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SISTER KATIE

The Memory and Making of a 1.5 Generation Working-Class Transnational

Caroline Waldron Merithew

Identifying the theoretical and chronological fault lines that divide immigration and women's history, I use memory and biography to argue that assimilation and transnationalism in the 1.5 and second generations were not oppositional. In this article, I tell the story of an Italian immigrant who moved to the United States as a young child and who became a self-proclaimed "left winger." I cast Katie's story less from her own words as from the recollections of others who remade and remembered her from the 1930s until 1960. I argue that a working-class transnational's identity was one that could move through large and small geographic spaces as well as take up the minds and hearts of men and women who made (or witnessed) global crossings. The identity of "transnationals"—those immigrants like Katie—might be described as slippery. They slipped through identities, highlighting and hiding different pieces of themselves at different moments and places. The construction of Katie over time comprised domains often imagined and experienced by many as contradictory or competing: the foreigner/the citizen, the personal/the political, the internationalist/the American, and the home/the community.

In the 20 July 1961 issue of the magazine *Il Borghese*, Giuseppe Prezzolini, an Italian journalist with ties to Benito Mussolini, devoted much of his regular column to the memorial of Katie DeRorre, born Catherine Bianco, an Italian immigrant and self-proclaimed "left winger" who lived most of her life in the coal towns of Illinois. Prezzolini acknowledged DeRorre's American roots—she had arrived in the United States at the age of eight—but he highlighted her Italianness. To think about how Katie lived her life was to be reminded of one of the great moments in Italian history: the "time when Italian socialism was in its pink phase, the epoch of Prampolini and Massarenti." These men "believed they could conquer the world with good," Prezzolini wrote. Katie's gravestone, which was engraved with "Good Samaritan of the Coalfields" and etched with images of a miner and child, also reminded Prezzolini of the ancient Mediterranean heritage they shared. Katie's tomb, he reflected, was like those of the "first Christians in the Roman catacombs."¹

Prezzolini was not unique in "transnationalizing" the memory of Katie DeRorre. Gerry Allard, a French immigrant, socialist, and newspaper edi-

tor, also made connections between Italian and American pasts in Illinois's *Collinsville Herald*. "Two elements" shaped Katie's "character and actions," he argued—Italy's Piedmont region (she was born in Turin) and her mining father. "The Turinos," he wrote, were "progressive" and "socially minded." In their villages, the "teachings of Cavour, Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Modigliani took deep root." For readers better versed in U.S. civilization than Italian history, Allard helpfully explained that "these Italian thinkers and leaders are to Italy what Jefferson, Lincoln, Tom Paine, and Gene Debs are to America. That part of the world is now one of the bulwarks of democracy."² Jack Battuelo, a coal miner and anarchist, remembered a different side to DeRorre. Before post-WWII Italy was remade as Allard suggested, Katie practiced a type of domestic democratic "state" of her own. "Katie's home was her cathedral," Battuelo reminisced, "Through it passed people from all walks of life. They came; the atheist and the pious; the progressive and the conservative; the radical and the reactionary; the white man and the black man. None was shunned. None was turned away. None was segregated. They sat at her table and supped, and they left forever touched by her graciousness and nobility."³ The praise songs for Katie were repeated by others, including Frank Zeidler, the long time socialist mayor of Milwaukee, and Roger Baldwin, the founder of the American Civil Liberties Union.

That these men—with markedly different politics, class backgrounds, cultural bearings, and standings in the world—would describe an immigrant homemaker-activist in such international terms, especially at this moment in the twentieth century, which stood between the great immigrant waves to the United States, begs a challenge to an array of historiographical assumptions about gender, the 1.5 and second generations, memory, and the divergence of immigration and women's history.⁴ Prezzolini, Allard, and Battuelo remind us that transnational identification was made in multiple dimensions. In his foundational work on the African American diaspora, historian Earl Lewis has posited that multipositionality should be understood as something more than identity shifting or privileging (e.g., race over class, gender over religion). "It is the interactive construction of identity—as child, lover, spouse, and so on—that requires fuller explication," Lewis contended.⁵ A transnational immigrant's identity was one that could move through large and small geographic spaces as well as take up the minds and hearts of men and women who made (or witnessed) global crossings. While transnationalism has been invoked with an array of meanings, my principle concern in this essay is to explore the term in a way that brings together Lewis's notion of interactivity with the notion of the "diasporic private sphere."⁶ The identity of "transnationals"—those immigrants like Katie—might be described as slippery. Their lives encompassed the territoriality of immigration and the emotional ties of immigrant

homes. They slipped through identities, highlighting and hiding different pieces of themselves at different moments and places.

Given that people remembered Katie in similar ways despite their curiously mismatched politics, my analysis starts with a deceptively simple question (pared down from the dozens of questions I have asked while discovering my subject in the archives, newspapers, oral interviews, private homes, local history societies, censuses, and letters). I ask here: who was Katie DeRorre? My answer and interpretation of the question brings together the theoretical and chronological contributions of immigration, women's history, and critical race studies. The article is consciously microhistorical and I am clear about the problem of scale. As historian Martha Hodes has shown, relations of power "can best be illustrated by exploring the experiences of particular historical actors in particular geographical settings."⁷ Where historical actors and settings begin and end, however, can be complex, especially when we consider the realities of the majority of immigrants who moved transnationally and left scant records of their steps.

In this article, I cast Katie's biography less from her own words as from the recollections of others who remade and remembered her from the 1930s until 1960. I suggest that in writing her narrative, her unintentional biographers did more than consider DeRorre's immigrant life. They also reflected on, and created meaning for, their own lives. These constructions of (and through) Katie over time comprised domains often imagined and experienced by many as contradictory or competing: the foreigner/the citizen, the personal/the political, the internationalist/the American, and the home/the community. By contextualizing these dichotomous memories, we might see Katie's story as one that leads to an alternative history of transnationals—a narrative that encompasses the public and private spheres as well as connects cultural and political experience with internationalism.

Immigration historians have transformed the way we study U.S. history. They have defined frontiers, traced border crossings, made diasporic connections, and found the transnational links between individuals, communities, and social movements.⁸ We now know that arbitrary sociopolitical lines do not confine people's movements, the way they think, or the communities they build. With some few exceptions, however, historical discussions of transnationalism have been pillared on either side of the 1924 and 1965 Immigration Acts.⁹ This periodization has meant that the identities of the 1.5 (those who emigrated as young children) and second generation children who came of age between the Great Depression and the early Cold War—a fundamental period for the immigrant story—have been missed.¹⁰ Despite the gap, some try to make comparative claims between the new immigrants and the fourth wave. Nancy Foner, for example, has recently stated, "Among earlier European immigrants, transnationalism had

a fairly short life . . . [and] fell off sharply after the first generation."¹¹ My findings suggest something different. The strength of Italian immigrants' transnationalism in its everyday form extended into the 1.5 and second generations, who were raised in the post-Johnson Reed era, came of age during World War II, and defined their legacy during the early Cold War. The memories about Katie DeRorre and her home were etched into people's minds and retold by them precisely at this time.

In contrast to immigration historiography, women's history is flush with studies that probe the middle decades of the twentieth century. Historian Nancy Cott's call to move beyond the notion that 1920 ended an era for feminism has begun to change the field. More recently, historian Dorothy Sue Cobble has destabilized the middle-class narrative of the second wave. Her *Other Women's Movement* has shown that women's rights activism did not dwindle during the period between the 1930s and 1950s.¹² Rather than being the "dead zone" of feminism, these years marked a continuation of political and social struggle that had everything to do with the reemergence of second-wave feminism—in both its liberal and liberationist forms. Like most labor historians, Cobble's class analysis depends on the union membership of her subjects. Many immigrant women, especially those who resided on the rural industrial frontiers (like the mining fields, the sphere in which Katie resided) were outside of large urban metropolises that provided female wage labor opportunities.

