



**Association of Italian-Canadian Writers**

**Associazione di scrittori/scrittrici italo-canadesi**

**Association des Écrivain(e)s Italo-Canadien(ne)s**

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*Photo by Francesca Foschi Mitchell*

## **Italian Summer**

*Monterosso al Mare, Liguria, Italy*

### **AICW on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram**

Follow the AICW on Twitter [@AICWCanada](#) and Instagram [@aicwcanada](#)

If you are on [Facebook](#), please take the time to **LIKE** our page.

# A Message to Our Members

Dear Members,

While we are longing for the pandemic relief that this summer could bring, I am happy to inform you about AICW's many projects.

We celebrated National Poetry Month in April and Short Story/Prose Month in May by sharing our members' works on social media. And in June, Italian Heritage Month, we are going to have a special online edition of the Books & Biscotti Literary Series: we will feature five-minute video readings on the theme of Italian heritage and roots. If you have a recorded reading or event, post it on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. Send the link to [info@aicw.ca](mailto:info@aicw.ca) by the 20<sup>th</sup> of June and we will share it on social media.

May 13<sup>th</sup> marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Shut Up and Write! (on Zoom) with Annalisa Panati and Licia Canton. These weekly meetings are not only an opportunity for our members to feel connected while writing, but also a safe place to share and give birth to new collaborations and projects. Join us anytime! May also saw the return of "4 chiacchiere in Italiano," hosted by Rosaria Moretti-Lawrie and Maria Pia Spadafora: twelve people signed in and we had a great time chatting about music and our Italian heritage.

Congratulations to AICW members who participated in the fourth edition of Librissimi – Toronto Italian Book Festival in May. Gianna Patriarca, Carmelo Militano and Mary di Michele were on the poetry panel; George Amabile, Nino Famà and Genni Gunn were on the fiction panel; Liana Cusmano, Gianluca Agostinelli and Maria Pia Spadafora discussed their experience as emerging writers on a panel sponsored by Villa Charities, on the occasion of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary; Dennis Maione and Giulia De Gasperi presented the AICW Bressani Literary Prize.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to *Here & Now: An Anthology of Queer Italian-Canadian Writing*. The AICW is proud to support this groundbreaking volume, which can be purchased at <https://accenti.ca/product/here-now-anthology/>

In September, we will celebrate AICW's 35th anniversary. Look for our series of video testimonials leading up to the anniversary.

Coming soon! AICW will send details about a project funded by the Government of Quebec's Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers, with ELAN (English Language Arts Network) as project supporter.

As of June 1<sup>st</sup> Licia Canton is the AICW president and Delia De Santis is vice-president. Thanks to all committee workers for the volunteer hours that they dedicate to our association. A special thanks to our youngest executive members: Giulia Verticchio, Annalisa Panati and Gianluca Agostinelli. Based on my personal experience, I can confirm that being actively involved in the AICW is very satisfying. Let us know if you'd like to contribute to our Association's success.

AICW does not have an office. It does not have staff. We are all volunteers. If you have questions, write to [info@aicw.ca](mailto:info@aicw.ca) and we will forward your message to the appropriate volunteer. And thank you for your patience.

I would like to extend a warm **welcome** to those who have recently become members ([See page 15](#)). Thank you to long-time members who have renewed their commitment to the AICW. Thank you all!

I wish you all the best in your future projects.

Have a great summer!

Maria Pia Spadafora  
for the AICW Executive

# NEWS

## 2021 *Accenti* Writing, Photo and Poetry Contest Winners

# ACCENTI

The Magazine with an Italian Accent

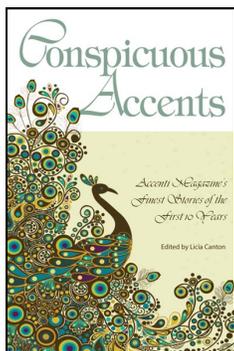
**i** Montreal, May 16, 2021– We are pleased to report the names of the winners of the 2021 *Accenti* Writing, Photo and Poetry contests. The winners were announced live on Zoom during the [Librissimi](#) Toronto Italian Book Festival on Saturday, May 15, 2021.

