I sign myself "G"

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Her story begins with a photograph.

It's a wedding portrait, taken in a local studio just over one hundred years ago. The photographer carefully posed the participants in front of a painted backdrop –all arched windows and potted palms. But there's something odd. The central figure in the group is not the bride, but the groom—my grandfather, age 24. He sits in state in an elaborate wooden armchair. Carved lion heads snarl at the end of each armrest. Carved lion's paws scrabble on the carpet. Sitting there erect, my grandfather cuts a handsome figure, *una bella figura*. His compact six-foot frame nicely fills out his well-cut wedding suit—white tie, white gloves, incongruous white socks. He sits solemnly, magisterially: jaw squared, head held high, hair combed back and glistening with pomade, boots well buffed and laced tight. He sets his face in the same narrow and slightly scary half smile—mouth closed, lips tight, the right side straight, the other slightly raised—that I remember from my 1950s childhood.

There are four wedding attendants in the picture--two diminutive couples posed stiffly at either side of the chair. The two young men are standing, their hair even more highly stacked and pomaded than the groom's. They look like the recently emigrated village teenagers they were. The two bridesmaids, each seated in front of her escort, are trying to look sophisticated with their flapper-style coiffures held in place by fake pearl headbands. Their attempts at fashion do little to hide how young they are. They look dressed for their First Holy Communion.

The camera pays little attention to the 21-year-old bride. She is tiny and frail. Standing less than five feet tall, she seems dwarfed by the groom's chair of state. She wears a veil, its sheer body-length fabric held in place by a triple crown of lace, one that visually rhymes with the comical pompadour of the groomsman standing nearby. She hovers to the right of and slightly behind her husband. Her left hand rests deferentially on his shoulder. She too could be mistaken for a child in a first communion dress, or the awkward leader of a May Day procession in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Her gaze seems blank, even cowed, in contrast to the bridegroom's arrogant complacency. In both size and demeanor, she seems the image of an oppressed Calabrian peasant girl—deferential as a servant, lost in the shadow of the groom's charisma.

But like the photographer's stage set, all may not be as it seems. I recently digitized my copy of the photograph. That allowed me to zoom in on the young bride's face. In this closer view, everything changes. This is a face charged with intelligence. There is a clarity, a shrewdness, in her eyes. I get the sense that she allows my grandfather, seated so stiffly on his gimcrack throne, to lord it over only by sufferance. She is biding her time. Like so many immigrant Italian wives, her public demeanor is painfully subordinate. But you sense that in the privacy of their marriage she will exert her authority. Clarity and shrewdness: I like to think those are the qualities that led my grandfather to marry her.

Of course, at this hundred years' distance, I can only speculate. Less than eleven years after this photograph was taken, the bride was dead. So it's no surprise that, growing up

in the 1950s and ‘60s, I heard almost nothing about her. My grandmother died in 1930, having given birth to eight children—seven boys and one girl—in barely eleven years of marriage. My father told me once that she died of pleurisy. That seems to be all he knew about her. The church funeral record lists the cause of death as cancer. I suspect the real cause was exhaustion, that, as a good friend of mine once remarked, her body was broken on the wheel of relentless reproduction. Once my grandfather himself was dead, a little over thirty years later, none of his children, including my dad, could remember much about their mother. My father was just three years old in 1930, his little sister Eleanor just barely one. What her children couldn’t know was what my grandfather knew all along while he raised them, but for some reason kept secret.

Jennie had left behind a written record.

Just a few days before she and my grandfather posed for that wedding portrait, Giovanna Esmeralda Nucci—renamed Jennie in this new American life--wrote the last in a series of love letters, each signed with a row of x’s surrounding a florid, girlish letter “G”. She mailed the letters from her father’s house in Utica to her fiancé, Giuseppe Ferrauiolo—soon to be called Joe Ferlo—the elegant, self-satisfied young man who dominates the center of the wedding photograph. Energetic and ambitious, Joe was an itinerant fishmonger who had emigrated several years before to central New York State from a town in Calabria near where Jennie was born. Jennie was in fact a distant cousin, related on her mother’s Spadafora side. Joe lived among his Ferlo relatives in Rome, NY, just fifteen miles away from the Nuccis’ rented house on Mary Street in Utica. The Nucci

house was located in the middle of the Italian *colònia* in Utica—larger and more established than the neighborhood she would move to in nearby Rome—and centered near the knitting factories.

The love letters are no longer a secret. My father and his brothers discovered them when they opened an old safe in a corner of the cellar beneath the family's grocery store, soon after my uncle Fiore died. Fiore was my father's bachelor brother. He never moved out of the bedroom over the grocery store in the small apartment block that my grandparents rented, then purchased, on the corner of East Dominick and Sixth Streets, across from the Rome Cable factory.[1] When he wasn't tending the counter or stocking the shelves, Fiore spent most of his time at the local American Legion hall, or down the cellar watching the Yankees play on the small black and white television that sat on the shelf above the meat grinder, in which his brother Tony once lost half a finger, ground into the meatball mix.

When I was growing up, that cellar was my grandfather's domain, although he slept across town with a woman named Angela. Their liaison was no secret during my childhood. In those days, an upstairs kitchen was mostly for show. There was usually a second, shabbier, but more lived-in and usable kitchen in the cellar, perhaps to keep pungent cooking smells away from the upstairs rooms. By the time I was born, almost every trace of any upstairs kitchen in the Dominick Street tenement apartment had pretty much disappeared, like every trace of my grandmother herself. As children, except to use the toilet located off the upper landing, we were seldom allowed upstairs, which I

remember as being oddly empty of furnishings: just a few stray crates of glassware, an empty china cabinet, and an old kitchen sink. It was "down the cellar" where, when he wasn't living with Angela across town, from that tragic year 1930 until he died in 1961, my grandfather cooked his meals, fed his children, intimidated his sons' new wives, including my mother, and held court for all his local *compari* and *paesani,* charging them each a quarter for a tumbler of his homemade red wine, made from grapes he pressed and fermented in a back room. That musky back room, behind an inner door just past the furnace, was mostly off limits to me and to the fourteen or so other grandchildren he knew in his lifetime. My youngest brother was not yet born when my grandfather died, and by the early sixties, most of Jennie's sons, including my dad, were estranged from her only daughter Eleanor, my godmother. By then Eleanor was on her way to giving birth to more children than her mother had—a mother whom she closely resembled both physically (she stood about 4'10"), and I suspect, temperamentally, both in her resilience and in her buoyant good humor.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, three of my six uncles along with their wives and children occupied units on both floors of the apartment block, with entrance porches facing west on Sixth Street. Their brother Fiore lived by himself in the three-room apartment where my grandfather brought his bride sometime in the year after their wedding. He slept in what had been their bedroom, on the upper floor facing Dominick Street, at the top and to the left of two steep flights of stairs on the east end of the building—the one outdoors leading to the one indoors. Just inside on that first-floor

landing was a trap door giving access to another, rougher set of steps leading to the cellar, where real life was lived.