Using critical biography to identify the theoretical and chronological fault lines that divide immigration and women's history, I argue that assimilation and transnationalism in the 1.5 and second generations were not oppositional. My contention moves into debates in race and working-class history. Because immigrant radicalism was vocal and widespread, there is a tendency in labor history to elide transnationalism with internationalism. Indeed, in many cases transnationalism and internationalism went hand in hand. As historians Donna Gabaccia, Fraser Ottanelli, Lisa McGirr, Jennifer Guglielmo, Michael Miller Topp, myself, and others have suggested, such radical social movements as anarchism brought workers from around the world together and heightened their sense of the power of "borderlessness." But the terms are not the same. Although they disagree on the details, scholars David Roediger, Jim Barrett, Thomas Guglielmo, and Matthew Fry Jacobson have shown that becoming American changed the way that immigrants thought of their racial identity. Racialization was certainly linked to Americanization. But assimilation did not stall transnational thinking in the children and grandchildren of new immigrants. Daughters and sons could equally reject their elders' ways of life and, in turn, embrace an altered transnational subjectivity. Bringing together the theoretical underpinnings of Roediger's understanding of racial agency

and Guglielmo's finding of unwavering government officials in their classification of Italians as white, I suggest that the simultaneous rejection and embrace was significant especially at the mid-century when the American government and Italian Fascists were vying for loyalty, and radical leftist political organizations and ethnic community leaders shaped immigrants' world view (and Katie DeRorre's reality).¹³

This article follows three complementary courses the evidence takes to unravel the biography, memory, and history of Katie DeRorre, a 1.5 generation transnational. In the first section, I look at how, when, and by whom Katie was remembered in the period neglected by immigration historiography. In the 1920s and 1930s, internationalists began to combine articulations of politics and culture as a way to combat the rising resonance of fascism in the United States. After World War II, the discourse of internationalism tended to hide the full spectrum of transnational immigrant life by favoring expressions of cultural over political connections, especially during the height of the Red Scare. The second section highlights and historicizes domesticity. Here I analyze how memories of Katie's home were central to the domestication of transnationalism which was embedded in post-WWII America but still linked to earlier gender constructions of male and female capacity. In the third section, I plot the biographical details of Katie's life and contextualize the part she played in her working-class immigrant community (in its provincial and global forms). I seek to underscore here the transnational identity of a 1.5 generation female immigrant. I explore the way contradictions in Katie's narrative move my analysis beyond mere biography to an analysis of social, cultural, and political meaning in the twentieth century. My thoughts here delve into the recent historiographical discussions about microhistory, narrativity, and biography.

"Sister Katie Day," 1956

On 3 June 1956 family and friends paid tribute to Katie DeRorre by declaring "Sister Katie Day" and naming her the "Good Samaritan of the coalfields." Celebrants heard speeches by Milwaukee's Socialist Mayor Frank Zeidler and Gerry Allard and enjoyed a picnic lunch at the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall. The organizing committee had solicited cards, letters, and photos beforehand—"a review of our younger days"—and pasted them in a red leather bound "souvenir book" to present to Katie at the festivities. Celebrating an individual woman's life was strategic. By 1956, radicals had had time to regroup and redefine themselves. The anti-labor act Taft-Hartley was almost a decade old; Senator Jo McCarthy was dead; the Red Scare was changing; and in February of that year, Nikita Khrushchev delivered his "Secret Speech," which was leaked to the West. Allard and his wife, Irene,

expressed hope about the changes. In their card to Katie, they wrote: "It would seem that this group lost practically all the battles but they may yet win the war." Intended for public consumption, the organizers assembled the political event around the personal. They chose Katie because her "heroic spirit . . . exemplified the career of thousands of others," but also because, as Tillie and Jack Battuello put it, "*We think Katy is just perfect.*" University of Chicago Economics Professor Maynard Krueger signified her importance: "You may not know it," he told DeRorre, "but whenever as many as three D.P. ex-miners in Chicago get together to chew over old times the name and the deeds of Katie DeRorre are sure to come into conversation." The party-throwers had rehearsed beforehand. But Katie played her part impromptu. She cried when she was presented with flowers, a watch, memorabilia, and the scrapbook. She "wondered why" all this fuss for a "common housewife," the *Saint Louis Post Dispatch* reported.¹⁴

Sister Katie Day embodied the collective memory of a transnational Left. The memory was narrated through a feminization of the struggle which both revealed and masked the role women (and their homes) played in the uprisings of the 1930s. Historian John Bodnar has formulated immigrant memory as a marker of both past and present. He has written that people "inevitably recall the past in ways that best serve their purpose in present time, and they erase or revise facts and interpretations that they consider antithetical."¹⁵ The crowd of progressives "with Italian, French, German, Scotch, and English names" that gathered were honoring, remembering, and rewriting a history of a quarter of a century at a moment when the Left, though decimated, was surviving the Cold War.¹⁶ They emerged cautiously.

To invoke the term "Good Samaritan" was a sign of the times. During the 1930s, when Katie was involved in union and unemployed organizing, African American and immigrant rights' advocacy, and free speech struggles, she was often referred to as "Sister" not Samaritan. By the 1950s, "Sister" was associated and linked too closely with subversion. Good Samaritan, on the other hand, was more nuanced.¹⁷ This new label both depoliticized and repoliticized. A Good Samaritan Sister held religious undertones. And while the allusion did not reflect accurately Katie's relationship with institutional religion, comrades claimed that her deeds were done in the true spirit of a Christian ethic. "Among her intimates, she often expressed perplexity at the immense division which exists among the religious denominations, and their failure to practice in the way of their doctrinal teachings," Battuello remembered.¹⁸ Still, the mayor of the city read from Proverbs about the virtuous woman. Mary, Joseph, and Katie came to mind for others: "A Mississippi poet wrote that Southern Illinois . . . had never produced a Joseph, alluding to Joseph leading Mary to Bethlehem. That is true but it

produced a Katie." The soup kitchen work DeRorre did was saintly. She helped feed children regardless of race, creed, national origin, or union affiliation in a way that would be familiar to "Jesus in Israel and St. Francis in Romany," reported the *Collinsville Herald*.¹⁹ In his card, Roger Baldwin waxed eloquent for Katie: "If courage is the essence of freedom . . . and if compassion for your fellow men is the virtue which makes life meaningful, yours is blessed beyond most."²⁰

During the Cold War, Good Samaritan moved beyond the parochial. It was tied to America's new internationalism and imperialism. Diplomatic historian Emily Rosenberg has written insightfully that Henry Luce's "American Century" had multiple components that reinvigorated an international outlook. Second-generation transnationals could connect their radicalism with the emerging Americanization of the world. The organizers of Sister Katie Day might have had this in mind—they certainly knew the rhetoric. In the 1950s, the immigrant Left could come "out" by "becoming the Good Samaritan to the entire world in times of hunger and need" that Rosenberg has described.²¹