The winner of the *Accenti* Writing Contest and recipient of the \$1000 Grand Prize is **Maria Luisa Ierfino-Adornato** for her story “Life Is What Happens...” Three finalists each receive \$100: **Lucia Gagliese** for “Papa’s Shed,” **Darlene Madott** for “Cooking Sicilian with Concetta and Lampedusa During the Pandemic,” and **Polly Phokeev** for “Long Haul to Napoli.” The judges were **Delia De Santis, Eufemia Fantetti, Mark Frutkin** and **Gilda Morina Syverson**.

The winner of the *Accenti* Photo Contest and recipient of the \$1000 Grand Prize is **Doron Talmi** for his photo “San Trovaso Aqua Alta.” Three finalists each receive \$100: **Stefano Anghileri** for his photo “Socializing Laundry,” **Andria Salles** for her photo “Setting a World Record – Longest Foosball Table,” and **Doron Talmi** for his photo “San Marco in the Rain.” The judges were **Andrew Andreoli, Nicolas Colarusso, Daniela De Pau** and **Franca Totera**.

The winner of the inaugural *Accenti* Poetry Contest and recipient of the \$1000 Grand Prize is **Susanna Cupido** for her poem “The Door.” Three finalists each receive \$100: **Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews** for “Feux Rouges,” **Diane Pacitti** for “Unfoundland,” and **Renee Sgroi** for “Weak Cloth.” The judges were **Domenico Capilongo, Mary di Michele, Cristina Perissinotto,** and **Derek Webster**.

**Congratulations to all the winners!**



All winning stories, photos and poems will appear in *Accenti* in the coming weeks. Winning stories from past *Accenti* writing contests appear in the volume *Conspicuous Accents: Accenti Magazine's Finest Stories of the First 10 Years*, edited by **Licia Canton**, available here:

<https://accenti.ca/product/conspicuous-accents-accenti-magazines-finest-stories-of-the-first-10-years-edited-by-licia-canton/>

Follow *Accenti* on [Facebook](#), on [Twitter](#) and on [Instagram](#).

## George Elliott Clarke: A Tale of Two Cities

by Joseph Pivato

On June 3, 2021, the AICW hosted George Elliott Clarke who delivered a Keynote Lecture during Congress 2021, an event supported by the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences in Ottawa. Dr. Clarke's talk was on the controversial topic of Afro-Metis writers and artists, how they self-identify and how they are received in both Black communities and Indigenous communities across Canada. Do universities have a role to play in this process? I see a parallel here with Italian-Canadian writers who historically have not been supported or even recognized in Italian literature programs in either Canada or Italy.

I had the honour to introduce George whom I have known for over 25 years. He is a pioneering scholar of African-Canadian literature. He has always been a strong speaker and writer against racism in any form. His more than 30 books of poetry, prose, drama and opera libretti have exposed the human suffering caused by racism. He is the inaugural E.J. Pratt Professor of Canadian Literature at the University of Toronto. He holds 8 honorary doctorates and is also an Officer of the Order of Canada and Parliamentary Canadian Poet Laureate for 2016. He has also been a strong supporter of Italian-Canadian writers. In May 2002 he was our keynote speaker at the biannual AICW conference held in Toronto.

This brings us to the tale of two cities: London, Ontario and Edmonton, Alberta. The Congress of 2020 was to take place in-person on the campus of Western University in London, Ontario. On June 2<sup>nd</sup> George was to speak at this event sponsored by AICW and I was to introduce him. Then, Pandemic Covid 19 arrived in Canada and at the end of March the entire Congress was cancelled. Western University did not have the technology to support such a large Congress in a virtual mode. The theme of the congress was "Anti-Black Racism" in response to incidents in Canada and the USA. When the Federation for HSS cancelled Congress 2020 the Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA) was upset and later decided not to participate in Congress 2021. In support of BCSA's boycott the Indigenous Literary Studies Association (ILSA) also withdrew from Congress 2021 as did CACLALS. And Black and Indigenous speakers who planned to participate in other events such as the large ACCUTE conference, also withdrew. As a result of all the above cancellations when George Elliott Clarke gave his talk on June 3<sup>rd</sup> he was probably the only Black-Canadian keynote speaker at Congress 2021. This congress officially took place in Edmonton at the University of Alberta, but since it was entirely virtual, participants were all over the world. It was very unfortunate that this international opportunity to discuss vital Black and Indigenous issues was wasted because of boycotts and academic chill.

