



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

Fall Colours

Vancouver, BC

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy October!

A warm welcome to new and returning members and many thanks to long-time members and supporters. Our members and volunteers keep this Association alive. Congratulations to all on the AICW's 35th anniversary. Special thanks to Anna Foschi, who was honoured at the September 25th AGM for her 35-year contribution to the AICW.

The AICW has received a grant from the Government of Quebec's Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers, with the English Language Arts Network (ELAN) as project supporter. Maria Pia Spadafora and Giulia De Gasperi have been working on the project, which includes a mentorship program and survey. The survey was sent to AICW members at the end of August. We will share the results in the coming months. The "Relaunch Your Passion for Writing" is a ten-hour remote mentorship currently in progress. The objective is to relaunch the arts and culture sector following Covid-19. This project benefits ten English-language speakers in Quebec to develop their writing skills or to learn about the business of writing. Ten mentees have been paired with ten established writers, members of the AICW. (See Page 16)

Over the past year, we've been working on the AICW-Bressani Literary Prize. The Bressani Prize was previously managed by the Italian Cultural Centre in Vancouver. AICW's Anna Foschi, who co-founded the Prize in 1986, facilitated the transition period; and we thank her for sharing her expertise. The AICW-Bressani Prize committee is currently chaired by Giulia De Gasperi with committee members Domenic Beneventi, Dennis Maione, Licia Canton and Christine Sansalone. Jury members are currently reading submissions. Four \$1000 prizes will be awarded in 2022: First Book, Poetry, Fiction, Nonfiction. Thanks go to the following organizations for supporting the AICW-Bressani Prize: Federazione delle Associazioni Venete del Québec, Associazione Italo-Canadese del "West Island" (Montreal), and Villa Charities.

After a number of delays, the next AICW Conference – "The Traces We Leave: Italian Canadians and Their Works" – will be held on May 5-7, 2022, at the Università di Torino. We are looking forward to this in-person event.

All AICW events and activities have been online since spring of 2020. These include six events in the Books & Biscotti Literary Series, which the public can watch on [YouTube](#). Please join us for the next event on October 29 at 5 p.m. ET. The following members will be reading from their work: Lucia Gagliese, Sylvia Smith, Luigi Spadari, Carole Giangrande, Sante Viselli and Emma Pivato.

From May 2020 to July 2021, the AICW organized a weekly "Shut Up and Write!": total of 59 consecutive writing sessions were hosted by Annalisa Panati, Licia Canton and Maria Pia Spadafora.

Because of COVID-19, it has been a difficult year. But we have done a lot as an Association. Thanks to Executive Members Maria Cristina Seccia, Cristina Pepe, Delia De Santis, Maria Pia Spadafora and Christine Sansalone for their contribution to the AGM. Special thanks go to Gianluca Agostinelli, our outgoing social media manager, and Secretary Giulia Verticchio for keeping members informed. A final thank you goes to volunteer Newsletter Editor Francesca Foschi Mitchell, Anna Foschi and Maria Pia Spadafora without whom this newsletter would not be possible.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours!

Licia Canton, President

Venera Fazio Poetry Contest 2021

Winning Poems—Comments by James Deahl

1st – **The Archivist**—Giovanna Riccio

2nd – **The Return**—Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews

3rd – **Colossus**—Silvia Falsaperla

Honourable mention—**The House of Four Winds**—Ryan Gibbs

First judges: Anna Ciardullo Villapiana & Carolyne Ven Der Meer

Final judge: James Deahl



1st prize – “**The Archivist**” is the story of an immigrant to Canada from Calabria. The initial quality the reader will notice is the firm grasp the author has on free-verse prosody (so rare these days!); this is a well-constructed poem. The tale it tells is a common one, and it reminds Canadian readers that Canada is much more than a country of people whose roots go back to either the British Isles or France. It deals with the struggles immigrants face: poverty, learning a new language, separation from family, etc. And it deals with the attempt to retain something of the “old country” in the new one. Finally, the actual immigrants experience a separation from their children and grandchildren in that their descendants are “full” Canadians while the immigrants are “hyphenated” Canadians, caught, as it were, between two countries. (And this works the other way, too — children born and raised in Canada often have trouble relating to their foreign-born parents.) Importantly, readers are reminded of the vital role the tales of these new Canadians play in making Canada what it is — a nation of many different, and valid, stories. All this and more is covered in this remarkable poem.

2nd prize – “**The Return**” is a brilliant *tour de force* of extended metaphor. In this poem, the movements of life — the ebb and flow of our human relationships — are presented as a merry-go-round or a carousel in a carnival. Our reality, with repeating circular patterns, is likened to the carnival. The metaphor is then extended when the merry-go-round becomes an atom in which electrons and protons spin around their nucleus, again showing repeating patterns. While I am unsure that life is really a carousel, a line like “a black scarf of stars” is worth a prize in and of itself. Many poets never write such a fine line.

