

Boarding and Belonging

Thoughts on Sojourner Institutions

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BOARDING AND BELONGING

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Robert F. Harney

The gap between the subject matter of migration studies and that of North American urban and ethnic history has narrowed in recent years. Historians of migration now study in detail the precise local causes of the movement from old world locations and the pattern of the consequent diaspora. At the same time, those who study major American cities and small industrial towns have begun to show some appreciation of the relationship between migration causes and settlement. In most studies, however, there remains a lacuna between accounts and explanations of the crossing and the history of ethnic institutional and neighbourhood life on the North American side. Although we have moved from Oscar Handlin's compelling, if often incorrect, metaphors of "uprootedness" and "in fellow-felling" to explain the processes of migrating, ghettoizing, and acculturating, we continue to depend too much on mono-causal agents of settlement such as family chain migration or the padrone system.¹ Using these ideas to carry them over the rough spots in narration, historians lose sight of the important mental transition from sojourner to settler among newcomers, and of the formative period in ethnic settlement when male sojourners predominated. Even if it is a proper reflection of the sojourner's ambivalence as a man neither in his home place nor reconciled to his new place, this lack of study destroys our chance to discover the stages of cultural and institutional transition from migration to sojourning and settlement.

Abrupt transition from the locus of emigration to full-fledged ethnic settlement and the use of padronism or extended family as deus ex machina to turn migrants into urban North Americans can be found in even the best recent studies of immigrants in cities, as, for example,

¹O. Handlin, The Uprooted (Boston, 1951); R. Vecoli, "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of the Uprooted," Journal of American History, Vol. LI (December 1964), pp. 404-417.

in H. Nelli's Italians in Chicago and J. Barton's Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Rumanians and Slovaks in an American City.²

Nelli, building a model of padronism and an indistinguishable mass of the exploited for whom the generic "southerner" provides both a class and ethnic identity, must wait until the newcomers have broken the sojourning thrall enough to be on Chicago's registered voter rolls or in commercial directories before he is able to study geographical and occupational mobility. For the sojourning period, he offers nothing but the stock characters, padrone and southerner, and a few biographies of exceptional immigrants. There is, in his account, neither a history and analysis of sojourner institutions nor a guide to the changing sentiments, intentions, and ethnic identity of the newcomers.

Barton makes more effort to explain the pattern of settlement in North America in terms of old world causes such as family and paese (home town) loyalties and the larger push factors that existed in specific European areas. There is, however, no "interior" history of the migrants. We do not know their frame of mind, their levels of expectation, nor how long they intended to stay. Nor is any thought given to whether knowing these things would enable us to understand better the pace of acculturation or the intensity of ethnic persistence in Cleveland. So, although Barton implements the best ideas of Handlin about the migrant as a villager and of Vecoli about family and paese reconstitution in the city, his chapters on the Old World remain strangely disjoined from those which deal with the new ethnic institutions of the city such as benevolent societies, visible ethnic business enterprises, and parishes. By failing to appreciate and study the informal, often

²H. Nelli, Italians in Chicago, 1880-1930: A Study in Ethnic Mobility (Oxford, 1970), offers a detailed chapter on geographical settlement with no analysis of institutions before 1920. A later chapter uses the padrone system to explain occupational patterns. See also, J. Barton, Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Rumanians and Slovaks in an American City, 1890-1950 (Harvard, 1975). Chapter II uses chain migration to make the leap from a statistical analysis of old world emigration to a skimpy and anecdotal knowledge of sojourning communities. Moreover, there is some disjuncture between emigration locations and origins of Cleveland migrants.

amoebic, institutions of the sojourning period and by maintaining stock characters like the padrone and the "southerner," the historian fails the immigrant in his continuous, if tortuous, journey from migrant to "ethnic" and retrospectively confirms the stereotyping of male sojourners as Wops, Bohunks, birds of passage, cafoni--the faceless guestworkers of North America at the turn of the century.³

It is my belief that a chrysalis of the ethnic settlement of the North American ethnic group itself, its boundaries and its content, can be found in those first years of urban migrant life, now shrouded in creation myths and filio-pieties. Careful study of the sojourner, his frame of mind, his needs, his amoebic institutions, and the impact of the sojourn on his identity will demonstrate this. Such study will require the use of oral testimony as well as a change in approach. In fact, North American historians have ceased to view immigration, the ethnic colony, and acculturation as an obvious continuum, and, in the face of startling ethnic persistence, more time has been spent rethinking the relationship between the last two pictures in the triptych than between the first two. The distinctions between migrants and immigrants, sojourners and settlers⁴ is not always made and the result is that family settlement is very often seen as the first stage of ethnic neighbourhood life.

Now, when so many excellent local studies of specific ethnic groups and their settlement are appearing, it seems the right time to reassert the need for thorough comparative studies of the migration,

³R. Juliani, "American Voices, Italian Accents: The Perception of Social Conditions and Personal Motives by Immigrants," Italian Americana, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn 1974), pp. 1-25; and "The Origin and Development of the Italian Community in Philadelphia," in J. Bodnar, ed., The Ethnic Experience in Pennsylvania (Lewisburg, 1973), pp. 233-261. Juliani's use of oral testimony and background in sociology allow him to say more about the mind set of first arrivals, their institutions and "paesani services."

⁴P. Siu, "The Sojourner," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 58 (July 1952), pp. 34-44. Siu describes the sojourner as, not a "marginal man," but one committed to maintaining himself in a manner which will enable him to re-insert himself easily in his country of origin.

sojourning, and settlement patterns of each ethnic group. Stock characters such as steamship agents, immigrant bankers, foraging foremen sent to Europe to recruit, and labour brokers need to be studied as part of an economic structure rather than simply appearing on the stage in the immigrant drama. Households with boarders, extended families, boarding-houses, padrone-run bunkhouses and commissaries, informal paese clubs, mutual aid and burial societies--all elements in the sojourner's world--require analysis as institutions,⁵ if we are to understand the transition from sojourning to settling to ethnicity in terms worthy of historians rather than those of latter day restrictionists or settlement house workers.⁶

I will look at the institution of boarding from the perspective of the sojourner and the settler. We must first remove some of the confusion that surrounds the practice of boarding among newcomers, and then we can see it as a form of entrepreneurship for some settlers, as a social institution fulfilling most needs for sojourners, and finally, as a frame within which aspects of North American ethnicity were defined. Two points need to be made at the outset. In attempting to show the entrepreneurial and institutional nature of boarding, I am not denying the important contribution made to the subject from the perspective of household and family studies. For example, Modell and Hareven's

⁵Of the institutions mentioned, probably the padrone system has received most systematic attention from historians. See L. Iorizzo, "The Padrone and Immigrant Distribution," in S. M. Tomasi and M. H. Engel, eds., The Italian Experience in the United States (Staten Island, 1970), pp. 43-75; R. F. Harney, "The Padrone and the Immigrant," The Canadian Review of American Studies, Vol. 2 (Fall, 1974), pp. 101-118; H. B. Nelli, "The Italian Padrone System in the United States," Labor History, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 1964), pp. 153-167.