George identifies as a Black-Canadian writer, but he also has Indigenous roots. His ancestors are African-American and Cherokee people transported to Nova Scotia during the War of 1812 and has a great-grandmother who is thought to be part Mi'kmaq. He is an appropriate scholar to speak about the Afro-Metis syllabus. Having fought for years against the exclusion of Black writers and artists, George feels that boycotting and cancelling conferences is not the best strategy to support Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization. I strongly agree with George as do some members of AICW. Finally, George asked me to communicate to all the members of AICW his sincere appreciation for the support that they have given him over the past few years.

### Bibliographic Note

George Elliott Clarke has published his lyric-style epics *Canticles I (MMXVI)* in 2016 and *Canticles II (MMXIX)* in 2019 with Guernica Editions.

*Africadian Atlantic: Essays on George Elliott Clarke*, edited by Joseph Pivato. Guernica, 2012.

# EVENTS

## Books and Biscotti Literary Series (Online Edition)

To mark Italian Heritage Month, the Association of Italian-Canadian Writers (AICW) is pleased to announce a special online edition of the Books and Biscotti Literary Series.

Throughout the month of June, we will feature **five-minute** video readings (**members only**) on the theme of Italian heritage and roots (other themes welcome): fiction, non-fiction or poetry (in English, French, Italian or dialect). Readings by unpublished or emerging writers are welcome.

If you don't already have a recorded reading or event (with a link), simply use your cell phone or computer camera. Give the video a title and indicate your full name and title of the material you are reading. Then post your video on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. Send the link to [info@aicw.ca](mailto:info@aicw.ca) and we will share it on social media.

Here are examples of readings currently posted on AICW's FB page:

<https://www.facebook.com/151311478238844/videos/553890208590504>

<https://www.facebook.com/AICWCanada/videos/669956886896647/>

<https://www.facebook.com/AICWCanada/videos/275771163639782>

**Deadline: June 20, 2021.**

**NOTE:** The AICW reserves the right not to share a video reading or link due to poor quality, content or length.

By sending your link to [info@aicw.ca](mailto:info@aicw.ca), you give AICW permission to share your reading on social media and to the AICW membership list.

**NOTE:** Please write to [info@aicw.ca](mailto:info@aicw.ca) or [dpds2961@outlook.com](mailto:dpds2961@outlook.com) (Delia De Santis)

## The Traces We Leave: Italian-Canadians and Their Works



The Department of Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the University of Turin will be hosting the 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Association of Italian-Canadian Writers (AICW), in 2022 (dates to be confirmed).

The organizing committee will contact conference participants as soon as details are available.

The AICW Executive does not have any other news at the moment.

# EVENTS

## Canada Italy Innovation Award 2021



Professor Carmen Concilio, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures and Modern Cultures at the Università di Torino, in collaboration with *Accenti Magazine*, is looking for Montrealers (60+ years old) of Italian heritage for a Torino-Montreal Project (words and images) about lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. This project has received a Canada Italy Award for Innovation (2021).

Participants will attend virtual writing workshops with writer/editor Licia Canton and drawing workshops with artist Marlene Creates.

Participants will write a short text and draw a map of their place of birth. The project will lead to an exhibit of (handwritten) texts and drawings in Torino, November 2021, and publication of a book in 2022.

No writing or drawing experience is necessary.

The project includes 30 people in Montreal and 30 in Torino.

Workshops will take place in July 2021. The texts (stories, letters, poems...) can be in French, English, Italian or dialect.

For more information or to be included in this project, please write to [lcanton@accenti.ca](mailto:lcanton@accenti.ca) as soon as possible, and no later than June 24, 2021.

# EVENTS

## INVITATION Books and Biscotti Literary Series - Italian Heritage Month

On June 27 at 12 p.m. ET, Licia Canton presents “Summer Stories.”

