatives, and their differing resonances, we can see the inventions, representations, and constructions that have fascinated cultural historians and the human agency that captivated their predecessors in social history.

"Little Italy" rolls so easily off the tongue today that it is hard to imagine calling a neighborhood occupied by Italian immigrants anything else. Yet before 1880, there was no Little Italy along Mulberry Street or anywhere else in North America.[5] Once invented, the phrase seems to have captured something vital about English speakers' attitudes toward immigrants from Italy, for it spread rapidly through public discourse. Still, some were reluctant to use the phrase, which was persistently ensconced in quotation marks. Italian speakers and Italian Americans have maintained the longest-term ambivalence toward the phrase. And for many New Yorkers, Little Italy long meant one specific place, while for tourists it meant another.

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[5] Until very recently, the term found little use outside of the U.S. or in languages other than English. This, I hypothesized in an earlier article, pointed toward the origins of the phrase in English speakers' curious, and also curiously racialized, "Italo-phobia." See Gabaccia, "A Global Geography of 'Little Italy;'" Robert Harney, "Italophobia: English Speaking Malady," *Studi Emigrazione*, 22 (March, 1985): 6-43. Harney's article might be regarded as the first salvo in what has become a complex debate about the color and race of Italians, in Italy and in the wider world. See Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, eds., *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (New York, 2003).

The sudden availability of huge, searchable collections of digitized, online texts provides new alternatives to the methodologies painstakingly developed by etymologists and by teams of scholars analyzing the literary output of single authors.[6] With digitization, scholars can more easily identify and more effectively contextualize the appearance, use, and spatial or temporal diffusion of key words and phrases. Boolean searches (e.g., of immigr* and "x," where immigr* covers all variations of a root word and "x" is a refining term or a qualifier) facilitate analysis of webs of association—between and among words—that help to produce meaning.[7] Digitized newspapers, government documents, periodicals, books, library catalogues, and personal narratives document language use among diverse groups—from the urban and political elites of New York and Washington to scholars, African-Americans, feminists, and southerners.[8] Tellingly, and disturbingly, however, digitized texts written by immigrants in their native languages are scarce.[9] To explore the use of Little Italy or its Italian equivalent, *piccola Italia*, in the immigrant press still requires hours at the microfilm reader, searching for terminological needles in textual haystacks. I am still searching—unsuccessfully—for an early use of *piccola Italia* or Little Italy in the Italian-languge press of the early twentieth century.

For this paper, I have depended heavily on digitized full-page images of the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* and the Making of America collection of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century monographs and periodicals.[10] The online library catalogues of Harvard University (Hollis) and WorldCat gave access to scholarly and literary writings about Little Italy, while the World Wide Web provided evidence of contemporary use.

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[6] Thus the apparently frivolous "NoSweat Shakespeare" site can now proclaim with authority that Shakespeare used 17,677 words, <http://www.nosweatshakespeare.com/shakespeare_words_phrases.htm>.

[7] Although it is a visually ugly solution, I use * throughout this paper to signify root words subjected to Boolean searches.

[8] African-American newspapers are available through subscription from <http://www.accessible.com/>; for digitized southern publications, see <http://docsouth.unc.edu/>; for women's voices, cross-culturally, see <http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/html/help/about/about.html>. The Library of Congress, American Memory has a number of collections related to westward expansion, e.g. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/umhtml/>.

[9] See Alexander Street Press, North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries, and Oral Histories, <http://www.alexanderstreet.com/products/imld.htm>. All are in English. One of the few digitized texts in Italian is by Italian reformer Amy Bernardy, <http://pds.harvard.edu:8080/pdx/servlet/pds?op=f&id=4837114&n=8&s=4>.

[10] "Making of America" is: <http://www.hti.umich.edu/m/moagrp/> and <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/>. For two other important digitization projects, see: <http://www.bartleby.com/> and <http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page>.

Little Italy and Its Alternatives

The phrase Little Italy was invented in New York City sometime in the mid-1880s. It first appeared in the *New York Times* in its present-day meaning on October 21, 1886. Until then, at least in the *Times*'s pages, New Yorkers most often referred to their city's Italian "colony." Into the 1890s, many also wrote of the "Italian quarter." Other synonyms, such as Italian "district*," "settlement*," "neighborhood*," or "commun*," appeared more occasionally.[11] Only after 1900 did Little Italy replace Italian colony as the most frequently used label for an immigrant Italian residential cluster.

For New Yorkers, Little Italy was a very specific place. However it was not located along Mulberry Street but rather six miles to the north, in Harlem. In 1886, the first *Times* reporter to use the phrase felt he had to explain to readers that Little Italy was "the territory extending from One Hundred and Tenth to One Hundred and Twelfth street from First to Second Avenue." (Thereafter, the territory understood to be Little Italy expanded. By 1930, this Harlem Little Italy housed 89,000 immigrants and their children; it was the largest such district in the city.[12]) When describing that portion of lower Manhattan that is today known as Little Italy, *Times* journalists generally followed Jacob Riis in calling it Mulberry Bend, the Mulberry District, or simply the Bend. Like the *Times* reporters, Jacob Riis also consistently referred to Little Italy as located in Harlem.[13] Until 1900 *Times* reports on Mulberry Bend far outnumbered those on Little Italy. Most *Times* reports on Italian immigrants focused on one or both of these specifically named districts in

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[11] What is particularly noteworthy about the labeling of residential clusters of Italians in the *Times* is the insignificance of terms used so widely today. For example, references to Italian neighborhood(s) were extremely rare before 1900, and for the first decade of the twentieth century they appeared almost exclusively in real estate notices relating to the sale of residential properties. Similarly, the term popularized by the new social histories of immigrants in cities—commun*—was almost completely unknown before 1900 and rarely used between 1900 and 1920. References to the Italian commun* in the *Times* became common only in the late 1950s and 1960s.

[12] Gerald Meyer, "Italian Harlem: America's Largest and Most Italian Little Italy," <http://www.mibarrio.org/italian_harlem.htm>.

[13] See, e.g. Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives; Studies among the Tenements of New York* (New York, 1890), 25, 26, 48, 161; and *A Ten Year's War: an Account of the Battle with the Slum in New York* (Boston, 1900) and the slightly expanded version of this book titled *The Battle with the Slum* (New York, 1902), 110, 296, 308, 375. Four articles of Riis's appear as part of the "Making of America" digitized collection of journals; in all, references to Little Italy are to Harlem. For other New Yorkers' insistence on Little Italy's location in Harlem see *Report and Proceedings of the Senate Committee Appointed to Investigate the Police Department of the City of New York* (Albany, 1895), which discusses "policymakers" (roughly the equivalent of the later "numbers racket") in the uptown Little Italy, and Franklin Laurence, "The Italian in America: What He Has Been, What He Shall Be," *Catholic World*, April 1900, 74, 76. Surprisingly, in other writings in this periodical, it is difficult to ascertain the physical locations of the Little Italy under discussion, e.g., E. Lyell Earle, "Character Studies in New York's Foreign Quarters," *Catholic World,* March 1899, 786-88.

[14] George Pozzetta, "The Mulberry District of New York City: The Years before World

Manhattan but occasionally continued to label both—along with other, similar neighborhoods—as Italian colonies or Italian quarters.

Inventing Little Italy

The timing and location of Little Italy's invention itself deserves explanation. Because of its size and its large immigrant populations, writes George Pozzetta, New York City "has long held a special place in the history of Italians in America."[14] Similarly, the late nineteenth century represents a special moment in the history of immigration and American culture.[15] I need not rehearse for readers of this journal Americans' oft-studied discovery of the immigrant poor; here I concentrate on the context and cultural consequences of this discovery for the invention of Little Italy.

It is probably significant that the reporters who first used the phrase in the *New York Times* placed Little Italy in quotation marks and continued to do so well into the twentieth century. Those quotation marks suggest many things—an unfamiliar phrase, an ironic phrase, or one learned or borrowed from someone whose judgments the writer suspects or disapproves. Alas, *Times* journalists never revealed their sources or their reasons for ensconcing Harlem's Little Italy in quotation marks. But it is striking that other labels for Italian neighborhoods did not receive the same treatment.[16]

Even without digitized Italian-language newspapers, we can be confident that Italian speakers did not bring with them the phrase Little Italy (*piccola Italia*) or introduce it to New Yorkers. While Americans of the nineteenth century did sometimes refer disparagingly to the new nation of Italy as little, especially when commenting on international relations,[17] Italian writers more often aspired to national greatness. Educated Italians of the nineteenth century consistently described every immigrant settlement as a *colonia italiana*;[18] this was not a specific neighborhood but the entire Italian

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War One" in *Little Italies in North America*, ed. Robert Harney and Vincenza J. Scarpaci (Toronto, 1981), 7-40, cited material, 7.

[15] John Higham, "The Re-Orientation of American Culture in the 1890s" in *The Origins of Modern Consciousness*, ed. John Weiss (Detroit, 1965).

[16] One possible exception here was "the Bend," which did often appear encased in quotes, while Mulberry Bend more often appeared without them, at least in the *New York Times*.

[17] Describing political cartoons in the British comic sheet *Puck*, a *Times* foreign correspondent described "burly France threatening to assault poor Little Italy, while Prussia taunts him with the advice to 'take one of his size.'" Writing in the *Times* from the Vienna Exposition of 1872, U.S. Commissioner Thomas B. Van Buren regretted that the U.S. had not yet filled its allotted space at a time when even "little Italy has appropriated $2,000,000" to a display of its machinery, inventions, and products. Littleness mattered also to Jacob Riis, who in 1889 in his first reference to Little Italy, referred to the Harlem neighborhood as "a miniature copy of the Bend." "Foreign Notes," *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1867; "The Vienna Exposition," *New York Times*, Aug 19, 1872, p. 8; "How the Other Half Lives," 660. See also, "Little Japan," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 27, 1895.

[18] Donna Gabaccia, Dirk Hoerder, and Adam Walascek, "Emigration and Nation-Building

population of a city. American journalists borrowed the term but fixed it in space; they did not find a need to translate the Italian dream of a *piu grande Italia* (a larger Italy) emerging from the demographic imperialism represented by its foreign colonies of immigrants.[19] It is probably also significant that the term Little Italy appears nowhere in the one available digitized collection of immigrant personal narratives.[20]

We must look among outsiders for the inventor of Little Italy. Visitors to New York's poor, immigrant neighborhoods were many, of course. However, before 1880 their urban portraits rarely pasted national labels on Manhattan's street map. Political wards and street addresses located the poor spatially in the early 1850s writings of the Reverend E.H. Chapin; this evangelizing friendly visitor also identified "Five Points" as an already-infamous Sixth Ward residence for impoverished Irish and German immigrants.[21] Only once, in 1854, did a reporter for the *Times* describe a "Little Germany" in lower Manhattan.[22] Twenty years later, Charles Loring Brace again dryly noted the addresses of his Children's Aid Society institutions but adopted more colorful terminology to describe residential areas, such as a shantytown of Irish immigrants on "Dutch Hill" in the East 40s, "Misery Row" on the West Side (19th street), and a colony of young Italian organ grinders in the Five Points.[23] For *Times* reporters, too, residential clusters of Germans were occasionally noted as either Germantown—as in Philadelphia—or—in New York—Dutchtown. In 1880 a first reference to a Manhattan Chinatown also appeared in the *Times*.[24] As immigrants from Italy arrived,

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during the Mass Migrations from Europe," in *The Politics of Emigration*, ed. Nancy Green and Francois Weil (forthcoming).

[19] Mark Choate, "From Territorial to Ethnographic Colonies and Back Again: The Politics of Italian Expansion, 1890-1912," *Modern Italy*, 8 (2003): 65-75.

[20] North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries, and Oral Histories. Nor can the exact phrase "Little Italy" be found in the Library of Congress digitized *American Life Histories: Manuscripts* from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940 A rare Italian voice, indirectly present in digitized texts, is that of a realtor who provided data for the *Report on the Cost of Living for an Unskilled Laborer's Family in New York City* (New York, 1915), 34. In the data he provided, he distinguished between the Mulberry Bend District and Little Italy (ensconced in quotes in the original).

[21] E.H. Chapin, *Humanity in the City* (New York, 1854). A recent scholarly study is Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points: The Nineteenth-Century New York City Neighborhood that Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum* (New York. 2001).

[22] *New York Times*. May 24, 1854, p. 8. Like Italians, furthermore, German speakers of that era who discussed Kleindeutschland—"little Germany"—referred to the entire "German-American metropolis" in New York, not to a specific neighborhood. Stanley Nadel, *Kleindeutschland: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana, 1990). For a single reference to "Little Ireland," see "The Wild Irishman," *New York Times*, Dec 21, 1879, p. 4. Significantly, the reporter noted that while many believed "a Little Ireland is a dangerous spot for a foreigner," in fact the drunken, wild threats of the Irish "signify nothing."