⁶There were of course many excellent studies of specific institutions by contemporary social scientists. Two which deal with the sojourners well are G. Abbott, "The Chicago Employment Agency and the Immigrant Worker," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. XIV, No. 3 (November 1908); and E. Bradwin, The Bunkhouse Man (New York 1928). I am using institution in the simplest sense - a relationship or behavioural pattern of importance in the life of a community or society.

excellent study, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families," although it does not pay attention to sojourning as a concept, informs most of my thinking on the places of households in the study of boarding.⁷ Also, I am aware that much damage is done to separate ethnic traditions and patterns of boarding by my cross-cultural approach. I wish only to show in this paper that the condition of being a sojourner, which was shared by most male migrants of the so-called "new immigration" of the 20th century, encouraged similar institutions among all groups.⁸

Questions of morality and definition linger from then, and, before we can discuss the role of boarding in the sojourner economy and society, some confusions need to be sorted out. The Dillingham Commission, despite its misuse of the statistics on boarding, offered in 1911 a sensible classification of varieties of the boarding phenomenon among newcomers. The three general categories listed were: households consisting of two or more families living together; households consisting of one or more families with boarders and lodgers; and "scattering households" in which no family is present and called for this reason "group households." This last category divides into "either . . . a group of men who share all expenses or . . . a 'boarding house' usually [run by] a man without a family, and boarders and lodgers."⁹

⁷John Modell and Tamara Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families," Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 35 (August 1973), pp. 467-78.

⁸The only detailed study of an ethnic boarding house that I am aware of is A. Vazsonyi, "The Star Boarder: Traces of Cicisbeism in an Immigrant Community," in Tractata Altaica (Wiesbaden, 1976), pp. 695-713. This is an ethnological romp through the mores and arrangements of mid-American Hungarian boarders.

⁹U.S. Immigration Commission, 1907-1910 Reports (henceforth cited as Dillingham Commission), Vol. I, Abstracts, pp. 422-438. For agreement with Modell and Hareven that the semantic distinction between boarding and lodging was irrelevant, see Dillingham Commission, Vol. 26, pp. 79-80. Although padronism and so-called immigrant hotels fall under the last classification, group household, it is clear that many inns and hotels that ran in traditional commercial terms also were essentially ethnic institutions. See D. Esslinger, Immigrants and the City: Ethnicity and

Two subspecies of the first and last classifications have received most attention from historians. The household of an extended family has been the focus of chain migration studies, and the boarding house/inn as an adjunct of padronism has interested those who view migration a strict relationship of labour, flowing through brokers, to capitalist demand. The phenomenon of several families, related or from the same old country locale, living as a single household was not uncommon, especially for short periods of time while people inserted themselves into the North American economy. However, one or more families living with relatives or fellow countrymen as boarders was far more than a "malleable household"; it was also a complex network of informal trust, written contract, and cash exchange. Oral testimony shows that there was almost always exchange of money, precision about services rendered and terms of modus vivendi, as well as careful accounting of food and other costs. Analysis of boarding among sojourners then as simply family or household history does fall short of the cash nexus that existed and animated the institution at least as much as "in fellow-felling" did. The other subspecies, which skews our understanding of boarding much more than a too simple view of family and paesanism, is the extreme form of exploitation found in padroni inns and isolated work camps.

Confusing the traits of remote work camps with boarding itself is the same as identifying private enterprise with monopoly capitalism. Indeed, it was monopoly--through cultural or geographical isolation--of lodging, transport, job opportunity, and food supply which produced the extreme forms of exploitation. In both Canada and the United States, work camps on the railways, shanties near coal patches, isolated barge canal camp sites, and lumber camps led to virtual enslavement . . . a condition which was luridly detailed by social reformers and immigration,

Mobility in a 19th Century Midwestern Community (Port Washington, 1975), p. 45, has an interesting account of German hotels in downtown South Bend but does not seem to see the phenomenon as an aspect of ethnic enterprise or of the changing Polish and German ethnic boundaries of the roomers.



Boarding house on York Street, winter, 1910. (City of Toronto Archives)

industrial, and royal commissions. This spectre of the padrone-run commissary and bunkhouse or of the overcrowded inn near train stations and harbours created the aura of depravity and criminality which surrounds all of the Dillingham Commission's third category, "group households."¹⁰

¹⁰ See Reports of the Industrial Commission (Washington, 1910) Vol. XV, pp. x-xii; and Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Immigration of Italian Labourers to Montreal and the Alleged Fraudulent Practices of Employment Agencies (Ottawa, 1905). Dillingham Commission, II, p. 427.

In the case of Sicilians in the southern United States and the Chinese along the entire west coast of the Americas, insertion into the North American economy, often to replace black slave labour, was so reminiscent of negro servitude that the housing of the newcomers was naturally compared to slave quarters.¹¹ In 1930, an exposé of padrone and company-run camps in West Virginia showed that Italian migrant labour was often shanghaied, threatened with physical violence, and that camp security was maintained by armed guards and, in one case, a gatling gun.¹² Thus, the housing of foreign sojourners and the image of slavery ran together in the public mind. In the cities, immigrant entrepreneurs sometimes kept their employees in crowded lodgings near their shops. Especially in cases when those employees were immigrant minors, such as Greek or Basilicatan bootblacks or Syrian and Lebanese confectioners and pedlars, boarding became associated with white slavery and child abuse.¹³

Boarding in the city was rarely seen as the product of rapid population growth and poor urban planning or, conversely, as the sojourner's choice. For Nelli's Chicago, it was the padrone control of lodging itself which served as the mechanism by which target migrants were trapped and sojourners transformed into settlers.

Unemployed workers who remained in Chicago had no problems in obtaining food or lodgings, for padroni and Italian bankers saved and operated tenement houses where they encouraged

¹¹J. Scarpaci, "Immigrants in the New South: Italians in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1880-1910," in F. Assante, II Movimento migratorio italiano dall' unita nazionale ai giorni nostri (Naples, 1976), pp. 206-209. In the Chinese case, the steamship agents' "holding pens" for migrants at Macao bound for America were called barracoons, the word for slave quarters in most of the Iberian world. See John Foster, American Diplomacy in the Orient (Boston, 1903), p. 280.

¹²"Forced Labor in West Virginia," The Outlook, June 13, 1903.