Ask for link: [lcanton@accenti.ca](mailto:lcanton@accenti.ca)

Books and Biscotti Literary Series

### Summer Stories

A Public Reading

by **Licia Canton**

Sunday, June 27 at 12 p.m. ET



Photo: S. Miraglia



Funded by the Canada Council for the Arts & The Writers' Union of Canada. In collaboration with AICW, Longbridge Books & *Accenti Magazine*.

Request the link at [lcanton@accenti.ca](mailto:lcanton@accenti.ca)

# EVENTS

## Celebrating Pride Month and Italian Heritage Month

On the occasions of Pride Month and Italian Heritage Month, The Frank Iacobucci Centre for Italian-Canadian Studies (University of Toronto) and *Accenti Magazine* cordially invite you to the launch of the groundbreaking volume *Here and Now: An Anthology of Queer Italian-Canadian Writing* (ed. Licia Canton) on June 22, 2021 at 5PM ET.

The writings by more than 35 authors, with a three-part introduction by Queer Studies scholars, take readers on a journey that interweaves private and public spaces, eliciting love and anger, laughter and tears.

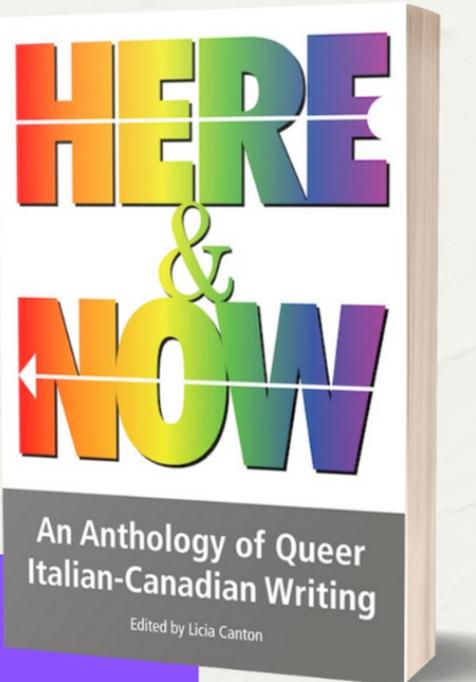
**TO REGISTER FOR THE EVENT:** [queeranthologylaunch.eventbrite.ca](https://queeranthologylaunch.eventbrite.ca)

**TO PRE-ORDER A COPY OF THE VOLUME:** [accenti.ca/product/here-now-anthology](https://accenti.ca/product/here-now-anthology)

THE FRANK IACOBUCCI CENTRE FOR ITALIAN-CANADIAN STUDIES  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO & ACCENTI MAGAZINE  
CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO THE  
**LAUNCH OF THE GROUNDBREAKING VOLUME**

**A conversation with the editor,  
queer studies scholars,  
and contributors.**

**A celebration of the diversity  
of Italian-Canadian communities.**



**22 JUNE 2021**  
5-6.15PM (EST)  
ON ZOOM  
FREE AND ALL WELCOME  
REGISTER AT:  
[QUEERANTHOLOGYLAUNCH.EVENTBRITE.CA](https://queeranthologylaunch.eventbrite.ca)

**Pre-order now!**

# EVENTS

## Here & Now: A Video Presentation

On June 3rd, 2021, the Department of Humanistic Studies at the University of Calabria & *Accenti Magazine*, in collaboration with Longbridge Books, Association of Italian-Canadian Writers (AICW) and English Language Arts Network (ELAN), were pleased to host an event with contributors and the editor of *Here & Now: An Anthology of Italian-Canadian Writing*.

Watch the video: <https://youtu.be/irNPBV72Gw>

## A Virtual Conversation on *Here & Now*

**ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH**

**Here & Now**  
Readings and Discussion  
Live Virtual Panel

Villa Charities, in collaboration with the Association of Italian Canadian Writers (AICW), *Accenti Magazine*, Longbridge Books, and English Language Arts Network (ELAN), is pleased to invite you to a conversation with the editor and contributors of *Here & Now*.

Licia Canton (editor)  
Liana Cusmano  
Monica Meneghetti

Anthony Portuese  
Jonathan Settembri  
CJ Volpe

Let's celebrate Pride Month together.

**Tuesday, June 29**  
5:00 - 6:30pm

REGISTER:  
[villacharities.com/ihm](https://villacharities.com/ihm)  
Log-in details will be provided upon registration.

