



Italian Education

By Tim Parks

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Tim Parks' first bestseller, *Italian Neighbors*, chronicled his initiation into Italian society and cultural life. Reviewers everywhere hailed it as a bravissimo performance. Now he turns to his children -- born and bred in Italy -- and their milieu in a small village near Verona.

With the splendid eye for detail, character, and intrigue that has brought him acclaim as a novelist, he creates a fascinating portrait of Italian family life, at school, at home, in church, and in the countryside. This panoramic journey winds up with a deliciously seductive evocation of an Italian beach holiday that epitomizes everything that is quintessentially Italian. Here is an insider's Italy, re-created by "one of the most gifted writers of his generation" (Jonathan Yardley, *The Washington Post*)

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In *Italian Neighbors*, British-born Parks gave a wry portrait of his adopted Italy, where he lives with his native-born wife Rita in a village outside Verona. This engaging sequel is an affectionate family album focusing on the experience of raising their son, Michele, and daughter, Stefania, combined with general observations on childrearing practices in Italy. Parks believes the typical Italian child is born into a tight social matrix of caution, inhibition and a suffocating awareness of everything that can go wrong. For Italians, "pregnancy is, inescapably, a pathology," and the intense mother-child relationship, suffused with eroticism, often produces young men with "an extraordinarily inflated, mother-fed opinion of themselves." Beyond parenting, Parks serves up pungent cultural commentary. His Italy is a paradox, where an ancient mentality steeped in peasant Catholic traditions coexists with a hedonistic society that eagerly embraces all things modern. Parks's wit, eye for telling incident and sensuous prose make this a captivating family portrait.

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From [Booklist](#)

When expatriate novelist Parks wrote about living in Italy in *Italian Neighbors* (1992), he focused on the process of acclimation and his often tricky relationships with adults. Now, in another charming and fluidly composed volume of keen observations, amusing anecdotes, and creative musings, he considers the "world of children," especially of his own inventively bilingual son and daughter, who, Parks must concede, will grow up thoroughly Italian in spite of being half English. Childhood in Italy is a fecund topic for Parks, a perfect conduit for analyzing all the quirks of Italian society. As Parks attempts to define what exactly makes Italians Italian, he discusses everything from bureaucracy to lullabies, attitudes toward pregnancy and large families, food preferences, the worship of conformity, the "mama mystique," typical vacations, adultery, school events, and textbooks. Thus the concept of "Italian education" works on two levels. While Parks is describing how Italians teach each other to be Italian, he's also teaching us outsiders all about their richly textured culture. This is an intelligent and sunny book, glimmering with all the contradictions and joys of daily life. *Donna Seaman*

About the Author

Tim Parks is the author of seven novels: *Loving Roger*, *Home Thoughts, Tongues of Flame*, *Family Planning*, *Goodness*, *Juggling the Stars*, and *Shear*. He has won international acclaim for his work, including the Somerset Maugham, John Llewellyn Rhys, and Betty Trask awards. Born in Manchester, England, he studied English literature at Cambridge University and Harvard. In addition to his own award-winning books, Parks has translated the works of Moravia, Calvino, and Calasso. He lives just outside Verona, Italy, where he teaches English at the University Of Verona.

Users Review

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