¹³T. Saloutos, The Greeks in the United States (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 52-53; Dillingham Commission, Vol. 2, pp. 401 & 405.

guests to indulge in extravagance in order to place them more completely in debt.¹⁴

Turn-of-the-century eyewitnesses noted the geographical proximity of "employment agencies, saloons, cheap lodging houses, lunchrooms, and cheap or second-hand clothing stores."¹⁵ Amy Bernardy saw the same link between boarding and labour exploitation in Boston's North End:

The problem of capital and labour shines through between the lines in the notice outside the banchista's office: 'need 300 men for work on the railroad.' The horror of the unsanitary and degrading accommodations shows itself beneath the laconic sign: 'bordo' or 'we take in boarders'.¹⁶

In Toronto, a cluster of bankers, travel agencies, and hotels existed in the heart of the first 'Little Italy' in the St. John's Ward; the Venezia Hotel, a steamship agency, an "immigrant bank," and a working class hotel dominated the main intersection of the second neighbourhood around St. Francis (St. Agnes) Parish. The Royal Commission which dealt with fraudulent labour practices surrounding the importation of Italian labour to Montreal demonstrated the close ties between the Canadian Pacific's recruiters, the padrone, Antonio Cordasco, and a number of boarding houses.¹⁷ Inevitably the boarding of alien migrant males became almost synonymous in Canadian cities, as it already was in the rural work camps, with exploitation and monopoly of services. In fact, any sense that sojourners might prefer such a boarding system was lost in a haze of moral outrage. The very place of boarding as an aspect of the commerce of migration rather than an exploitative end in itself became lost. The United States Industrial Commission of 1901 heard this testimony: "However, I have called the attention of the

¹⁴ H. Nelli, Italians in Chicago, p. 60; for the concept of the target migrant, see J. M. Nelson, Temporary versus Permanent Cityward Migration: Causes and Consequences (MIT, 1976).

¹⁵ G. Abbott, "The Chicago Employment Agency," p. 294.

¹⁶ A Bernardy, America Vissuta (Torino, 1911), p. 316.

¹⁷ See Royal Commission (Italians); and R. F. Harney, "Chiaroscuro: Italians in Toronto, 1885-1915," Italian Americana, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1975), pp. 143-167.

commission to many cases of Italian hotel keepers who have tried to get hold of the Italian immigrants in order to speculate upon them." And boarding was identified with outright violent crime as well. "Others have told me," wrote the director of Ellis Island, "how they were led to boarding houses where they were beaten and robbed or shanghaied to some far off mine, quarry, or construction site."¹⁸

If boarding came into the cities from the remote work camps with a criminal record, in the city, the sojourners and their lodging system were immediately caught in yet another vortex of moral and sociological confusion. Boarding was associated with overcrowding, tenement conditions, and the dangers of the "lodger evil." All of those masks of social disintegration intensified when the "pipeline to the cesspools of Europe" was attached. The lodger evil itself, of course, had emerged as a moral issue only when the majority of boarders in the city ceased to be middle class and were replaced by rural, lower class migrants and foreigners.¹⁹ In that sense, ethnic and cultural disparities were merely a convenient rallying cry for the city reformers and social gossippers, but reform, inspired by the social gospel or not, and prejudice fed on each other. J. S. Woodsworth, describing immigrants in Winnipeg and Toronto, could not comprehend why Galicians would live "twenty-four in one room where only seven should have been. Fancy such conditions," he added, "with illimitable prairies stretching to the

¹⁸Industrial Commission, Vol. XV, p. 157; B. Brandenburg, Imported Americans (New York, 1903) describes all the frauds and violence visited on migrants in process; E. Corsi, In the Shadow of Liberty (New York, 1937), p. 38.

¹⁹Modell and Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household," p. 470. The 'lodger evil' among immigrants also was subject to confusion about extended families and about how kinship might make household proximity more respectable no matter how remote. For example, the Dillingham Commission remarked that "many persons in few rooms is not so serious a matter when all are members of the family as when strangers are included in the household." Dillingham Commission, Vol. I, p. 748. So it was not the quality of life, the health hazard, but really the "moral climate" that mattered to the authorities.

north and west."²⁰ Thus, someone like Woodsworth could see boarding as an aspect of clannishness, a failure to acculturate, and a judgmental category which served to portray the sojourners (not incorrectly, only maliciously) as being like Emily Dickinson's rats, "the concisest tenants of the Earth," providing unfair competition for native stock. By living and surviving in the bestial nests of the boarding house, sojourners not only lowered standards, but also threatened to succeed. In Toronto, the muckraking newspaper Jack Canuck clearly expressed the danger that the sojourner might prove to be the fittest breed in the industrial city: "Not so the Italian. He is content to 'pig-in' with a crowd of others and live under conditions which an Anglo-Saxon would be ashamed of."²¹

The Report of the Toronto Medical Health Officer Dealing with the Recent Investigation of Slum Conditions in Toronto, Embodying Recommendations for the Amelioration of the Same, prepared for the city by Dr. Hastings in 1911, contained a typical interplay of hostility toward boarding, foreigners, and the burgeoning industrial city itself. Charts of overcrowded rooms, dark rooms, rear houses, tenement houses, common lodging houses, cellar dwellings, and one-roomed dwellings--all obviously employed as indices of squalor and social disintegration--were juxtaposed page on page with lists of ethnic households in the neighbourhoods studied in the report.²² Boarding then, rather than being approached

²⁰J. S. Woodsworth, Strangers Within Our Gates (Toronto, 1909), pp. 217-220.

²¹Jack Canuck, January 1, 1912, p. 14. Saturday Night at least sensed the relationship of this condition to sojourning (January 20, 1912), p. 2, "He is probably counting the hours to that longed for day when he too shall appear at Salerno and jingle money in his pockets."

²²Hastings Report, pp. 16-17. The list of families by nationalities included all groups but Anglo-Celts. The three districts chosen for analysis were St. John's Ward, the Eastern Avenue area, and the Niagara Street district. All were heavily immigrant, commercial, and the last two were industrial as well. They were not however the most squalid in the city. The juxtaposition of ethnicity with social problems was quite misleading since British lower class and Canadian pathological slum neighbourhoods were not included in the study.

as a possible variation on the "malleable household," a sign of the resilience and initiative of migrant networks, was treated as urban pathology.²³

If we can pass from the moralizing and emotion that surrounds turn-of-the-century boarding to its social reality, a different set of questions can be asked about the institution itself: questions about the uses of family and household to cope with a new North American situation, about boarding as a form of ethnic entrepreneurship and proprietorship--one of the earliest such forms--and as a community institution and a force shaping the boundaries of ethnicity itself. Further questions about the role of boarding in establishing the ambiente and density necessary for an ethnic settlement, and indeed, in moving the sojourner into the position and attitudes of a settler need answering as well. A new perspective, informed by much oral testimony and by the concept of sojourning, when combined with an understanding of different ethnic household traditions, should enable us to see boarding as one of those key institutions now lost in the mists between migration and permanent settlement.