The memories pasted in the scrapbook and read aloud at the party combined a sense of immigrant identity, the role women played in the radical movements of the past, and American ideals about the present. Attorney L. P. Harris had mined coal with Katie's father, Felix Bianco. Harris's card paid "my deepest respects and fondest and best wishes to that girl who deserved the respect and esteem of the coal miners of Illinois." Harris wrote the note as much for Katie as for the audience and the public who, he knew, would report on the event. He found it important to emphasize Italian heritage and American values. Katie's "father was a fine Italian immigrant to this country," Harris remembered, "a conscientious hard worker. . . . And no immigrant from any country was ever more deserving the respect of the American people than was Felix Bianco." Baldwin echoed the sentiment of assimilation: "I have cherished the memory of you as one of the rare pioneers . . . in the good fight for our American freedoms."²² Representative Melvin Price entered Sister Katie Day in the Congressional Record: "Mr. Speaker. . . . Mrs. Catherine DeRorre . . . wife of an immigrant and daughter of immigrant parents . . . is a legend." He reminded others on the House floor that day that miners were a "special breed": "In every nation of the western world, even in the nations behind the Iron Curtain, miners have been in the forefront of every struggle for social justice. The men have not maintained their spirit without help and encouragement of women." Zeidler, the master of ceremonies, described Katie with the American work ethic. He told the group that "'Sister Katie' . . . is a symbol of the pioneer woman of the industrial age. . . . She is 'one of the least of these, my brethren,' who along with inventors and builders and statesmen,

bring the changes that make a kinder, fairer world."²³ The committee also spelled out its hopes. They considered it "an honor to have participated in such an affair. . . . May our children and our children's children build a better world!" John and Betty Williams felt that remembering Katie was about both past and present. They wrote, "How wonderful it is . . . to have a friend who remembers—and who's not too busy to sit and speak of the past, and plan the future, and make him feel again that he is part of the things he loved so much."²⁴

Though most of the progressives (well versed in organizing tactics and the art of persuasion) wrote a narrative for the times in which they lived, some of her comrades interpreted Katie in different ways. "Because the expression of our various myths is influenced by people with varying degrees of political, corporate, media, and cultural power," Bodnar wrote, "sacred narratives can either reinforce or contest each other's validity."²⁵ The memory of Katie was dissonant. DeRorfe's friend Craig Easton from Andover, Massachusetts remembered a story slightly removed from the new vision of internationalism in the Cold War and the Americanization expressed by many. "Just a few lines to salute you in this, your day," Easton wrote, "You stood up and was [*sic*] counted in the never ending battle to eke out just a nice bit more from our Oppressors. I am proud to have been associated with you and the others of the *left wing* the best group in the USA. Persons who knew what *Nationalism is and was*. They thought along International lines."²⁶

The celebration for Katie allowed friends and family to fortify the memories of their heyday. These memories also reflected a reevaluation of women's labor in the movement. The planning committee that conceived of Sister Katie Day was all male ("Gerry and the rest of the boys," according to Krueger). These men may have inculcated some of the Cold War rhetoric, which, according to historian Elaine Tyler May, connected "ideology and the domestic revival" in the 1950s.²⁷ Women like Katie "who throughout the turbulent lives of the miners, have stood by their side, have kept the faith, women who have kept the hearth of home warm and secure, held the brood together, and fed and clothed and nursed and bedded and schooled the children, and when the going was tough, real tough, they were to take the battle lines to uphold the right of the men to work not as vassals but as freemen."²⁸ As they recalled the roles their wives, mothers, and daughters had played in their lives—their retelling of events glorified women in the past. But it did something more. Scholar Chiou-Ling Yeh has traced the feminization of Chinese New Year celebrations in the 1950s. Just as Chinese American men highlighted female subjectivity in this festival, Katie's male comrades chose to emphasize the domestic realm of their movements at the same time.²⁹

Katie's Home

A month after "Sister Katie Day," the *East St. Louis Journal* featured DeRorre in a story entitled "Mostaccioli Her Specialty." With a photo of Katie in her kitchen, the article framed her life in domestic terms in three ways, which underscored the complexity of a 1.5-generation transnational at mid-century. First, its iteration of Katie's past feminized the labor movement by highlighting the role of women in the miners' struggle. DeRorre recalled the dual union fight between the United Mine Workers of America (UMW) and the Progressive Mine Workers (PMA). "There were things that had to be done, so I helped do them," she said. Katie hinted at women's importance: "Someone had to get things started—things couldn't go on as they had been." Second, the story focused on her home as her politics. The article, for example, included recipes. My first interpretation of this focus was that the journalist had downplayed Katie's radicalism. But read another way, perhaps Katie intentionally highlighted her home and the recipes actually show the domestication of radicalism and diaspora. Was Katie asked by the reporter to give recipes? Or did she include them as a means of underscoring the different ways politics might be fed? Either way, "her home," the journalist repeated the words that were used in the Congressional Record, "was always a haven for the afflicted." Third, the piece drew attention to the transnational links that Katie continued to have with Italy. American Studies scholar Maddalena Tirabassi has shown that Italian workers in the diaspora had a different sense of domesticity than the American middle class. For Italians, "the worlds of work and family did not always form separate 'private' or 'domestic' and 'public' spheres, even in industrial settings."³⁰ Katie's mostaccioli, "her most popular dish," was served "in her home" for political consumption. She did not prepare Bagna Calda (a hot dip made with anchovies, garlic, and olive oil) for non-Italians, but it was an important component of her cooking. "Now that's a Dish!" Katie laughingly told the reporter; "Mrs. DeRorre said that one must acquire a taste for this dish, but one may be assured that almost all Italian families serve it at least once a year." Cooking Italian meals for her guests and writing letters to her husband's family in Italy (because she was the one who knew how to write in Italian) was the way Katie, like other 1.5 as well as second-generation transnationals, secured links in the diaspora.³¹

Immigrant homes were economic and psychic venues. Historian David Roediger, in his recent perceptive equation of American identity and cultural ownership, has used the notion of "white houses" to unravel the complicated racial assimilation of the second generation. Boarding houses, single-family dwellings, apartment flats, and company shacks were the nexus of family life, intimate relationships, and the places where

ideas about the world were formed (and rejected). Immigrants made the domestic political in the complicated and contradictory ways that whiteness afforded them.

Home ownership, for example—which went up with generational sequencing of white immigrant groups—underscored the meaning of what legal scholar Cheryl Harris has described as “whiteness as property.”³² Katie DeRorre valued her house. She made it a center of working-class community that linked public and private, personal and political. At home, she wrote letters to kin in Italy, held meetings for the women’s auxiliaries of the PMA and the Alpina Dogali Society, fed people, and formed her radical consciousness by listening and talking with others. In 1937, Katie and her husband, Joseph, tried unsuccessfully to use their property (whiteness and home together) as bail for a fellow unemployed organizer, Ed Parker. Parker, an African American member of the Illinois Workers Alliance (IWA), was race-baited and thus targeted as a leader in WPA demonstrations for higher compensation in southern Illinois.³³

Katie’s domesticity was her activism and that is what many remembered about this Italian immigrant. The point deserves emphasis because it reveals both a hidden side of the immigrant Left but also the political savvy of my subject. By the 1950s, the shifting public and private sphere that Tyler May has referred to as part of the middle class also occurred in working-class communities. While the the security of the home included echoes of nineteenth-century True Womanhood, progressive maternalism, and radical motherhood, domesticity in this period was not an exact replicate whether working or middle class.