[23] Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Years' Work among Them* (New York, 1872).

[24] See the series of articles, March 4-6, 1880, that began with "Miscellaneous City News:

no New Yorker would insist he or she lived in Italytown, although journalists, including Riis, did remark on the development of a Jewtown that they quickly re-labelled "the Ghetto."[25] It is striking, too, that journalists almost never ensconced Chinatown or Dutchtown in quotation marks; such labels, apparently, seemed completely natural, and journalists felt comfortable using them.

Not so with Little Italy. After 1880, police reporters such as Jacob Riis replaced evangelists as the most important writers about New York's poor. Like all journalists, the foreign-born Riis was a visitor to the immigrant slums, commuting from Brooklyn to police headquarters along Elizabeth, Mulberry, and later MacDougal Streets.[26] Harlem was far from Riis's usual beat, and he seems to have visited there only occasionally. Riis, along with less well-known reporters for the new mass-marketed and sensational newspapers emerging in the 1870s and 1880s, added many quirky new details to the poverty maps of Lower Manhattan—writing, for example, about "Poverty Gap," "Bandit's Roost," "Hell's Kitchen," the "Bloody Sixth," and the "Pig Market." In his writings, Riis labeled the western portions of the old Fourteenth Ward—home to today's Mulberry Street Little Italy—an "old Africa." (Brace, too, had reported the district to be occupied by "coloreds.") But the neighborhood Riis knew best was "the Bend," or "Mulberry Bend"—a curved section of Mulberry Street, south of Canal Street.[27]

Police reporters' informants were the most likely source of a newly nationalized geography of New York neighborhoods. But who were they? Since they were rarely named, cited, or quoted, it is probable they were working-class people—English-speaking Irish or second-generation Germans living in Lower Manhattan. Humor and irony characterized many of the place names they passed along to Riis and other reporters, most noticeably in the labeling of a Jewish market area (where no pork was sold) as the Pig Market. If, as the *Times* reporters' use of quotation marks suggests, the first references to Little Italy were also ironic, then some plebeian

Chinamen Coming East; The Car-Load which Arrived in this City Yesterday," *New York Times*, March 4, 1880. p. 8. The article located Chinatown along the lower part of Mott Street. *Times* reporters had been referring to Chinatowns in California for several decades.

[25] Before 1900, New Yorkers had experimented with many other names for the neighborhood, including *Judaea: Illustrated New York: the Metropolis of Today* (New York, 1888), 45. The first *Times* use of the term ghetto for the Jewish Lower East Side appeared in Milton Reigenstein, "Pictures of the Ghetto," *New York Times*, November 14, 1897, p. IWM3. The spread of the terms Little Italy and ghetto followed somewhat similar paths: Hutchin Hapgood's *Spirit of the Ghetto* (1902) appeared six years after his older brother, Norman Hapgood had written a short story (discussed below) set in Little Italy.

[26] Riis's account of his own life is *The Making of an American* (New York, 1901); see the digitized version: <http://www.bartleby.com/207/>.

[27] On Jewtown, "old Africa," "Mulberry Bend," and other neighborhood designators, see Riis's first mainstream publication, "How the Other Half Lives—Studies among the Tenements," *Scribner's Magazine*, Dec. 1889.

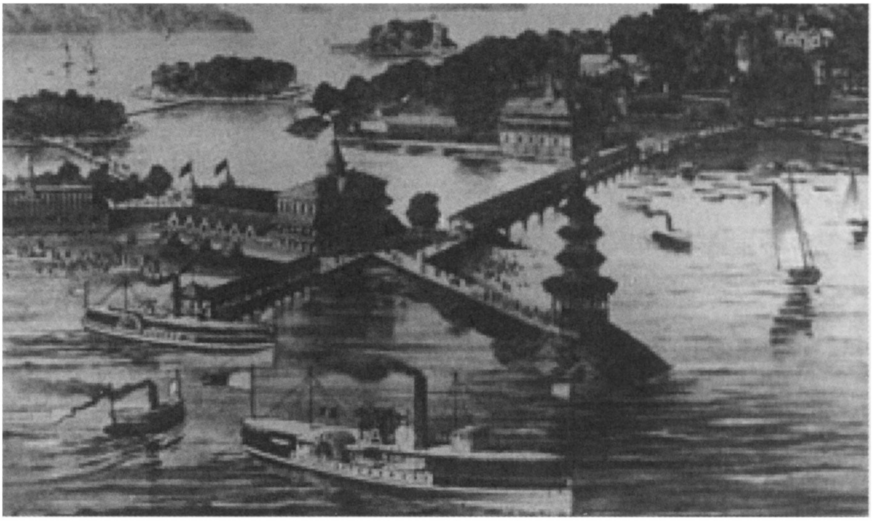

Illustration 1: Glen Island Resort, 1880s. Source: http://www.nrpl.org/photos.html. The website of the New Rochelle Public Library, Glen Island, Index # GI 9.

humorist of lower Manhattan may well have been suggesting that for slummers—a recently discovered and hotly discussed new group of visitors to impoverished neighborhoods— this distant Harlem destination might prove as popular as a new Little Germany that was attracting considerable popular attention, and visitors, in the early 1880s.

From Little Germany to Little Italy

This Little Germany was not a crowded immigrant neighborhood in Manhattan, but an attraction on Glen Island in suburban New Rochelle. Opened in 1881 by John H. Starin, Harbor Master of New York, the resort enjoyed a flurry of summertime press coverage in the 1880s as Starin promoted boat excursions there. (See illustrations 1 and 2.) Starin intended Glen Island to offer a genteel alternative to the increasingly plebeian Coney Island.[28] After opening a Chinese Pagoda on Glen Island in 1881, Starin's Little Germany—which a *Times* reporter described as a "fantastic-looking structure, inclosed [sic] on three sides, and open on the others," with architecture "similar to the small inns in some parts of the Fatherland"—followed in 1882.[29] Little Germany soon offered excursionists a beer garden, a

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[28] Norman Brouwer, "Harbor Master," *South Seaport Museum Magazine*, <http://www.southstseaport.org/magazine/articles/1997a-02.shtm>. Coney Island was known for attracting "rough" (meaning working-class) visitors already in the 1870s; see "Summer Resorts," *New York Times*, May 10, 1873.

[29] The first article describing this Little Germany is "Glen Island and Rockaway: Large Crowds at Both Popular Resorts Yesterday," *New York Times*, July 3, 1882, p. 8. Reports continued throughout the summers of 1882 and 1883. A few also appeared in 1884. A long sequence then again accompanied the hot weather of summer 1886, just months before Little Italy made its first appearance in the *Times*.

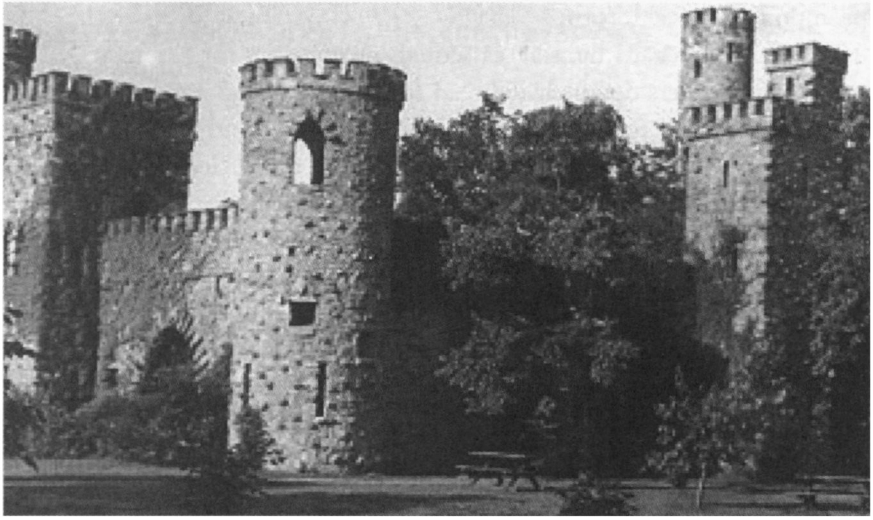

Illustration 2: "Little Germany," Castle in Beer Garden, circa 1900. Source: http://www.nrpl.org/photos.html. The website of the New Rochelle Public Library, Little Germany: Index # GI 16.

music pavilion, swings, and animal displays. Starin promised New Yorkers a chance to visit Europe on a hot summer day without leaving home.

In this context, it is indeed tempting to imagine some plebeian wag suggesting that Little Italy in Harlem could offer middle-class slummers something comparable. More than one author has pointed to the origins of American urban tourism in the nineteenth-century practice called slumming.[30] Slumming was very much a focus of New Yorkers' attentions in the early 1880s. *Times* reporters writing about slumming at first insisted that British and Romanian "slumming societies" were shipping Europe's human refuse to the U.S.[31] They reported visits by European royalty—possibly in search of immoral entertainment—to the poorer districts of lower Manhattan. They lampooned philanthropists for having caught "a fashionable London mania," perhaps from Atlantic theatrical players such as actress Lillie Langtry.[32] Throughout the second half of the 1880s, *Times* reporters even poked fun at ministers and reform-minded women who borrowed from the British this "new way of killing time."[33] Condescending *Times* journalists quickly lost their battle against the reformers, however; by 1889 Jacob Riis's stories and photographs about slum life were in mainstream periodicals with middle-class readerships.[34] Riis was not killing time frivolously but promoting political reform.

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[30] Koven, *Slumming.*

[31] Editorial, *New York Times,* July 24, 1884, p. 4.

[32] "Slumming in this Town: A Fashionable London Mania Reaches New York, Slumming Parties to be the Rage this Winter—Good Districts to Visit—Mrs. Langtry as a Slummer," *New York Times* Sept. 14, 1884, p. 4.

[33] "Undesirable Immigration," *New York Times,* June 21, 1884, p. 4.

[34] Riis expanded his 1889 *Scribner's* article into *How the Other Half Lives.* In the previous

Riis did not regard himself as writing guidebooks for slummers.[35] But some New Yorkers definitely did read *How the Other Half Lives* as providing them with a guide for their visits to immigrant neighborhoods.[36] From the moment of its invention, then, Little Italy (like Little Germany) seems to have been what sociologist Jere Krase—student of Italian neighborhoods around the world—later termed an "ethnic theme park."[37]

Safe Danger in Little Italy

Harlem's Little Italy evoked sharp reactions from its visitors. Its attraction included its foreignness and the drama, spectacle, and hint of risk it promised. In 1899, a disgruntled reader (who signed himself only J.F.F.) wrote the editors of the *New York Times*, noting that he had read in Riis of "the picturesequeness and humor to be found" in New York's "Italian and Jewish colonies." But J.F.F. complained that such writers looked "upon actualities through a rose-colored glass." "Instead of humor," he continued peevishly, "I found—dirt; instead of picturesqueness—squalor." After finding naked street children there, J.F.F. declared Harlem an "octopus of sensuality."[38]

While J.F.F. feared sensuality, others feared the crime, filth, and disease of immigrant neighborhoods. Boolean searches in a digitized text like the *Times* easily link and quantify discussions of crime (e.g. the words mafia, maffia, "black hand," or murder) or disease (e.g. words such as typhoid, cholera, smallpox, filth, or unsanitary) with Little Italy and with the many alternative designations labeling Italian neighborhoods. In the *New York Times*, all labels for Italian immigrant neighborhoods bore at least some burden of negative associations. New Yorkers read particularly often about filth and disease in articles about Mulberry Bend and about crime in Italian "communities."

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half-decade, the *New York Times* had been drawing on Riis's reporting without ever naming him as their source, e.g., "Masquerading as a Priest, a Tramp Steals a Surplice and Strolls through 'the Bend,'" *New York Times*, Dec. 26, 1884, p. 5; "Cleansing Foul Places: A Sanitary Visit to 'the Bend' in Mulberry Street," *New York Times*, July 8, 1885, p. 8; "Raid on Stale Beer Dives," *New York Times*, Nov. 14, 1885. p. 2 and many more. A direct reference to Riis did not appear until "Her Point of View" described the exclusion of women from a Brooklyn YMCA Lecture Series that included him as a speaker, *New York Times*, Oct. 21, 1894, p. 18.

[35] Nevertheless, one can scarcely ignore as an influence Riis's life-long interest in entertainment and his realization in the 1880s that the education of Americans about the poor would require novel, attention-grabbing strategies. Riis frequently gave lantern shows already in the 1870s, and his decision to include photographs of slum dwellers may have held the key to his success in broadening his audience for *How the Other Half Lives* and for his early *Century* and *Scribner's* articles about slum life.