Whether we are dealing with a family with boarders or a "group household," no amount of rhetoric about paesanism and kinship ties should draw us away from the economic matrix of the institution as it was understood and used by both the boarder and the keeper of boarders. For

²³V. Greene, "The Polish American Worker to 1930: The Hunky Image in Transition," The Polish Review, Vol. XXI (1976), pp. 63-78. On page 65 it is pointed out that even sympathetic observers of Slavic group households left the impression that "the workers still required non-group leadership to effect the necessary reforms" in immigrant life including housing. This same view persists among students of European guestworker systems who feel that boarding or hotel accommodations "lead to a ghetto-like life and prevent any contact with the local community . . . (and thus) retard a positive process of learning." W. R. Bohning, "The Social and Occupational Apprenticeship of Mediterranean Migrant Workers in West Germany" in M. Livi-Bacci, ed., The Demographic and Social Pattern of Emigration from the Southern European Countries (Florence, 1972), p. 226. This view like that of the turn-of-the-century Toronto assumes that integration is the only proper course for sojourners.

the boarders, the nature of the arrangement satisfied the needs of their sojourning frame of mind. That frame of mind (mentalità) called for maximizing savings, minimizing potentially costly encounters with the host society, and, as much as circumstances permitted, recreating or remaining in the ambiente of the home country.²⁴ Considered in these terms, one can see that the family-run boarding system was not so much a different institution from the "group household" as it was a felicitous and highly efficient form of it. Enterprise, a labour intensive and administrative organization around a working wife and serving children, was not only a traditional aspect of the European rural family but was also an efficient adaptation of that tradition to the city. The study of boarding benefits enormously from recent interpretations of the role of women in the work force and reassertions of older ones about the family as a single economic unit.²⁵

Boarding then was a practical use of family and village ties as well as of certain qualities within the pre-industrial family itself. Historians have rarely felt that they could penetrate the complex nucleus of fellow-feeling and entrepreneurship in the relationship of

²⁴See P. Siu, "The Sojourner"; V. G. Nee and B. de B. Nee, Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown (New York, 1973) Chap. II "The Bachelor Society"; R. F. Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885-1930," a paper presented to the AIHA-CIHA Joint Sessions (Toronto, Oct. 28, 1977).

²⁵Traditions among South Slavs like the zadruga and drustvo and the role of wives in running czarda in Hungary obviously made adaptation to being a boarding house mistress easier for female immigrants from those groups. For the Italians, M. H. Ets, Rosa: The Life of an Italian Immigrant (Minnesota, 1970); and the story of Rosa Mondavi in A. Pellegrini's Americans by Choice (New York, 1956), pp. 138-147, demonstrate the almost involuntary economic performance of immigrant wives. See J. Scott and L. Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in 19th Century Europe," Comparative Studies in Society and History (Jan. 17, 1975); C. Golab, "The Impact of the Industrial Experience on the Immigrant Family: The Huddled Masses Reconsidered," Immigrants in Industrial America 1850-1920, Richard Erlich, ed., (University Press of Virginia: September 1977); and V. Y. McLaughlin, Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo 1880-1930 (Cornell University Press, 1977).

of relatives and fellow villagers who lodged together in North America.²⁶ In 1941, Oscar Handlin's eloquence could not hide the fact that he had thrown in the towel with the remark that, among the Boston Irish, "no matter how cramped the quarters of those already settled, there was always room for the sake of rent, charity or kinship."²⁷ Even in Vecoli's articulate critique of Handlin's Uprooted, the sojourner's family and "belongingness with his fellow townsmen" are contrasted with padronism, as if the former had no cash nexus.²⁸ Since then, perhaps because of the heritage of padronism or the image of sex roles, the study of boarding among Italian migrants remains too dichotomized. Certainly Slavic and Hungarian studies have no trouble in dealing with the family with boarders and the "missus" of the establishment as both a household and a well-organized business enterprise.²⁹

Thomas Kessner's recent study of Jewish and Italian social mobility in New York City concludes that "lodgers represented the closest of neighbours and immigrants were careful to choose those of similar ethnic origin and religious background. These boarders became part of the immigrant household." Kessner notes in passing that in 1880 most Italian bordanti in the city were unrelated to the family with whom they formed a household, and that even by 1905, by which time chain migration could presumably have done its work, over 62% of bordanti were

²⁶The study of ethnicity would profit from more awareness of issues in the study of the formation of nationality and growth of national feeling. For example, see A. Smith, Theories of Nationalism (London, 1971); and K. Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (MIT, 1953). Both suggest that the scale of fellow-feeling is a function of the economic and social network which proves most useful.

²⁷Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants (Harvard, 1941), p. 101.

²⁸Rudolph Vecoli, "Contadini in Chicago," pp. 408-411.

²⁹See for example, G. Prpic, The Croatian Immigrants in America (New York, 1971); M. Byington, Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town (Pittsburgh, 1910); T. Bell, Out of This Furnace (Pittsburgh, 1976); L. Adamic, From Many Lands (New York, 1939); and Vazsonyi, "The Star Boarders."

unrelated to the household in which they lived.³⁰ All this suggests more family enterprise than chain migration and kinship.

Among Italian lodgers, words like bossa for the keeper of the house, bordo for their arrangement, and bordante to describe themselves were borrowed and the Italian expression covivenza was rarely used. Perhaps an ethno-linguist could explain what qualities in the Italian North American household were sufficiently alien to require such borrowing. That boarding confused the newcomers themselves can also be seen in the attempt to force an ascriptive setting. Older boarders were called uncle by the young women who, after marriage to a boarding-boss, found themselves wives and keepers of boarders. Younger lodgers called the lady of the house auntie or nonna (grandmother), and la padrona when they referred to her with third parties. Hungarians usually referred to the boarding-boss's wife as the "miszisz."³¹ Many of these terms were obviously used to impose vigorous sexual controls on the boarding house, but they also reflect the attempt to make the institution fit either household or family situations which could be understood from the old world experience.

The use of terms of respect or of familial designations between boarder and the boarding-boss's wife cannot obscure either the menial labour status of the woman who ran the boarding establishment or the precise business arrangements which existed between boarder and keeper. Although oral testimony invariably emphasizes the atmosphere of trust,

³⁰T. Kessner, The Golden Door. Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915 (New York, 1976), p. 100.

³¹For the uses of "miszisz," see Vazsonyi "The Star Boarder"; C. Panunzio, The Soul of the Immigrant, shows the typical Italian use of "padrone" to describe the head of the establishment; "Bordo" and "bordante" ("bordisti") are terms discussed by Amy Bernardy in Italia randagia attraverso gli Stati Uniti (Turin, 1914), pp. 88-122. Louise Tilly's thesis on the formation of the Milan working class, 1881-1911, shows the use of the proper Italian covivenza to describe urban boarding of newcomers there (Toronto: History Department, 1972), R. F. Harney, Director, p. 291. The uses of family terms like auntie, nonna, uncle, and daughter to reduce tension and define roles is mentioned in most oral testimony.

family values, and sense of shared fate in early Italian Canadian boarding, further questioning always brings out descriptions of highly structured arrangements about services rendered, payment for services, controls on boarder behaviour, and on the organization of boarding itself. These latter aspects are clearer in the "group household" than in the family with boarders or the boarding-boss variations, but they are present in all forms of immigrant boarding.