When I was growing up, Uncle Fiore was putatively in charge of the grocery business, although my grandfather—known to his offspring as "Pa"—was clearly the boss, showing up mainly on Sundays to retake possession of the cash register. I suspect Pa had Fiore both on payroll and a short leash. I used to hang out a lot "helping" Uncle Fiore, and would kill time whirring the dial of the safe down the cellar, seeing whether I could ever get it to click open. I remember thinking there was some kind of war souvenir locked in there, including maybe a German Lugar, as my six uncles had all fought in the Second World War. If that's what the brothers found after Fiore died, they didn't reveal it. I infer the safe was pretty much empty when they opened it, except for the sheaf of my grandmother's letters that my grandfather had carefully locked away, through his thirty-one years as a single father, and so for decades afterward.

The letters were all in their original envelopes, the entire packet secured by a flimsy blue ribbon, edged in tiny lace, and tied into a bow. Watching my father handle that fragile packet and hearing him read aloud a sentence or two in broken Italian, I realized that this was the closest he had come to recalling what his mother's voice might have sounded like to him as a three-year-old. Jennie wrote the letters on cheap paper, in more or less standard Italian, using a careful American-style penmanship more precise than the grammar. Both the attempt at standard Italian and the American penmanship came as a surprise. I had assumed she was illiterate.

My grandmother had likely emigrated in 1908 (the census records are contradictory) with her family from Atilia, in the last great wave of Italian immigration. Atilia is a tiny village midway between Cosenza and Catanzaro in Calabria, that mountainous and impoverished province far south of Rome and Naples, in the toe of the Italian peninsula. As far as I can tell, when my grandmother was a child in Atilia only a tiny percentage of people in southern Italy spoke the Italian spoken in Milano or Torino. Italy south of the capital is still called the *Mezzogiorno* (the Italian word for "noon") because of its unrelenting, dessicating sunshine. Italians living in places like Genova or Firenze use much less complimentary names for the region and its denizens. The feelings were mutual. To people like my grandparents, standard Italian was the language of the northern elites and oppressive government bureaucrats. Southerners spoke Calabrese, or Abruzzese, or Siciliano, or any of the other complex and layered dialects that distinguished their village or district or province. Very few southerners spoke standard Italian in 1900. Even fewer people could read it or write it, especially girls, even though a mandatory education act was passed as early as 1877. For that reason alone, these letters seem special.

Throughout the southern provinces in the early 1900s, the Italian government made a concerted effort to increase literacy in standard Italian, including literacy education for women. That being the case, when and where did my grandmother learn to write in standard Italian, considering that she came to central New York as a teenager? Was it in Calabria? Did she ever abandon her Calabrian dialect as her spoken lingua franca? How

much English did she learn to speak in her short life? She probably spoke a kind of creole, mixing Calabrian, standard Italian, and whatever English she picked up working in the knitting mills.

No one knows when my grandfather would have put Jennie's letters into the safe, just as no one now alive knows much at all about the eleven years that they were married, except that they somehow scraped up enough money (or borrowed it) to rent and then purchase the building on East Dominick Street, open the grocery store, and produce eight children, before my grandmother died suddenly of "pleurisy" in 1930. The one detail of which I can be sure is the likely month when each of her pregnancies began. I can calculate this by counting backwards from my father's birthday in 1927, and the birthdays of his older brothers and younger sister. It's odd that the few things I know for sure about my grandparents' marriage are the months they had productive intercourse.

What I also know for sure is how deeply my grandfather mourned Jennie's death—enough to keep those letters intact all those years. And enough to go to unusual expense in burying her. Her grave is in the Irish Catholic cemetery, St. Peter's, situated on East Dominick a few car dealerships west of the Italian Catholic cemetery named for St. John the Baptist, like the Italian parish itself. Both graveyards are on the eastern outskirts of the city, across the road from the German Catholic one, St. Mary's, at the point where East Dominick Street opens out into the county highway to Utica. In the days after my grandmother's sudden death, my grandfather bought a large plot in St. Peter's, large enough to include six graves, all of which are now taken. He's buried there beside my

grandmother, along with his mother, Uncle Fiore, and my parents. But when my grandfather bought the plot in 1930, it was meant only for his Jennie. He paid to have a six-foot tall granite monument erected in the middle of it, with the single word "Ferlo" engraved in large lettering across the center, and a bas relief of a Gothic window carved into the peak, engraved with a pious "IHS".

It wasn't until recent years, as I finally got around to transcribing and translating those letters, that I realized how odd it was that Joe Ferlo should bury his wife so extravagantly in the Irish cemetery, especially as the Italian cemetery up the road had been dedicated just two years before. That dedication ceremony was a big deal at the time, a sign that the Italian *colònia* in East Rome had come into its own. A news photograph survives of the occasion.[2] It's all too clear that even though this was a burial place for the Italians, the Irish were in charge, in the person of the Irish-American monsignor from St. Peter's who is presiding from the temporary platform, surrounded by hundreds of Italian parishioners, their own priests huddled well off to the side. The Irish clergy ran things in those days, as in many ways they still do. Even then, in 1928, over fifty years after Italian unification, the Irish priests regarded Italian immigrants with both supercilious condescension and fierce mistrust, associating them with the anti-papal Italian nationalists who were content to keep the Pope a self-declared prisoner in his Vatican fortress. [3] Ironically, it was the burdensome taxation and military policies of this secular Italian government that prompted the millions of southern Italians who could afford the passage, like my grandparents, to make their way here, before the American anti-

immigration laws passed in the 1920s, during the Red Scare and racist eugenics craze, cruelly stanched the human flow.

What was my grandfather thinking then, buying a plot from the Irish, mixing his young wife's bones with the bones of Hayeses, McCarthys, Sullivans, and Mahans? There was plenty of room in the new St. John's cemetery next door, which at that time contained just a handful of graves at the far east end of the property, most of them marked with small, cheap headstones, crudely inscribed in terse Italian. After all, the Ferlo family had been closely connected to St. John's from its founding in 1906.