3rd prize – “**The Colossus**” is a political poem that resists the all-too-common flaw of political poetry: preaching. The first four stanzas describe the scary, but unreal, horrors of Hallowe’en: vampires, goons, skeletons, etc. All good spooky fun; a party for children. But as the poem moves towards its conclusion the Godzillas and vampires are replaced by a parade of Q-Anon crazies and Trump supporters. The make-believe-world of Hallowe’en becomes our dangerous world of political fanaticism. It is nice to read a good political poem.

Honourable Mention – “**The House of Four Winds**” is a slight, but lovely poem about four people: Matteo, Camille, Rosita, and the Master of the Convent. The scene is La Monaca, a village in Italy (in the region of Calabria). Although each of these characters has only four lines, the reader is left with a remarkable empathy for them. This comes as close as possible to pure poetry in its flawless beauty.

NEWS

In my opinion, the above four poems are clearly superior to the other poems I considered. (As far as I can tell, none of these poems were written by any of the poets I know.) It's wonderful to see a poetry contest celebrating Venera.

Our Association gratefully acknowledges Mr. Dwayne O'Neil for sponsoring the 2021 Venera Fazio Poetry Contest.

Congratulations!



Giovanna Riccio



Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews



Silvia Falsaperla



Ryan Gibbs

NEWS

The Archivist

by Giovanna Riccio

1

My birthright, that schoolboy's pebbled leather satchel
carted from Calabria's parched paradise,
companion to the weighty desktop encyclopedia—
two volumes flaunting the Italian you courted
with a chevalier's ink, pages doubly bound
by a *cavaliere's* lust for wisdom and verse,
your pen bidding beauty's brio.

Did that pliant vault soften the rough Atlantic
by harboring sea and earth, a twirl of hair,
your mother's picture, a Mediterranean shell
or did it lay destitute—an expectant void
fertile only with the future—to shelter, say
the antics and annals of no-account players,
unschooled scholars foiling each day's
scatter in a swirl of dreamless sleep?

You, an autodidact scribe, logging lofty
and nitty-gritty rhythms, an archivist piecing lives,
gathering pages, images, musings against forgetting
ourselves, fleeting as ephemera fading,
the blank life threatening...

Your voice set against erasure like a piazza
composing public memory—unthinkable to overcome
without a word, poverty's rubble, a tongue-tied exile,
the rupture of family and familiars—so before
the time-card's whistle, rise from ruins with the light,
veto silence by marking unremarked characters.

With no home, no wife and kids, no money
you pulled into Toronto, gravitated to a communized
Victorian in Little Italy, five fellow loners your roommates,

NEWS

at night again, you roused a pen flush with oceanic currents,
spewed satirical rhyme echoing migrant woes—
the ugly looks and bum rap brutality hostile
Hogtown Anglos heaped on dirty, hot-blooded *wops*,
or pick-pocket priests preaching dollars over prayer
as proper love of God, tagging you the devil's twin
for acerbic songs limned in cobalt lines wailing
in that satchel sanctuary—peasant wit, a grave chronicler
waxing to populist poet—witness to the overlooked moment.

Back home you glossed an imaginary figure
fragmented in air mail letters spilling poignant
mea culpas for meagre funds dispatched,
and mother weeping blue tears in epistles,
wringing work-hardened hands lest love be disfigured
in a vast sky where time's fault cracks bonds
so hunger and thirst no longer remember vows
that bind night to day summing to half a decade
to reunion at Union Station...

all the while recording, animating space with glaring
photographs depicting a black and white city of men
missing women: clippings from *giornali* and newspapers,
missives from intellectual cronies to *Il Giornale di Toronto*
homesick magazines pushing glamour-puss celebs,
cryptic columns from *The Globe* and *Telegram*,
ideological posturing, political double-talk and mirth:
an elect obvious and oblique, revenants suspended
in that immigrant treasury—the past
passed on—becoming...

2

You kissed a toddler goodbye, we touched again
as strangers. Shaped by your passions and persona
I contoured into a mirror, prizing books, stage and poets.
Afloat in the sixties, my rebel-girl favoured brandy

NEWS

and smokes chasing a freedom that eluded you;
only 25, raging tears on that goodnight a burst aorta
blitzed your heart, I refuged in the bathroom,
sipped whiskey, toasted Dylan Thomas.

Your paper remains abide as my inheritance, a death
transcending re-collection crafting a man unreadable
beyond the workaday barbershop and prosaic papa,
his *ars vitae* time-capsuled in crumbling skin.
For decades I cart, guard, closet that satchel, avoid
trespassing upon a stashed away bio.