Info: [cultural@villacharities.com](mailto:cultural@villacharities.com)

Books and Biscotti Literary Series

**HERE & NOW**  
An Anthology of Queer Italian-Canadian Writing  
Edited by Licia Canton

**HERE & NOW**  
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**ACCENTi**  
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**LONGBRIDGE BOOKS**

**elan**  
english language arts network

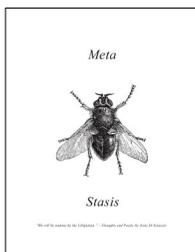
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[villacharities.com](https://villacharities.com) #VC150

# BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT

## Meta Stasis

Poetry by Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews, Mosaic Press, 2021.



Metaphorically, carcinogenic, viral corruption threatens the world in an era of surveillance, monopolizing oligarchies and moral decay.

From an unexpected diagnosis, to the loss of a precious mother, to greed endangering our ecosystem, *Meta Stasis*, guides us poetically, through a dark, heartless underworld of invisible machinations.

Like Virgil leading Dante through the circles of Hell, it shines a light upon the rot of both the physical and spiritual disease spreading endemic, aided by artificial intelligence's net trap. As above, so below, there is a weird energy tearing everything asunder.

Through the revelatory power of writing, philosophical ponderings and snippets of scientific data, this book illuminates us with emergent concepts never before tackled in a Canadian poetry collection.

*Metastasis weaves a braided tapestry of hope and despair on the natural cycles of existence. From the parasite of cancer to human-induced climate change, this collection of poems is a brooding contemplation on the ironies of motive, perspective, and chance. A remarkable collection of poems that will provoke, embed, and—like Nature Herself—linger beneath the skin long after you have put it down.*

--Nina Munteanu, author of "A Diary in the Age of Water"

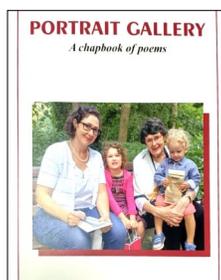
Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews is the host & coordinator of the Oakville Literary Café Series. Her new collection, *Sunrise Over Lake Ontario*, will be published this summer. Josie's poetry has been shortlisted for the Malahat Review's Open Season Award, Descant's Winston Collins Prize and won first place in *Arborealis* and *Big Pond Rumours* online poetry journal.



Josie Di Sciascio

## Portrait Gallery A chapbook of poems

by Caroline Morgan Di Giovanni



Caroline Morgan Di Giovanni announces the publication of her first chapbook, **Portrait Gallery**.

This slim little book contains a selection of poems about poets, artists, leaders and friends who have influenced her creative life.

To order the book at \$15 please contact the author at [casa.digiovanni@sympatico.ca](mailto:casa.digiovanni@sympatico.ca)

# BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT

## Book Review: *To The Men Who Write Goodbye Letters*, by Gianna Patriarca

Toronto, Ontario: Inanna, 2020.

by Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews

I was first introduced to Gianna Patriarca's poetry twenty years ago, in a postgraduate course at University of Toronto's St. Michael College. She had been invited to read her work in one of our classes by that particular year's poet in residence, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco. I had already bought some of her books for the Italian-Canadian Literature course: *Italian Women and Other Tragedies*, *Daughters for Sale*, *Ciao Baby* and I was drawn immediately by her words, by their immediacy and relatability. They were words finally speaking about my own lived Italian-Canadian reality and the reflections of a long sought soul sister, finally found.

*Among the pages Find a life  
As ordinary as any life  
As splendid as any life  
All of it  
In one good poem*

When I read a poem by Gianna Patriarca, I feel like I am home. Her words invite me into the comfort of a kitchen or a garden veranda to drink some espresso, a glass of wine, to share some much needed familiar conversation, to heal my long-held silent griefs. I imagine walking arm in arm with the poet on a street in downtown Toronto or sitting in a streetcar on the way home from work, recollecting memories and impressions as two friends might do. This literary kindredness is a salve for minds and bodies at war all day against cold weather and cold interactions in a world rife with loss, fear, narcissistic self-preservation, paranoia and incessant tragedies. Ice not only in the snow banks of the city, but in the expressions of a world dehumanized by a calculating capitalist ethos dangling the carrot of upward mobility in an era of self-serve. In the poem *Inside the Kitchen* however,