I suspect there is a backstory. My grandfather had emigrated from Calabria in the early 1900s, most likely sponsored either by his half-brother Mike in Connecticut or his cousin Tom in central New York. The Connecticut branch had kept the original family name—Ferrauiolo—but Tom, likely for business reasons, had reduced it to shorten that cavalcade of Mediterranean vowels. In those days of mass migration this welcoming embrace of immigrant relatives was called family sponsorship; in these meaner days it is what is denigrated as "chain migration." Although Mike Ferrauiolo and his wife Mary had already settled in Danbury, my grandfather instead joined his Ferlo cousins in central New York, where they had started several businesses, including a tavern (Tom had been arrested and fined more than once for selling liquor on a Sunday)[4] and then a bakery (still in business now, and run by two first cousins of mine). The Thomas Ferlos were among the seven or eight thousand Italians who landed in New York in the first trickle of Italian immigration in the 1880s and '90s, two-thirds of whom exited the stinking and crowded

metropolis as soon as they arrived, moving north up the Hudson and then either east toward Connecticut, or west along the Mohawk River, following the track of the old Erie Canal, settling in small industrial cities like Utica and Rome.[5]

By the time my grandfather arrived from Rogliano and made the trek upstate to join his Ferlo and Spadafora relatives, the little Italian *colonia* in East Rome could assemble to hear Mass said (in Latin, of course, but with a sermon in Italian) in a storefront in what the locals called the "Ferlo block." The block of shop fronts and backrooms was located at 311 East Dominick Street, about half a mile west of the corner lot where my grandparents later stocked and ran their new grocery store. But the congregation's tenure was temporary. By 1911, the Italians had abandoned the Ferlo storefront, managing to finance and construct a church building of their own, halfway up the hill on River Street north of Dominick. What's more, in these first years, tired of English-language sermons grudgingly provided by the local Irish clergy, the parish founders, including my grandfather's cousin Tom, persuaded the Irish bishop in Syracuse to import an Italian priest, Father Giorgio, to lead it. When Father Giorgio was reassigned after a brief residence, a more permanent pastor, Fr. Joseph Panesi, arrived in 1917.[6] That is the same year that my grandmother started writing her letters to my grandfather from her parents' house in Utica, in those spare moments when she wasn't working for ten cents an hour in one of the several weaving mills that were the backbone of the Utica economy before the First World War.

Family lore has it that my grandfather and Father Panesi did not get along. My grandfather was not alone in this. Panesi, it seems, had both an authoritarian instinct and intellectual pretensions.[7] His obituary in 1947 described him as an expert in the novels of Manzoni and the poetry of Dante. But he also had a reputation for being both aloof and autocratic, alienating many of the working-class, semi-literate immigrants in East Rome who worked in the local copper and wire factories, and for whom Panesi's expertise in Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* would count for little. From the Irish bishop's point of view in Syracuse, Panesi's was a success story, and no doubt offered the Irish hierarchy relief from the Italians' grudges and complaints. Panesi was intent on establishing a power center at the heart of the neighborhood, hoping to foster the same *campanilismo* that had shaped the social and political allegiances of his parishioners when they were still villagers in Calabria, living within hearing distance of the local *campanile*.

But in doing all this, Panesi made enemies. Immigrant men from southern Italy harbored long-standing resentments against meddling and autocratic priests. Like a lot of other Italian men for whom the church was as oppressive in Italy as the government was, it seems that after my grandmother's death in 1930 my grandfather had no time for priests. He would show up for baptisms and weddings and funerals, where he relished playing the *paterfamilias* role, but otherwise he stayed away and aloof.

There's more to the story. In the years my grandfather was courting my grandmother, right through 1930s, my grandfather's cousin Joe Spadafora, who was also my grandmother's uncle and so my great-great uncle, wrote, edited, and published an Italian-

language newspaper in the city. Called "*La Vita"* ("The Life"), the paper included notices of local births, deaths, and marriages, ads for local Italian-run businesses, as well as a recurrent feature offering sample questions in English for immigrants preparing for citizenship tests. But he would periodically offer savagely barbed opinion pieces that pilloried Panesi's authoritarian ways.[8] Joe Spadafora had a history of anti-clerical editorials. Even before Panesi's appointment, an assistant priest at the parish, one Father Alfi, had already sued Spadafora for libel. Spadafora was acquitted in the same year as Father Panesi's arrival (the jury reached a verdict in just thirty minutes, a small triumph for the First Amendment), which perhaps emboldened Joe further. Things got bad enough by the mid-1920s that Bishop Ludden in Syracuse assigned an Irish-American priest as Panesi's assistant, an indication of how rapidly the parish had grown since 1906. Ironically, Father O'Connell spoke decent Italian. It was he who presided at my grandmother's funeral and burial in the Irish Catholic cemetery, when it was also reported in the local English-language paper that my young grandmother's funeral procession to the cemetery included as many as sixty cars.[9]

So I suppose my grandfather's hostility toward Italian priests in general, and Fr. Panesi in particular, pretty much ran in the family. I like to think that my grandfather bought that Irish burial plot near to the road and raised that monument six feet high so that Panesi would have to stare it down whenever he drove by. Given the large number of burials that Panesi would conduct before his own death seventeen years later, that drive-by sighting would likely be often.

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So then, what was she like, the mother about whom my father and his little sister remembered almost nothing, about whom family stories are scarce, this young woman who was pregnant for seventy-two of the 120 months she was married? Evidence is scarce, memories dim. Because of the letters, I now know more about her life in the three years prior to her wedding than any of her children ever did.

When she started writing, or at least by the time the first letter that survives begins, she was a recently arrived teenager, working long hours in one of the giant knitting mills that made Utica, the larger and more prosperous city fourteen miles east of Rome, a center of the American manufacture of knitwear. I also infer that her father and brothers were not happy about her writing letters to Joe. And even though his own letters have been lost, I infer as well that my grandfather was a needy and manipulative suitor.

