

Tony Miksak's

Words on Books

as broadcast weekly on KZYX radio
(Mendocino, California)

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At the Duomo Museum (Museo dell Opera del Duomo), in the attached bookstore, I discovered Linda Falcone's brand new book *Italians Dance and I'm a Wallflower, Adventures in Italian Expression*.

This is a wonderfully enthralling collection of essays, interesting even if you are not an expatriate or student of Italian. For some years now Falcone has written a monthly column for the local English language newspaper *The Florentine*. Typically she riffs on a selected Italian idiomatic phrase for the benefit of English-speakers in Italy.

I learned a lot from her. Plus, best part, she's funny.

Linda Falcone was born in northern California and raised in a bilingual family with an Italian mother and American father. Almost from birth she has traveled between California and Italy. She now has lived full time in Florence for fourteen years.

On the subject of non si fa she writes, "Italians, as a people, are fairly relaxed. They will not obsess about politically correct word choice or nitpick about pseudo-moral dilemmas. They have a great capacity for putting things in perspective and avoiding unnecessary fuss. But there are some things that you cannot do in Italy. Some things that are just not done. Have never been done. Will never be done. Why? Simply because non si fa... "

Falcone started keeping a non si fa list: "No walking barefoot ever or anywhere... No showering after meals. It blocks the digestion and could be deadly. No shorts in the city, even if it's August... No eating without a tablecloth..." and so on to the uses of toilet paper (not for nose blowing), mixing sweet and savory (don't even think about it), washing your hair (not every day, please), no itemizing the bill (relax -- it will average out).

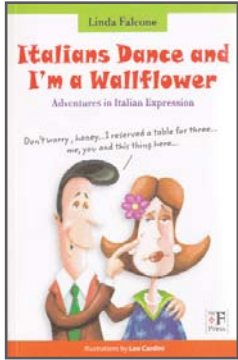
Unfortunately, Linda Falcone's book is not yet available on this side of the Atlantic. If you'd like to read some of her most recent writing, try clicking on the newspaper's website:

<http://theflorentine.net>

As for me, I'm delighted to be back in California, speaking and writing English once more. But Italy always calls, and I know I'll be back one day.

BOOK REVIEWS

Each month The Roman Forum will feature book reviews on new, recent or influential publications written in or about Rome and Italy. These may be fiction or non-fiction, for adults or children, covering everything from historical novels to tourist guides to language learning aids.



Italians Dance and I'm a Wallflower

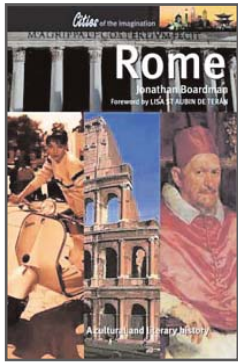
By Linda Falcone

This bizarrely titled book is a page-turner as well as an eye-opener. It is packed with wry little anecdotes into everything Italian, from the history to the language and identity of the bel paese and its colourful natives. The bilingual authoress, born to an Italian mother and American father, embarks on some thirty 'adventures in Italian expression', explaining why Italians are in fact a shy people, why waiters are brusque, and why nepotism is a way of life. Falcone also provides insights

into why it's bad form to wish someone 'good luck' and on the difference between Latin 'shame' and Anglo-Saxon 'guilt'. In under 140 pages, Falcone's colourful vignettes are like the stain-glassed windows in a baroque cathedral, each one telling a story and most often with a moral in the tail. One criticism would be that some of the chapter titles are poorly or even too literally translated: 'Is difficult', 'We don't do', 'Don't take it to yourself', 'Let's arrive at the point'. These can't have been translated by Falcone, whose English is flawless and lucid; instead the titles sound as if an Italian waiter were attempting a recital with a thick Florentine accent. However, praise is due to Leo Cardini for the simple and witty cartoons at the start of each chapter. (Howard Hudson)

Rome: A Cultural and Literary History

By Father Jonathan Boardman



This book from the Cities of the Imagination Series is a real gem. Father Boardman is a man whom you would want to show you around the Eternal City, or, failing that, sit down over a bottle of Chianti and listen to him hold forth on this city he obviously loves. His personality and charm seem to have been effortlessly translated to the written page. He is a guide nonpareil: warm, thoughtful, encyclopaedic, and, above all, entertaining. The book is at once a history and contemporary guidebook, tracing the roots of the city and the routes

of the city. He sprinkles it liberally with anecdotes and trivia and keeps it broad in scope yet personal in the delivery. As a sometime tour guide I can appreciate the skill with which Fr. Boardman shows his love and knowledge of the subject, without being gushy or partisan. He also manages to be an exhaustively well-read know it all without seeming show-offy, thereby thoroughly educating and delighting the reader. A little treasure well worth your time. (Ryan Millar)

Beppe Grillo Blog

By Beppe Grillo



Dissent on the Web? Spreading our wings this month, TRF mentions a blog under 'book reviews'. Indeed, it is worth honouring the site of Italian political satirist Beppe Grillo, ranked 28th "most influential" blog in the world in a recent study (the survey, conducted by blog-search engine Technorati, ranks blogs according to the number of incoming links from other blogs). In his daily entries, Grillo covers subjects ranging from the environment to freedom of speech, always challenging Italy's political and commercial establishment. Time magazine chose Grillo as one of its "European Heroes 2005" for his stand against corruption and financial scandals. His blog is published both in Italian and in English. www.beppegrillo.it

(Corentin Wauters)

BOOKS AND VIDEOS IN ENGLISH

There is a good selection of bookstores with books, magazines and videos in English in Rome including:

ALMOST CORNER BOOKSHOP

in trendy Trastevere, (Via del Moro, 45) carries all types of books and an especially good selection of historical and fictional titles. Via del Moro, 45. Tel. 065836942. Mon-Sat 10.00-13.30, 15.30-20.00 (Sun 11.00-13.30, 15.30-20.00).