*Mamma waits  
Inside this kitchen  
Every day  
Snow or ice Sun or rain Hot or cold She waits  
The pot is ready Boiling  
Dishes and glasses set  
On the tablecloth with the red roses Everything is ready and waiting*

*The bread she baked this morning  
In the centre  
Of the table*

In her new collection *Men Who Write Goodbye Letters*, it is delightful to reconnect with the reassuring voice of a poet who writes

# BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT

our hearts by connecting to the universality of our lives through her own experience. This is indeed Gianna Patriarca's magic: her ability to connect with the reader through commonly shared struggles, using language as a mirror yet as a hug of reassurance. Her poetry is a conduit to a deeper understanding of the everyday. She becomes a necessary, intermediary link to transcendence and hope in the face of life's losses. Even in grief, against the depressed lethargy of the body, someone loves us and needs us:

*On this chair  
These dead legs wait  
While the world passes  
Slowly slowly*

*These three cats around me Caress me  
They know that  
I will give them food*

Throughout the poems of this new collection runs a thread of hope, however tenuous, the soul transmuting even death to the fine art of integration of all things, into a tapestry of fond remembrance, worth, appreciation and beauty.

*My mother is shrinking Fading  
Becoming air  
Delicate as the sparrows  
She softens bread for*

A poet summing up a decade of death, of suicides and of an era deconstructed by a pandemic comes to grips with an inner resilience born from the power of writing. These poems are conduits through time which connect all of us to the ones long gone, through the filament of words making reasonableness out of life's painful absurdity and of its eventual decay.

*I wish you had written  
that letter to me back then  
I might have convinced you*