[36] J.F.F., "Romance vs. Reality," *New York Times*, May 23, 1899. p. 6.

[37] Jerome Krase, "Seeing Ethnic Succession in Little Italy: Change despite Resistance," *Modern Italy* 11 (Feb. 2006): 79-95. Even more focused on ethnic theme parks is Krase's online publication, "The Present/Futures of Little Italies," <http://www.brooklynsoc.org/semiotics/v1n1/index.html>.

[38] J.F.F., "Romance vs. Reality," p. 6.

Table 1: References to Crime and Unsanitary Conditions in *Times* Reports, 1851-1919

Italian	Crime	Unsanitary	Total	N Cases
Colon*	10%	5%	15%	874
Little Italy	5%	6%	11%	651
Quarter*	9%	7%	16%	421
Mulberry Bend	2%	17%	19%	315
Settlement*	5%	6%	11%	115
District*	7%	4%	11%	122
Communi*	29%	9%	38%	38
Neighborhood*	3%	11%	14%	37

My analysis suggests that Little Italy numbered among several labels (including also settlement and district) that were least burdened by negative associations. A surprising number of the early reports in the *Times* about Harlem's Little Italy were straightforwardly sympathetic, for example, an 1888 article headlined "Poor Sons of Sunny Italy: How They Are Swindled at Home and Abroad" that also reported Harlem's 8,000 immigrants to be "of the better class."[39] And although Little Italy was from the very moment of its birth a crime scene, its crimes were those of drama and passion among immigrants. A screaming headline (ordinarily rare in the staid *Times*) had midwifed the phrase Little Italy in 1886: "Shot Down by His Wife: The Domestic Troubles of an Italian Ended with a Revolver." Initially, at least, Little Italy reportage was less about black-hand or mafia threats than of violent and tragic ends to romantic tales of runaway or betrayed wives, husbands, and lovers. It is hard not to conclude that Little Italy was not only an ethnic theme park but what Seth Koven (in a study of slumming in London) termed a "sexed space,"[40] inhabited by immigrants who were a bit frightening in their passionate search for love and revenge. News reports such as the 1907 "Slashed to Death in a Jealous Fury" read more like opera bouffe plots, to be put to music by Verdi or Puccini, than like prequels to *The Godfather.*

Jacob Riis's most widely read foray into Harlem points as well toward spectacle as a positive lure to urban tourists. In a lavishly illustrated article about the street festivals of Italian neighborhoods, published in the *Century* in 1899, Riis provided one of the earliest images of the now-famous yearly festival of the Madonna del Carmine, celebrated on 115th Street.[41] (See illustration 3.) Repeatedly, *Times* reporters visited Harlem in the 1890s and 1900s

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[39] *New York Times,* July 27, 1888, p. 8.

[40] Koven, *Slumming,* 273.

[41] Robert Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*

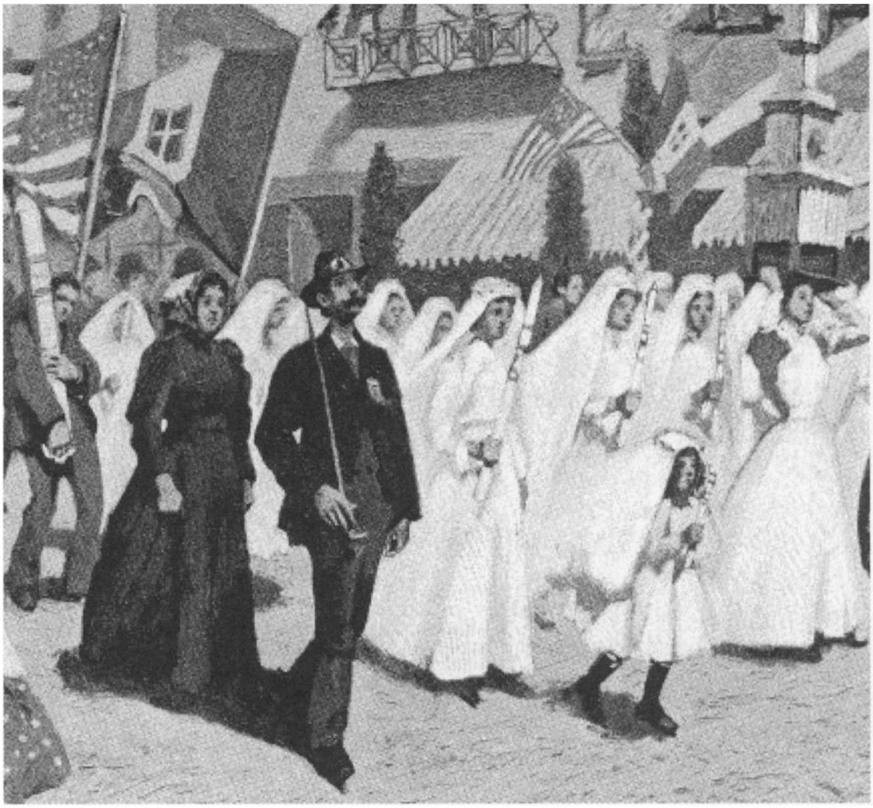

Illustration 3: The Festival of Madonna del Carmine in Little Italy. Source: Jacob Riis, "Feast-Days in Little Italy," *The Century*, August 1899, 491-500.

for this midsummer festa. Particularly exciting was a 1905 report headlined, "Italian Worshippers in Panic from Fire, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parade Scatters in Confusion; Men Trample the Women; Excitement Finally Quelled when a Drowning Starts another Outbreak—Then a Second Fire Scare."[42]

Increasingly, journalists suggested that a visit to Little Italy could replace an expensive excursion abroad. Already in 1891 a Rand McNally writer, Ernest Ingersoll, had enticed tourists to Mulberry Street by telling them, "It is hard to believe this is not Naples."[43] After 1900, the *Times*, too, offered occasional illustrated guides to immigrant neighborhoods as tourist destinations. Curiously absent from all these reports was the enthusiastic association with food that would only much later become prominent among Little Italy's attractions. As in the earliest days of slumming, part of the appeal of immigrant neighborhoods remained their poverty.[44] Journalists—whether

(New Haven, 1985).

[42] *New York Times*, July 18, 1905, p. 2.

[43] Ernest Ingersoll, *Handy Guide to New York*, 11th ed., cited in Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 197.

[44] "Another Cosmopolitan Colony Has Planted Itself in Eastern Harlem Within the Last

initially sympathetic or not to urban reform—had initiated what Catherine Cocks has called the "aestheticization of poverty" and the romanticization of ethnic minorities.[45]

Invented in a specific time, place and context—the confluence of slumming, a new summer resort, and the discovery of the poor by reform-minded journalists in the 1880s—Little Italy was modestly associated with crime and squalor and with romance, drama, and spectacle. By exploring the spread of the term Little Italy beyond the place of its invention in New York we can also recognize the many vehicles—but especially newspaper networks, reformers' writings, and literature and drama—that carried indirect knowledge of Little Italy to ever greater numbers in North America and beyond. We can also begin to see how the location but not the main associations of Little Italy changed as the phrase traveled. Ultimately, even New Yorkers found they had to respond to the changing meaning Little Italy acquired as it traveled and then returned with tourists seeking to visit it in their home city.

Relocating Little Italy

The travel of Little Italy through journalists' networks was almost instantaneous, as was a change in its location. Already in mid-1887, Brooklynite William E.S. Fales filed a report with the *Los Angeles Times*, "About Little Italy."[46] This elusive sometime-doctor, sometime-lawyer, theosophist, poet, journalist, and politician had in the same year just published a book about Brooklyn's policemen.[47] It is unclear whether Fales was a slummer who had actually visited Little Italy or merely a reader of New York police reporting, writing the article while in California, perhaps even while en route to Asia, where he became vice-consul in Amoy in 1890. The 1887 *Los Angeles Times* article certainly reveals Fales as someone who had read and borrowed liberally, and carelessly, from Jacob Riis's newspaper reports issuing from Police Headquarters near Mulberry Street.

Fales—unlike Riis and other New Yorkers of the 1880s and 1890s—introduced California readers to a Little Italy that was located along Mulberry Street. Fales's Little Italy was otherwise a familiar one—both enticing and dangerous—when seen, as Fales put it, "by daylight and gaslight."[48] After he returned from Amoy in 1893, Fales and the journalist

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Few Years—Its Population Already is 250,000 Foreigners—a New Field of Usefulness of Social Workers," *New York Times*, Oct. 9, 1904, p. 8.

[45] Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 174, 195.

[46] William E.S. Fales, "About Little Italy," *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 1887.

[47] For sketchy details of Fales's life, see his obituary, *New York Times*, May 18, 1906. His 1887 book is *Brooklyn's Guardians: A Record of the Faithful and Heroic Men who Preserve the Peace in the City of Homes* (Brooklyn, 1887).

[48] Not the most original of reporters, Fales borrowed this phrase from the police memoir

Margherita Arlina Hamm (who may have been his wife) more often wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* and elsewhere about Chinese themes.[49] Still, Fales may also have been the author of an 1894 *Los Angeles Times* article, "Some Coming Chefs" (describing a visit to the lower Manhattan Mott Street Industrial School) and an article extracting Jacob Riis's 1894 *Century* article, "The Making of Thieves."[50]

In any case, after Fales's initial article, and especially in the decade between 1894 and 1904, reporters in Los Angeles filed articles that described crimes in Little Italies located in many American cities, including Kansas City, Denver, Chicago, Buffalo, and even, eventually, their home town.[51] They also occasionally reported on the Little Italy of New York's Harlem, although many such articles came from the Associated Press.[52] Associated with these scattered Little Italies were familiar themes; on the West Coast, too, readers learned of immigrant crime and passion and viewed pictures of religious pageantry.[53]

Articles about Little Italy quickly appeared in other American newspapers in the 1880s. The first *Chicago Tribune* article about a Little Italy discussed Arab street merchants who had taken up residence (and were believed to be operating as thieves) in an Italian district in Providence, Rhode Island. A subsequent article referred to New York's Little Italy in lower Manhattan.[54] Articles about Little Italy appearing in Chicago and Washington newspapers contained interesting clues to how the term spread. A *Washington Post* reporter insisted that while the general public still referred to a local Italian

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of Edward H. Savage, *Police Records and Recollections: Or, Boston by Daylight and Gaslight* (Boston, 1873).

[49] The only one of Fales's books to receive some review and the only one with a professional printer named on its publication pages was *Bits of Broken China* (New York, 1902). The book easily falls into the genre, discussed below, of "fictional slumming," with ironic stories (all of them decidedly sympathetic to the Chinese characters) such as "Poor Doc High," "The Red Mogul," The Temptation of Li Li," and "A Mott Street Incident." The book confirms that Fales was quite familiar with San Francisco's Chinatown as well as with southern China. Hamm was by far the more successful journalist of the two, an editor of New York's *The Journalist* (1894-99), and the author of a wide variety of books about U.S. expansion in the Pacific and Caribbean (including one collection of valuable early photographs) and studies of eminent American and New York families. Hamm also authored a work of fictional slumming in the same year as *Bits of Broken China*, although by then she was married to John Robert MacMahon; it was called *Ghetto Silhouettes* (New York, 1902). References to Hamm's writings about China are in *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1893, Mar. 8, 1896, and Nov. 19, 1899. The *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* 25, 147 (March 1985): 332, describes Hamm in its "Chit Chat" column of literary gossip as the wife of Fales but her *Who's Who* entry makes no note of the marriage to Fales but reports a marriage to John Robert MacMahon. Fales died in 1906, Hamm in 1907.

[50] *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1894; Nov. 8, 1894.

[51] E.g. Dec. 29, 1894; Jan. 28, 1901; Dec. 15, 1901; Sept. 19, 1902; Mar. 14, 1904.

[52] E.g. June 24, 1902.

[53] See for example, "High Day of Little Italy; Children in White Greet Their Busy Bishop; Picturesque Street Scenes in Los Angeles; Mission is Dedicated—Cross, Banners and Hymns," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 14, 1904, p. 10.

district as "Purdy's Court," police and newspaper reporters had begun calling it Little Italy.[55] And when a Chicago reporter who wrote about "the Italy of Chicago" (or, as he also put it, "an Italy in the city by the Lake") just once used the term Little Italy (to refer to Polk Street), his article prompted a rebuttal from a citizen of Italian origin, Charles Triolo, who complained that the reporter had "seen fit to name it" Little Italy.[56]

While traveling swiftly through press networks, Little Italy changed its location with equal swiftness. Urban tourists arriving from California, Chicago, or Washington to visit New York may well have expected to find Little Italy along Mulberry Street as early as the 1890s. In 1894, a guide to New York published in Chicago did locate Little Italy along Mulberry Street.[57] Soon fiction swelled the ranks of tourists expecting to find pleasure and danger in Little Italy—whether in Harlem or along Mulberry Street.