A Methodist colporteur in Toronto complained that Sicilian women in the 1900s were so busy tending to boarders that they could not come to church gatherings; he did not understand that caring for a group of bordanti, or a boardinghouse, was an occupation for the whole family and a profession for the wife of the household: "Thus the rooming house is lucrative because it utilizes almost completely the family spare time labour. Similar is the case with lunch bars, grocery stores, etc."³² Whether we can find sufficient material in traditional sources, such as assessment rolls, income statistics, and city directories, to measure how lucrative keeping boarders was as an ethnic enterprise, the psychic saving involved in keeping the mother and wife at home to work and in maintaining the family as a single economic unit was clearly supplemented by much real profit from taking in sojourners.³³

Fortunate the settler who could turn his household and his dependents into a source of income while still working outside the home himself. He was like the rich contadino of the old country who owned a draft animal which could be rented out for extra income. A wife as a beast of burden in the boarding business was certainly the equivalent of a mule in southern Italy or Macedonia, and small children were as

³²John Kosa, Land of Choice: The Hungarians in Canada (Toronto, 1957), p. 31.

³³J. MacDonald and L. MacDonald, "Chian Migration, Ethnic Neighbourhood Formation and Social Networks," in C. Tilly, ed., An Urban World (Boston, 1974), p. 231. This, like most sources, concentrates on the importance of sheltered work for Latin immigrant women rather than on the entrepreneurial role of family.

valuable an asset as healthy sons had been on the land.³⁴ The profit margin for the family with boarders was potentially great, limited only by the energy of the family, the size of the house, the satisfaction of the clientele, and, very occasionally, public inspection and intervention. For example, in Toronto in 1911, at a time when an Italian unskilled sojourner could earn about \$2 a day as a labourer, a Toronto Italian family collected \$3 a month from each of thirty boarders. The house they used rented for \$28 a month. Depending on food arrangements, clear profit as well as free shelter accrued to the entrepreneurial family, and the husband was able to work full time outside of the home. In other instances, men paid \$1.25 a week or the equivalent of a day's wages on board. The Hastings Report remarked darkly that there was "some evidence that certain small hotels and old rooming houses are about to undergo the dangerous transformation into foreign lodging houses."³⁵ If the Report saw such changes as heralding the spread of slum conditions, we should see it as proof of a successful entrepreneurial form and evidence of the existence of a satisfied clientele. Egisto Rossi, a special commissioner for the Italian government, calculated the sojourner's reasons for supporting a boarding system:

Accepting my conclusions about the second and third points, it should be noted that the cost of food and lodging in Canada does not differ much from that of the United States. With 3 or 4 dollars a week, a manual labourer can live well enough in both countries. Certainly, our labourers do not spend on average more than 15 dollars a month, and that, when you consider that they earn usually about \$1.25 to \$1.75 a day, enables them to save and to return to Italy at the end of a season with some gruzzolo di denaro (nest-egg).

Thus, there is every reason to believe that groups of sojourners would

³⁴J. Marlyn, Under the Ribs of Death (Toronto, 1971), pp. 19-22, presents a convincing picture of the ambivalence of the children of boarding house keepers toward their role in the extended household. Lithuanian and Polish landlords in Chicago often rented out the better units to tenants but lived in the worst rooms themselves to minimize costs: see Victor Greene, For God and Country: The Rise of the Polish and Lithuanian Ethnic Consciousness in America, 1860-1910 (Madison, 1975), p. 53.

³⁵Hastings Report, pp. 8 and 14.

have created boarding institutions if entrepreneurial families and boarding-bosses had not done so.³⁶ That is, after all, what the existence of so many "group" or "scattering households," as described by the Dillingham Commission and many other contemporaries, signifies.

Despite the camaraderie and intra-ethnic warmth that emerges from much of the oral testimony, boarding was a business. In an oral history of Pennsylvania immigrants, the authors describe a boarder in a South Slav establishment who found his "plate [turned] upside down at the boarding house when he did not have work." Moreover, the definitions of services to be rendered between keeper and boarder, regardless of kinship or paesanism, were so precise and so quickly surrounded by local custom that it very soon did not depend on the ritual of affecting kinship described earlier. Whether the mistress of

³⁶E. Rossi, "Delle Condizioni del Canada rispetto all' immigrazione italiana," Bollettino dell' Emigrazione #4, Anno 1903. Although the economics of boarding usually is described in terms of the boarding-boss or family with boarders profit, it must be remembered that the sojourner clientele made the system work. It was they, maximizing their savings to meet old world needs, who accepted crowded conditions and minimal service. A convincing local example can be found in R. Wilson, A Retrospective: A Short Review of the Steps taken in Sanitation to transform the Town of Muddy York into the Queen City of the West (Toronto, 1934), p. 32, which describes a three-room cottage with twenty Italian boarders thus: "They were all jolly good natured fellows and were highly amused at the visit of the health inspector and his inquiries as translated by the boss . . ." - hardly the atmosphere of white slavery and padronism. In the Canadian case, a special service offered by the ethnic boarding system was credit for room and board over the long winter months of unemployment. Nick Lombardi speaks from the perspective of the boarding house keeper: "We had a couple, not because we needed them, but because they were good friends and they wanted to stay with us. We all used to eat together. And if they didn't have any money, daddy and mom never used to worry. They knew they'd pay off the debt in the summer." (Taped Interview, The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, June 1, 1976). His friend, Paul Lorenzo, remembers the situation from the sojourner's view: "We used to live over where they put the new Mount Sinai hospital, near Mt. Carmel church on McCaul Street, in an Italian boarding house - \$2.50 a month. There were about 8 or 10 boarders in the house. In the winter time, we can't pay the rent - we have no money. You must wait for summer to return so you can go out and work again and pay your debts . . . And when you'd go to the store you had to sign a book since you had no money. And my father kept his own book too, so that he would never be cheated." (Taped Interview, The Multicultural History Society of Ontario.)

such a "malleable household" was called la padrona, auntie, or the missus, if she took money for bed and board, she accepted a more rigorous set of commitments for service than any boarding house boss.³⁷ The woman was responsible for serving the boarders in a way that closely resembled the duties of a peasant wife to her husband. (Perhaps that is why, in the Hungarian case, the missus was assumed by many boarders also to share sexual favours with them, and why Italian feminists like Amy Bernardy railed against boarding as a source of adultery.)³⁸

Giovanni Verga, in one of his short stories about Sicilian life, describes the obligations of a good peasant wife thus: "She made sure that he found a fresh sheet on the bed, the macaroni made, and the bread for the following week already leavening."³⁹ The female boarding house keeper, and this varied considerably from ethnic group to ethnic group, washed the workers soiled work clothes, bedding and dirty underclothes, and sometimes even the back and legs of the boarders themselves when they came in from mines and factories. The services rendered require much more study, for the status of women and the sexual mores of each country of emigration must have affected services offered in North American boarding arrangements.