The memories of Katie’s home were summoned in physical and emotional spaces—what might be conceived of as a third sphere. While women in unions and politics used this third sphere most effectively during the Great Depression, when the unemployed could not always meet or organize on the shop floor but had to do so in living rooms, hobo camps, and public park benches which now doubled as a public domicile, its roots were planted earlier. Boarding houses run by women, including their front stoops and the streets they overlooked, were centers of such activism in cosmopolitan working-class neighborhoods, historians have discovered, around the country. Black and white Republicans found refuge in Hannah Flournoy’s boarding house, for example, during Reconstruction, and Puerto Rican immigrant Luisa Capetillo served political speech with meals for her boarders in early-twentieth-century New York City. Female immigrants in Lawrence, Massachusetts inculcated a domestically based internationalism to build interethnic cooperation during the 1912 textile strike.³⁴ By the 1930s, the multiethnic and multiracial Left openly expressed the “culture of unity,” forging an internationalist mindset as American identity to build the

Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the largest industrial union in American history. Factory organizing was essential for the CIO's success. But communities and homes (which were sites of both unpaid and paid labor, as such scholars as Eileen Boris have shown) still continued to be important, especially for women who did not have equal access to union halls, local bars, mutual aid societies, or other male-defined public space. By the 1950s, for the children of this generation, a feminized radicalism that forefronted the domestic was not new, and it may even have seemed innate.³⁵

Katie (and the memory of her) was the embodiment of this domestication and its function in the diaspora. The discourse about her home was personal and political reflection. In the card that Agnes Burns Wieck sent on the occasion of Sister Katie Day, she wrote: "As I greet you on this gala day, my thoughts go back to the time when first we met—almost a quarter of a century ago. Late at night, but it was never too late for a special supper in Katie's kitchen in DuQuoin." She continued, "Do you remember how your house used to overflow with women fleeing violence from meetings where they were denied their civil liberties? Like refugees we came. The little house on Walnut Street was transformed into a mansion of hospitality."³⁶ From the mid-nineteenth century through the 1950s, the idea of home was equated with refuge—a place to escape from the world. But Katie's home was not simply an escape. It was also an alternative. Thyra Edwards, an African American New Yorker active in socialist politics, told Wieck in a correspondence: "And the recollection of 'Sister Katie' conjured up the most thrilling experience in my life. I always have a feeling of deep gratitude to you and Tom Tippet for making it possible."³⁷ Agnes explained the meaning of the thrill in her greeting card to Katie and the partygoers. "Do you remember the night I arrived with a Negro woman to help win the wives of our colored brothers? I hadn't asked you, and it could have proved disastrous. Somehow we all knew that Sister Katie was ever ready to go beyond the call of duty. . . . Soon you were visiting the DuQuoin schools, colored and white, to welcome every child who wished it, to a hot lunch those cold winter days. I can still see that ramshackle house your Auxiliary made into a soup Kitchen. To me it was like a shrine. For a little while, in labor's history, white and colored families shared true equality."³⁸ In a newspaper article, Edwards remembered the food and solidarity of the DeRorre house, too. "Katie's dining room was crowded with Negro miners and we talked P.M.A. as we lunched [on] French endive salad, Italian spaghetti, dolci paste and pickled wild mushrooms." Later on, "Katie's front parlor was full past capacity, with the wives of Negro Miners. And over cups of Katie's steaming coffee we talked Woman's Auxiliary."³⁹ As an activist, DeRorre's actions served as example. She made her home a union hall, which became part of the struggle for interethnic and interracial working-class justice and

she hoped others would follow her lead. For Battuello, who had described the DeRorre house as a cathedral, "her world" was a place where "there could be neither surplus or surcease as long as there was one hungry child or one exploited miner."⁴⁰

The alternative possibilities that people experienced in Katie's home started with family relationships which defined each member. In the domesticity of Katie's world, the maternal was not necessarily the core. And motherhood was not spiritually sanctified. What made good mothers was the same thing that made good workers—not biology but fairness. When Katie became involved in the Illinois Workers Alliance, a friend had asked her to write about ways that women might use their domestic skills to save money while on relief. Katie was adamant that women should not focus on penny pinching to help their households, but rather "better their conditions to fight for more relief and a higher budget, not to pinch them down to show how far the dollar can be extend[ed]. The point is to point out the necessities of life in the growing children, pregnancy and nursing mothers."⁴¹ To be sure, DeRorre was conscious of herself as a homemaker. But she was also a radical and the work she performed in the third sphere bridged private and public spaces that structured coal towns around family life and industry. In "Mostaccioli her Specialty," she emphasized the special relationships she had with her family and that the caring connections within her home had defined who she was and how she acted. "Family life has not been neglected," the *East St. Louis Journal* told its readers. "It is with deep pride, that she tells that it was the children and her husband who made possible her service to others."⁴² Norman Thomas, associate editor of *The Nation*, commented on this: "I shall never forget the night I spent at your house and the extraordinary impression that you and your family made on me."⁴³

Katie consciously rejected authoritarian familism at the same time that she sustained a sense of Italianness, an identity that was a product of the racism of southern Illinois as well as her transnational community. Katie, then, was among the many Italian immigrants and their children who were tested by the increased nationalist sentiment in the United States and around the globe in the 1920s and 1930s. Her challenge to prejudice was a mix of personal and political feeling that pushed her to create the alternative world she did in her home.

That living rooms and kitchens were political spaces was not new for working-class women (and even men) but widespread recognition of its importance by the 1950s was new.⁴⁴ Katie knew this and she embraced it for its possibilities for her people.

Biography and Subjectivity

Who was Katie DeRorre?

This section uses more traditional biographical methods to tell the story of Katie's life. My interpretation relies on newspaper articles, census materials, the Sister Katie Day scrapbook, and correspondences between friends and family. I also use oral histories done with Katie's daughter (Catherine DeRorre Mans, who family and friends call Babe). These oral interviews include tapes from a project of local history completed in the 1970s by the University of Illinois at Springfield and then follow-up interviews I conducted between 2005 and 2007.

Catherine Bianco DeRorre was one of the thousands of poor Italians who migrated to the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She experienced the same type of emotional and physical hardship that many of her working-class female contemporaries did—she chaffed against “Old World” parents, she married in her teens, she gave birth and tried unsuccessfully to prevent one of her children from dying young, she found her political voice picketing on the streets before she voted at the polls, and she fought for a pluralist American dream in which the underclass's rights would be recognized regardless of race, class, religion, or national origin.⁴⁵

Katie was born in the village of Canischio in the province of Turin. At the age of eight, she immigrated with her grandmother and sister to DuQuoin, Illinois in the southern part of the state.⁴⁶ Her mother and father had moved six years earlier to the small mining town in an area known as “Little Egypt.”⁴⁷ Their personal story reflected larger demographic contours of this Italian region's diaspora as well as the industrial pull that brought immigrants to the United States. As historian Donna Gabaccia has shown, the “Europeanized north of Italy actually had lower rates of female migration . . . than most of the supposedly patriarchal south.”⁴⁸ Prior to 1900, when new coal techniques were developed to efficiently extract the mineral, “Little Egypt” was dominated by agriculture and populated by farmers from the U.S. South and Germany. By 1910, new immigrants from Italy, Poland, Lithuania, Russia, and Hungary arrived.⁴⁹ After World War I, mining companies recruited African American men to work in the pits. Both her Italian upbringing and the demographics of the region would have an impact on the type of activism DeRorre pursued in later years.