His jealous neediness becomes clear in a rapid exchange of letters and visits in the summer of 1917. Time and again Jennie is forced to defend herself against Joe's accusations of indifference. On June 28 she writes:

> My dear
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> Peppino,
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> For a long time I have intended to write to you, but it's been impossible for lack of time. You need to excuse me for responding to you a little slowly. No doubt

> you will smile to hear that I don't ever have time to write to you. You probably think that I have forgotten you but what you say is not true—I always have you in my thoughts. I hope that you will come on Saturday, if you weren't joking about it last week. Before Saturday I will expect another of your letters. Nothing more except to tell you that I give my most affectionate greetings and [*mi firmo*] I sign myself G.[10]

That imagined smile is wishful thinking. True, I have only Jennie's side of the correspondence. But it soon becomes clear, from her defensive responses, what kind of tone Joe took in his letters to her: wounded, accusatory, and self-involved. Jennie writes again two weeks later, on July 9, following Joe's Sunday visit to Utica:

> Dearest Peppino
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> After two weeks I have decided to write to you. Excuse this for now; the next time I hope not to do it again. Sunday I noticed that you were angry with me, and to tell you the truth I've stayed pretty displeased seeing your lack of concern. I don't think that I've done anything wrong to you. At any rate I want you to write to me because I so want to have news about you. Just because I don't write doesn't mean I don't think about you a lot. But I'm sure that you will forgive me my tardiness and reply to me. If you come to my house you won't find me because I'll have gone to work, but I hope to see you on Saturday. I have nothing else to tell you, but end by giving you my dearest and most affectionate greetings and signing myself

G

Let's see each other soon.

Write.[11]

He does write, but it would have been better if he hadn't. Their letters appear to have crossed in the mail, and she responds two days later to Joe's accusations:

> I received your letter yesterday and was not pleased to hear what you said. I can't understand the reason that you write so contemptuously and show such indifference to me. I don't feel that I have done anything wrong. I was only a little careless in not replying immediately, but then I realized I was at fault and wrote you right away. So it's clear that you don't place much value on my love. I thought I was loved the way I love you but in fact that's not true. If you're tired of me, find someone else who wants you more—there's still time.

The letter than takes an even more serious turn:

> But you said that I prayed to God that you enlist as a soldier. It would be better to offer me a glass of poison than to write like that. You must think I have a heart like a tiger. You cannot imagine how I've spent the last two days thinking about your letter—how often your words come into my mind, that I don't love you. Is that what you believe? If I did not love you I would never have had you come to

> see me. I beg you to set your mind at peace and not to think this contrary way about me, because I will always be faithful to you.[12]

"You said that I prayed to God that you enlist as a soldier." Joe's accusation was a low blow. It was in the summer of 1917 that the United States entered the war in Europe, a war in which Italy only belatedly entered on the Allied side. The Selective Service Act was passed in Congress on May 18, and the first draft registration took place on June 5. Ironically, it was the threat of compulsory service in the Italian kingdom that prompted many young men to emigrate to America. I have a copy of Joe's American draft card from the 1930s, by which time he was widowed and responsible for eight children. It was unlikely he would be drafted in peacetime. But it was a strong possibility in 1917, especially as proponents of the draft had argued that it would speed the Americanization of immigrant men like Joe. It was understandable that young women like Jennie would be worried that the draft would single out recent immigrants. No wonder she reacts so strongly to Joe's accusation that she would just as well see that happen: "You must think I have a heart *come una tigre*."

On July 22 she writes again, having pored over the names of draftees published in the local paper:

> I am always thinking about you, afraid that you will have to go as a soldier. Believe me, I have no peace thinking about your having to go so far away from

> me. I hope with all my heart that this will never happen. Every day I look in the paper to see whether I will find your name.[13]

Again on August 18:

> I know that you love me and never forget about me, and I will do the same. I am really upset about this business with soldiers—they've begun to call them up again. I am afraid for you. If it happens that you have to go I don't think that I could endure such sorrow, seeing you go so far away, so far from me, not knowing whether you will ever return. Thinking about this I get no peace. [14]

Her fear remains an undercurrent of these exchanges for the entire length of the war. On March 5, 1918, she writes "I hope that your number as a soldier is never called." At last, following the news of the armistice on November 11, 1918, she writes on November 13: "My dearest Peppino, I write this letter with my heart full of joy that finally there is not danger that you will depart far from me. "

Another undercurrent of these letters is the burden of Jennie's workplace obligations—obligations that Joe seems to have a hard time either understanding or accepting. August 1, 1917: "Taking advantage of the fact that I don't go to work today I'm hurrying to reply to you. I haven't written before this because I haven't had the time for it, as you know. I trust you will let me be excused. I've waited for another letter from you but up to now I have received nothing—maybe you don't have the time, like me." She is a proud

woman, she says in a letter early in November, pushing back in anger at Joe's refusal to take her at her word that she lacks the time to write:

> Utica 7 November 1917
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> My dearest
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> I'm responding to your letter, and understand everything that you are saying. I accept what you are pointing out to me but I don't want to go back to it. Let's just leave it and not think about it any more. I know that I have lacked a little on my side and so have you on yours—so now we're equal. But I need to say one thing. You have noticed a bit late that I am a proud woman [*sono superba*]. Enough—I don't want you to be angry with me any more and I don't want to be angry with you. I've forgotten everything that I've said to you and think that you should do the same….*Ma!* Don't take offense at it … that I am obedient …, because I have said this to make you understand that I am not as you think—for me your love never changes. For now I'll leave off writing because there's no time. Another time I will write at greater length. I end now, giving you my most dear and affectionate greetings and say that I am your
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> xxxG.xxx
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> xxxxxxx
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> I wait anxiously for your letter[15]

Like so many immigrant teenaged girls in newly industrialized Utica, NY, Jennie worked long hours in the knitting mills, many of which were in walking distance of her home. At

the turn of the century there were nine spinning mills in Utica, and by 1910 there were as many as forty knit goods firms. By 1918, as many as 25,000 men and women (and some children), worked in the knit goods factory, bringing home as little as ten cents an hour.[16]

Jennie's work schedule—and her nightly exhaustion—kept her from writing regularly, a lapse that Joe found hard to forgive. July 22, 1917: "Just today I received your postcard (I had so hoped for it) and I hurried to reply to you. I haven't written to you before this because I haven't had time. This is always the reason that I am never able to reply at the time I should." August 8: "I wasn't able to write because everyone was home last night and during the day I work. That's the reason, and I hope you won't need to hear it another time." November 20: "Today I find myself at home because there isn't any work."

