

Book Reviews

A filo doppio. Un'antologia di scritture calabro-canadesi. A cura di Francesco Loriggio e Vito Teti. Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2017.

A Filo doppio is an anthology of Calabrian-Canadian writers who share their experiences of immigration and emigration. The various shades of what it means to be a Calabrian, when conveyed to traditions and cultural expectations, fill these pages with the vibrant colours of the Mediterranean. The emotions involved in processes of departures and the feelings attached to the distant loved ones are quintessential in these readings. The theme of belonging is pivotal in the exploration of both the new culture or the old one, leading to the understanding that one's identity cannot and should not be changed. No matter the situation or the place, one's roots will always be a part of the big mosaic of the emigrant's inner life.

The anthology offers a deep insight into how Italian-Canadian literature has flourished exponentially throughout the last three centuries. Francesco Loriggio emphasizes the importance of the first *italo-canadese* volume *Roman Candles*, published in 1978 and the intricate features conveyed to the process of emigration/immigration portrayed in the authors' works. In fact, the selected writers are not only based in major Canadian cities, such as Toronto, Montréal, or Vancouver, but are also from Calgary, Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Thunder Bay. The narrations shed light on the talent of Calabrian-Canadians by offering a multifaceted literary account of their personal journey via an elaborated mixture of both linguistic and visionary variations.

The collection is divided in twelve sections, which are the following: Penny Petrone, who narrates the story of a Calabrese woman who came to Canada during the XXI century. She is a passionate traveler with a thirst for knowledge regarding First Nations literature. She published several volumes: *Breaking the Mould* (1995) and *Embracing Serafina* (2000), and a third volume pertinent to her teaching experience, *Schoolmarm* (2007). The collection encloses Petrone's descriptions of people and situations with nuances regarding the two world wars and the postwar. Each volume delves into a specific moment of the writer's life. *Breaking the Mould* narrates Petrone's younger years with an emphasis on her decision to leave her family for studying purposes, whereas, *Embracing Serafina* relates to her adult years full of travel, beginning in Africa, then Europe, concluding in her parents' hometown, where she reconnects with her origins and roots. Her last volume highlights her pedagogical and career pathways.

Connie Guzzo-McParland was born in Miglierina, Catanzaro. She immigrated to Montréal, Canada with her family in 1957. She wrote two novels: *The Girls of Piazza d'amore* and *The Women of Saturn*. The first novel is an autobiographical narrative that tells the story of Connie's childhood when living in *ITALIAN CANADIANA*, Vol. XXXII, (2018), 257-267

Mulirena (CZ). She shares her school memories of her teachers and her first impressions about Canada. She describes how initially her father moved to Canada, and then the rest of the family planned to meet him there the following September. She also depicts the preparation for the long boat trip that was to begin in Naples and conclude in Halifax. One cannot help but notice the cultural importance of being able to bring the sopressate, or salamis, from Calabria to the other side of the ocean as a delicacy for those who had left. Eating what you will never find in Canada and indulging in what is unique of your ancestral land, is a major theme of Connie's novel. It emphasizes the struggle of living abroad, far away from her family members. Connie's mother changes her appearance to adapt to the new culture. At the end, Connie's mother leaves one of the most valuable pieces of jewelry to Mother Mary (Madonna) as a way to ask for safety and guidance throughout their voyage across the ocean. This stresses how hope and spiritual guidance are fundamental aspects to the characters' spiritual trajectory in a foreign land.

Antonio Mazza was born in Colelli, Aspromonte. He moved to Canada in 1961. He attended Carleton University in Ottawa, the University of Toronto, and the Normale Superiore of Pisa. He taught at Carlton University. He translated the following works: *Ossi di Seppia* by Montale, the novel *Ville sans femmes* by Mario Duliani, the drama *A modo suo* by Tony Nardi, and some poems written by Italian poets such as *Italville*, which won the Italo Calvino prize and *Immigrants Songs*. Moreover, he also wrote numerous poems including *The Way I Remember it* (1998), *La nostra casa è un orecchio cosmico*, and *The Other Passenger*.