Fictional Slumming

By the 1890s Little Italy was also traveling indirectly to middle-class readers—fictional slummers of a sort[58]—who enjoyed novels and plays about the new immigrants in part because they had either visited Italy or dreamed of doing so. As Seth Koven noted of London, slumming blurred distinctions between factual reporting and imaginative fiction, and British evangelicals tended to "circulate narratives" between both types of publications.[59] Charles Loring Brace in the 1870s clearly understood literary genres when he described "a romantic incident in an industrial school" or referred in his writings to "scenes" among the poor.[60] But circulation between reform and fiction increased significantly after 1890 with the publication of romanticized portraits of individual slum dwellers. Across that decade, Jacob Riis shifted his attention away from social surveys toward stories of individual "characters"; Riis also increasingly gave these characters voice, usually in his rendition of their English-language street vernacular.[61] Soon Riis found it necessary to defend the factual nature of his work: he insisted he was still a

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[54] *Chicago Tribune*, February 26, 1888; August 7, 1888.

[55] *Washington Post*, November 17, 1889.

[56] Vance Thompson, "From Rome to Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, February 23, 1890; "In Defense of Italians," *Chicago Tribune*, March 2, 1890.

[57] See James W. Shepp, *Shepp's New York City Illustrated: Scene and Story in the Metropolis of the Western World: How Two Million People Live and Die, Work and Play, Eat and Sleep, Govern Themselves and Break the Laws, Win Fortunes and Lose Them, and So Build and Maintain the New York of To-day* (Chicago, 1894), which is typical in locating "Little Italy," "African Quarters," and the "Chinese Quarters" adjacent in Lower Manhattan.

[58] Here, I adapt the use of Michael Stephens, "Safe Danger & Virtual Slumming."

[59] Koven, *Slumming*, 95.

[60] Brace, *The Dangerous Classes*, 160-65.

[61] For example, in his *Children of the Tenements* (New York, 1903), which, like most of his later publications, was lavishly illustrated. See also Riis, *Neighbors: Life Stories of the Other Half* (New York, 1914).

reporter with no interest in writing what he called an East Side novel.[62]

Others were quite interested in that task. Even before the 1890s the slums had become what literature scholar Walter Fuller Taylor called "a fresh literary field" for realist, sentimentalist, and picturesque writers alike.[63] Much of the writing about Little Italy showcased the cultural knowledge of Italy that English-speaking authors had acquired as travelers to Europe; this experience, they seemed to believe, gave them privileged knowledge of Little Italy's residents, whether in New York or in other American cities. For those Americans who had traveled abroad, taking the "grand tour" of the nineteenth century, Italy itself had promised picturesque scenes (first rural, later urban) and encounters with safe danger (viewing ruins, for example, amidst threats that brigands or pickpockets lurked nearby).[64] For some tourists, furthermore, southern Italy was already a "sexed space."[65] And for most tourists, Italy stopped at Naples: Napoli soon acquired an anglicized name, as its southerly neighbors, Palermo and Agrigento did not. Americans would view Little Italy through the lens of their Neapolitan tourist experiences.[66]

Thus, already in 1869, William Dean Howells, who had served as American consul in Venice (and who wrote several books on Italian topics) offered a story of immigrant life in his *Atlantic Monthly* story, "Doorstep Acquaintance." His was a highly idiosyncratic coupling of "little" with "Italy," however.[67] Writing of an offer of food to an Italian beggar woman in Boston, Howells describes how they "made a little Italy together." More typical of the flood of fiction that would soon follow, Norman Hapgood's 1896 "The Promotion of Cadet Norcross" instead described a slummer attracted to a Salvation Army lieutenant working in Harlem's Little Italy. Searching for her there, the man is distracted by a protest defending Maria Barbara (a real-life Italian immigrant charged with the murder of her lover) and by a dinner of "macaroni and California wine" in a local restaurant.[68]

[62] See Riis's introduction to *Children of the Tenements*.

[63] Walter Fuller Taylor, *The Economic Novel in America* (Chapel Hill, 1942), 79. A fuller recent treatment is Carrie Tirado Bramen, "The Urban Picturesque and the Spectacle of Americanization," *American Quarterly* 52 (2000): 444-77.

[64] For a recent treatment of "grand tours" to southern Italy, see Tommaso Astarita, *Between Salt Water and Holy Water: A History of Southern Italy* (New York, 2005). Thanks to Giorgio Bertellini for reminding of the rich literature on European and American travel in Italy's south and for the importance of the picturesque in relationship to ethnography in shaping American visions of Italy and its inhabitants.

[65] Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean* (New York, 1993).

[66] It is striking that authors of guidebooks and fiction alike consistently referred to the resemblance of Little Italies to Naples—the only significant tourist destination in southern Italy—and not to Palermo. In many cities, such as Kansas City, there were probably more Sicilians than Neapolitans in Little Italy.

[67] W.D. Howells, "Doorstep Acquaintance," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 1869, 484-93; reprinted in *Suburban Sketches* (Boston, 1887).

[68] Norman Hapgood, "The Promotion of Cadet Norcross," *The New England Magazine*,

A string of opportunities for fictional slumming followed. Written by Horace B. Fry, the play "Little Italy" was produced first in 1898 in Chicago and then performed in 1902, 1904, and 1928 in New York (and in 1902 in Boston, too).[69] Starring the popular transatlantic star, Minnie Maddern Fiske, "Little Italy" was, in the estimation of its author, a "domestic tragedy" and "only one more of the short and simple annals of the poor," a phrase that could have been lifted from the writings of Riis. Fry set his play in Harlem's Little Italy, in "a sordid living room" on the fourth floor of a five-story tenement on Sixth Avenue. Fabio, a baker, has taken through an arranged marriage a second, younger wife, Giulia, whom he trusts to love and care for his daughter, Gioia. The third character in the play is Giulia's former lover, a street singer from Naples, Michele, played by Tyrone Power in the Chicago production. (The music for Little Italy was also subsequently published.[70]) Giulia's life obviously lacks romance; seeking it, she dies while escaping to join her lover. The play "Little Italy" appeared as a short curtain raiser for "Divorçons," a longer piece translated from the French of its author, Victorian Sardou, who appropriately had been the librettist for Puccini's opera, "Tosca." The sophisticated French, this coupling of plays suggested, resolved marital discords by divorcing; the occupants of Little Italy solved them with threats of stabbing and a melodramatic death on a tenement dumbwaiter.

"Little Italy" tells us more about its writer and its middle-class audiences than about life in Harlem's Little Italy, where there was no Sixth Avenue. The stolid, business-oriented and Americanizing husband of Giulia is the play's least sympathetic character; its plot instead celebrates as Italian an alternative set of life-affirming but risky values—love, passion, and the need for beauty (represented by Michele's music). Giulia insists she does not want to become an American and reminds her baker husband that even Americans—like the playwright, Fry?—preferred Italy. Certainly, Fry showed off his knowledge of the national language by beginning the play with dialogue in stilted tourist Italian. Of course, audiences did not hear in "Little Italy" the Neapolitan dialect actually spoken by immigrants, since Fry did not know it.

The celebration of romance, beauty, and passion, with its risk of violence, the foregrounding of American authors' familiarity with the Italian language, and the blurring of fact and fiction characterized Little Italy nov-

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Dec. 1896, 502-08. The author would later become editor of *Collier's Magazine*, where he supported both fiction and factual journalism that shared the goal of "muck-raking." As noted above, he was the older brother of Hutchins Hapgood, who helped to popularize the use of the term ghetto for the Jewish Lower East Side.

[69] Horace B. Fry, *Little Italy, A Tragedy in One Act* (New York, 1902).

[70] Fry, *Little Italy* [Incidental music from the tragedy] (New York, 1899).

els, too. These included the miserably written and social Darwinist *Last Lady of Mulberry* by Henry Wilton Thomas, who portrayed bumbling "dago" characters, speaking a dialect (in English) presumably meant to resemble Shakespeare's plebeians.[71] More sympathetic and complexly plotted was Mabel G. Foster's *The Heart of the Doctor: A Story of the Italian Quarter*, set in Boston.[72] Foster used the street vernacular of both Italian immigrants and New England characters; her Italian was better than Fry's. But her book, too, suggested that immigrants' values were attractive to Americans. In *The Heart of the Doctor*, the successful uniting of separated immigrant lovers foreshadows and motivates a similar reunion among frustrated New England lovers—the doctor and his beloved, a young woman who, against her father's wishes, hopes to work with him serving immigrants as a nurse in his North End clinic.

While Riis refused to write a Lower East Side novel, at least one urban reformer leaped–albeit under a pseudonym–at the chance to transform East Harlem on the Upper East Side into a fictional slum in *Heart of the Stranger, A Story of Little Italy*, published in 1908.[73] Anna C. Ruddy, writing as Christian McLeod, was a Canadian who knew Harlem at least as thoroughly as Riis knew the residents of Mulberry Bend: since the 1890s she had worked in the East Harlem Garden settlement house.[74] Much like Riis's *How the Other Half Lives, Heart of the Stranger* is full of photographs of street children. The children portrayed in Ruddy's book as growing up in, around, and in rebellion against the settlement house are even more wooden than Riis's characters, and they symbolize rather crudely the moral lessons the author hoped readers would absorb from her story. Ruddy's boy characters, in particular, are all forced by plot devices to choose between starkly contrasted good or evil acts; their choices then have predictable moral effects on their subsequent lives. One potentially virtuous boy, for example, becomes—through a particularly contrived plot device—an anarchist, who promptly blows himself up.[75] Like *Heart of the Doctor, Heart of the Stranger* offered readers parallel romances developing between two young settlement workers, on the one hand, and two reformed street urchins, on the other. The Italian slum children not only grow up to become Protestants and to marry but also to bear a child whom they give the name of their fallen former friend, the anarchist, thus redeeming the hope they earlier had for him by endowing their baby with it.

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[71] Henry Wilton Thomas, *The Last Lady of Mulberry: A Story of Italian New York* (New York, 1900). Thomas also published in pulp fiction magazines on both sides of the Atlantic.

[72] Mabel G. Foster, *The Heart of the Doctor—A Story of the Italian Quarter* (Boston, 1902).

[73] Anna C. Ruddy, *Heart of the Stranger, A Story of Little Italy* (New York, 1908).

[74] Ruddy sometimes wrote letters to the *Times*, calling attention to the problems of immigrant children growing up in Harlem, and she wrote a novel for boys, *From Tenderfoot to Scout* (Toronto, 1911). The Garden settlement in Harlem, where Ruddy worked, was well known for encouraging children's love of nature and flowers in its backyard garden, a theme that appeared in almost all of her fictional writings. Leonard Covello, Italian-American educator, high school principal, and Harlem activist, was among the young Italian boys who visited the settlement.: <http://www2.hsp.org/collections/balch%20manuscript_guide/html/covello.html>.

[75] Ruddy, *Heart of the Stranger.*

Popularizing Little Italy

While fictional slumming entwined the themes of travel, passion, violence, reform, romance, and pathos for middle-class readers, indirect knowledge of Little Italy soon also spread through other media to wider audiences. Filmgoers and readers of "dime novels" had never and, in all likelihood, never would make the grand tour of Europe, ending in Naples. One example will have to suffice to illustrate how such media translated anew journalists' reports of romantic crimes—in this case a 1904 kidnapping—into fictional stories located in Little Italy.

On June 4, 1904, the *New York Times* reported on a kidnap several days earlier of the thirteen-year-old Maria Basso, identified as the "Belle of Little Italy," who was reported to have been grabbed by two men riding in a carriage. The kidnapping had supposedly occurred on 114th Street and First Avenue, in Harlem, and the *Times* story focused on Maria's parents' initial reluctance to report the crime to the police and their receipt of a letter threatening vengeance upon them if they did so. The article was copied almost verbatim from a similar report that had appeared in the mass-circulation Pulitzer newspaper, the *World*. Both articles suggested that Maria's parents feared vengeance by the Black Hand criminals who had kidnapped their daughter. According to a terse report in the *Times* on the following day, police found Maria in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and returned her to her parents. The *World*, by contrast, reported more fully that Maria was an unhappy stepdaughter who had been arrested in Bridgeport after running away with her lover, Ralph Marrone. Marrone had abandoned her there with a false story—that he was returning to New York to get his wedding clothes—after failing to marry her the day before. Marrone, too, was under arrest at the time of the *World* report. In short: there had been no kidnapping.