It may be that Jennie meant only that on November 20 she took a day off. But that was unlikely. There were no paid days off. There was simply no work that day, and so no pay. Jobs like hers were precarious for working-class immigrants, especially once the war was over. The spring when Joe and Jennie were married was also a season of violent labor action in cities across the industrialized Northeast and Midwest. There were famously bitter strikes in Lawrence, Massachusetts and in Chicago. But there were also strikes closer to home—first in Rome, and then, more violently, in Jennie's neighborhood in Utica[17]. In early June, just a few days after Joe and Jennie moved to 801 East Dominick Street, directly across from one of the city's largest wire mills, thousands of Italian workers went on strike, demanding an eight-hour workday and a reinstatement of

wartime bonuses. The mill owners in Rome refused to speak to any workers' representatives, assuming correctly that doing so would be an implicit recognition of the workers' rights to organize. Unsubstantiated rumors of Bolshevik plots and IWW agitation appeared in the local news. The most notorious of the mill owners, John Spargo, greeted some would-be union negotiators by shoving them down the stairs from the landing near his office. He tore up their written request for a meeting, and sent back the scraps by mail, along with an obscene note. [18]

The contents of that note would come back to haunt him. By mid-July, the mill owners began to import strikebreakers from downstate, infuriating the locked out workers. Someone stabbed John Spargo as he was exiting his car—word of that obscene letter had spread widely. In disgust Spargo left town for a fish camp in the Adirondacks, leaving the other mill owners to face not only the growing threat of violence, but also the embarrassment of defending Spargo when confronted with mediators from Governor Al Smith's Industrial Commission. The team from Albany was led by the young Frances Perkins, later Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor. Immediately upon on her arrival in Rome by train, Perkins made herself available to the workers' representatives. She ignored threats of violence, and insisted on speaking to the workers themselves through local interpreters, defying the local mill owners. Her task was not easy. A few days earlier, Mayor Clayton Midlam had petitioned Governor Al Smith to send in state troopers on horseback to quell the crowds, an unprecedented use of the newly-formed state police. People in Rome long remembered the arrival of the troopers. It was

reported that they chased striking workers into their houses by riding their horses right up onto their porches.[19]

Years later, participating in a Columbia University oral history project, Perkins vividly recalls the negotiating sessions. Having spoken directly to the workers' representatives in a hearing she convened at the Oneida County courthouse in the middle of town, she insisted that the owners appear in person, without their attorneys, at an open and public evening session. Her biographer writes that "[a]s Perkins observed later, there is a kind of denial of the workers' humanity when employers, 'Grown men who own factories, will not say for themselves what they think and will do but instead shut their mouths tight, look at the floor and get a lawyer to do their talking for them.'"[20] At the start of the 8pm hearing, the owners tried to stonewall.

> Herbert T. Dyett, Rome Wire Company, was asked why he wouldn't meet a committee of workers. "Matter of pride," he answered. "What would keep you back?" "Logic." "Don't you ever intend to change your policy?" "We may some time."
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> Barton Haselton, Rome Brass and Copper Company. "Did you meet a committee?" "No." "Would you?" "No." "Why not?" "Because I said 'No.'"[21]

As the five owners remaining in the city sat stone-faced at the conference, Perkins pulled an envelope from her pocketbook and handed it to her male colleague to be read aloud.

Everyone in the room knew it was Spargo's letter. Perkins describes the moment: "[I said] I understand there is a very interesting letter in circulation somewhere around town. They all looked as though they would die. I saw at once from their faces that they knew about it. I said, 'Of course, I haven't seen it. I just heard a rumor. Rumors are rumors.' Silence fell upon them. I said to myself, 'This is true. These grown men…wouldn't be so paralyzed, wouldn't be struck dumb if they didn't know about them too.'"[22] The owners panicked, with Percy Thomas begging that the letter not be read in the presence of the workers, fearful that their case—and more to the point, their reputations—would be irreparably tarnished by association with Spargo's tactics. Perkins' shrewd move broke the logjam. Although the team left Rome without a settlement, within two weeks the owners agreed to meet with the workers' representatives, implicitly recognizing the Italian workers' right both to organize and to be heard.

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With her marriage to Joe Ferlo in the week before the Rome strike began, Jennie's letters cease. Like most newly-married immigrant women, Jennie left the paid workforce, and so took no direct part in the dramatic events unfolding that summer and fall directly across the street. Jennie's new job was to generate children, a job as life-threatening in those days as anything happening in the mills. I wish I knew what she thought about the strike—what workers she knew and greeted, whom she cheered, whom she avoided, what she feared, what she saw of and how she reacted to the invasion by the troopers She must have read *La Vita,* where her uncle Joe Spadafora's Italian-language editorials left

no one in doubt of his own radical support for the workers' cause: *Avanti con coraggio,* he writes in June*:*

> Go forward with courage, with energy, and with faith. If you are not already organized, ORGANIZE YOURSELVES! Only then will you be able to combat injustice. For bread, for EIGHT HOURS OF WORK, and liberty for all. Declare, if necessary, a general strike.[23]

Echoing the rhetoric of labor radicals in Italy, Joe Spadafora defends "the rights of the proletariat" against the greedy capitalism of the owners ("*ingordo capitalismo sopraffatore*"). [24] It was probably lucky that the local police could not read Italian. What did Jennie think about all this? All that can be known is that within a few months following the strike, she was pregnant with Antonio ("Tony"), her first child. Any drama in which she would play a part, once she was married, would be entirely private, entirely domestic, and now all but irretrievable.

We do know, however, that the three years of Joe's courtship had not been without its tensions. There are hints in Jennie's letters that her relationship with Joe Ferlo—including her letter-writing—was not entirely welcome in her family. In August of 1917, we get the first hint of trouble: "Please don't be upset when I don't reply at once. You know why without my having to tell you again. I always like to see you happy and not angry." A month later, she is equally cryptic: "I am not able to stay close to you. You know the reason—there's no need for me to tell you." And two weeks after that: "As far

as what you asked me in your last letter about my father, don't…because you are well aware of his temper." She warns him several times not to write, in fear that the letters might be intercepted. Matters seemed to come to a head in January, 1918, when Joe seems to have put down some kind of ultimatum: "You're right on your part, but I am also right on my part," Jennie heatedly replies:

> You write so forcefully… but there are certain times when I don't have the chance, and moreover I don't want my father and my brothers to see me with your letters because I am too ashamed, and they would … certainly do their duty. I want to do my duty to avoid these things. This is the reason—pure and simple—why I do not write. I know that you report all this chatter. You do not believe me as you haven't believed me so many times. "*ma io son sicura che dico la verità*": But I am sure that I am saying the truth. [25]

So perhaps it wasn't just exhaustion that kept Jennie from writing to Joe in the late evening. Like so many Italian men, Jennie's father and brothers may have felt it was their "duty" to protect their unmarried daughter and sister from the predations of male suitors. That paternalistic behavior was often pro forma. But with Joe Ferlo matters might have been different. Once again, the story involves the editor of *La Vita,* Jennie's Uncle Joe Spadafora, her mother Francesca's brother. A cherished family story I heard as a teenager was that Joe Spadafora (whom my mother remembered was nicknamed "Cuddles" for his puffy cheeks) colluded with my young grandfather to "kidnap" Spadafora's future wife, Lucy Toro, in 1914. Together they met her at work, and tricked

her into getting into Joe Ferlo's horse and buggy, ("I'm going back to Italy," he told her, "and I want to shake hands with you"). He then yanked her into the buggy, driving her against her will to his brother's house in Utica. My great-grandmother Francesca's thoughts on the matter go unrecorded, but this incident may have added to the distaste she and my great- grandfather might have felt for the badgering, accusatory tone Joe tended to assume in his letters to Jennie.