Damiano Pietropaolo has been living in Toronto since 1959. He immigrated to Canada from Maierato. He studied at the University of Firenze and at University of Toronto, where he graduated. He landed a managerial job in a Canadian broadcasting corporation and won several awards, such as the CBC literary awards/Les Grands Prix littéraires Radio-Canada. He also showed a particular interest in the theatre with *La Regina e i ribelli* by Ugo Betti (1997). Recently, his interests are directed towards exile and migration: *Where is here? the drama of Immigration and little Italies* (2005-2006). Moreover, a strong interest is perceived through the classics such as *The love Song of Ovid* (2010), the reportage of *Federico Secondo e il Regno delle due Sicilie* regarding Italian and European history (2014). In the same years, he published a narrative collection for Lyricalmiracle Books titled *Lucia by the Sea*, and the drama *Love letters from the Empty Bed*. *Lucia by the Sea* is a melange of prose and poems. This collection analyzes the political situations perceived by the characters. Throughout these poems and prose Wallace Stevens, Čechov, and William Maxwell are highlighted through recurrent citations. In *Lucia by the Sea*, the author uses a variety of linguistic mixtures: when the verses refer to the birth place of the author, Maierato, fragments of dialect are inserted. The person using the dialect is Lucia, whereas the words spoken in standard Italian are those pronounced by the narrator. Moreover, in *Lucia by the Sea* the author colours his sentences with the emotions of belonging and not belonging somewhere. He entangles the feelings of immigration and emigration and questions what the concept of a home

could possibly represent to a person who decides to leave and then longs to go back. He expresses the sensation linked to officially obtaining a green card, which initiates a new process of identification. In addition, Lucia's game *campana*, played every night, reveals the linguistic differences of the tourists present throughout the Calabrian summers. The author refers to this flux of tourists as the Tower of Babel that floods the evening streets while the beach waves roll in as the sunsets stir the cool breezes. Lucia speaks to the narrator in Calabrese dialect and asks about his wife who had gone back to 'Merica'. Lucia shares the feelings of solitude and understands that emigrating is just like the sea waves that roll in and then roll back out into the ocean. *Sognando Buenos Aires* is an autobiographical work with traces of fiction. This narration sheds light on the factors correlated to immigration and emigration. The story portrays the connections between grandfather and grandson who have emigrated or are about to emigrate. This tie is one of the main issues of Italian-Canadian literature, as it relates personal stories to art and the cultural archives of a country. In addition, the story illustrates how the love of a husband, who lived abroad for over 20 years, becomes the main force that draws him back to his wife and family in Vibo Valentia. His dream is to bring his family to Buenos Aires, but his wife refuses to leave. His grandson tells us how, having breakfast with his grandfather was one of the few things he really looked forward to, not much for the food itself, but for the stories his grandfather told him, which were of great fascination to him. His last memory of his grandfather was prior to leaving for Canada while saying their goodbyes. After the grandfather's death, the grandmother decides to emigrate to Canada on one condition, that after her death, her bones be buried next to her husband's. This clearly indicates the concept of belonging to the soil of one's country of birth.

Saro D'Agostino was born in San Nicola Carissa in Vibo Valentia. He came to Canada with his parents in 1953 at the age of 5. He never considered himself an emigrant, as he didn't willingly cross the ocean. He studied at York University and began teaching in elementary school. He suffered from severe depression, which led him to suicide in 2000. His most well-known poems were published in an anthology named *Roman Candles*. He was considered one of the *poètes maudits* of his time. He is, in fact, portrayed as one of the most tragic figures of Italian-Canadian literature. Throughout his works, the author seems to lurk in the shades of the 'here and now' of his bodily figure. During his time in Italy, the author ponders on his memories and nostalgia of Canada. When in Canada, his mind wanders to Italy. His poems thus mirror contradictory emotions. Furthermore, he manifests conflicting feelings regarding the function of poetry and what poetry represents. He initially narrates about his personal attitude towards the inner, slow development of poetic inspiration, and in another situation, he claims that poetry is cold and apologizes for what he had composed. He stresses the importance of the connection between the feelings of emigration and language. Amongst his many poems, are: *Pomeriggio a Corfu*, *Viaggio Veglia*, *I ching a marzo*, *Canti di emigrante Poesia*, and *Ripensando*.

Carmelo Militano, born in a small village of Reggio Calabria in 1956

moved to Canada when he was only two years old. A highly educated writer, he has studied and specialized in literature in different countries: Canada, Italy and England. During his career he has extensively published, both poetry and fiction. Militano has consistently investigated the deep consequences and ramifications of "living in two, maybe three different worlds." In the *Fate of Olives*, the writer explains how he "did not feel like belonging to none of these worlds," but also reinforced the idea that "each of these worlds may hold the key to allow him to become a writer." A critic of several aspects of capitalism and a deep thinker of the more trivial aspects of a man's ordinary life, Militano does not neglect the importance that Winnipeg has always had in the elaboration of his own roots, that is his Calabrese origins. His writing thus displays an intricate dichotomy inherently attached to his dual nature: a Canadian born in southern Italy. Literary traces of these aspects are found in pieces like "*Domanda per il posto di poeta*" (2008), "*Dopo aver letto,*" — "*Il felicio malinconico,*" — "*Un frammento di Antonio Foti.*"

Giovanna Riccio, Born in Carissa, a little town in Vibo Valentia, emigrated to Canada at seven years old. She attended Teacher's College in Toronto and studied at the University of Toronto. She published a poem collection in 2010 titled *Vittorio* and in 2011 *Strong Bread*. From 2009 to 2012 she was the coordinator of a literature circle *Ragazze italo-canadesi non tanto brave ragazze (e amici)*. *Strong Bread* is considered a rare collection,—which is transformed into a theatre of voices where every lyrical impulse becomes a soliloquy. She portrays a social-political interest in important events such as deparadecidos and adolescent behaviours in second generation Italian-Canadians. Her interests focus on Hispanic-American writers and surrealists and mostly how words are what make poetry and where sentences and memories mingle with one another just like dreams.