Contractual arrangements revolved around the food supply,

³⁷This story was gathered by John Bodnar and Carl Oblinger of the Pennsylvania Museum of Man and will appear in a forthcoming oral history volume. P. Roberts, The New Immigration (New York, 1914), p. 131. The sick, wounded, and unemployed threw off the three shift bed rotation and were often evicted. Gina Petroff (Taped Interview, Oct. 12, 1976) tells the story of a man known as Nick Coca Cola. "Anyway he been sleeping on the third floor. Not working. He never get up two days, just sleep and stay there day and night, and the name is Nick . . . There's Depression and nobody give work to you. So anyway they kept him for a little while over . . . and then they kicked him out." (Unless otherwise cited, all oral testimony is from the collection of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario. A computerized guide to that collection is in process.)

³⁸See Vazsonyi, "Traces of Cicisbeism"; and A. Bernardy "Da un relazione de Amy Bernardy su l' emigrazione delle donne e fanciullo italiane nelle Stati Uniti," Bollettino del' Emigrazione (1909).

³⁹"Nanni Volpe," in G. Verga, The She Wolf and Other Stories (Berkeley, 1958), p. 160.

clothing, and bedding, but it was the first of these that seems almost to have been a preoccupation. A Roumanian account indicates that groups of boarders sometimes moved in search of better food.⁴⁰ For historians and social scientists who fear that contemporary emphasis on varieties of ethnic cuisine may trivialize ethnicity, the study of the place of food in boarding is instructive. The food supply was the most flexible of the sojourner's costs, and its preparation, along with language and daily contact with boarders of the same origin, was the most salient aspect of the sojourner's struggle to insulate himself from cultural change. The boarder balanced his concern to maximize savings with his need for ample and hearty food in labour intensive job situations. He refused usually to sacrifice fully his ambiente and culture by eating food prepared in an "English" or North American style every day of the week.

The boarding-boss or the housewife with boarders wished to maximize profits while not alienating clientele. Again, it is obvious that excesses occurred where isolation and company indifference gave the commissary or those in charge of the food supply a virtual monopoly. For example, since most foremen and section bosses of Italian work gangs on the Canadian Pacific Railroad depended on Montreal padroni for their supply of Italian food, the railroad navvies in isolated camps paid as much as five times the going city rate for mouldy bread and tainted sardines (anchovies). In the city, competition between forms of lodging and perhaps greater "fellow-feeling" caused more balance between the profit motive and the workers' tastes and requirements. On the other hand, taste in food did maintain ethnic boundaries. Certainly sojourners saw it as an important difference between themselves and other groups, and it was used as a reason for maintaining ethnically homogeneous bunkhouses at many work sites. "All Japanese stay in same bunkhouse. The Canadians live in a separate bunkhouse and of course didn't like to eat Japanese food from our Japanese cook." What was true of isolated

⁴⁰"The Boarding House," from The New Pioneer in V. Wertsman, The Romanians in America, 1748-1974 (Dobbs Ferry, 1975), p. 62.

camp sites was equally true of the city, and Jack Canuck, lamenting the clannishness of Italians and the fact that they received work from the city through subcontracts, remarked: "It is said that the Italian employed by the city of Toronto refuse to buy any other than Italian macaroni. That they live in gangs of from 6 to 9 in one room. . . ."41 The newspaper's bitter comment tells us something about the place of boarding in the creation of ethnic density, of making other ethnic enterprises such as food importation possible, and the importance of food in defining ethnic boundaries and choice of housing.

Although carefully arrived at agreements between a boarding-boss and his boarders or in a "group household" might be expected, the degree of organization in the arrangement of meals in the household with boarders is a bit startling. Even in warm, family-based, and paesani (fellow townsmen) boarding circumstances, the question of food supply was matter for careful accounting and individual, if usually unwritten, contracts. In one household, a hurdy gurdy man and his wife kept three or four younger boarders, often men from their paese. In the kitchen was a great black stove with separate pots of food prepared by each lodger for himself. An affluent or prodigal man might be preparing veal while a boarder more concerned about the cost of prepaid steamship tickets limited himself to the same meatless minestra or pasta every day. Yet another had made a full board arrangement with the family and ate their prepared meal with them. Everyone took his food from the stove and sat down to eat at the kitchen table together.⁴²

A Slovak migrant in the Niagara peninsula described his boarding arrangement thus:

The rooming house . . . see we paid the lady a dollar a month for cooking. You paid a dollar and we paid the room extra. And every week she bought what she need in the grocery store. She was purchaser. She chose--sometimes she says well

⁴¹Jack Canuck, Vol. 1, No. 14 (January, 1912); T. Hiramato (Taped interview).

⁴²Mary Caruso (Taped Interview, Dec. 7, 1976). Her grandfather, a hurdy-gurdy man, left the boarding enterprise completely to his wife.

tomorrow we're going to have real meat or something like that--or breaded veal or pork chops. Okay everybody agree. And then, end of the week--Sunday usually--they calculate everything--how much she spent--and then she spread the expenses amongst all of us. We pay a dollar and she had a free board. And her husband had to pay same as we do.⁴³

The ethos of this arrangement hovers between family, trust, and good business, and the possible mutations of the boarding arrangement seem endless. Without a much larger sample, and some attempt at controlling that sample by time, place, and ethnic group, it is difficult to tell how much old world traditions affected the nature of the arrangement, but it should be clear that the simple line between family and enterprise is quite useless. For example, a Donau-Schwaben (German from Hungary) boarding house in Welland, Ontario had only lodgers who were related to one another and the owner. The lady of the household cooked for all the men, but

We paid so much a week and she cooked. She cooked for us and we could buy our own food and take it to her and she cooks it or sometimes--the butcher came to the house. Butcher send young fellow and he notes down what you want and the next day they delivered it.⁴⁴

The boarding system was further complicated by whether the household was responsible for preparing the lunch pail for each worker/boarder as well. In that instance, the matter could range from a commitment to so many sandwiches or cold sausage per day to no agreement. (In Toronto, for example, many Polish and Lithuanian boarders in the Niagara-Queen Street factory district found it easier to save by buying monthly lunch tickets from local Chinese and Macedonian restaurants who had packed lunches waiting for them each morning as they passed by.)

The sojourners' preoccupation with their meal arrangements grew

⁴³Michael Guzei (Taped Interview (Slovak Barr)).

⁴⁴John Krar (Taped Interview Donau-Schwaben #260 Frei) Dillingham Commission, Abstracts, Vol. I, pp. 422-552. "Many variations upon this arrangement are met with but some form of it constitutes the method of living usually followed by recent immigrant households (read, sojourners.)

from two different sources. First, as the most variable of their expenses, it bore constant and close scrutiny by men committed to saving. However, we must not deny the centrality of familiar cuisine to their maintenance of popular culture while away from the homeland. Moreover, it seems likely that boarding as an important and pioneering form of enterprise in immigrant neighbourhoods would not have existed if those who maintained boarders could not meet their dietary and culinary demands. Those Roumanian boarders in Cleveland expected a Sunday noon meal of noodle soup, pork meat, and dumplings. They demanded sauerkraut, sausage, and pureed white beans a certain number of times a week.⁴⁵ Like the Italian labourers who would only eat imported pasta, the Roumanians were practicing a primitive but determined consumer power. Their existence made possible small entrepreneurial successes for those who imported pasta and tomatoes or made sauerkraut to some old country formula. Storefronts, ambiente, and ethnic settlement followed.