DeRorre's childhood was trying. Like most mining households, the Bianco family was often in dire economic need even though they were, what a local newspaper called, “one of the most highly respected Italian families in the city.”⁵⁰ Katie's emotionally abusive mother compounded the hardships of poverty she faced. To care for the family's boarders, Katie

and her sisters did the “heavy work” of household chores while “the boys . . . got all the privileges.” Despite the fact that the girls milked the cows, washed, and baked everyday for the household of men, they were not given much in return. The sisters had to wait for their suppers until the boarders finished. “And if there was nothing left, why they would get a piece of bread.” DeRorre’s grandmother, who lived with the family, tried to ease the strain of her granddaughter’s life. Katie’s daughter Babe remembered her mother’s stories: “My great-grandmother had many an argument with my grandmother because she didn’t let the girls eat along with the boys.” The great-grandmother “would go sneak some crackers or a piece of bread or a piece of cheese [to] . . . my mother because she was crying.” As an adult, Katie was estranged from her mother. “I can’t say too much about my grandmother,” Babe said, “that was the only house that we never went to.”⁵¹

On Saturday 15 May 1915 at seven in the morning, Katie married Joseph DeRorre in the parish of Sacred Heart in DuQuoin. Katie’s sister, Angeline Casaretta, was her bridesmaid and Joe’s brother, John, stood up as the best man.⁵² Eight years her elder, Joe had been in the United States since childhood, migrating from the Province of Belluno, in the Veneto region of northeastern Italy to southern Illinois at the turn of the century. Like his father, Joe was a coal miner. There is no evidence about how Joe and Katie met or of their courtship. I imagine, however, that Katie was happy to get out of her parents’ house given her relationship with her mother. (Unlike many new immigrant couples, Katie and Joe immediately moved into their own home). She told her children that on “the day she was married she had to go make sure that she milked the cows before she went to church.” As a parent, she recalled her wedding day and laughed about it. But the memory must have been bitter sweet, and as a nineteen-year-old woman, it must have been straining. Katie and Joe had three children, Felix was born in 1916, Antoinette in 1918, and Catherine in 1921.⁵³ In 1931, Antoinette died.

The death of her daughter changed Katie—her world, her emotional well-being, and her frame of reference. The loss of Antoinette opened up relationships with family members and friends but closed off institutional links that she was tentatively connected to (and which connected her to an immigrant past). Like many northern Italians, the DeRorre’s had a tenuous relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. Though married in the church, religion was not a central component of their lives. Their marriage and children’s baptisms may have been their last acts of devotion. When Katie requested a funeral mass for Antoinette and a place to bury her in the Catholic cemetery, the local priest said no. There is conflicting information about how and why this happened. Babe’s memory was that her siblings and she had not been baptized. Their baptismal records, however, are still

at Sacred Heart Church in DuQuoin. Perhaps the rift between the DeRorres and the church happened sometime after Antoinette's baptism and it was something about which the family never talked (and therefore, Babe did not know). Or, possibly, another family member (Katie's mother) took the babies to be blessed—not an unheard of scenario.⁵⁴ Regardless of when it happened, Babe remembered that after her sister died, Katie never had anything else to do with Catholicism and others corroborated this claim.⁵⁵

The cutting off of those religious ties—ties which for so many Italian women were important in their lives outside of the private—did not reflect a retreat for Katie into traditional domesticity. Katie neither grieved the loss of her daughter in a vacuum nor experienced the sexism, racism, and class oppression that she struggled against in isolation. Her life was filled with family and friends she loved, as well as allies and enemies to whom she responded. Raised in a home where authoritarianism and poverty were difficult to escape, she learned much about the dual oppressions of sex and class. She strove not to repeat them.

The death of their daughter brought husband and wife closer together. And the DeRorres seemed to have eschewed some of the trappings of matrimonial patriarchy. The spirit of the DeRorre home had always been different than the Bianco household of Katie's childhood. The couple understood each other's strengths and, after the death of their daughter, needs as well. They both joined and supported a dual union struggle that began the same year as Antoinette's death, and later Joe supported his wife's commitment to the Workers Alliance. But with young children at home, practical choices had to be made. Only one parent (at a time) could do the organizing, attend the meetings, walk the pickets, and travel to the state capital to lobby elected officials. Katie and Joe decided together that it was Katie who would be the one. Babe explained that her father "believed in the labor movement, and, I mean he, he had no reservations about my mother being so active. He knew that this was an escape to her grief, and he was glad that she was active. But he stayed at home with us kids, and . . . oh occasionally he would go, but Mom would go . . . Mom was always gone, so somebody had to be home. But no, he was the quiet one of the family."⁵⁶ Katie became homemaker/union activist and organizer, while Joe was coal miner/husband and caretaker. Friends commented on the way Joe and Katie balanced activism and family life. Thyra Edwards recalled that the first time she visited the DeRorres' home, "Katie was out . . . [H]er husband, told us Katie is always out now, busy with the Movement. 'She can express herself better than I can so I'm glad to have her go.'" While waiting for his wife's return, Joe made supper for the guests.⁵⁷

Not only did Katie and Joe have a loving and respecting relationship that challenged gender roles and comforted her, but there was also another

element that shaped the family dynamics: Katie took in boarders.⁵⁸ Starting in 1923 and continuing for over three decades, an Italian immigrant named Charlie Rovoletti was Katie's boarder. Born in 1896, he migrated from Italy in 1912. Rovoletti was an immigrant intellectual, "well read" and "a self taught scholar," who was "very interested in the labor movement, and took an active part in it." Daughter Babe remembered that "after my sister died in 1931, my mother took it so hard that when the miners' struggle started, and Charlie being home . . . my mother got interested in it. . . . That was one of her escapes from her sorrow. And that's how she got so involved" in organizing and community work.⁵⁹ Charlie, Joe, and Katie were all close. The two men mined together for most of their adult lives. They shared a home, and it is clear that they both loved and respected Katie. The daughter of a friend of the family's (who had spent a lot of time at the DeRorre home) remembered Charlie as a brother rather than a boarder. Though we can only speculate on the details of their relationships, fragments of letters refer to special connections and closeness between the three.⁶⁰

Katie's involvement, however, was not only driven by immediate personal tragedy. It was also motivated by the pangs of hunger that she felt as a child and that, as an adult, she found hard to forget (as her retelling childhood stories to her children suggests). DeRorre's sensitivity to class and race oppression, then, was deeply personal; how she addressed this dual oppression was consciously political. One of her first acts of organizing was both quintessentially feminine and reflective of her industrial feminist ideology—an ideology that historian Annelise Orleck has described as "deeply imbued with class consciousness and a vivid understanding of the harsh realities of industrial labor."⁶¹ In March 1933, DeRorre and her "sisters" in DuQuoin opened a "lunch kitchen" for hungry children and within weeks they were serving one hundred to one hundred fifty children per day.⁶² Katie opened her doors to all despite the fact that the community was divided in the dual union struggle and Katie was strongly in favor of one side. "A hungry child is a hungry child to us . . . whether its father is Progressive or hasn't any more sense than to pay big dues to keep John Lewis' family in luxury," Katie told a crowd at a rally in Belleville, Illinois. In a report to the *Progressive Miner*, the DuQuoin women reinforced their lunch kitchen commitments: "No discriminations are made by the Auxiliary . . . [N]o matter whether they are American or foreign, negro or white, children of P.M of A, miners or U.M.W. men, they are treated alike."⁶³ While it is likely that her abhorrence for racial discrimination was formulated before the PMA's organization, Katie's work in the PMA, and later in the IWA, gave her a means to work against the racial status quo in her southern Illinois community by welcoming African American and white men, women, and children together to eat, to meet, and to challenge

oppression together.⁶⁴ That is what her friends Thyra Edwards and Agnes Wieck remembered most about Katie.