Except I have since discovered that it didn't happen that way. A strange news item follows as an addendum to the Spadafora-Toro wedding announcement that ran in the local paper ("wedding of popular young couple takes place yesterday at the home of the groom's brother"). It was reported that on the morning of the wedding in Utica, the police chief in Rome was notified that the couple would be returning to the city, where an unnamed young woman—it must have been Lucy Toro—was observed the previous evening to be "bustled into a wagon…and was heard to scream for help as the wagon was driven rapidly through Dominick street in the eastern part of the city. The rig is said to belong to Spadafora and driven by his driver, and he had no help in taking the girl from the street and placing her in the wagon." I am pretty sure that the driver was his young cousin Joe Ferlo. It turns out the whole incident was a pre-nuptial stunt, a staged farce that both fooled and scandalized the Protestant establishment and the local press—a bit of immigrant theater imported from Calabria in which Lucy was a willing and cooperative participant. This might explain why the couple was described as "popular" in the heading to the wedding announcement. Whatever the case, given Joe Spadafora's prickly attitude toward the church and the local clergy, it is no surprise that the wedding of Joe

Spadafora and Lucy Toro was conducted not at the local parish church in Utica but at the home of Jennie's Uncle Frank on Lansing Street, and presided over by a town magistrate—in-your-face anti-clericalism at its best.[26]

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I have evidence for only a few distinct events—besides the births of her eight children—that marked Jennie's short marriage. In November, 1922, Joe Spadafora announced the opening of the Joe Ferlo's new grocery store on Dominick Street. [27] It was frequently the women in these marriages who in effect ran their husbands' grocery businesses from behind the scenes.[28] I like to think that Jennie was one of them. The one other event I know about, touching Jennie directly in those years, is sobering. In 1924, newspapers in Rome and Utica reported that Jennie's young first cousin Louis, Frank Spadafora's son, was gunned down on a street corner in Utica, in what was likely a mob-related shooting. He had for some time been involved in illegal liquor sales. The news stories go into much lurid detail.[29] Prior to his murder, found in violation of his parole, he had been arrested, and had named names to the cops. The Utica paper reported that in the search for Louis, the police had launched a midnight raid at the home of Jennie's parents, who lived around the corner from her uncle Frank. And now he was dead. And then, several children later, and seven years after her cousin was murdered, Jennie too was gone.

A moving death notice appeared in her uncle's newspaper the week after Jennie died. **LUTTO NOSTRO**, the headline declared in bold caps: "**OUR GRIEF**." The first-person plural likely reflects the widespread shock in the neighborhood following Jennie's

premature death, as well as the depth of Joe Spadafora's own private grief. The full obituary is worth quoting, as it explains why the local English-language paper had reported at such unusual length the size of the funeral procession—sixty cars!—and the participation of relatives from four area towns. Jennie was perhaps even more popular that Lucy Toro, and her death was a huge blow to more than just her immediate family.

OUR GRIEF [*LUTTO NOSTRO*]

*Wednesday of last week around 9am Mrs. Giovanna Ferlo passed away at her own home at 801 East Dominick Street. Her dear life ended serenely [*cara esistenza si spense serenamente*] in the loving presence of her husband, her father, her brothers, sisters, and other close relatives, who adored her. Her illness resisted every measure taken to save her young life, but her smile lasted even to the end as an expression of her goodness.*

*Her early death occurred in her 33rd year; our countrywoman and compatriot [*compaiana*] leaves eight children (all of a tender age), her parents, brothers and sisters, and her poor, inconsolable husband, in deep mourning, which time will lessen only with difficulty.*

*The funeral took place on Saturday and was truly solemn, with a large crowd and many floral tributes. The grief is also ours, as the deceased was the daughter of the sister of our Editor, with whom he joins in mourning such a dear and precious lost one [*che sì associa a lei nel dolore di sì cara e Preziosa pèrdita*].*[30]

By this time, Jennie's husband, *inconsolabile,* was much changed from the arrogant young man at the center of that wedding photograph, and the hectoring correspondent in those love letters. Now a widower with eight children ("all of a tender age"), Pa purchased a large plot in the Irish cemetery, buried his lost wife, his *pèrdita*, and erected there a grandiose monument to her memory. And he quietly set aside a small bundle of letters—letters that did not reflect well on his own behavior, but boldly revealed Jennie's own pride and strength—that would enable her grandson tonight—ninety-one years later—to restore to public memory a once-forgotten life, the life of a indomitable young immigrant woman who lovingly signed herself—"G".

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ENDNOTES

[1] As late as 1907 many streets in East Rome familiar to me from my childhood had not yet been laid out. See *New Century Atlas. Oneida County, New York.* (Philadelphia: Century Map Company, 1907).

[2] See D'Argenio, Nicholas, *Italian American Heritage. Rome, New York. November 4, 1994* (Rome, NY: A & M Litho Services, 2000), 62-63.

[3] For a still definitive account of immigrant attitudes toward church hierarchy, see R.J. Vecoli, "Prelates and Peasants: Italian Immigrants and the Catholic Church". *Journal of Social History,* Vol. 2, no. 3 (Spring, 1969). 217-68. For a more local view, focused on Utica, see Philip A. Bean, *The Urban Colonists: Italian American Identity and Politics in Utica, New York* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010), 71-108.

[4] *Utica Herald Dispatch* (May 14, 1902). Tom Ferlo was arrested again in 1916, his license revoked, and jailed for three months for this second violation of the liquor tax laws. See *Syracuse Daily Journal*, May 13, 1916; *Utica Herald Dispatch*, December 11, 1916.

[5] Michael La Sorte, *La 'Merica: Images of Italian Greenhorn Experience* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), 119.

[6] See Mary M. Gratch, "The Italian Americans in Rome, New York." Photocopied typescript dated 1976, 16-17. This typescript, perhaps a college class assignment, is deposited in the local history section of the Jervis Public Library, Rome, NY. See also the St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church website for a brief history of the parish (http://stjohnthebaptist.weebly.com/st.-johns-history-page.html).