Now, at an age when saving promises
no end other than itself, over a private telling,
I crave an opening—the found moment
where ephemera evolves as history.

To rouse a life bigger than a daughter's lens
or genealogical myth, my dig flounders as I unravel
yellowed years, haloed ink blurred by neglect.
I strain to decode Italianate script and shifting form
to enter a writ become my second tongue
and revel in your philosophic drift.
Musing on wounded jottings and smart-ass aphorisms,
wistful for your knowing smile and soulful spunk—
eloquent clocks re-verse to banquet halls; again I witness
you speechifying marrying rhetoric and lyric at festive nuptials
or brains and book-learning to endorse a politico *paesano*
vying for votes reaching to unlock the “ethnic” paddock.
Then on to clashing missives when I blew Toronto
to get back-to-the-land (the very life you'd evacuated)
and set my hippy soul free in nota bene New Brunswick,
verbal fisticuffs we threw across generations—muscular,
laced with bloody love, so as I write my heart
sounds, longing—to lean into your warmth.

NEWS

To woo the chief archivist at the Fisher Rare Book Library,
like a tutored orator and done-good poet,
I piece your story between cerulean covers.
A go-between shuttling voices, faces, crossings
and landings—with unalloyed hope, I unscroll
your artful artifact, the bittersweet, sweat-soaked diary
of two interconnected, disconnected countries.

Yes
paper binds beginning to end
sealed by final words penned on that farewell morn,
the salutation—your arabesque signature
a lettered last kiss, archived, winging off the page
into illuminated finding.

The Return

by Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews

You wait for me as I echo
Like a note reverberating

From the centre of my turns
On a carnival ride.

At the edge of time I sit
On a white paper maché

Gilded horse, circling
The flowering wood rings

Of my years.
At that merry-go-round

You stand eternal.

NEWS

A fixed star.
Pattern of my seasons.

Steadfast, you wait for me
To alight from my manège of vagaries.

I love you blindly
Like protons and electrons

Love the nucleus
Of their atom

Without knowing it.
Magnetism of centrifugal force

Spinning coherently, returning
Constant on its swivel

Out of simple physics
God particles

You and I
Ghosts in the spin

Of our continuous return.
We are the waves

Oscillating towards space.
Sunlight fading to starlight

And moons repeating in cycles,
Spyrographing reality

Into a melody
Of our life's familiar refrain.

NEWS

Heart beat
Blood pulse

A carousel
Of pastel paper pulp.

Childish vehicles & horses
Prinked with gold and silver

Roses, curlicues & diamonds
Of broken mirror glass

Reflecting the passage
Of our vanishing

Faces, our miraculous
Temporal voyage.

~ Refrain

Tempus irreparabile fugit

~

Piano music trickles like water,
liquid waves of sound, undulations

Of light fragments, Escher
Scapes repeating

Unto themselves
Before disaster

Before the sparking
Spinning top

Of your molecules
Spun out unbound

NEWS

And your form
That face of love and goodness

Turned away from me
Into a black scarf of stars.

Yet for a while we held
that wheel of chance.

They say that time is non-linear,
But circular, a cochlear spiral.

We return inescapably
Through memory

To those circuits we incised
With our living

In the universe's vinyl longplay.
You will always

Be waiting for me
Like the sun.

Look! I am a child
Showing off for you

Riding that princess chariot
In the peach organza dress

You embroidered
& that green *panno lenci*

Hair band with the tiny flowers.
You're still young, in your prime.

NEWS

I know nothing
Of what's to come ahead
Assured only of this moment's truth.
I will return endlessly

Here and to all the other points
We highlighted in time.

Maybe they are other worlds
In superposition

Other dimensions, heavens
And dreamworld scapes

Spaces lit with love and sun.
A luna moth

Spins a pale green carousel
Fluttering diaphanous wings.

Feeds on sunlight
Ever circling an invisible centre

So beautiful.
So joyful.

She is so young.
Her life, so brief.

The Colossus

by Silvia Falsaperla

It'll be Halloween in a fortnight—
the neighbourhood streets
are decked out in horror

NEWS

ghouls waiting in the trees
for the night of the dead
a colossal inflatable float of a vampire hangs
from a top window of a house
his red twisted hands splayed out scary-like
with spiky nails like the spiky mace of the new
invisible fiend called Goon

on the door below hangs a skeleton
in a white tulle veil
like a bride grinning, as if snickering,
open the door,
welcome home, my daar-lings!

