FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Culture

Unknown Book
3993

When *Italian Americana* journal was founded in 1974, it took on the ambitious goal of presenting the riot of writers and poets who were paving the way towards a distinctively Italian-American literature. Now, more than thirty years later, longtime editor-in-chief Carol Bonomo Albright and Joanna Clapps Her-man, professor of Graduate Studies at Manhattanville College, have culled an anthology of short stories, memoirs, poetry, and interviews from the protean journal. The collection should be the starting point for any student of Italian-American literature.

In defining what Italian-American literature is, some answers seem more intuitive than others. The gen-eration gap between immigrants and their children appears as a great demarcation in Italian-American litera-ture. Short stories featuring first-generation immigrants seem more self-assured. Ben Morreale's rabid, scathing short story, "The Prince of Racalmuto," features a Sicilian prince who is starved into immigrating to an America that robs him of his children, his identity, and his language. Other pieces, like Mary Caponegro's fanciful "An Etruscan Catechism," manifest a longing for traditional Italian culture, draped and sandaled in myth. Later generations of Italian-American writers are more prosaic. Distanced from the poverty of their parents and assimilated to American culture, they fasten onto immigrant tales and seem to write in diminuendo about their own experiences. Albright herself ponders "the kind of literature that future generations of Italian-American authors, who will not know an origi-nal immigrant, will produce." The prospect of an evolving Italian-American literature without the touchstone of an immigrant experience seems grim: indeed, most selections in this book hark back to the im-migrant experience, which amounts to a redux from an earlier time in America as well. Bold and enterprising in scope, *Wild Dreams* will endure as a milestone in Italian-American literature.