Katie's political coming out started with the violent PMA-UMWA battle. She never left the PMA's Auxiliary but she moved into other civil rights organizing. DeRorre joined the Illinois Workers Alliance, part of the unemployed union movement that was sweeping the country in the mid-thirties. It was in the IWA—more so than in the Auxiliary of a male union—that she felt more comfortable and more effective, in part, because she did not have to waste time making arguments about where, how, and why women should “belong.” “I am proud to have been a founder of the Auxiliary, although I devote most of my time in behalf of the unemployed,” Katie wrote in 1936.⁶⁵ Her friend Mary Voyzey described what this shift meant for Katie: “I saw Mrs. Katie DeRorre two weeks ago. She was up at a[n] I.W.A. conference. . . . She was elected on the Board again. . . . Yes if we had a few more like Katy we would get along fine.”⁶⁶ For the rest of the depression, Katie picketed city officials for bread, justice, and better pay for WPA workers. She climbed the ranks of the Alliance and served as the only female Board Member of the IWA starting in 1935. In 1937, DeRorre was one of three women elected to the Alliance's National Executive Board. The other two, Emma Tenayuca from San Antonio and Frankie Duty from New York City, connected Katie to a national diaspora of women's activists and new ways of thinking about oppression and power.⁶⁷

Katie was happy to let others do the talking while she worked behind the scenes (though by the end of the 1930s, she seems to have become more self-assured about public appearances). We might speculate about why and how she decided to spend her time in political work. As a talented organizer, DeRorre might have actually thought others could more effectively persuade than she herself could. Or, perhaps, the psychological scars of her childhood (which silenced her when she was young) had something to do with why she preferred more intimate conversations. Katie's friends hinted at both possibilities. In 1935, Wieck (now in New York) received letters from two mutual friends in Illinois. The letters filled her in on local news and gossip and shared their thoughts on politics and their anxiousness about surviving another year of the depression. Each also told Agnes about how Katie was doing. “She made a splendid talk,” wrote Voyzey, “Much improved in her speech. I commented [to] her on it.” Echoing this thought, the other wrote, “Katie sure is working hard. . . . Now she sure looks fine too.”⁶⁸ Despite others' positive opinions, public performance made her nervous. “She told Agnes that she had to end her letter because ‘Well, I must quit as I am so nervous for I had the story to write so Babe could type it.’”⁶⁹ Agnes wrote Katie often, but there were times when her friend could not write back: “Received your several cards . . . but there's no

other excuse as not answering them but just being too nervous to write."⁷⁰ She had been "so upset for the last two months that I had never sat down to write."⁷¹ In another letter, Katie wrote after closing, "Excuse mistakes as I have several things on my mind." Katie apologized for "bad writing as it is written in bed and can't do much."⁷² In one instance she asked Agnes to write a newspaper article that she had been asked to compose: "I wonder if you could draw it up providing your health and time approves it."⁷³

Katie's struggle with depression and illness heightened her sensitivity to others in despair. Such awareness gave her the chameleon-like qualities that made her a good mediator. As her daughter Babe said in an interview, Katie was "a socialist with anarchist friends." As the Prezzolini column shows, she also had fascist sympathizers as admirers. This puzzling Prezzolini praise makes little sense unless we understand it as a reflection of her political abilities. Mussolini's rise undermined the momentum of radicals in the diaspora. But it seems that Katie worked against fascism in her community. In 1934, at the same moment that Prezzolini was working with others to make "Little Italy's" fertile ground for fascism, Katie was working against these politics. When Katie was elected to the IWA Board, the organization went on record as "condemning Italian aggression in Ethiopia," and the Alliance newspapers, which Katie had a hand in, editorialized Il Duce's politics and shenanigans.⁷⁴ In an undated letter to Agnes, she wrote, "I have not yet seen where the men convention went on record to adopt the resolution against fascism. Scottsboro boys, Mooney, Billing on a special program to educate the young miner." Katie's mediation skills were a political reflection of the ways she reconciled the private and public roles she lived and the embodiment of multiple identities. She may have learned these powers in early life from her grandmother who fed her "under the table." It was obvious from her friends' and families' memories about the DeRorre home that she had a talent for making people feel welcome and bringing them together. She "not only excelled in the women's world, but was equally at home with the problems of the men," Battuello said. She was part of the Italian community but felt comfortable as an intermediary between it and native-born Americans. In a place where racial tension was severe, she promoted "social mixing," despite the fact that this would be "offensive to certain people" within the union.⁷⁵

If Katie's mediation skills brought to her home people from racially diverse and ideologically distinct backgrounds, and if Katie had so much anxiety about writing and speaking, what caused her to continue her work in public? Why not retreat instead to a more maternal domestic sphere? Given the legacy of working-class Italian women's organizing and the central place of the home as women's political place, this might not have even crossed Katie's mind. She pressed on also because the constant reminder

and ever-present memories bothered her. "It's mighty hard for the poor worker to forgive and forget," Katie told Agnes in 1937.⁷⁶ DeRorre was exasperated by something a WPA administrator had told young men who had been short-changed by their New Deal paychecks. The sentiment not "to forgive and forget" might be used to understand DeRorre's life choices and activism. She was angered by injustice and she was stunned when others did not see or work to change oppression. "What if we can't get justice," she stated to Agnes, "The people here are just as other places. . . . The left wing scares them an[d] those that don't believe can't say nothing." She kept working at it despite her questioning, "I wonder if these people will ever wake up?"⁷⁷

Katie gained confidence through her position in the Workers Alliance. In one of her only published pieces, we see Katie making new connections between economic and environmental justice. In the article "In the Wake of the Flood," she explained the devastation caused by the great 1937 floods of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. While the government stepped in with WPA workers to build additional levees, elected officials did not step up to protect or compensate them adequately for their work. Despite New Deal rhetoric, people were forced to rely on charity to get what they deserved. In this article, Katie is angry and passionate, words that her admirers never use to describe her. "But in the wake of this greatest disaster . . . there has come a new flood. A flood of untold misery—homelessness, destitution, hunger, disease, death," she wrote and continued, "We of the Workers' Alliance of America are determined that the nation shall not forget. . . . From Paducah, Cairo, Louisville, Wheeling, Cincinnati and other points, The Workers' Alliance says to Congress and the President: 'We demand an end to such disasters; we demand conservation of America's vast natural resources; we demand the protection and reclamation of lives and families; we demand that jobs be provided for millions of needy workers who are ready and willing to reclaim the heart of America, now being wasted away by floods and draughts.'"⁷⁸ The writing was a reflection of her new more confident voice which she began to use in writing as well as public speaking. "Two men and myself" were invited to the County Commissioners for a hearing, she told Agnes, "But as usual I was to be the spokesman."⁷⁹

Katie's "appearances"—in letters to friends, published articles, and newspaper reports—disappear in the 1940s and 1950s. Other than the fact that Katie worked for her local rationing board, there is a dearth of sources for this period. She was still hosting meetings of the Auxiliary in her home in the 1950s. In the postwar years, the organization spent a lot of time raising money to help members in need who had lost loved ones. They also spent money from their treasury to send children of coal miners to Washington DC. Though the meetings often started with the Pledge of Allegiance and the

Lord's prayer, working-class progressivism was not completely absent. In 1957, for example, Katie supported a resolution lambasting the Taft-Hartley Act that had been on the books for a decade. The Auxiliary promised to use political force and the women pledged to vote only for candidates who went on record against this anti-labor legislation. A year before this resolution against Taft-Hartley, at the 12 June 1956 meeting, Katie beamed and showed her red leather scrapbook to her sisters.⁸⁰

Katie slipped through historical moments just as she did through traditional masculine and feminine roles and Italian and American communities as well. DeRorre's second-generation transnationalism was fluid. And she mediated ethnicity as she did politics. By 1937, the majority of the Italians in DuQuoin had dropped out of the Women's Auxiliary. These women were her ethnic and political kin, yet Katie would not follow their exit. "They think I too should leave such an outfit for it is only a disgrace to me," she told Agnes, "but I look it at [*sic*] a different point of view as I have always done before, we have an obligation to try to fulfill." This sense of obligation seems was reflected both a sense of allegiance but also self-confidence in her ability to make a movement "right." Not only did she remain in the PMA but also in the Alpina Dogali Auxiliary. Babe and Katie wrote the by-laws for this organization; "Peace on Earth" was their password.⁸¹

In 1959, Katie was diagnosed with cancer and was given less than a year to live. She passed away in January 1960. The same friends who had gathered for Sister Katie Day came together again and memorialized their friend and comrade. There were union members, politicians, friends, and DeRorre's large "famiglia piemontese." Regardless of their background or standing, "All remembered this woman as one who gave comfort."⁸²