Concern over the cost, quality, and ethnicity of food existed in the "group households" as much as in the family with boarders where instead of agreements with la padrona, the boarders had to evolve a regime as a group. The organization of a cooking roster, rent payments, a budget of shared costs for food and drink, and even the laying out of rules for behaviour between boarders took time and consensus. Sometimes one would be hard put to tell the difference between a commercial boarding-boss and the sort of authoritarian leader who emerged to dominate such households. Usually the latter was an older member of an extended family of males involved in the boarding establishment, or a village man whose reputation had been great in the old country as well. He might differ from a boarding-boss only in so far that his power lay in his influence rather than in proprietorship over the location.⁴⁶ In other cases, remarkable democracy prevailed. More oral testimony,

⁴⁵V. Wertsman, The Romanians, p. 63.

⁴⁶Stoyan Christowe, This Is My Country (New York, 1938). The leader of a "group household" although he depended on a coterie of elders or kin, exercised control.

especially about weekly budget meetings and arrangement of a roster, will certainly show that "group boarding" nurtured the more formal institutions of the later community, such as burial societies, mutual aid organizations, and paese clubs. Some boarding establishments sounded more like settlement houses or fraternal organizations than households anyway. Peter Roberts described what he, as a social gospeller, had found to be an ideal "group household" of Japanese in Omaha:

One of the best samples of housekeeping I have ever seen was done by the 140 Japanese who lived in the House of the Good Shepherd in South Omaha. A board of managers had charge of the affairs of the group. The secretary of the board kept all records, accounts, and transacted all business with outsiders; the commissary had charge of the feeding of the group; the cooking, washing, and scrubbing were systematized, and each member was bound by a set of rules that secured peace and order.⁴⁷

As we turn to the role of boarding the dynamic of changing ethnic identities in North America, we should observe that for the true sojourner, the boarding place, whether under a padrone system, with a family, or in a "group household," provided a means of living with one's own on a scale larger than the family, and yet, smaller than the host society or even of that North American invention, the ethnic group. The lodging place served as the focus of "fellow-feeling," of gossip about townsmen and countrymen who were mavericks, philanderers, or drunks, of the news' network coming from the home village, of intelligence about job opportunities, of the arranging of marriages and the travel of other family members, and finally, of who were reliable merchants, money-lenders, and go-betweens. It was the place to play old world card games and spend leisure time. In that sense, the boarding house, especially if one includes the saloons and ancillary enterprises often in its immediate environs, had for the sojourner a variety of the ethnic "completeness of institutions"⁴⁸ that Raymond Breton has described as

⁴⁷P. Roberts, The New Immigration, p. 124.

⁴⁸R. Breton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 70 (September, 1964), pp. 193-205. Anna Kaprielian (Jan. 24, 1978,

necessary to a later stage of ethnic development.

In its informal and amoebic way, boarding provided for all the needs of the sojourners. If we could keep that in mind, the early period of ethnic settlement, dominated by male migrants and boarding arrangements, could be understood not in terms of the failure of acculturation or the pathology of marginality, but as a period when the sojourners' needs were met and when those entrepreneurs who drew their income from serving and exploiting the sojourners began the formation of permanent settlement and, indeed, of an ethnic bourgeoisie. One need only think of the sojourner's agenda to predict those institutions which would grow up in his presence and those which would be retarded.⁴⁹ Institutions of acculturation or culture mattered little. There were no children to educate in the new ways or to make steadfast in the old. For most of the groups involved, the presence of women was required to make ethnic parishes necessary. On the other hand, the sojourners did require ethnic food, rough leisure in the form of saloons, coffee-houses, and billiard rooms, steamship agencies, banks, employment bureaux, and some form of mutual aid or burial insurance. Just as oral testimony can show the presence of successful immigrant enterprise before city directory or tax roll evidence existed,⁵⁰ interviews also confirm that

Armenian) - same sense of the completeness of a sojourning institution comes out of this conversation. "He had a house. The first floor was a coffee shop and library. People would go there and play backgammon, cards, read books (whoever could read). Armenians would congregate there. Everyone would tell his story, talk about his family. They'd write letters. . . ."

⁴⁹For those who believe that the sojourning attitude shapes a migrant's relations with North America, studies about occupational mobility and acculturation should reflect the intensity of the migrant's desire to insert himself as much as it does North American conditions. The contrasting of Jewish settlers and Italian sojourners as to rates of occupational mobility without reference to their frame of mind and attitude about staying in the United States becomes silly. See Betty B. Caroli, "Italian Settlement in American Cities," in H. S. Nelli, ed., The U.S. and Italy: Proceedings of the 9th Annual Conference of the AIHA (Washington, 1976), pp. 156-158.

⁵⁰For example where would a man who sold balloons at Toronto parades who also was chief money lender in the Italian community, a man who lost

early community business notables and leaders of paese clubs or benevolent societies began as heads of group households or as boarding house bosses. Dr. Juliana Puskas of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences has pointed out that in those groups, such as the South Slav and the Hungarian, where the "mieszusz" had a special role in running the boarding establishment, many such women were the moving spirits and first officers of parish and benevolent society committees.⁵¹

One suspects that the study of boarding and especially of the "group household" could bring us to the very heart of the relationship between ethnic identity and socio-economic reality, as well as providing a means of understanding the shifting boundaries of that identity. At a simple level, boarding often provided a neighbourhood with the density and concentration of people necessary to attract or create institutions which more overtly nurtured a separate ethnic existence. At a more important level, boarding as a form of clustering people from the same homeland began the process of breaking down extreme localism, even when each household seemed to represent only one local origin, and thus, led to what Helen Lopata has described as the "gradually emerging fabric" of North American ethnicity.⁵²

If we look closely at the place and scale of "fellow-felling" in boarding, we can begin to grasp the way in which localism and ethnicity among the sojourners existed as both a continuum of identities and as

his arm in an abattoir accident but made a comfortable living escorting brides back and forth from Macedonia, and all the informal keepers of boarding establishments fit in the gross measures of mobility and status such as S. Thernstrom's The Other Bostonians (Cambridge, 1973). Some synthesis of oral testimony and quantitative methods would greatly enhance the value of urban studies.

⁵¹Conversation with Dr. Juliana Puskas, Toronto, January 25, 1978. Dr. Puskas has spent the last year visiting Hungarian committees in the U.S. and Canada.

