

Marginal Man: Life of Emilio Goggio

Paul Redvers Brown

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Marginal Man is the thoughtful biography of a controversial but respected immigrant professor.

Prompted by a promise to set the record straight about Emilio Goggio's postwar reputation, *Marginal Man* is Paul Redvers Brown's admiring biography of his grandfather, an accomplished professor and Italian immigrant to the United States and Canada.

The book chronicles University of Toronto professor Emilio Goggio's story and analyzes it in terms of his character, his strengths, and his weaknesses. His Italian childhood was pastoral; delicious local flavors mix into the book's related coverage, as with memories of a grocer's dog sniffing out truffles that looked "like dirty, deformed potatoes, with a rough irregular surface." In his adulthood, he became a controversial writer on topics ranging from Italian influences on American literary figures (including Ralph Waldo Emerson) to Italian Canadian studies. Some of his related perspectives are covered herein—including that world peace depended on multicultural communication and understanding, but also ideas on Italy's plans to colonize Ethiopia (he argued that "the Italians were fair" in wanting "to go in ... and improve and develop the country"). He was knighted in his forties for his academic contributions.

Though it aims for equanimity, the book's sense of balance varies. For example, Goggio's marriage to the first girl he met in the US is romanticized and compared to Dante meeting Beatrice for the first time; a scene in her Boston apartment is enlivened by memories of the air being "fragrant with aromas of allspice and rosemary in a tomato-based meat sauce ... simmering on the stove." And while the text covers Goggio's difficulties and unpalatable views in frank terms, it also reasons through some—for instance, suggesting that Goggio's understanding of politics was quite influenced by Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Goggio's enthusiasm at the beginning of the Italian fascist regime is also covered, with a note that he was more swayed by Benito Mussolini's tangible accomplishments than by the beliefs underpinning Mussolini's fascist policies (he was "seduced by Mussolini's braggadocio, but never loyal to the Duce's cause," the book claims). Further, in focusing on these elements of Goggio's damaged reputation, the book avoids broader introspection about the situations in Italy and Ethiopia. Additionally, the book's switches between American and Canadian English are discombobulating.

Written by his grandson, *Marginal Man* is a biography of controversial Italian immigrant Emilio Goggio, who is sometimes remembered for being on the wrong side of prewar politics, but who fought to make his mark on Canadian education.

STEPHANIE MARRIE (March 27, 2024)

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