No matter. Two years later, Wallace McCutcheon directed a short, seven-minute, film, "The Black Hand," that told the story of the Black Hand threatening a butcher named Angelo with the kidnap of his beautiful daughter, Maria. The American Mutoscope and Biograph Company produced the film; Biograph, as it was later known, employed D.W. Griffith beginning in 1908, and it subsequently re-located to California, where Griffith also pro-

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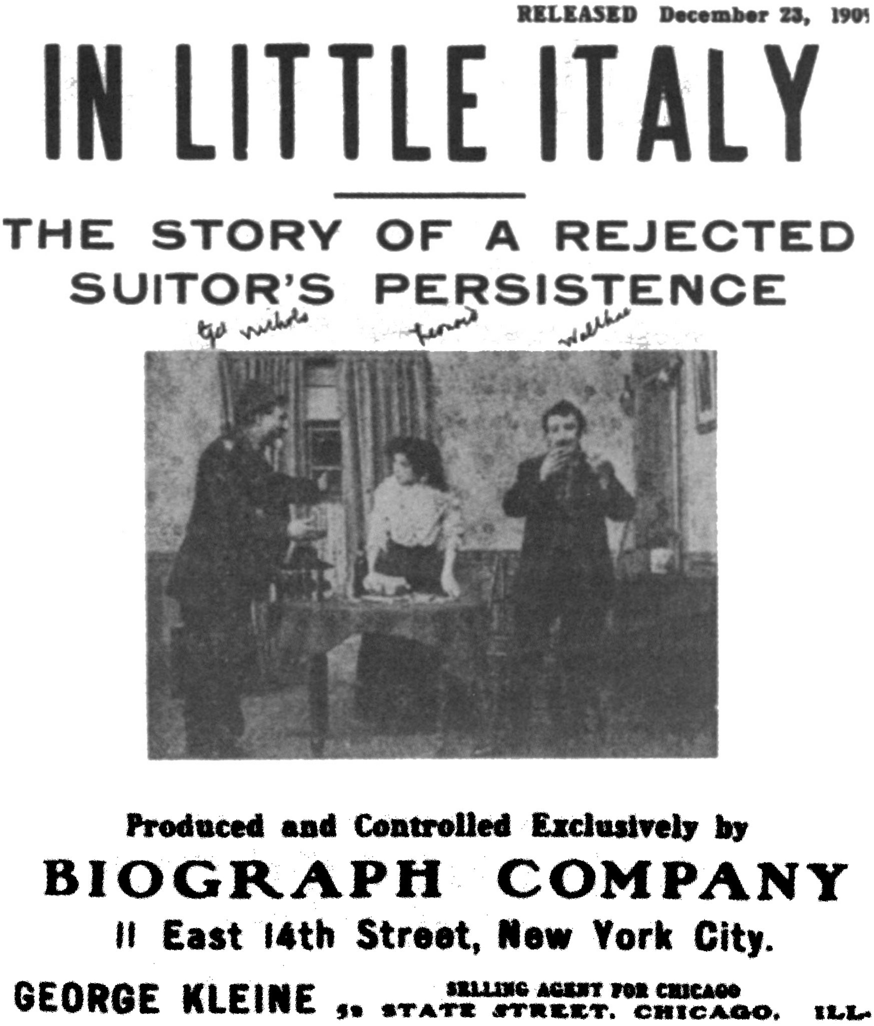
[76] My account of the film does not differ significantly from the one offered online by Rosanne De Luca Braun, "Made in Hollywood: Italian Stereotypes in the Movies"



RELEASED December 23, 190

IN LITTLE ITALY

THE STORY OF A REJECTED SUITOR'S PERSISTENCE

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Illustration 4: An Early "Little Italy" on Film. Source: Biograph *Bulletins*, 1908-1912 (New York, 1973): 153.

duced a number of films with slum themes.[76] It is doubtful that McCutcheon filmed in Harlem's Little Italy: the company's studio was located on 14th Street; the headquarters of the Black Hand gang was said to resemble Sixth Avenue in Lower Manhattan. (See Illustration 4.[77])

"The Black Hand's" association of Little Italy with crime and romance

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<http://www.osia.org/public/commission/only_a_movie.asp>. In a personal communication, Bertellini has called my attention to Griffith's "In Little Italy" (1909) and "The Musketeers of Pig Alley" (1912), which feature ethnographic excursions into the immigrant neighborhoods and gangster dens of Italian New York. See also Eileen Bowser, ed., *Biograph Bulletins, 1908-1912* (New York, 1973).

[77] Additional illustrations from "The Black Hand" from the Library of Congress collection, including a frame of the blackmail note, and a discussion of the film, can be found in

was predictable but it encouraged new fictional and dramatic elaborations on the theme; they can be traced in the surging numbers of *Los Angeles Times* reviews of film and stage productions focusing on a Little Italy almost universally portrayed as located in southern Manhattan. Los Angeles readers had already been interested in the Chicago production of Fry's "Little Italy" with Minnie Maddern Fiske.[78] Subsequent articles told of Little Italy dramas, including one with a barber character named Ravioli.[79] Once relocated to Hollywood, film production and distribution continued to assure that images of a lower Manhattan Little Italy traveled to viewers across the nation. These included a 1915 film "Sin," featuring Theda Bara in staged sets of Italy and Italian immigrant neighborhoods of New York and films produced in California but supposedly situated in New York's Lower East Side such as "The Italian," which starred George Beban as Beppo Donnetti, a former Venetian gondolier re-located to America.[80] Clearly, tourism appeared repeatedly in filmed versions of fictional slumming.

In New York, by contrast, the preference for Harlem's Little Italy as a site continued even in the fictional reworking of the Basso story. In the same year as the 1906 "Black Hand," a highly sentimental and picturesque short story about a Harlem kidnapping appeared in the *Sunday Magazine* of the *New York Times* as "A Story of Little Italy."[81] Its anonymous author transformed Basso's tale into one of pathetic humor: in it, a beautiful little Italian immigrant girl's love of flowers results in her unintentional transportation, asleep, to a suburban family and garden. With its jarring renditions of English street vernacular and tourist Italian and focus on flowers, the story bears the earmarks of authorship by Anna C. Ruddy.

The following year, readers of the juvenile dime novel series *Bowery Billy*, written by the self-proclaimed and probably pseudonymous detective John R. Conway and published between 1905 and 1907 by the Winner Library Company of New York, could enjoy yet another kidnapping story.[82] Its hero, Bowery Billy, is described on each illustrated cover as "an adventurous street Arab, whose career in the midst of the whirlpools and slums of a great city brings him into daily contact with mysteries waiting to be solved." While most of the Bowery Billy stories with immigrant themes took place in Lower Manhattan (see illustrations 5a-5d, which depict Billy's encounters

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Giorgio Bertellini, "Black Hands and White Hearts: Italian Immigrants as 'Urban Racial Types' in Early American Film Culture," *Urban History* 31 (2004): 375-99.

[78] See "At the Theaters," *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1899 and July 30, 1899.

[79] See, for example, "The Drama—Players, Playhoues, Gossip of the Stage," and "'Overnight' at the 'Maj.'" *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1907, pg. vii, and April 8, 1912, p. 115.

[80] On early filmed portraits of Italian immigrants, see Bertellini, "Italian Immigrants."

[81] "A Story of Little Italy," *New York Times*, Oct. 7, 1906, p. 3.

[82] Winner Library published in the same years and in much the same format the even more flamboyant Red Raven series. It featured tales of pirates and buccaneers.

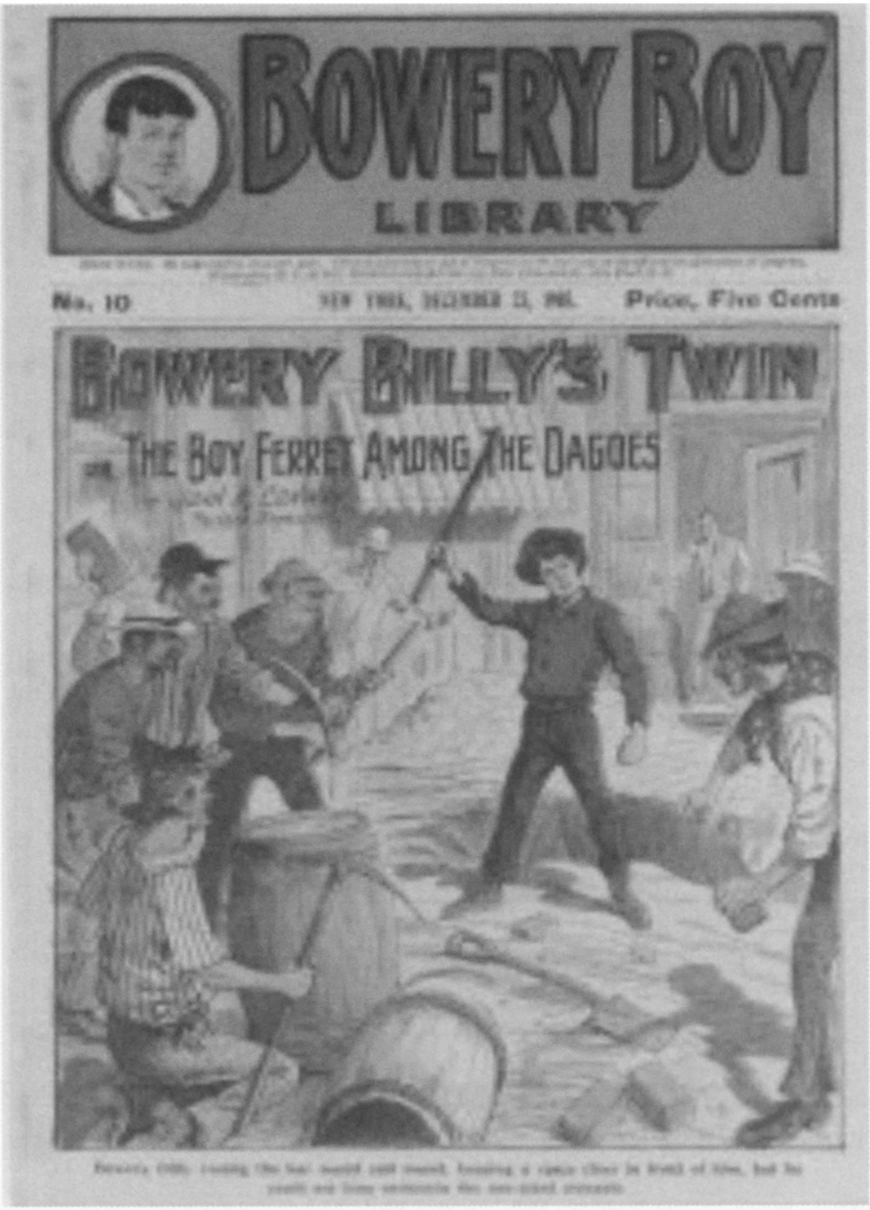
BOWERY BOY
LIBRARY
No. 10
Price, Five Cents
BOWERY BILLY'S TWIN
OR, THE BOY FERRET AMONG THE DAGOES

Illustration 5a: Little Italy in the Popular Press for Boys. *Bowery Billy's Twin, or, The Boy Ferret Among the Dagoes*, No. 10, December 23, 1905. Source: Syracuse University Library, Department of Special Collections, Street & Smith Dime Novel Cover Art Collection, Bowery Boy Library & Bowery Boy Weekly, Digital Edition, <http://libwww.syr.edu/digital/images/s/StreetAndSmith/BoweryBoyLibrary/>.

with Dagoes, Italian street musicians, and a beer brewer villain from Little Germany), Billy's efforts to save Bianca, the missing May Queen of Little Italy, took him instead to Harlem. The climax of this tale occurs during a May Day festival in Central Park when Billy prevents the kidnapping of