[7] Sr. Mary Alphonsis described her memories of Panesi to Mary Gratch in 1976: "Fr. Panesi was a severe man who had formerly been a teacher of philosophy and theology. His impressive, massive physical appearance coupled with his austere disposition inspired respect and fear, rather than affection among the parishioners. Rev. Edward O'Connell, who became his assistant in 1929 was much better able to communicate with and respond sympathetically to the people. Surprisingly enough, Fr. O'Connell understood and spoke all the different dialects of Italian that could be heard in East Rome and the Italians thought of him as 'one of them.' It was this Irish priest, Gratch notes, who encouraged Italian immigrants to preserve their national and provincial practices and customs. (Gratch, 17).

[8] In 1922, Panesi had blocked the entrance to River Street at Dominick to make way for one of his festival processions. It seems an ice cream vendor complained vigorously, and Spadafora took up his cause. When Panesi, whose English was not good, wrote a

badly garbled appeal for volunteers to prepare the *festa* for the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Spadafora published the appeal verbatim, and then ran the following commentary in his own questionable English (*La Vita,* July 22):

> The above excerpt was printed in handbills and circulated around the Italian Community of Rome.
>
> Editorially we wish to know what the above language is. It looks like a crypogram [sic] and we would like to know if it is one. We have read Edgar Allen Poe and all of his rules as to the method of procedure in deciphering a code but we are still at sea.
>
> We came to the conclusion that it is [not?] an apology for studying Englesh [sic]—but rather trying to boycott a licensed pedlar of ICE-CREAM from partaking of his ordinary privileger [sic], because he happened to interfere with the composer of the above.
>
> Still we may be wrong and if so we are open to conviction and our apologies will be forthcoming. —*The Editor*

[9] Jennie's obituary runs at unusual length in the local English-language newspaper, perhaps a testimony to her and her husband's excellent reputation in the community. The obituary in full reads as follows:

> FUNERAL HELD FOR **MRS. JOSEPH FERLO** Services Conducted This Afternoon at Church of St. John the Baptist. Jennie Nucci, wife of Joseph Ferlo, 801 .E. Dominick street, was laid at rest today in St. Peter's cemetery following services conducted at the Church of St. John the Baptist this afternoon at 2 o'clock by the assistant pastor, Rev. Father Edward D. O'Connell. The funeral was held from her late home at 1:30 p. m. There was a profusion of beautiful floral offerings from friends, relatives and neighbors. Over 60 automobiles were in the funeral procession. Friends and relatives were present from Utica, Syracuse, Oneida and Canastota. Those who acted as bearers are Ateo Spadafora, Mario Spadafora, Thomas Ferlo jr.. Albert Spadafora, Fireman Albert Spadafora and Emilio Spadafora, all relatives of the deceased.
> *Rome Sentinel* (November 1, 1930)

[10] In the transcriptions included in these endnotes, I signal the occasional illegible phrase with brackets. Translations of the text are my own.

> Mio caro
> Peppino,
> Da molto tempo o avuto intenzione a scriverti ma non é potuto essere possibile per mancanza di tempo, devi scusarmi se ti rispondo un po' tardi. Certo tu ridi nel sentire che non ho mai un po' di tempo per scriverti e credi che ti o dimentico ma non é vero quello che tu dici che ti o sempre nel pensiero. Sabato spero che vieni se non scherzo come la settimana passata. Primo sabato aspetto

un'altro tua lettera. Non ho altro che dirti ti dono i miei piu affettuosi saluti e mi firmo G.

[11] Carrissimo Peppino
Dopo due settimani ho deciso a scriverti scusami per adesso che un'altra volta spero non farlo piú. Domenica mi sono accorto che tu sei in collera con me, e a dirti il vero sono rimasta molto dispiaciuto vedendo la tuo indifferenza, io credo di non averti fatto nulla di malo. Intanto voglio che tu mi scrivi perche' sono tanto desiderosa di avere tue notizie, non perché non ti scrivo [ ] non ti [ ] anzi ti penzo di molto ma io son sicura che tu mi perdonerai di questa mia tardanza a risponderti. Vieni a casa a me no mi trovi perchè vado a lavorare, spero di rivederei sabato. Non ho altro che dirti finisco con darti i miei piú cari ed affetuosi saluti e mi firmo

G

Arriverderci Presto.

Scrivi.

[12] Caro Peppino
Ieri ho ricevuto la tua lettera e con dispiacere sento quanto mi dici. Io non posso capire la ragione che tu scrivi cosi' sprizzante e ti mostri indifferente verso di me, io mi sento di non averti fatto nulla di contrario solo sono stata un po' trascurata a non risponderti subito ma poi mi sono accolta della mia colpa e ti ho scritto subito, dunque si vede che tu poco a prezzi il mio amore, io credevo di essere amata come ti amo ma invece non è cosi, se [ ] tu sei stanco di me trovati qualche altra che ti avesse di piú perchè ancora siamo la tempo [?]. Ma dici che io pregassi i Iddio che tu adassi [?] soldato fosse state meglio a darmi un bicchiere di veleno e non scrivermi questo tu consideri il mio cuore come della tigre. Tu non puoi immaginare come a passato questi due giorne pensando alla tua lettera e come mi vengono in mente le tue parole dicendo che io non ti ami e tu lo credi? Se non ti vorrei bene altrimenti non ti avrei fatto venire a casa, ti prego di metterti l'anima in pace e non e non pensare al contrario di me perché io ti so sempre fidele. Non ho altro che dirti perché non ho piu la forza di scrivere t'invio i miei piú affetuosi saluti e mi firmo

G

Arrivederci

[13] Mio caro
Oggi appunto o ricevuto la tua e da me tanto desiderata cartolina e mi affretto a risponderti. Io non ti ho scritto piú prima perché non ho avuto tempo che questa è sempre la ragione che non posso mai risponderti a tempo dovuto, io sto molto in pensiero per te crendendo [sic] che devi andare soldato e credi non ho pace pensando che devi allontanarti da me ed io desidero con tutto il cuore che mai avenisse ciò in tutti [..?giorne] leggo il giornale se trovo il tuo nome.

[14] Sto molto dispiaciuta con questa questione di soldati che anno cominciato a chiamarli di nuovo ed io temo per te, se succedesse il caso che tu dovessi partire credessi [?] io

non potessi soffrire questo dolore, vederti partire cosi' lontano, lontano da me e non sapessi se tu ritornasse piu' e nel pensare questo non ho pace.

