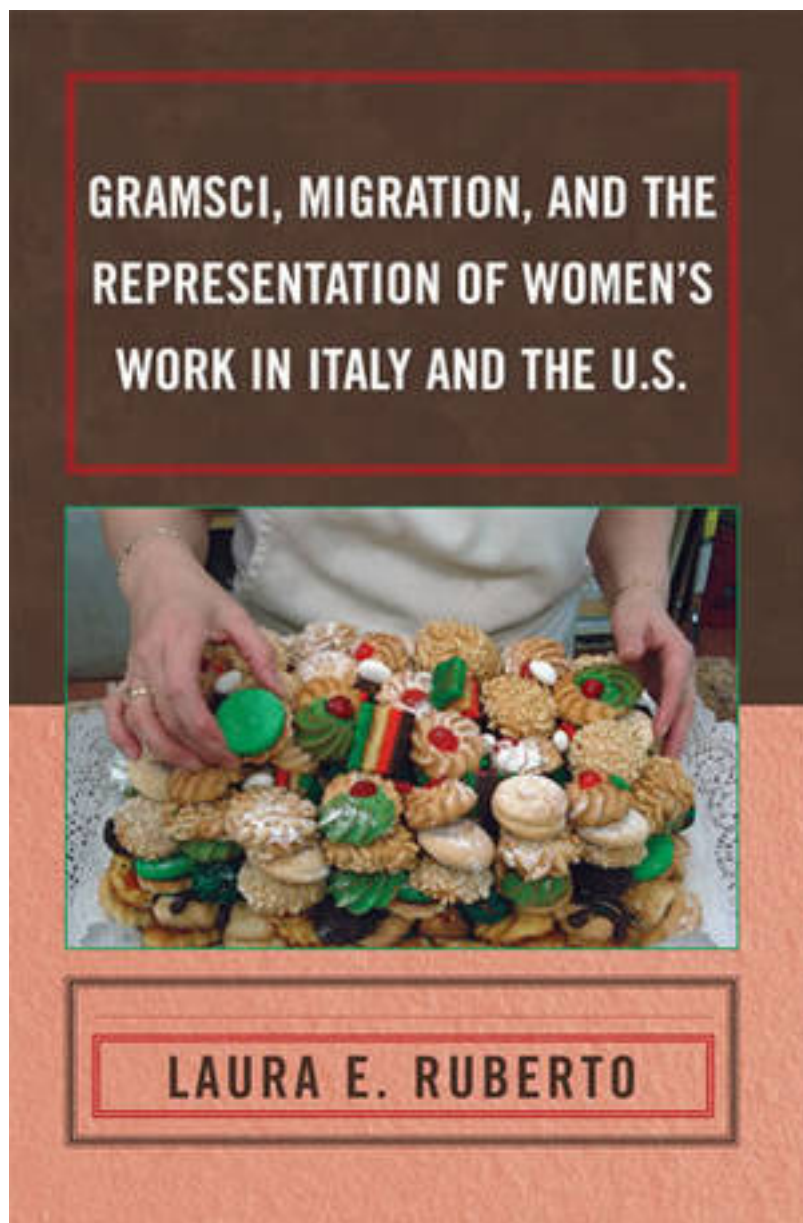




A Gramscian Podcast on Women Workers and Migration

Laura E. Ruberto (April 15, 2008)



Podcasting on Gramsci, immigrant women, labor, and the history of San Diego's cannery workers.
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Last month I presented my book, *Gramsci, Migration, and the Representation of Women's Work in Italy and the U.S.* (Lexington Books, 2007), at the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Queens College, CUNY. You can listen to a podcast of my talk [here](#) [2] (or see link below).

The book looks at the work of Italian cultural theorist Antonio Gramsci, revisited through a feminist perspective, and offers insights into the relationship between the history of Italian emigration and contemporary immigration to Italy, particularly in relation to the representation of women's work. I study a variety of cultural representations (novels, films, testimonials, photographs, etc.) of immigrant women workers, focusing on rice work and paid domestic labor in Italy, and cannery labor and unwaged housework in the U.S. I'm interested in how migrant women workers take part in the development of what Gramsci calls national popular culture, even as they are excluded from dominant cultural narratives.

In this podcast I offer some general impressions as to what I find so thrilling about Gramsci's work and then I move on to talk a bit about the history of Italian Americans in San Diego. I approach the subject with a story involving an old photograph of Italian, Mexican, Portuguese, and Japanese immigrant women cannery workers, an 82 year old Mexican American man, and the city's annual Columbus Day Festival.

It's a story that reminds me of the possibility of cultural recuperation of immigrant women worker's experiences through unconventional sources, like photographs. At the same time, the story highlights the complex relationship Italian Americans have to assimilation and their position as white Americans. Finally, it demonstrates some of the ways women's unrecognized kinds of practices and work experiences can point toward a new kind of national popular culture based on women's lives.

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