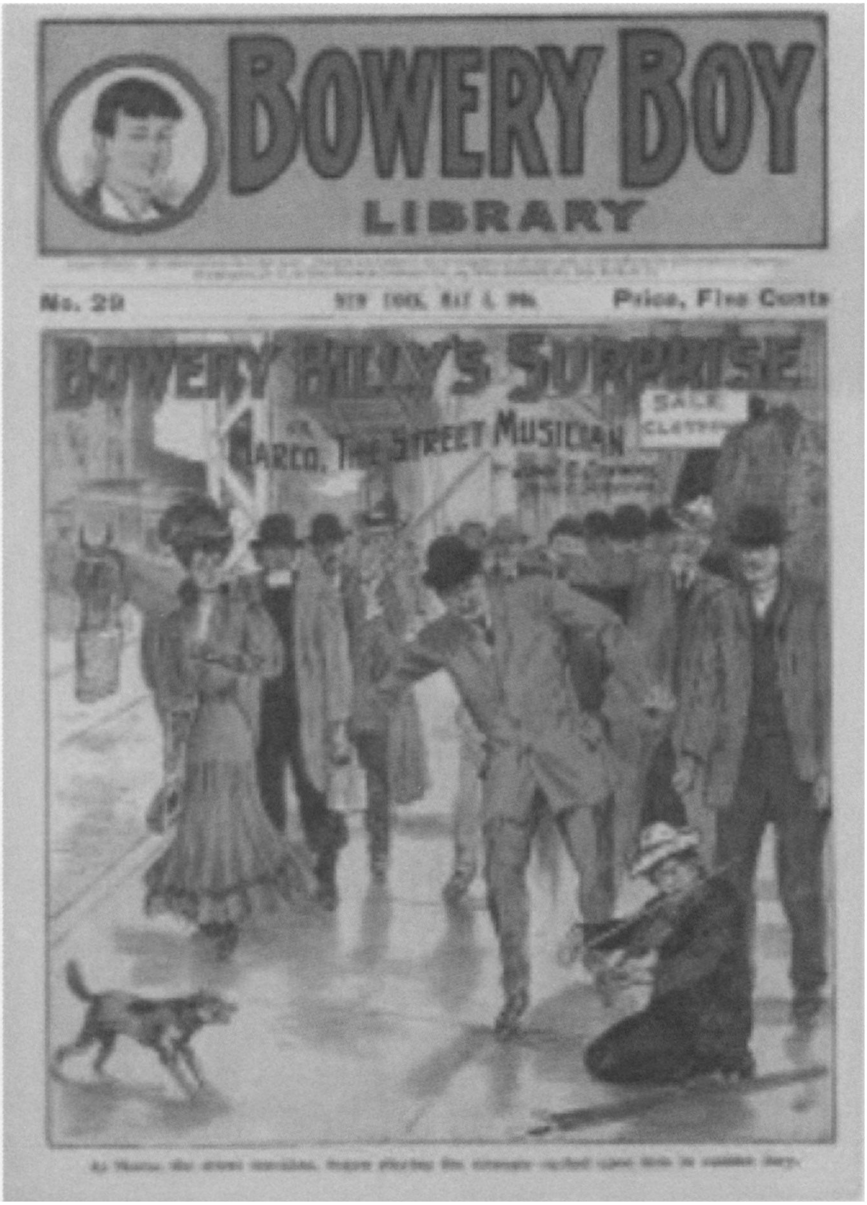
BOWERY BOY
LIBRARY
No. 29
Price, Five Cents
BOWERY BILLY'S SURPRISE
MARCO, THE STREET MUSICIAN
SALE
CLOTHING

Illustration 5b: *Bowery Billy's Surprise, or, Marco, the Street Musician.* No. 29, May 5, 1906. Source: Syracuse University Library, Department of Special Collections, Street & Smith Dime Novel Cover Art Collection, Bowery Boy Library & Bowery Boy Weekly, Digital Edition, <http://libwww.syr.edu/digital/images/s/ StreetAndSmith/BoweryBoyLibrary/>.

Bianca by her father's murderer. Unlike Maria Basso, the fictional Bianca is only eleven years old and she is an English speaker, purportedly because her father is of "the better classes," but more likely because Bowery Billy's author knew no Italian. While Bianca and the noble Billy speak perfect

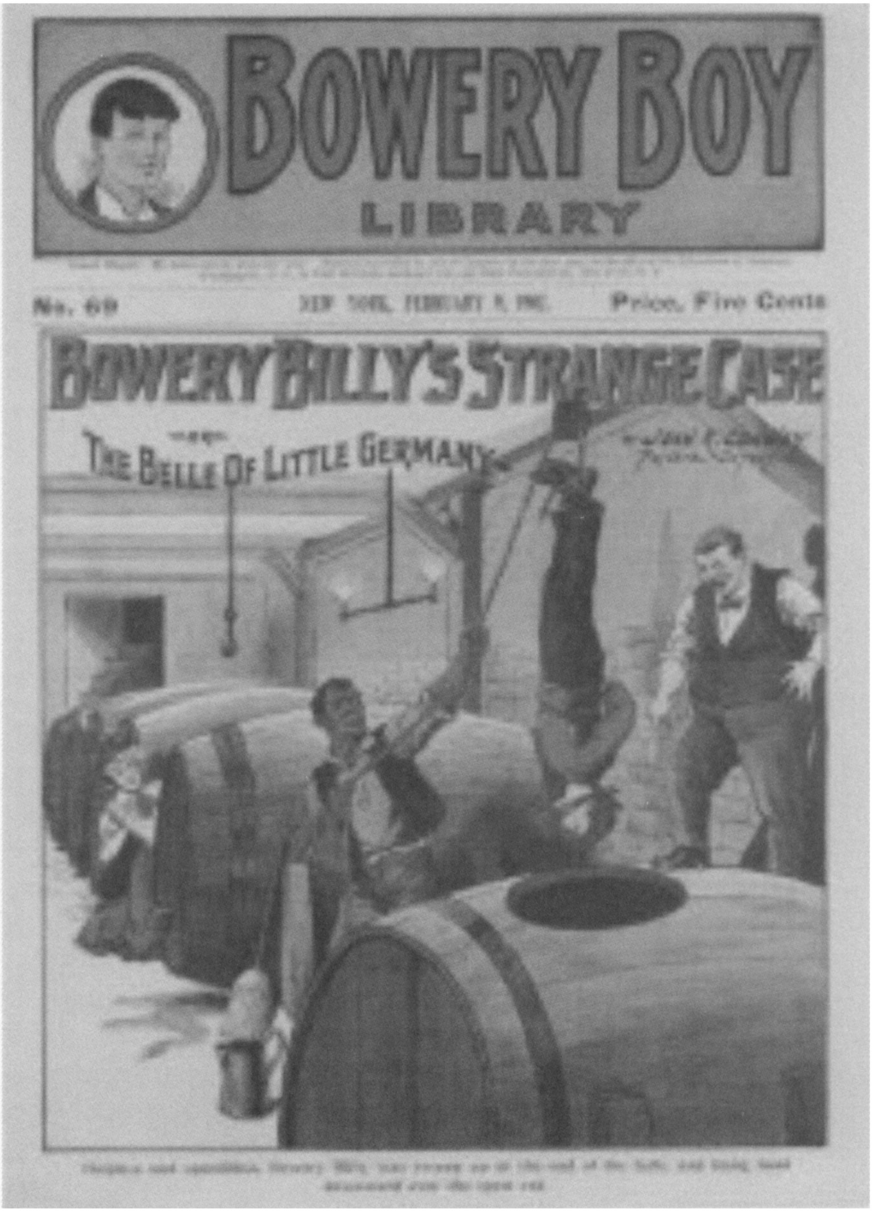
BOWERY BOY
LIBRARY
No. 69
NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 9, 1907.
Price, Five Cents
BOWERY BILLY'S STRANGE CASE
—OR—
THE BELLE OF LITTLE GERMANY

Illustration 5c: *Bowery Billy's Strange Case, or, The Belle of Little Germany.* No. 69. February 9, 1907. Source: Syracuse University Library, Department of Special Collections, Street & Smith Dime Novel Cover Art Collection, Bowery Boy Library & Bowery Boy Weekly, Digital Edition, <http://libwww.syr.edu/digital/images/s/StreetAndSmith/BoweryBoyLibrary/>.

English, New York street vernacular emerges from the mouth of Billy's sidekick who exclaims, "Green bananers" and "cheese it," as required.

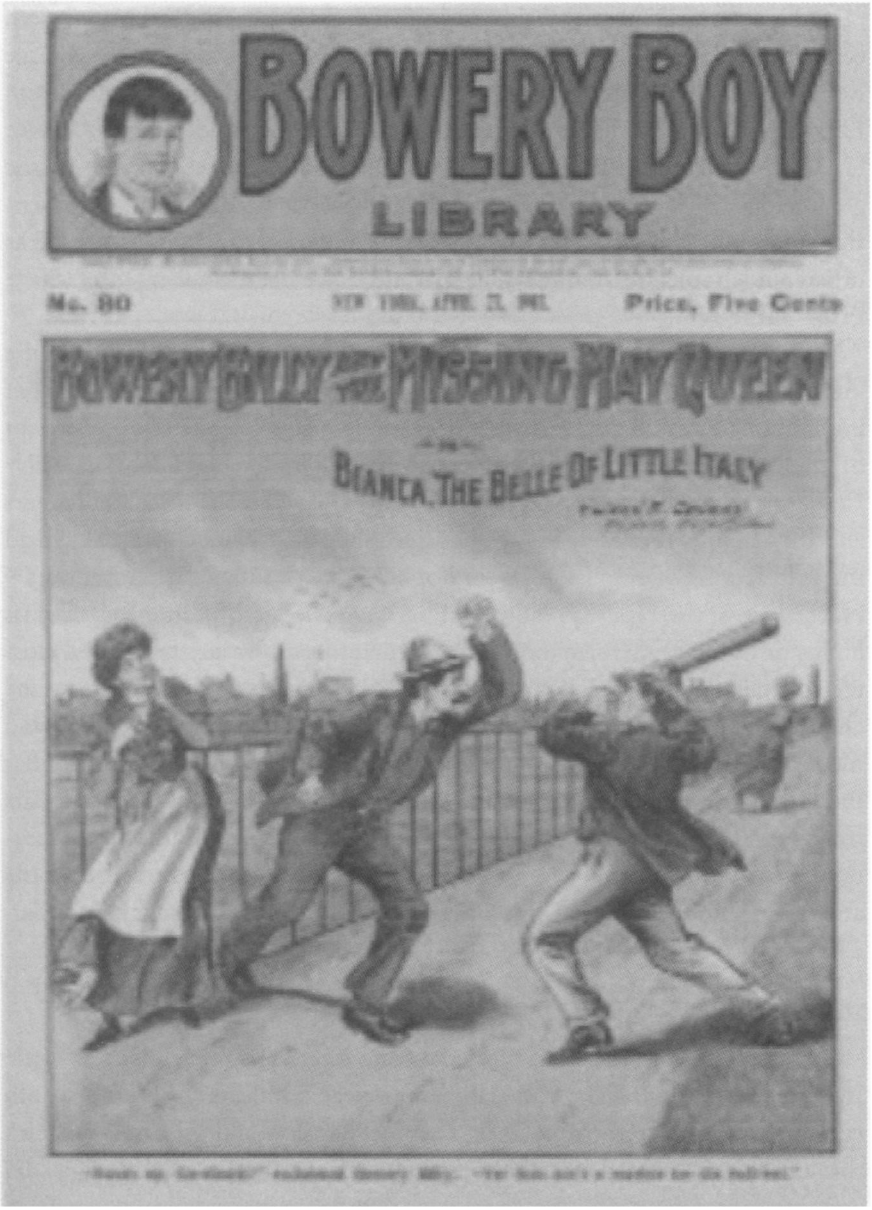
BOWERY BOY
LIBRARY
No. 80
NEW YORK, APRIL 27, 1907
Price, Five Cents
BOWERY BILLY AND THE MISSING MAY QUEEN
OR
BIANCA, THE BELLE OF LITTLE ITALY

Illustration 5d: *Bowery Billy and the Missing May Queen, or, Bianca, the Belle of Little Italy*, No. 80, April 27, 1907. Source: Syracuse University Library, Department of Special Collections, Street & Smith Dime Novel Cover Art Collection, Bowery Boy Library & Bowery Boy Weekly, Digital Edition, <http://libwww.syr.edu/digital/images/s/StreetAndSmith/BoweryBoyLibrary/>.

Whether for boy adventure-seekers, immigrant visitors to nickelodeons, middle-class readers of romantic fiction, or those following the course of urban investigation and reform in newspaper reports, Little Italy had become a familiar place by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. It had also begun its travel outside the U.S. as evidenced by George Robert Sims's 1906 description of an Italian immigrant neighborhood in *Living London*.[83] Sims may have learned of Little Italy from reading Riis, since his portrait of Little Italy, like Riis's 1899 article, focused on the artistic genius Italians exhibited in their saints' day street decorations and pageantry. But since Sims was also a playwright who wrote musical comedies as well as urban guidebooks for slummers, he may also have been familiar with Horace Fry's "Little Italy."

Historians of immigration and ethnicity will recognize in my account the important role of fiction and drama in popularizing representations of immigrants: even non-specialists, for example, often know that the concept of the American melting pot originated in a 1908 play by Israel Zangwill.[84] Certainly by 1920, the appeal of Little Italy's pleasurable and safe dangers and the feelings that Seth Koven has described as "shamed sympathy" and the "attractions of repulsion" were not limited to middle-class Americans.[85] Nevertheless, the rapid spread of indirect knowledge of Little Italy had its limits, as did its transformation into a general term for any residential cluster of Italians. Resistance to the use of the phrase and attention to the changing meaning of Little Italy are also worth locating in time, space, and medium. Here, instead of offering a conclusion, I urge readers to ponder the long legacy of Gilded Age and Progressive Era cultural developments for popular representations of immigrants. In doing so I raise more questions about the further evolution of Little Italy than I can satisfactorily answer in a paper focused, for obvious reasons, more narrowly on 1870-1920.