ANGLO AMERICAN BOOKSTORE

www.aab.it, near the Spanish Steps has a large selection of books, almost all in English, from general fiction to hard-to-find academic books from a wide range of disciplines. If they don't have what you're looking for, they'll even order. Via delle Vite, 102 (M Spagna). Tel: 06 6784347. Tue-Sat 10.00-19.30 (Mon 15.30-19.30)

BORRI - Termini Station, some books in English are available at the large bookshop in the atrium, close to the main entrance of Termini train station. Fiction is upstairs with guidebooks and non-fiction downstairs. (M Termini). Tel. 06 4817940. Mon-Sun 07.30-23.00

FELTRINELLI INTERNATIONAL

www.lafeltrinelli.it, Italy's biggest book and media chain, the international branch is close to Termini station and has books in several foreign languages, many of them for language learning. The English section includes classics, contemporary fiction, children's books, current affairs and poetry as well as international magazines and journals.

Via E Orlando, 84 (M Repubblica). Tel: 06 4827878. Mon-Sat 09.00-20.00 (Sun 10.00-13.00, 16-19:30)

FELTRINELLI MEGASTORE

www.lafeltrinelli.it, one on Largo Argentina, the other on Viale Giulio Cesare (near St Peter's) have a large selection of books, videos and music with quite a few in English, mainly guidebooks, fiction and classics. Open most of the week. Largo Torre Argentina, 11.

Tel. 0668663001; Viale Giulio Cesare, 88 (M Ottaviano-San Pietro). Tel. 063772411

LIBRERIA PUNCH!

in the plush Monteverde area west of the Janiculum Hill, sells books, CDs and DVDs in Italian and in English as well as stationery and small gifts. All books, including those in English, have a permanent 10% discount on the cover price! Piazza Rosolino Pilo, 6 (Monteverde) Tel. 065806260 sam.gaetani@iol.it (Tue-Sun 08.15-13.00, Mon-Sun 17.00-20.45)

MEL BOOKSTORE

www.melbookstore.it, modern book megastore with small but varied choice of English books to the left of the main entrance. Browse the art and architecture books at the café on the second floor.

Via Nazionale 254, (M Repubblica). Tel. 064885405. Mon-Sat 09.00-19.30 (Sun 10.00-13.00, 16.00-20.00)

THE LION BOOKSHOP & CAFE

one of Rome's oldest and best-known bookshops with a wide selection and cosy cafe. Plenty of fiction, travel, cookery and children's books and news and information about exhibitions, book clubs and signings. Via dei Greci, 33/36

(M Flaminio, M Spagna). Tel. 0632650437. Tue-Sun 10.00-19.30 (Mon 15.30-19.30).

UK - THE BOOKSELLER

- 1. Jamie Oliver**, Cook with Jamie, Michael Joseph, hardcover
- 2. Josephine Cox**, Journey's End, HarperCollins, paperback
- 3. Lemony Snicket**, The End, HarperCollins, paperback
- 4. Peter Kay**, The Sound of Laughter, Arrow, hardcover
- 5. Guinness World Records 2007**, Guinness World Records, hardcover
- 6. Clive Cussler**, Sacred Stone, Berkley/Penguin, paperback
- 7. Gordon Ramsay**, Humble Pie, Michael Joseph, hardcover
- 8. Lauren Weisberger**, The Devil Wears Prada, paperback
- 9. James Patterson**, Mary, Mary, Headline / Warner, paperback
- 10. Kerry Katona**, Too Much, Too Young, Ebury, hardcover

(Provided by Feltrinelli International)

USA - BARNES&NOBLE

FICTION

- 1. Mitch Albom**, For One More Day, Little Brown, hardcover
- 2. Vince Flynn**, Act of Treason, Atria, hardcover
- 3. Michael Connelly**, Echo Park, Orion, hardcover
- 4. Charles Frazier**, Thirteen Moons, Coronet, hardcover
- 5. Diane Setterfield**, The Thirteenth Tale, Orion, hardcover

NON FICTION

- 1. John Grisham**, The Innocent Man, Century / Doubleday, hardcover
- 2. Bob Woodward**, State of Denial: Bush at War Part III, Simon&Schuster, hardcover
- 3. Nora Ephron**, I feel Bad about My Neck, Knopf, hardcover
- 4. Donald Trump**, Robert Kiyosaki, Why We Want You to Be Rich: Two Men - One Message, Rich Press, hardcover
- 5. Bill O'Reilly**, Culture Warrior, Broadway, hardcover