⁵²H. Lopata, Polish American Status Competition in an Ethnic Community (New York, 1976), pp. 608 and 19-20 gives a clear sociological view of ethnicity as a historical process, in which the okolica, the physical and psychic unit of group identity, changes in North America.

conflicting loyalties or, at least, loyalties of different intensities. For example, when in Upton Sinclair's The Jungle, Jurgis Rudkus and his Lithuanian group reach the Chicago stockyard area, they find housing that seems to reflect both their Lithuanian ethnicity and the melting pot:

There were four such flats in each building, and each of the four was a "boarding house" for the occupancy of foreigners--the Lithuanians, Poles, Slovaks, or Bohemians. Some of these places were kept by private persons, some were co-operatives.⁵³

Rudkus, however, did not end up in that boarding-house because he was a Lithuanian, he was led to it by a man from his own village: "The two families literally fell upon each others' necks--for it had been years since Jokubas Szedvilas had met a man from his part of Lithuania." In almost every account of boarding, what appears to be camaraderie based on large ethnic definitions recedes upon closer examination, and one finds people from one village, town, or district clustering together. Optimum size for "group households" and families with boarders tended to stay within such parochial definitions of their group. In such instances, at least within the boarding establishment, ethnicity did not extend beyond the paese or local area of emigration. Yet boarding was an expedient and a functional institution for sojourners, allowing them to adapt their sense of "fellow-feeling" to the scale of ethnicity imposed upon them by the nature of their migration, their jobs, or their lodgings.

A look at a single sojourner's experience can demonstrate this point. Paul Bertoia, an immigrant from near Udine in Friuli, the northeast of Italy, arrived alone in Toronto after World War I. In search of work and relatives, he went on to Edmonton. There he stayed in boarding house/inn known to its residents as the Roma Hotel. One floor was occupied completely by Friulan sojourners, and the next floor by Trevisans from a neighbouring region of Italy. Each floor had its own cooking, dialect, card games, and camaraderie, even though the inn was named for Italy's capital and the native Edmontonians considered

⁵³Upton Sinclair The Jungle (New York, 1965), first edition 1906, p. 32.

everyone in the building an Italian migrant. When Mr. Bertolia boarded with kinfolk in Drumheller, he associated chiefly with people from his home town near Udine, and later, when he came to Toronto, became involved in benevolent organizations like the Fratellanza which took in members from all over the Italian peninsula.⁵⁴ His ethnic reference group changed according to his setting.

Men who found themselves in more remote work situations with few paesani with them seem to have developed a sense of belonging to a larger Italian or Italian Canadian ethnic group more quickly than those who were able to lodge with paesani:

Question: Were there a lot of people working on that job from your home town in Calabria?

Answer: No. They were mostly from other provinces. Was mixed you know. Mostly from southern Italy. In this gang we passed the winter in this converted horse stable--we were all Italian.⁵⁵

Mr. Carnovale, the man who answered the above query, had three possible reference groups other than acculturation to Canadian ways: his paese, his region defined either as Calabria or the Italian south (Mezzo giorno), or the nation state of Italy. It is impossible to doubt that the background of the men with whom he sojourned and boarded did not affect his commitment to one identity or another, or at least his pace along a continuum from campanilismo to an Italian Canadian ethnic sense. In that way, detailed study of the social setting of the migrants might begin to yield answers about the historical process of ethnicity.

In an account of a Macedonian "group household" in Toronto in 1920, we can see how the smallest details of the boarding organization

⁵⁴P. Bertolia (Taped Interview Friulian, March 1, 1978). Ethnic identities among sojourners were nowhere near as hard-edged as prejudice and the ethnic groups own retrospective falsification now make them appear. Finns, Swedes, and Finn Swedes who lived near quarries on Cape Ann in Massachusetts changed ethnic loyalty with boarding houses. See P. Parsons & P. Anastas, When Gloucester Was Gloucester: Toward an Oral History of the City (Gloucester, 1973), p. 21.

⁵⁵John Carnovale (Taped Interview, Italian, The Multicultural History Society of Ontario.)

could cement village ties or break them down either in favour of a larger Macedonian identity or of acculturation. A father defends his son who has burnt the daily stew prepared for other boarders. There is an angry exchange of words, and, despite the fact that they are all fellow villagers, no turning back. Some moved and found new households; they passed either into the so-called "English" boarding houses or found another Macedonian "group household." In either case, the real conditions of their sojourn caused them to move away from their village loyalties and identity.⁵⁶

If a burnt stew could threaten "fellow-feeling," it should also show that boarding in a "group household," even of fellow townsmen, was no idyll. All the tensions of inter-family jealousies and of life without womenfolk existed. For those families who left after such a contretemps, the "group household" and the village or paese that it served in the diaspora lost meaning in that sense which Harold Isaacs, quoting Robert Frost, felt was at the core of ethnicity: as "the place where, when you've got to go there, they've got to take you in."⁵⁸ For the many ethnic identities in flux at the turn of the century, boundaries moved, not just because of the broad categories of prejudice used by the

⁵⁶F. Tomev (Taped Interview, Macedonian, December, 1977). In a given boarding house, there would be all "pro-Bulgarian" or all patriarchist Macedonians and men from the same village would not board together if their politics differed. The sources of this rising ethnic consciousness lay in local, neighbourhood developments which affect all immigrants, even the most articulate. See Victor Greene, For God and Country: The Rise of Polish and Lithuanian Ethnic Consciousness in America, 1860-1910, p. 5.

⁵⁷H. N. Brailsford, Macedonia - Its Races and Their Future (London, 1906), p. 102. "Is your village Greek, I asked him, or Bulgarian. Well, he replied, it is Bulgarian now but four years ago it was Greek. . . . The Bulgarians heard of this and they came and made us an offer. They said they would give us a priest who would live in the village, and a teacher to whom we need pay nothing. Well sir, ours is a poor village, and so of course we became Bulgarian." For all peasant migrant groups, ethnicity was far more local and malleable than we have assumed.

⁵⁸H. Isaacs, Idols of the Tribe (New York, 1975), p. 43.

North American host society, but also because of the vicissitudes of the sojourning community. Boarding situations, length of sojourn, and neighbourhood density meant that local identities brought from the Old World gave way, although never for various ascriptive purposes disappearing, in favour of North American ethnicity. Toronto's Italians appeared out of a skein of earlier relationships in which Calabrese generally boarded with Calabrese, and Abruzzese with Abruzzese. (Sicilians and Friulians did not mix at all with the mainland Southern Italians.) Even people from regions living together represented a change from localism. At the turn of the century people from the original towns of settlement like Laurenzana and Pisticci had formed their own boarding households and institutions. The Dillingham Commission had counted Brava (Cape Verdean coloured Portuguese) as a separate ethnic group and had listed their boarding houses separately. Ruthenes, Galicians, and Bukovinians found their larger identity as Ukrainian only slowly.

In a sense, not only were ethnic institutions born in the sojourning years, so was North American ethnicity itself. Historians who wish to understand the relationship between the social and geographical processes of migration and the growth of ethnic identity would do well to look more closely at those first years of sojourning and at the institutions adapted to cope with North America. The sojourners themselves knew that it was an important social and cultural formative period. The Appalachian saying of our time sums it up nicely: "We ain't what we want to be and we ain't what we're going to be, but we ain't what we were."⁵⁹

⁵⁹M. Pei, What's In a Word (New York, 1968), p. 52.