



# **By the Breath of Their Mouths: Narratives of Resistance in Italian America (SUNY series in Italian/American Culture)**

*Mary Jo Bona*

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*Examines the liberating power of speech and its influence on generations of Italian American writers.*

In *By the Breath of Their Mouths*, Mary Jo Bona examines the oral uses of language and the liberating power of speech in Italian American writing, as well as its influences on generations of assimilated Italian American writers. Probing and wide-ranging, Bona's analysis reveals the lasting importance of storytelling and folk narrative, their impact on ethnic, working-class, and women's literatures, and their importance in shaping multiethnic literature. Drawing on a wide range of material from several genres, including oral biographies, fiction, film, poetry, and memoir, and grounded in recent theories of narrative and autobiography, postcolonial theory, and critical multiculturalism, *By the Breath of Their Mouths* is must reading for students in Italian American studies in particular and ethnic studies and multiethnic literature more generally.

"This book ... serves as refuge and challenge, as critique and commemoration, as resistance and continuity, and as a crucial resource for students and scholars of Italian America, literature, culture, and for those who dare to explore the complexities of personhood and humanity." — *MELUS*

"Mary Jo Bona's *By the Breath of Their Mouths* ... elegantly highlights how Italian American authors challenge those internal institutions that intend to shape them into relatively quiet people—the patriarchal family and the cultural code of omertà ... Bona's own authoritative voice plants the voice of Italian American women firmly in the foreground of our scholarship." — *Italian Culture*

"...Bona fruitfully crosses her analysis with some of the most vital theoretical issues of contemporary cultural studies." — *CHOICE*

"...a unique study of Italian-American literature, old and new ... Through this work, [Bona] builds a bridge to the next phase of Italian-American literary criticism—the integration of Italian-American writings into the U.S. canon." — *Fra Noi*

"This is a work of consummate scholarship incorporating substantial knowledge of literary history, critical theory, and great breadth of reading in Italian American and multiethnic literature. Beautifully written, it is one of the top critical works I have encountered in the field of Italian American studies." — Josephine Gattuso Hendin, author of *Heartbreakers: Women and Violence in Contemporary Culture and Literature*

"This book will become a canonical work in the criticism of Italian American literature." — John Paul Russo, author of *The Future without a Past: The Humanities in a Technological Society*

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