[15] Utica 7 Novembre 1917

Mio carissimo

Rispondo alla tua lettera e sento quanto tu mi dici. Acetto cio' che mi indichi ma io non voglio ritornare indietro, lasciamo tutto questo e non pensiamoci piu'. Io so che ho mancato un poco del mio lato e tu dal tuo e cosi siamo pari. Pero' devo dirti una cosa ti sei accorto troppo tardi che so <?> superba. Basta non voglio che tu stai piu' in collera con me e ne io lo faro' con te, io o dimenticato tutto quello che t'ho detto e credi che tu fai altre tanto. Ma! Non offensartene <?> che io son sottomessa <?>, che ti o detta cio' per farti capire che io non sono come tu ti pensi che per me non cambia mai il tuo amore. Per adesso lascio di scrivere perche' non cio' tempo un altra volta ti scrivo piu" allungo lascio con darti i miei piu' cari ed affetuosi saluti e mi dico tua

xx<x *over* G>xG.xxx

xxxxxxx

Aspetto una tua lettera con anzia

[16] See Virgil C. Cristafulli, "Commerce and Industry" . In [Oneida County] 1977 *The History of Oneida County commemorating the bicentennial our national independence* (Utica, NY: [n.p],1977/1979), 105. Bean, 45-70, includes an extensive description and discussion of Utica industry. Bean's work is the most thorough study of Central New York Italian immigration history, especially in Utica, and one to which this essay is deeply indebted.

[17] For a full discussion and analysis of the 1919 strike in Utica, see Bean, 199-221.

[18] According to George Martin, Frances Perkins' biographer, Spargo's obscene letter has disappeared. Martin writes that Robert M. Lake, former executive vice-president of Revere Copper and Brass, "heard the following story from his father who had it direct from Spargo: sometime in the 1930s, when F[rances] P[erkins] was Secretary of Labor, she wrote Spargo asking for some information. He replied, "I have received your letter and used it to wipe my ass." George Martin, *Madame Secretary: Frances Perkins* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), 514. There are several accounts of the Rome strike, which differ according to the political and ethnic bias of the writer. The most thorough narrative account can be found in Martin's biography of Perkins. His description of the events is heavily indebted to the interview Secretary Perkins granted to the oral history project at Columbia University in the early 1950s. A transcript of that interview can be accessed at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/nny/perkinsf/introduction.html. See also New York State Department of Labor, *The Bulletin,* Vol. 4, No 11 (August 1919), 201-209, 219. The veteran journalist Isaac F. Marcosson's *Industrial Main Street: The Story of Rome—the Copper City* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co, 1953), is a corporate-sponsored history of the city, and repeats without

documentation the rumors of Bolshevik and IWW involvement. The local newspaper, the *Rome Daily Sentinel,* can be consulted for a day by day report (June 4 to August 18, 1919), but English-language newspapers in both Rome and Utica exhibited strong anti-union bias, as well as a condescension toward the Italian population (on the situation in Utica, see Bean, 145.) William Forbes bases his 1998 essay on the Rome strike mostly on these *Sentinel* stories. See *Annals and Recollections* [Rome Historical Society], Vol. IV, No. 20 (October, 1998). Marcosson provides an account of the Spargo brothers' role in Rome's industrial history, but like Spargo's official biography, gives no hint of Spargo's predilection for violence. See Marcosson, 140ff, and Henry J. Cookingham, *History of Oneida County, New York From 1700 to the present time of some of its prominent men and pioneers.* (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912).

[19] Martin, 156.

[20] Quoted in Martin, 158

[21] Martin, 160.

[22] Martin, 160-161.

[23] *La Vita* (June 14, 1919).

[24] Antonio Spadafora (perhaps Joe's brother) is present in a photograph of the Rome, N.Y. Socialist Party, taken on May 1, 1910, in D'Argenio, 31.

[25] She hints again at her father's and brothers' opposition in a January 1918 letter: Tu vuoi scritto a forza io certe volte non ho l'occasione e dal resto non voglio che mio patre e i miei fratelli me < ? > le tue lettere perche' ne sento troppo vergogna e loro certamente mi < ? > e certamente fanno il loro dovere ed io voglio fare il mio dovere ad evitare queste cose e questa e la pura e semplice ragione che io non ti scrivo, lo so che ti racconto tutte queste chiacchere tu non mi credi come non mi ai creduto tante e tante volte ma io son sicura che dico la verità.

[26] The wedding announcement, and its curious addendum, appeared in the *Utica Daily Press* (November 4, 1914).

[27] *La Vita* (November 18, 1922).

[28] See Bean's discussion of Nicoletta Sacco Cardamone, mother of the Utica-born novelist Helen Bertolini. Cardamone "maintain[ed] the fiction that she was little more than a humble housekeeper who modestly pitched in at the family shop when needed." On the contrary, as Bean demonstrates, she was responsible for transforming the enterprise into a prosperous wholesale operation. Bean, 134 and 404n47. Bean also

includes a valuable discussion of the importance of Italian groceries and bakeries as recent southern Italian immigrants adapted to life as American entrepreneurs. See Bean, 121-129. For more on immigrant entrepreneurship and social mobility, see also Bean 145, 147.

[29] See *Rome Daily Sentinel* (April 24, 1924): SPADAFORA MURDERED IN UTICA…VISITED ROME WITH GANG OF UTICA BOOZE ROBBERS; and *Utica Observer-Dispatch* (April 24, 1924): SPADAFORA KILLING BELIEVED RESULT OF BOOTLEGGERS FEUD.

[30] ***LUTTO NOSTRO***
Mercoledì della scorsa settimana verso le ore 9 a.m. cessava di vivere nella propria residenza, 801 E. Dominick St., la signora Giovanna Ferlo. La cara esistenza si spense serenamente fra le cure affettuose del marito, del padre, dai fratelli, sorelle, ed altri parenti intimi che l'adoravano. La malattia ribelle alla science ed a tutte le cure che la circondavano volle redimere quella giovane vita, ma il suo sorriso conservavo fino all'ultimo l'espressione della bontà.

L'immatura morte avveniva nel trentatreesimo anno di età; la compaiana lascia otto figli (tutto in tenera età) i genitori, fratelli e sorelle ed il povero ed inconsolabile marito in dolore che difficilmente il tempo saprà calmare suo dolore.

I funerali ebbero luogo sabato e furono veramente solenni, sia per il concorso del pubblico che per il tribute floreale. Il lutto è nostro, poiché l'estinta era figlia della sorella del nostro Direttore, che sì associa a lei nel dolore di sì cara e preziosa perdita. *La Vita* (November 1, 1930).