It is the surgical precision that Darlene Madott uses to create her characters and the storyline of her novelle that makes her writing incredibly direct, poignant and precise. It is no mystery that the juxtaposition of her profession (lawyer) and her passion (writing) contributes to creating the two major influences of her writing technique. This is best explained in several circumstances where the author ponders the legality and the moral consequences of using true aspects of close relatives of hers in order to develop her own fictional characters. She further explains this in the preface of her collection *Making Olives and Other Family Secrets* (2008). Madott's writing is a gateway to her revelatory memories, something that is in perpetual evolution and that constantly modifies the perception of her narrative, and the stories she carries within.

Joseph Maviglia is a rare example of a writer whose other major passion, music, intertwines in an incredibly powerful way with his narrative to create great art. Winner of the 1992 edition of the Juno Awards with his single *Father It's time*, Maviglia proceeded to release two more records. Characteristics of his writing style are the punctual descriptions of Italian and Portuguese road workers and his adherence to the narrative technique of the *linguaggio parlato*.

Distinctive traits of his migration experience resurface in works such as *A*

God Hangs Upside Down, where the discrepancies between the rural reality typical of Calabria, and the metropolitan reality of Toronto clash in a unique way to create a peculiar melange between two distant but coexistent worlds. His poetry is also characterized by a profound consideration of the role of dialect and a deep, social meditation upon the major difficulties present in Calabria, as profoundly described in *Disoccupazione* where the sense of abandonment of the land is paired with the lack of work and hope within those who remain in Calabria. Poems such as *Mezzogiorno*, *Disoccupazione*, *John il Portoghese* or, most significantly, *Cantatore* reflect Maviglia's effort in expanding his analysis of what the oral poetry represents for himself as a poet, and for the territory and the characters portrayed within.

Antony Di Nardo has published different collections of poetry. The realism and extremely detailed representation of real life, sometimes tragic events, are one of the main ingredients of his poetic style. In *Alien, Correspondent* (2010), Di Nardo instills in his verses the crudeness of war, throughout the use of journalistic techniques that provide a particular rhythm to the narration of the events. Poems such as *The Tourist* or *Dear Mahmoud* manifest Di Nardo's conception of what poetry is, capable of narrating the horrors of the war, but also used to celebrate the humanity that is inherent to the tragic developments of such deadly and life-changing events. The reader is invited to experience the darkest side of the author's imagination, in which even Death can be a date ("...and I took Death with me as my date").

Concetta Principe is a researcher at York University, and a PhD candidate at the same university. Principe is the author of both a poetry collection and a novel, *Stained Glass* (1997). A very complex and experimental novel, *Stained Glass*, displays a unique utilization of language, in which the written word is extremely precise, and the sentences are concise but imbued with profound meanings. The character's point of view is quintessential to the unraveling of the narrated story as much as her insights. The narration is spasmodic, rich in details. Principe's poetry is characterized by a particular use of mythology. Examples of this are poems such as *War* or *Tomb* or *Athene*. Relevant is also the spiritual and religious dimension of the author which is translated in verses in a poem like *Prayer*, where the reader can find a deep introspection in her spirituality.

Claudio Gaudio was born to Italian parents from Cosenza who moved to Toronto in 1963. Gaudio graduated from York University with majors in literature and philosophy. In the 80s, while working as a financial consultant, he started writing poetry. Some of his poetry has been published in *Exile Literary Quarterly* and *Rampike Literary Magazine*. His novel, *Texas* (2012), is an unusual depiction of various aspects of the typical structure of a novel. A poignant example is the particular use of the story's narrator and the role that the other main protagonist of the story, presumably a spy or a special correspondent for a newspaper, holds in the narration of the events. All the gimmicks displayed by the American character enrich the plot and offer an always fresh and challenging perspective of the storyline. An audiobook version of some chapters of his novel has been published along with the music of composer Grant Curle.

Peter Oliva, who was born in Oregon but educated in Canada, graduated from the University of Alberta. He traveled extensively in Italy, Japan, Taiwan where he teaches English and collaborates with several newspapers. He has published articles and stories in *The Globe and Mail*, the daily *Yomiuri*, *Brick* and *Alberta Rebound* amongst others.