Resisting and Transforming Little Italy

The most important resistance to labeling Italian neighborhoods as Little Italies came from Italians and Italian Americans. Italians in the nineteenth century had preferred to focus on Italy's expansion and greatness—things that Little Italy seemed to call into question. Nevertheless a few Italians did attempt to transport the phrase to Italy after learning of it from American reformers or from fictional slum stories. Even before the successful Chicago production of Fry's "Little Italy," the Italian actress Eleonora Duse was said to be ready to perform "Little Italy" in Italy, although apparently she never did so.[86] We know, too, from Maddalena Tirabassi's studies, that Amy Bernardy, the highly educated social reformer and surveyor, who was the daughter of a mixed American/Italian marriage and who regularly visited and taught in the U.S., carried the term back to Italy where she published her 1906 study *Piccola Italia*. Bernady continued to use the phrase in most of her pre-war publications.[87]

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[83] George Robert Sims, *Living London: Its Work and its Play, its Humour and its Pathos, its Sights and its Scenes* (London, 1906). Since Sims, British scholars have felt free to adopt what had originated as an American label for immigrant neighborhoods, e.g. Sacheverell Sitwell, *Little Italy in London* (Brackely, UK, 1977); Anthony Rea, *Manchester's Little Italy: Memories of the Italian Colony of Ancoats* (Manchester, 1988); Ian Taylor, *European Ethnoscapes and Urban Re-Development: The Return of Little Italy in Twenty-First Century Manchester* (Salford, UK, 2000).

[84] Fewer know that Zangwill was a British Jew who did almost all his writing in London, where most of his plays were also performed—yet another story of what Daniel Rodgers has called *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

[85] Koven, *Slumming*, 4.

But her fellow Italians did not adopt *piccola Italia* simply because Bernardy introduced the phrase to them; when they used it, furthermore, it often meant something rather different than it did in the U.S.[88] Google "*piccola Italia*" today and you will find mainly the websites of restaurants in the U.S. or other places outside Italy, including ones in Poland, the Netherlands, Ireland, Thailand, and South Africa, along with a Yokahama company that offers Italian language lessons but decorates its webpage with shamrocks. True, a hotel and wellness center on the *Lago di Garda* does call itself *Piccola Italia*. But even in the present, Italians' positive convictions about the superiority of their urbane civilization limit their fondness for the term, which they seem to associate with the provincialism of rural life. Thus, in a February 2006 series of articles titled "*Piccola Italia*" in *La Repubblica*, Antonello Caporale's focus is not expatriate Italians but Italian small towns. The occupants of *piccola Italia* are bumpkins, not emigrants. *Piccola Italia* also emerges on the web in several Italian-language discussions of sports, notably football, that contrast how the Italian "dream team" was once thought of as little—but no more![89]

The same concerns echo through recent Italian-American discussions of the phrase. For many Italian Americans, too, the only part of the phrase Little Italy that seems to matter is that presumably demeaning word, "little."[90] In 2003, one sensitive diaspora nationalist named "Mike" chided

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[86] "Theatrical Gossip," *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1897, p. 7. As best as I can tell from Duse's most recent, and exhaustive, biography, no European production was mounted. See Helen Sheehy, *Eleonora Duse—Biography* (New York, 2003).

[87] Amy A. Bernardy, *Piccola Italia* (Firenze, 1906). See also Maddalena Tirabassi, ed., *Ripensare la patria grande; gli scritti di Amy Allemande Bernardy sulle migrazioni italiane (1900-1930)* (Isernia, 2005). For now, at least, a Harvard University digitization project is the closest thing we have in the digitized world to a source on immigrant Italians written in Italian: Amy A. Bernardy, *Italia randagia attraverso gli Stati Uniti* (Torino, 1913), <http://pds.harvard.edu:8080/pdx/servlet/pds?id=6098225>.

[88] Italian scholars of the U.S. have adopted American use when writing about *piccola Italia*. Anna Maria Martellone, *Una little Italy nell'Atene d'America; La comunit italiana di Boston dal 1880 al 1920* (Napoli, 1973). But they have also used the phrase to distinguish between smaller and larger understandings of Italian national territories in studies of irredentism; see for example Luciano Bianciardi, *Un volo e una canzone: D'Annunzio: l'eroe immoralista della piccola Italia* (Milano, 2002).

[89] <http://www.kataweb.it/sport/sportdetail.jsp?extra=true&idCategory=5661&idContent=1718490&serie>.

"Anna," who had suggested collecting information about U.S. Little Italies on the website italianamericans.com, with this response: "Anna: The term 'Little Italy' should be replaced by 'The Greater Italian Community.' Little is so demeaning, e.g. we do not see 'LITTLE IRELAND.'" More recently (August 10, 2004), "Tony" asked "Rob" to "please stop using the term 'Little Italy' for the Greater Italian American Community." Confused, Rob responded, "I'm sorry but I don't find the term Little Italy offensive at all. It describes a small area where Italians/Italian Americans live. What a better way to describe an area. I know when I hear the term it makes me want to visit it."[91]

Resistance to describing immigrant settlements in Argentina and France as Little Italies may have somewhat different roots. Both countries have been reluctant to view immigrants or their descendants as forming or reproducing distinctive ethnic groups. Both nations have contrasted their successful assimilation or amalgamation of immigrants into a unified nation to the cultural diversity and hyphenated identities of English-speaking countries of immigrants, such as the U.S., Canada, and Australia.[92] Use of *petite Italie* seems to have emerged first in Canada and then belatedly to have found some acceptance in France.[93] It is probably no accident that French-language conferences and publications on *la petite Italie* have begun to appear only as the French come to terms with their nation's failure to assimilate its post-colonial migrants from North Africa. It is an acknowledgment—and perhaps for many French-speakers a more positive one—of cultural persistence among a less threatening but also sizeable group of former immigrants.

Perhaps because of its early association with popular culture, Little Italy did not quickly find acceptance among American scholars, either, even when writing about Italian immigrants and their urban neighborhoods. At least until World War I, scholarly studies more often discussed Italian quarters or colonies than Little Italy. Isolated scholarly use can however be found in a

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[90] For a suggestive early analyses of Little Italy by Italian-American intellectuals, see Robert Viscusi, "Making Italy Little," in *Social Pluralism and Literary History*, ed. Francesco Loriggio (Toronto, 1996), 61-90; Fred L. Gardaphe, *Leaving Little Italy: Essaying Italian American Culture* (Albany, 2004).

[91] <http://www.italianamericans.com/messages/Feb2004-Sept2004/3979.html>.

[92] Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Italy's Transnational Migrations and the Immigrant Paradigm of American History" in "Special Issue on Transnational History," *Journal of American History* 86 (Dec. 1999): 1115-34.

[93] French-speaking scholarship certainly suggests Quebec as the connector between Canadian and French discussions of *la petite Italie*. Bruno Ramirez, *Le premiers Italiens de Montréal: l'origine de la Petite Italie du Québec* (Montréal, 1984). See also Carmela Maltone, *Aroldo Buttarelli, Une petite Italie" à Blanquefort du Gers: Histoire et Mémoire, 1924-1960* (Talence, FR, 1993). More recently a September 2006 conference, held in Paris, "Les Petites Italies dans le Monde," organized by Marie-Claude Blanc-Chaleard and the Spring 2005 conference, "Petites Italies dan l'Europe du Nord-Ouest," organized by Judith Rainhorn, suggest the expanding acceptance and use of the phrase.

1906 discussion of Chicago's Little Italy by Edward Steiner, a professor of applied Christianity and devotee of Tolstoy,[94] and in a fascinating and underappreciated Columbia sociology dissertation, based on the study of a single, multiethnic Harlem city block by the African-American founder of social studies, the Hampton Institute's Thomas Jesse Jones.[95] Chicagoan I.L. Nascher located Little Italy along Mulberry Bend in his early sociological study, while a 1912 dissertation on Little Italy focused on Baltimore,[96] and a sociological study of Little Italy published in 1915 made Kansas City its focus.[97] New York-oriented scholarly publications, by contrast, such as a study of the cost of living in the city from 1915 and a study of Italian girls by Dorothy Reed, continued to locate Little Italy in Harlem.[98]

Widespread scholarly adoption of Little Italy by historians and other American scholars came much later, beginning in the 1970s.[99] And even then, one senses scholarly reservations—perhaps because historians so respect their primary sources or perhaps because so many writers about urban and Italian immigrant life in the 1970s were themselves Italian Americans. In his important study of the Italian immigrants of Lower Manhattan, Pozzetta modified Jacob Riis somewhat by calling the territory he studied the Mulberry District.[100] Pozzetta emphasized that contemporaries had called the area by many names, including "New Italy," "The Bend," or "the Bowery Colony." Strikingly, Pozzetta never once referred to the Mulberry District as Little Italy, even though he published his study in a volume called *Little Italies in North America*. And on this point, he had plenty of company. Only the editors of the 1981 volume, Robert F. Harney and J. Vincenza Scarpaci, called the neighborhoods they studied—in Toronto and in Baltimore—Little Italies. Other authors referred instead to Italian settlements or communities—in Philadelphia, St. Louis, Montreal—or even to the local Italian heritage, e.g. in Tampa, Florida. For his title, Gary Mormino borrowed the label most used by locals for St. Louis's Little Italy—"the Hill." Oddly, in a book on Little Italies, few references to specific neighborhoods called Little Italy can be found.

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[94] Edward A. Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant* (New York, 1906), 264, 271.

[95] Thomas Jesse Jones, *The Sociology of a New York City Block* (New York, 1904).

[96] Francesco Guglielmi, *The Italian Methodist Mission in the Little Italy of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1912).

[97] Caroline Virginia Greer, "The Americanization of the Children of the People of Little Italy in Kansas City, Missouri (A study of social conditions and social problems of Kansas City's Little Italy—taking, insofar as possible, the viewpoint of the Italian Child)" (M.A. thesis, University of Kansas, 1915).

[98] *Report on the Cost of Living*, 34; Dorothy Reed, *Leisure Time of Girls in a Little Italy* (Portland, 1932).

[99] See Martellone, *Una little Italy nell'Atene d'America*.

[100] Pozzetta's Mulberry District was bounded by Worth Street to the south, East Houston to the north, the Bowery to the east and Broadway to west; it includes all of today's much-geographically reduced Little Italy.

Still, one does find scholars in several fields adopting the phrase in the 1970s.[101] And use by both Italian and Italian-American scholars in history and literature continues to our own times.[102] It nevertheless seems worth noting that even those Italian[103] and Italian American novelists[104] who avoid labeling the scene of their fiction as Little Italy find themselves catalogued under the subject heading of "Little Italy (New York, N.Y.)–Fiction." The English-speaking American mainstream has naturalized use of the term to a far greater degree than Italians, Italian Americans, non-North Americans, and scholars. And for many years, Americans outside New York continued to use the phrase in fundamentally different ways than did the New Yorkers who had invented it.

New Yorkers' Little Italy

Most interesting of the questions about Little Italy's travels are perhaps ones that need to be posed about New Yorkers' reactions to and participation in the relocation of Little Italy—which seems to have occurred first and most extensively in the minds of those outside the city—to Mulberry Street. React New Yorkers did, however—if only slowly and mainly in the years after 1900. Surprisingly New Yorkers writing guidebooks were only slightly more responsive to national usage than were journalists writing for the *Times*.[105] Only in 1909 did John Charles Van Dyke's *The New New York: A Commentary on the Place and the People* ignore Harlem's Little Italy and discuss a Mulberry Street Little Italy, a trend that then, however, persisted until the upper Manhattan district completely disappeared as a destination for tourists seeking Italian life.[106] The geographic ease with which tourists could view the "sights" in three spatially adjacent immigrant communities in Lower Manhattan—Chinatown, the Ghetto, and Mulberry Street's Little Italy—may have encouraged this development, which is especially apparent in guidebooks written by New Yorkers in the 1920s, for example, Konrad Bercovici's *Around the World in New York*.[107] Guidebook author Stephen Graham even personalized the spatial connection when he insisted that Mott Street was "not content with staging Little Italy" but continued on to become Chinatown.[108] The fact that "uptown" in the 1920s was becoming known to excursionists in search of African-American culture almost certainly reinforced this trend. But guidebook writer James Huneker had offered a somewhat different explanation in 1915 when he insisted that the "old division of Little Italy, new Jerusalem, Bohemia" no longer held true because Italians and other immigrants were now located everywhere throughout the city.[109]

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[101] For example, Eugene Joseph Dionne, "Little Italy Lost; the Breakdown of Italian Hegemony in East Harlem" (Honors Thesis, Harvard University, 1973), listed in Hollis, the online catalogue of Harvard University; Gilbert Sandler, *The Neighborhood: The Story of Baltimore's Little Italy* (Baltimore, 1974); Albert S. Alissi, *Boys in Little Italy: A Comparison of their Individual Value Orientations, Family Patterns, and Peer Group Associations* (San Francisco, 1978). The final study focuses on Cleveland.