Conclusion

There are three shrines in Illinois to heroes of the miners: one for Mother Jones, one for the Virden Martyrs who died for the union, and one for Katie DeRorre. The first two are stories of legend, internationalism, and labor history; the last has been missed by the record. Pat Ansboury, a union "brother," remembered that on one occasion Katie, who did not have a phone in her home, came to his house at five o'clock in the morning with a car full of flowers and accompanied by her children. DeRorre invited Ansboury "on a trip to the graves of our brothers in southern Illinois who gave their lives for the cause of the Progressive Miners of America." Ansboury wrote, "It was a sad occasion, indeed. At each grave Katie laid a beautiful spray of red and pink roses. . . . Katie read the union obituary as she placed the flowers on the graves. . . . As Katie looked back when we were leaving she said: 'Good bye, our heroes. We will never forget.'"⁸³

We should not forget. Despite the fact that historians have failed to find her—no scholarly work mentions her existence—DeRorre is a historically significant figure.⁸⁴ Her life underscores how the identities of women transnationals brought the public, private, and international world together in their homes and communities. The circumstances of DeRorre's migration, settlement, and activism offer an alternative narrative to the dominant urban immigration histories that tend to ignore the realities of rural industrial settings. Katie's life also allows us to piece together how Italian radicals perpetuated themselves in the inter-war period by melding Italian networks with expanding racially and ideologically diverse communities in the United States.

NOTES

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¹Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Diario di New York," *Il Borghese*, 20 July 1961, 454–55. For Prezzolini's connection to Italian Fascism, see Gaetano Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1977), 169–70; and Philip V. Cannistraro, *Blackshirts in Little Italy: Italian Americans and Fascism, 1919–1929* (West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera Press, 1999), 115. There are many references to Katie's left-wing or "militant" stance. See, for example, Katie DeRorre to Agnes Burns Wieck, 18 January 1935 and 25 October 1937, Agnes Burns Wieck Collection, Box 2, Folder 2-23 ("DeRorre, Katie 1933-1938, 1960-1961, 1990"), Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, hereafter ABW Collection.

²"Obituaries and Eulogies of Mrs Katie DeRorre," *Collinsville Herald*, 11 January 1960, Gerry Allard Papers, Box 1, Folder "DeRorre—Katie," Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, IL, hereafter GAP.

³Jack Battuello, "A Biography of Katie DeRorre," Box 2, Folder 2-30, ABW Collection.

⁴This challenge might be part of what Merry Wiesner-Hanks has called the "new new social history"; see Merry E. Wiesner, "World History and the History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality," *Journal of World History* 18, no. 1 (2007): 66.

⁵Earl Lewis, "To Turn as on a Pivot: Writing African Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 3 (1995): 783.

⁶Donna Gabaccia has used the term "diasporic private sphere" to define research which underscores the important part domesticity plays in the defining and making of nations, transnational communities, and inbetween. The University of Pittsburgh conference, "Love of Country: Making Nations in Italy's Diasporic

Private Sphere" (8 to 9 April 2005), brought together scholars working on the idea. See, also, Rohitashya Chattopadhyay, "The Internet and Postcolonial Development: India's Transnational Reality," *Contemporary South Asia* 12, no. 1 (2003): 34; and Anne-Marie Fortier, "The Politics of Scaling, Timing and Embodying: Rethinking the 'New Europe,'" *Mobilities* 1, no. 3 (2006): 323.

⁷Martha Hodes, "The Mercurial Nature and Abiding Power of Race," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 1 (2003): 85–86.

⁸On defining and interrogating transnationalism and global crossings, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, "More 'Trans-,' Less 'National,'" *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25, no. 4 (2006): 74–84; Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999): 965–75; Marcel van der Linden, "Transnationalizing American Labor History," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999): 1078–92; Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters, *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of The Second Generation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002); Vicki L. Ruiz, "Nuestra America: Latino History as United States History," *Journal of American History* 93, no. 3 (2006): 655–72; and Lisa McGirr, "The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti: A Global History," *Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (2007): 1085–1115.

⁹The historical exceptions to this claim are Carol Lynn McKibben, *Beyond Cannery Row: Sicilian Women, Immigration, and Community in Monterey, California, 1915–99* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); and Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). For early psychological analysis on the second generation, see Irvin L. Child, *Italian or American? The Second Generation in Conflict* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1943).

¹⁰Rubén G. Rumbaut, "Ages, Life Stages, and Generational Cohorts: Decomposing the Immigrant First and Second Generations in the United States," *International Migration Review* 38, no. 3 (2004): 1162. The term "1.5 generation" usually refers to those under twelve at the time of immigration.

¹¹Nancy Foner, "Second-Generation Transnationalism, Then and Now," in Levitt and Waters, *The Changing Face of Home*, 243. Philip Kasinitz has argued a similar point in his "Race, Assimilation, and 'Second Generations,' Past and Present," in *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States*, ed. Nancy Foner and George M. Frederickson (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 278–79. I use the term "new immigrant" consciously and with an understanding of its problems. See David Roediger's discussion of the reinvestment in the term in *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 18–21.

¹²Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); and Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

¹³David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1999); Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*; McGirr, "The Passion of Sacco"; Jennifer Guglielmo, "Italian Women's Proletarian Feminism in the New York City Garment Trades, 1890s–1940s," in Gabaccia and Iacovetta, *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives*, 247–98; Caroline Waldron Merithew, "Anarchist Motherhood," in Gabaccia and Iacovetta, *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives*, 217–46; Michael Miller Topp, *Those Without a Country: The Political Culture of Italian American Syndicalists* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). On in-between identity, see James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, no. 3 (1997). On Italian fascist propaganda in the United States, see Philip V. Cannistraro, "Fascism and Italian-Americans in Detroit, 1933–1935," *International Migration Review* 9, no. 1 (1975): 29–40; and John P. Diggins, "Italo-American Anti-Fascist Opposition," *Journal of American History* 54, no. 3 (1967): 579–98.

¹⁴Gerry and Irene Allard to Katie, 12 June 1956; Tillie and Jack Battuello to Katie (n.d.), and Maynard Krueger to Katie, 16 May 1956, all in Sister Katie Day Scrapbook, private collection of Catherine Mans, Springfield, IL, hereafter Scrapbook. This scrapbook includes numerous cards, letters, photographs, and undated newspaper clippings.

¹⁵John Bodnar, "Remembering the Immigrant Experience in American Culture," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 15, no. 1 (1995): 3–27.

¹⁶*Saint Louis Post Dispatch*, 4 June 1956, as quoted in Comments by Representative Melvin Price, Illinois House of Representatives, 84th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record*, Appendix 102 (21 May 1956): A4581.

¹⁷An *East St. Louis Journal* article notes that people referred to Katie as the Good Samaritan for thirty years. In my research, the term comes up in the '50s. The *Journal* article is filled with factual infelicities—including that Katie was born in the United States. See Anne Quigley, "Mostaccioli Her Speciality," *East St. Louis Journal*, 19 July 1956.

¹⁸Battuello, "A Biography."

¹⁹Allards to Katie, Scrapbook; and newspaper clipping, *Collinsville Herald*, 11 January [no year], Scrapbook.

²⁰Roger Baldwin to Katie, May 1956, Scrapbook.

²¹Emily S. Rosenberg, "Consuming Women: Images of Americanization in the 'American Century,'" *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 3 (1999): 479.

²²L. P. Harris to Katie, Scrapbook; and Baldwin to Katie, Scrapbook.

²³*Saint Louis Post Dispatch*, 4 June 1956.