*Exiting  
Was the wrong thing to do  
~~~~~  
But you wanted to leave  
When you were still beautiful  
Didn't you?*

# MEMBER SHOWCASE

## SANCTUARY IN A NORTHERN GARDEN

by Frances Garofalo



*Photo by Frances Garofalo*

One must be an optimist to be a gardener, particularly in a Northern climate. I grew up in an Italian immigrant family, where the backyard garden was an important food source. Our family garden was vast, varied and specifically designed to produce large quantities of nutritious food. Through experimentation, my parents found varieties that flourished in the cooler weather. My husband and I continue the tradition in our backyard urban garden and greenhouse.

I believe that gardens are sacred spaces. A sensory delight of fragrant blossoms, aromatic herbs, chirping birds, emerging seedlings and verdant shrubs greet us every morning. The routine and rhythm of gardening provide a connection to nature, purpose, and refuge in our lives. While the garden produces fresh ingredients during the summer, it is also a sanctuary during the time of Covid. In the calm of the garden, the unending medical updates dissipate, and we focus on the task of coaxing plants to bloom. We revel in the anticipation of watching seedlings sprout, transplanting them, and hoping that they will take hold. When the hardiest plants begin to peek through the soil in the rock garden, they herald the arrival of spring. Perennials such as irises, hostas, day lilies and ferns provide a sense of hope and stability.

The mild temperature in the greenhouse protects tender plants against the frost, while we wait impatiently for warmer weather. When the chance of frost is minimal, we celebrate the transfer of delicate tomato and pepper plants outside to bask in the sunshine. Gathering our modest harvest reminds us of our parents' tradition of growing and preserving food for the winter ahead. This was a practice born of necessity in southern Italy. This sense of connection to the past helps us understand the great sacrifices they made to ensure a better life for their children.

As a painter, I love to use multi-coloured flowers, much as I use vibrant paint strokes, to create jewel tones in the landscape. Bright red impatiens, variegated pink petunias, trailing lobelia and climbing mandevilla create magical tableaux, and add beauty to our life. While my father always maintained that you can't eat flowers, I still love to admire lush hanging planters and brightly coloured blooms in vintage urns.

Both our children now have small gardens of their own, and grow a variety of plants. They rely primarily on their father for advice about planting, tending and harvesting their gardens. There is a feeling of satisfaction knowing that one small part of our heritage continues on to the next generation.

Each year I look at the shaggy thirty-year-old grapevine, and think that it will never come back from the harsh winter. In late May I noticed the budding leaves making a slow, sleepy return, and my faith was restored. Just as the grapevine leaves came to life, so will we, as we gradually make our way out of these dark times into a brighter post-Covid era.



*Photo by Frances Garofalo*

# MEMBER SHOWCASE

## Tango on the Waves (Excerpt)

by Jane Callen with Antonio Iantorno

Milano, gennaio 17, 2021

Last Saturday, the government announced that in the second wave of the pandemic, Lombardia, where Milano is situated, is a *Zona Rossa* or red zone. We have reached the highest level of contagion. All but essential stores are closed, there is a ten p.m. curfew that is monitored by the local police. Wash your hands, take your temperature and keep your distance. We're warned there will be no quick exit. I think of my students who have lost much of the skills they acquired with the last four months of inactivity. If I suggested a Tango class there could be no personal embrace, not even between husband and wife. Instead, I decide to propose lessons online using the Zoom platform.

I will contact the students on WhatsApp, call a zoom meeting, but I don't know who reads messages regularly, who will be available and what time of day. Some may think this is a money grab on my part. I choose the students with care, the historical group. They know me, but always the doubts surface. Doubts are like mountain wolves, they wait for the tired, the disoriented and lost prey. Attacking from all sides, they tear your soul to shreds.

Perhaps I should ask Nina to help me. Yes, I warm to this idea. She is a dynamic woman with the desire to make things happen. Last October she proposed I set up online classes. My initial queries met with a lack of interest back then. But we are in the never-ending waves now, perhaps there has been a change of heart. I will call her, ask for her help in offering the lessons. As soon as I feel I'm in the right mindset, I will call her. Nina is a volcano of energy; she is sure to act upon my proposal.

Vancouver, January 19, 2021

I join Antonio and Anna online in their apartment along with ten others, two couples but mostly singles. We peer out from our separate screens into cyberspace. I recognize Antonio's apartment, having enjoyed fine meals and conversations there in 2019. I especially remember the *spaghetti alle vongole* which Anna prepared for me. It's my favorite Italian dish. I sat beside the stove sipping prosecco and committing the recipe to memory. After they are steamed Anna removes half from their shells. When she tosses the clams and spaghetti there is a pleasant mix of seafood in and out of the shells. *Delizioso*.

That was before the plague descended, although now it is believed the virus was circulating in Lombardy that September as we day-tripped together to Bergamo. Covid later decimated the city where we took the funicular to the upper town and toured the Cathedral of Sant'Alessandro, a Baroque treasure from the 1400's. That innocent day in September, I snapped a shot of Antonio walking down the sunlit cobblestones towards the Piazza Vecchia. It features in the Italy playlist on the digital frame beside my laptop.