[102] Historians' focus on Little Italies in a variety of American cities again increased in the 1990s. See, for example, Richard N. Juliani, *Building Little Italy: Philadelphia's Italians before Mass Migration* (University Park, PA, 1998); Michael Immerso, *Newark's Little Italy: The Vanished First Ward* (New Brunswick, 1997); Joseph W. Sullivan, *Marxists, Militants & Macaroni: The I.W.W. in Providence's Little Italy* (Kingston, RI, 2000); Emelise Aleandri, *Little Italy* (Charleston, SC, 2002). For literature, see Gardaphe, *Leaving Little Italy*; Martino Marazzi, *Misteri di Little Italy: storie e testi della letteratura italoamericana* (Milano, 2001).

[103] Melania G. Mazzucco, *Vita: A Novel*, trans. Virginia Jewiss (New York, 2005).

[104] See, for example, the work of Louisa Ermelino: *The Black Madonna* (New York, 2001) and *The Sisters Mallone: Una Storia di Famiglia* (New York, 2002). Ermelino's first book did feature Little Italy in its title: *Joey Dee Gets Wise: A Novel of Little Italy* (New York, 1991).

[105] Compare *Illustrated New York*—which contrasted the districts "known as the 'tony' or 'swell' region" with "Little 'Italy,' 'Germany,' 'China,' 'Africa,' 'Judaea," but referred to the area around the Five Points as "Italy," in pages 45 and 47—to Frank Moss, *The American Metropologis, from Knickerbocker Days to the Present Time: New York City Life in All its Various Phases* (New York, 1897), which sharply distinguishes the "Italian quarters" on Mott Street and Little Italy in Harlem, in pages 28-32.

Occasional references to a Little Italy along Mulberry Street had commenced even earlier. Viola Roseboro, an editor of *McClure's Magazine*, provided an early description of slumming in a Little Italy along Mulberry Street already in 1888,[110] but such early use at the *Times* was limited to a single mention in 1891—predictably about two brothers from the Bend fighting over a woman's affections.[111] A year later, a *Times* reporter suggested that both lower and upper Manhattan districts had recently been christened as Little Italy.[112] While rarely referring to a Little Italy outside the New York area, as reporters for the *Los Angeles Times* more often did, reporters for the *New York Times* alluded in 1900 to a Little Italy in Brooklyn[113] and in nearby Westchester County, where its residents—workers on the Croton aqueduct—were on strike.[114] In 1901 reports of a Jersey City Little Italy appeared in the *Times*, and in 1902 one finds reports of a Bronx Little Italy, formerly known as Frog Hollow.[115] Already in 1906, Police Commissioner William McAdoo—surely an important personage for the police reformers who had familiarized the nation with popular terminology for New York's neighborhoods—was quite clear in identifying Little Italy along Mulberry Street; he located it between the Ghetto and Chinatown, more or less as writers of guidebooks did.[116] Nevertheless, *Times* reporters continued for another three decades to distinguish fairly consistently between the Italians of the Mulberry District and of Little Italy in Harlem.[117] In the pages of the *New York Times*, references to Harlem's Little Italy outnumbered references to Mulberry's Little Italy many times over until the 1940s. And only in the 1960s did the focus on a Mulberry Little Italy attain the same prominence in *Times* reporting that Harlem had in the early years of the century.[118]

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[106] John Charles Van Dyke, *The New New York: A Commentary on the Place and the People* (New York, 1909), 162, 239.

[107] Konrad Bercovici, *Around the World in New York* (New York, 1924); see also Ben Jehudah Lubschez, *Manhattan, The Magical Island, One Hundred and Eight Pictures of Manhattan* (New York, 1927).

[108] Stephen Graham, *New York Nights* (New York, 1927), 167.

[109] James Huneker, *New Cosmopolis, A Book of Images: Intimate New York* (New York, 1915). Huneker's book is noteworthy in visually comparing New York images to those of prewar European cities.

[110] Viola Roseboro, "The Italians of New York," *The Cosmopolitan*, January 1888, 396-408.

[111] "A Sample of Fraternal Hatred: It Came Little Short of Causing a Murder in 'Little Italy,'" *New York Times*, May 5, 1891.

[112] "New Shrine for Italians: They Leave Washington Square and Garibaldi for Columbus," *New York Times*, Nov. 28, 1892.

[113] "Seen in the Shops," *New York Times*, Dec.16, 1900. The item described was a child's toy goat that supposedly resembled the ones raised in the Little Italies of Harlem and Brooklyn, according to the author. Somewhat later, in 1904 a "Little Italy Neighborhood Association" began providing settlement house services to Italian immigrants at 146 Union Street.

This belated reorientation in New Yorkers' mental maps was not the product of changes in Italian migrations. The Italian speaking and Italian born immigrant populations of both Harlem and the Mulberry district were declining precipitously by the 1950s. In Harlem, however, new black and Puerto Rican migrants in search of cheap housing were replacing the earlier inhabitants from Italy; undoubtedly racial change made this urban neighborhood appear increasingly dangerous. At the same time of course, the relocation of Little Italy southward suggests a sharpening of the racial divide between "white" Italians and "black" African Americans or Puerto Ricans found in Riis's and Brace's descriptions of Italians living in Old Africa in the 1870s and 1880s.

During the same years, the Italian district of Lower Manhattan was emptying of population and temporarily losing its character as a residential district, especially when contrasted to nearby Greenwich Village, where Italians also lived in large numbers. Lower Manhattan's Fourteenth Ward Little Italy attracted far more tourist visitors than new immigrant residents in the 1960s. This would begin to change in the 1970s and 1980s as newcomers from China and southeast Asia and young urban gentrifiers both looked with new eyes on its old tenements. The Little Italy located in the 1950s and 1960s along Mulberry Street was not synonymous with Riis's Mulberry Bend, however. It could not be: the Bend had been demolished in the 1890s in an

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[114] "Strikers Held in Check by Troops: Cavalry and Infantry Control Situation at Cornell Dam," *New York Times*, April 18, 1900, p. 1.

[115] "Saw Bomb Kill Her Boy," *New York Times*, Oct. 14, 1902.

[116] William McAdoo, *Guarding a Great City* (New York, 1906), 3, 145, 149, 159, 179.

[117] e.g. "Immigrants from Italy," Oct 6, 1895.

[118] Boolean searches for references in the *New York Times* to Little Italy + Harlem compared to Little Italy + Mulberry give the following results: 1880s (2/0); 1890s (21/7); 1900s (84/25); 1910s (58/3); 1920s (25/3); 1930s (20/8); 1940s (10/6); 1950s (4/4); 1960s (7/9); 1970s (16/84); 1980s (71/217).

early exercise in urban renewal, and Columbus Park built over its razed tenements. Today's Mulberry Street stretches well north of the park that Jacob Riis demanded. Parallel to it, Mott and Elizabeth Streets, along with their cross streets, are today dominated visually by signs with Chinese characters. Chinatown has engulfed all of Little Italy, excepting only a few blocks of Mulberry Street.

Yet despite the population decline and even the shift in the location of the Mulberry Little Italy, *Times* reporters in the 1960s still imagined Mulberry Street's Little Italy as a neighborhood and as a vibrant immigrant community. As the Italian populations living around Mulberry Street continued to decline, and new Chinese immigrants moved into its abandoned tenements, *Times* articles about the Mulberry Little Italy actually doubled in numbers—peaking in 1980s before declining precipitously. As the attention of New Yorkers shifted toward Mulberry Street, their associations with the district—once known very negatively as a sanitary problem (as Table 1 demonstrated)— became more positive. A *Times* report on the festival of San Gennaro, reportedly the twenty-third such annual celebration, in 1949 captured the change in an article titled "Gay 'Little Italy' Dances in the Street."[119]

But even here, along Mulberry Street, one finds the replication of the older pairing of danger and pleasure, for Little Italy now served as the scene for fictional versions of gangster headquarters. Indeed, the trope of a gangland killing in an Italian restaurant probably deserves more attention than it has received. Others have described in detail both the rise of the gangster as a cultural icon during Prohibition and the 1930s and the role that Italian-American authors, actors, and film industry workers played in these film and literary inventions.[120] Less attention has focused on how Little Italy came to be associated with restaurants and food.

One can certainly find occasional references to chefs, restaurants, and delicious food in early reports on Little Italy in both the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times.* (Recall that the 1894 *Los Angeles Times*'s report on the Mott Street Industrial School focused on boys learning to cook.) Already in 1903, a journalist for the *New York Times* went to Mulberry Street and not to Harlem to report on "Italian Housewives' Dishes."[121] The density of pushcarts on the narrower streets of Lower Manhattan undoubtedly created a more picturesque scene than the groceries and food markets of Harlem, with its spacious, broader avenues. In 1906, too, "All Eyes on Mulberry Street" reported, tongue-in-cheek, about a spaghetti-eating contest that pitted Giuseppe Mangiamolto (Joseph Eats-A-Lot) against

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[119] *New York Times,* Sept. 19, 1949. p. 40

[120] Fred Gardaphe, *From Wiseguys to Wise Men: The Gangster and Italian American Masculinities* (New York, 2006).

[121] *New York Times,* June 7, 1903, p. 28.

Giacomo Valtellina, a "famous sprinter" and athlete.[122] Meanwhile, not far away in Greenwich Village, Maria Sermolino's father and his business partners would soon begin serving spaghetti Bolognese to Bohemians at their table d'hôte restaurant.[123] This combination of street markets, the tourist trade, and experimental Bohemian eaters probably goes a long way to explaining why food became more associated with Mulberry Street than it had been with Harlem's Little Italy and its street festivals. Again, too, the ease with which tourists could be guided (by their books) from the chop suey joints of Chinatown to the spaghetti of Little Italy and the delicatessens of the Jewish Ghetto certainly played a role in this transformation of Little Italy.[124]

Still, what persisted as Little Italy traveled were its associations with both danger and pleasure. The forms of both changed over time. There can be little question that just as the location of Little Italy moved and changed over the past century, so have Americans' understandings of safe danger. Italian Americans still bristle at their ethnic group's association with crime, and a comparison of Table 1 with the results of today's Google searches do suggest a surprising, if minor, continuity between past and present. Four percent of today's Little Italy webpages discuss crime; a century ago, in *Times* reporting, the percentage of crime-focused articles about Little Italy was only slightly higher. As immigrants vacated Little Italy, operatic stories of immigrant crimes of passion and romance gave way to far more gruesome cinematic tales of mafia, godfathers, and gangster wise guys. Street festivals have remained a staple, if intermittent, attraction to Little Italies for real-life tourists, while the pleasures of food and restaurants have increased markedly in importance. In fact, Mulberry Street's restaurateurs help to guarantee that every day on the street looks like a festival—with banners and lights and street vendors.

Urban tourism to ethnic theme parks, first exemplified in the naming of John H. Starin's Little Germany in the 1880s has continued to provide key elements in the history of Little Italy. Today's Little Italy along Mulberry Street is just as arguably a theme park as was Starin's Little Germany. The importance of fictional slumming has also persisted, although this slumming as often now occurs on the screen as on the pages of books by Italian-American and American criminal novelists, and it focuses on grisly murders and wise guys rather than the street urchins, artists, petty swindlers and murderous lovers of its predecessors. Like Little Italy and the mobile inhabitants of the country that loaned so many neighborhoods its name, notions of safe danger have changed over time. These changes may not tell us much about Italian immigrants or about Italian Americans; they remain uncomfortable with this labeling of the neighborhoods to which many are rooted through family and personal history. But they tell us a great deal about the Americans and English speakers of the twenty-first century who continue to seek a Little Italy—on Mulberry Street or elsewhere—even where no Italians live. They remind us of Americans' powerful concerns about the racial character of immigrant newcomers, about their predisposition to experience both revulsion from and attraction to cultures different from their own, and about their tendency to turn even stories of Little Italy, and its immigrant "characters," into stories about themselves.

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[122] *New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1906.

[123] For a discussion of the role of San Francisco and New York Bohemians in popularizing the Italian restaurant and hedonistic pleasures of the table as part of a general critique of Victorian American culture, see Gabaccia, *We Are What Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 99-102.

[124] Besides *Illustrated New York* and *The American Metropolis*, see Louis J. Beck, *New York's Chinatown: An Historical Presentation of its People and Places* (New York, 1898).