²⁴John and Betty Williams to Katie, n.d., Scrapbook.

²⁵Bodnar, "Remembering the Immigrant Experience," 3.

²⁶Craig Easton to Katie, 24 May 1956, Scrapbook.

²⁷Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 10.

²⁸"Testimonial—Milwaukee Mayor Speaks At Dinner For Katie DeRorre, PMW Pioneers," *Collinsville Herald*, 6 June 1956, 8.

²⁹Chiou-Ling Yeh, "In the Traditions of China and in the Freedom of America': The Making of San Francisco's Chinese New Year Festivals," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2004): 398.

³⁰Maddalena Tirabassi, "Bourgeois Men, Peasant Women: Rethinking Domestic Work and Morality in Italy," in Gabaccia and Iacovetta, *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives*, 107.

³¹Quigley, "Mostaccioli."

³²Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, 177–87. Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707. On homeownership, see Margaret Byington, *Homestead* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910), 57–62; Jeremiah Whipple Jenks, *The Immigration Problem: A Study of American Immigration Conditions and Needs* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1911), 28–282; James R. Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894–1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 104–8; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 76, 276; and Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920–1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 27–28.

³³"IWA Organizer Jailed, Terror Seeps 'Egypt,'" *People's Press*, 24 April 1937.

³⁴For Flourney, see Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 33. For Capetillo, see Bernardo Vega, *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega: A Contribution to the History of the Puerto Rican Community in New York*, trans. Juan Flores (New York: Monthly Review Press), 107. On home as a place of wage labor, see Eileen Boris and Cynthia R. Daniels, eds., *Homework: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Paid Labor at Home* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989). For Lawrence women, see Ardis Cameron, *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860–1912* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 2, 138.

³⁵On the importance of families and neighborhoods, see, for example, Steve Golin, *The Newark Teacher Strikes: Hopes on the Line* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 27–28.

³⁶Agnes Wieck to Katie, 1 June 1956, Scrapbook.

³⁷Thyra J. Edwards to Agnes, 28 March 1936, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

³⁸Agnes Wieck to Katie, 1 June 1956, Scrapbook.

³⁹*Progressive Miner*, 21 April 1933, 3. See, also, *Progressive Miner*, 20 January 1933, 1.

⁴⁰Battuello, "A Biography."

⁴¹Katie DeRorre to Agnes, 9 May 1938, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁴²Quigley, "Mostaccioli."

⁴³Norman Thomas to Katie, 11 May 1956, Scrapbook.

⁴⁴Golin, *The Newark Teacher Strikes*, 27–28; and Vega, *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega*, 107.

⁴⁵Maddelena Marinari, "Toward a New Era: World War II and the Fight Against Immigration Restriction" (paper presented at the Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, MN, 29 March–1 April 2007).

⁴⁶This is confirmed by the enumeration pages for DuQuoin City, Perry County, Illinois, Ward 3, in U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States* (Washington DC: GPO, 1930); "Obituaries and Eulogies of Mrs Katie DeRorre"; and Catherine Mans, interview by Barbara Herndon and Nick Cherniavsky, 1975, M318* (Mans, Catherine [DeRorre]), Oral History Collection, University of Illinois at Springfield Archives, Springfield, IL, hereafter OHC, UISA. Mans states in this 1975 interview that Katie DeRorre immigrated in 1900 but the census notes 1904.

⁴⁷The term "Little Egypt" reaches back, at least, to the Civil War period when northern Illinois's Republican press referred to the southern part of the state as "Egyptian." See Arthur Charles Cole, *Centennial History of Illinois*, vol. 3, *The Era of the Civil War, 1848–1870* (Springfield: Illinois Centennial Commission, 1919), 269.

⁴⁸Donna Gabaccia, "When the Migrants are Men: Italy's Women and Transnationalism As a Working-class Way of Life," in *American Dreaming, Global Realities: Rethinking U.S. Immigration History*, ed. Donna Gabaccia and Vicki Ruiz (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 192–94.

⁴⁹Daniel Jensen Prosser, "Coal Towns in Egypt: Portrait of an Illinois Mining Region, 1890–1930" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1973), chap. 2.

⁵⁰*The DuQuoin Evening Call*, 15 May 1915.

⁵¹Mans interview.

⁵²*The DuQuoin Evening Call*, 15 May 1915. Thanks to Ali Kinsella for finding the marriage certificate and baptismal records at Sacred Heart.

⁵³*Fifteenth Census of the United States*.

⁵⁴Felix, Antoinette, and Catherine (Babe) were baptized by Reverend C. J. Eschmann (the same priest that married the DeRorres) in October 1917, November

1919, and January 1921: Baptismal Certificates, Reverend C. J. Eschmann, Sacred Heart Church, DuQuoin, IL.

⁵⁵Julie Gruber, interview with author, Collinsville, IL, 1 June 2007.

⁵⁶Mans interview.

⁵⁷*Progressive Miner*, 21 April 1933, 3.

⁵⁸Mans's oral history hints that her brother might have helped with the household chores as well. Mans interview.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰See, for example, Katie to Agnes Wieck, 19 November 1935, and 8 March 1936, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection; and Gruber interview.

⁶¹Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900–1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 6.

⁶²*Progressive Miner*, 17 March 1933, 2.

⁶³*Progressive Miner*, 5 May 1933, 1, 3.

⁶⁴Copy of letter from Katie to Lucile Kohn, 20 January 1938, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁶⁵Katie to Clarence Hathaway, 17 August 1936, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁶⁶Mary Voyzey to Agnes Wieck, 18 August 1935, Box 2, Folder 2-34 ("Misc Letters"), ABW Collection.

⁶⁷*Workers Alliance Newspaper*, 15 August 1935, 3; and *People's Press*, 10 July 1937, 1.

⁶⁸Voyzey to Wieck, 18 August 1935; and Celine Burrell to Agnes Wieck, 3 September 1935, Box 2, Folder 2-34, ABW Collection.

⁶⁹Katie to Agnes Wieck, n.d., Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁷⁰Katie to Agnes Wieck, 25 October 1937, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁷¹Katie to Agnes Wieck, 9 May 1938, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁷²Katie to Agnes Wieck, 19 November 1935 and 8 March 1936, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁷³Katie to Agnes Wieck, 9 May 1938, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁷⁴*Workers Alliance*, 15 August 1935, 3; and *People's Press*, 27 March 1937, 2.

⁷⁵"Obituaries and Eulogies of Mrs Katie DeRorre."

⁷⁶Katie to Agnes Wieck, ca. March 1937, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁷⁷Katie to Agnes Wieck, 22 November 1933 and 15 July 1936, Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁷⁸Catherine DeRorre, "In the Wake of the Flood," *Woman Today*, April 1937, 15.

⁷⁹Katie to Agnes Wieck, n.d. [ca. 1937], Box 2, Folder 2-23, ABW Collection.

⁸⁰Executive Board Meeting, 12 June 1956, and Resolution to the Officers and Delegations of the P.M.W.A. convention held 16 October 1957, both in box 1, Record Series J9/5/24, Coal Mining in Illinois Project, OHC, UISA.

⁸¹*By-Laws of Alpina-Dogali Independent Auxiliary*, 1 April 1927, Local Collection, Collinsville Historical Museum, Collinsville, IL.

⁸²Prezzolini, "Diario di New York."

⁸³*Progressive Miner*, 9 June 1933, 1.

⁸⁴Agnes Burns Wieck's son, David Thoreau Wieck, mentions Katie in the biography he wrote of his mother: *Woman from Spillertown: A Memoir of Agnes Burns Wieck* (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1992). David Wieck understood Katie's importance and pushed Babe to write a biographical piece on her mother. Like her mom, Babe is shy about public performance.