# NEW MEMBERS

## Gina Bertolin



Gina Bertolin is a novice writer. Presently working on writing her memoirs with a fiction twist. She joined the AICW to have an opportunity to meet, learn and enjoy other authors.

## Tina Biello

Tina Biello was born in a small logging town in BC, and born to immigrant parents from Casacalenda, Italy. She is an actor, poet and playwright. She has three full length collections of poetry published, the latest one with Caitlin Press, 'Playing into Silence'. She was Poet Laureate of Nanaimo from 2017-2020.

[www.tinabiello.com](http://www.tinabiello.com)



## Jane Callen



Jane Callen writes novel length and short fiction. She's been an Italophile since first glimpsing architectural ruins of Roma in the twilight from her airport taxi a decade ago. Italy and her people figure frequently in Jane's writings.

Jane's current project documents the struggle of a Tango Maestro bringing the dance back to Milano as Covid fades. "Tango on the Waves" is a collaboration with Antonio Iantorno of Milano.

## Guglielmo D'Izzia

Guglielmo D'Izzia hails from Sicily. He's an actor and writer. *The Transaction*, his debut novel, won the 2016 Marina Nemat Award, was a finalist at the 2020 International Book Awards, won the Crime Writers of Canada Awards of Excellence Best Crime First Novel, and is currently a Foreword INDIES Finalist. He was also nominated 2020 "Most Promising Author" by The Miramichi Reader's "The Very Best!" Book Award.



# NEW MEMBERS

## Chris DiRaddo



Christopher DiRaddo is the author of two novels: *The Geography of Pluto* (2014) and *The Family Way* (2021). Since 2014, he has worked to create a space for LGBTQ literature in Montreal—producing and hosting the Violet Hour reading series, as well as programming Violet Metropolis, the LGBTQ leg of Montreal’s Blue Metropolis Literary Festival. He is the current president of the Quebec Writers’ Federation and an evaluation committee member on the Conseil des arts de Montréal.

## Silvia Fiorita Smith

Silvia Fiorita Smith was born and raised in Montreal, the youngest child of Calabrian immigrants. She grew up in Park Extension, a vibrant multi-cultural community that enriches both her life and writing. She won an award for her poetry by AICW and for a nonfiction story by *Accenti* in 2008. In 2019, she made the longlist for the CBC nonfiction literary contest. She has just published a collection of poetry, *Figs Beneath the Snow: Unearthing the Poetry Within* with *Oxygen Publishing Agency*, May 2021. She has been a member of the West Island Writers' group for many years, contributing stories to two of their anthologies. She was invited to read her works at community coffeehouses. She enjoys quilting, crosswords, and most of all her three children and four grandchildren. She teaches ESL part-time and lives in the West Island suburb of Pointe-Claire with her husband, a retired pastor.



## Stephanie Grella



Born and raised in Toronto, Stephanie earned a BA in English Literature & Italian Studies from Western University (2014) and went on to receive an MA in Journalism from New York University (2016). She's currently completing a Certificate in Creative Writing at the University of Toronto, where she is working on her first novel.

# NEW MEMBERS

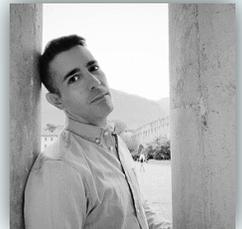
## Genni Gunn



Genni Gunn is an author, musician and translator. Born in Trieste, she has published twelve books: three novels, three short fiction collections, two poetry collections, and a collection of personal essays. As well, she has translated from Italian three collections of poems by two renowned Italian authors: Dacia Maraini, and Corrado Calabrò. Gunn's books have been translated into Italian and Dutch. Gunn has written an opera libretto, *Alternate Visions*, produced by *Chants Libres* in 2007 (music by John Oliver). Before she turned to writing full-time, Gunn toured Canada with various bands (bass guitar, piano and vocals). Gunn has a B.F.A. and an M.F.A. from the University of British Columbia. She lives in Vancouver.

## Elio Iannacci

Elio Iannacci is an award-winning writer, poet and a long-time arts reporter for *Maclean's*. He has written for more than 80 publications, contributing to periodicals such as *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, *The National Post*, *The Hollywood Reporter* and *The Toronto Review of Books*. Some of his most notable profiles include Sophia Loren, Barbra Streisand, Lady Gaga, Joni Mitchell and Beyoncé. The Writer's Trust of Canada recently asked Iannacci to be a juror for the Dayne Ogilvie Prize, a literary award dedicated to emerging LGBTQ+ authors.



## Rita Miceli



Rita Miceli, born and raised in the province of Ontario to Sicilian parents. She has been happily married for almost 30 years to John, and she is the proud mother of Lauren, Carolina, Maria, and Giaci. Since her son Giaci was diagnosed with autism, Rita has spent her life advocating for people with autism. She is an elementary school teacher, a professor in the Autism and Behavioral Science Graduate Program at St Clair College, and is past-president of Autism Ontario, Windsor-Essex Chapter. She loves watching videos of her son on his TikTok account, which has surpassed 500,000 followers!

# NEW MEMBERS

## Mirella Patzer



First generation Italian-Canadian, Mirella attended the University of Calgary where she specialized in leadership and human resources. She has worked as an Italian-English bilingual secretary, police radio operator, and administrative manager. Mirella writes historical fiction novels and lives in Calgary, Alberta.

## Anthony Portulese

Raised in East-End Montreal, Anthony currently studies civil and common law at McGill University. He previously completed a B.Sc. in Pharmacology and a M.A. in Art History. Writing during every minute of spare time he can extract from his days, he hopes to soon finish his first book.





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