Several literary critics have rightly observed and analyzed echoes of Calvino and shades of postmodernism in Oliva's works. *The City of Yes* extensively explores the literary development of the intersection between documented events and storytelling: Oliva thus explores and dissects events that happened both in Canada and in Calabria by portraying them and the places they occur in as carriers of stories. The places narrate the events as well. The exploration of the calabrese settings is quintessential to understanding the importance that geography and storytelling have in the formation and evolution of his characters.

Alessandro Porco was born in Canada in 1979 to Calabrese and Scottish parents. A graduate of Queen's University, Concordia University and the University of Buffalo, Porco has published two volumes of poetry in 2005 and 2008, and a chapbook version of a longer volume in 2011. He has edited the volume *Population Me: Essay on David McGimpsey*. The attention that the author placed on postmodernity is brilliantly encapsulated by the two verses that make up the epigram "Jass / clazzico." This clearly represents a distinctive example of the subversion of the typical roles held by *classicità* that prevail upon popular culture. The epigram also synthesizes the importance of opposite cultural items that merge in a new language, a new dialectic, a revolutionary reassembling of perspectives offering unexpected ramifications. Echoes of Italian poetry and poets are explicitly mentioned in poems such as *Solarium* or *Palindrome*, but the author explores and amplifies remnants of literary and poetic traditions ranging from Dante to Shakespeare to Pasolini.

Lastly, John Paul Fiorentino a professor who teaches creative writing and Canadian literature at Concordia University, who was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1975. His grandfather emigrated from Amelio, Catanzaro, to Winnipeg. His broad interest in many cultural activities ranges from the direction of the magazine *Matrix*, and the editing of several anthologies. His novels include *Ashmatica* (2005), *Stripmalling* (2009) as well as seven collections of poetry. Elements from a variety of subjects interfere and empower the fabric of his storytelling. In *Hover* the reader can enjoy terminology which includes words taken from the medical and pharmaceutical spheres. The way in which Fiorentino explores the potentiality of his words in both their morphological and phonetic characteristics is quite peculiar. Furthermore, in *Neurotransmission*, the poet employs the neurological mechanisms of activation and deactivation of neural cells to delve into human emotions and detail intimate, personal situations. The author elevates the suggestive power of mental and poetical representation of such events in lines like "*A neurotransmission trips itself more real, filmic.*" It is in pieces such as *Insulina Chic* (*Stripmalling*, 2009) that Fiorentino delves into the medical side of depression and the side effects of medications on such a con-

dition. The author uses it as a pretext to investigate, through the interaction between the narrator and an older character, the wide spectrum of ramifications that such a condition imposes on the person affected.

These gathered thoughts and themes provide an enriched insight on the reasons why so many Italians were forced to flee *il bel paese* and what awaited them in the new continent. Cultural representations from both worlds are key to understanding complex social phenomena, such as episodes of discrimination but also success throughout works of art and literature. Finally, this anthology stimulates an ongoing literary debate on the literature of migration. In Vito Teti's prologue, the author sheds light on those who left and those who stayed. The author sees himself as the opposite of Loriggio. In fact, in Teti's travels to Canada he searches what could have been his possible realities if his parents had decided to move to Canada when he was a child. He emphasizes how the Italian immigrants to Canada, mostly in Toronto, feel uprooted and search for their culture and identity through *Sagre del paese* and *le feste*. Many of these immigrants hope to return to their hometown but understand how difficult this is after so many years on the other side of the ocean. Teti's emotions and fears correlated to the concept of home are richly expressed. In a very articulate fashion, Teti investigates the role of the many women left alone when their husbands searched for success in Canada. He also cites Robert Harney's *Donne senza uomini*. This uprootedness in Teti's prologue is allegorized by a fig tree, which some calabrese has managed to bring over to Canada and plant in his backyard, eventually realizing that the fruit it produces will never have the same taste or scent as the one grown back in the ancestral Calabrian soil.

This meticulous recueil, carried out by a large team of scholars is of fundamental importance for a more nuanced understanding of emigration literature, culture, and traditions. It provides a thorough insight on the historical and social events that occurred in the last three centuries.

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Licia Canton, *The Pink House and Other Stories*. Montreal: Longbridge Books, 2018.

The Pink House is Montreal writer, Licia Canton's second collection of short stories after *Almond, Wine and Fertility* (2008). In her latest volume, Canton narrates the lives of ordinary people facing challenging times, drawing from her own personal experiences, as a writer, a daughter, a mother and as an Italian immigrant living in Montreal. With her straightforward narrative style she connects us with her characters' emotions in a way that allows us to identify with them and to feel their pain, their suffering, their awkwardness, their indifference, but also their perseverance and strength.

The Pink House is composed of fifteen seemingly unrelated short stories