Zoom in, Zoom out
Life is now on Zoom platform
Zzzoommm I stay tuned!
I shut my door and stay inside,
out for only essential food and sunshine

But I stumble into a parade of motley dudes
on the best street of Gotham town
honking the horns of their jeeps,
pick-up trucks and SUVs
thumping their feet on the ground
unfurling the leaf and the stars and stripes

There are no vampires, no Godzillas, you gullibles!
they honk, trumped up, trumping
honky tonk, we are the unmasked, the deplorables!
Qanon!
Make Freedom Great Again!
their placards holler—

I walk away from the madding crowd,
I avoid the street of the vampire and the skeleton bride
A squirrel on a fence post nibbling on a morsel

NEWS

held in its exquisite hands catches my eye
minding its own species business
a blessed natural obliviousness that
drowned the noise of
the crowd

The House of Four Winds

by Ryan Gibbs

for Carmen Ziolkowski

fair Matteo, on return to La Monaca
suffering his new wife's birth pains
his blood spilt with a sickle in the fields
he searches for a ghost to lift his curse

dark Camille, atop her white palomino
her green dress with a flounce of décolletage
sudden fear of her newborn killing her
her mind bolts from pregnancy

scarlet Rosita, bitten by an asp
remorse for dove's blood as a wedding stain
nuns dance in the house, devils dance in the garden
she dances tarantellas all alone

white Old Man, Master of the Convent
specter to the villagers wandering at night
he confesses his sins as the cuckoo calls
prophesizes new peace until a new war

The Pier Giorgio Di Cicco Poetry Award 2021

by Joseph Pivato

The winner of this first poetry award is Carmine Starnino for his book, *Dirty Words*. This volume of selected poems spans 20 years of publications, from 1997 to 2016. It is a kind of artist's retrospective, curated to create a work on language itself, its history and its living energy and flux. *Dirty Words* is an ode to language that eschews the flowery for words with "a goat stench." The dirty words of the eponymous book title are Italian swear words. The collection is an appreciation of language full of feeling rooted in experience, and in particular in the life of his working-class, Italian immigrant family.

The jury was impressed by the opulent variety of his versification and styles, by the extraordinary wide range of his poetry, and by the overall richness of his language (even when intertwined with slang). Starnino is clearly a supreme craftsman of the word.

The Pier Giorgio Di Cicco Poetry Award judges were:

Mary di Michele, Concordia University, Montreal;
Gabriele Niccoli, St. Jerome University/ University of Waterloo,
and Marisa De Franceschi, writer and editor, Windsor, Ontario.

The books submitted are listed here in alphabetical order:

Marc di Saverio, *Crito Di Volta*. Guernica Editions, 2020.
Joe Fiorito, *All I Have Learned Is Where I have Been*. Véhicule Press, 2020.
Carmelo Militano. *Catching Desire*. Ekstasis Editions, 2020.
Gianna Patriarca. *To the Men Who Write Goodbye Letters*. Inanna Publications, 2020.
Giovanna Riccio. *Plastic's Republic: Featuring the Barbie Suite*. Guernica Editions, 2019.
Carmine Starnino. *Dirty Words*. Gaspereau Press, 2020.

This poetry award was generously funded by Tony Patrick Trigiani in memory of his sister, journalist Michelina (Michey) Claire Trigiani Falcone Reid (1961-2020).

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco (1949-2019) was a founding member of the Association of Italian-Canadian Writers, editor of the first anthology, *Roman Candles* (1978), Poet Laureate of Toronto (2005-09), mentor to many younger writers and author of 19 books of his own poetry.

The Secretary for the Di Cicco Poetry Award is George Elliott Clarke.

For information about this award contact Joseph Pivato at pivato@athabascau.ca

NEWS

A Heartfelt Thank to the AICW!

by Anna Foschi Ciampolini



(Photo courtesy of Cristina Pepe)

At the last Association AGM on September 25th, the Executive had a major surprise in store for me. AICW recognized my thirty-five years of service with a marvellous plaque and a lovely floral bouquet. The inscription on the plaque reads: *For her extraordinary contribution to the Italian-Canadian community and to Canadian Literature.*

The Association has been and always will be an especially important part of my life and work. It has been a long journey since 1986, the year our Association was founded, and it still thriving. We can all be proud of it.

Grazie di cuore!



(Screenshot courtesy of Maria Pia Spadafora)

AICW'S Passion for Writing Mentorship Pairings

AICW'S "RELAUNCH YOUR PASSION FOR WRITING" MENTORSHIP PAIRINGS



Fiction

Chris DiRaddo & Anthony Portulese

Darlene Madott & Lea Beddia

Monica Meneghetti & William Wellman

Domenic Cusmano & Russell Fralich

Michael Mirolla & Jennifer Deleskie

Genni Gunn & Irene Aguzzi

Non-Fiction

Licia Canton & Jessica Little

Jim Zuccherro & Andy Kozina

Liana Cusmano & Anna Maiolo

Poetry

Carmelo Militano & Jeanne Schoenwandt

Secrétariat aux relations
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Québec 



elan
english language
arts network

ACCENT *i*
The Magazine with an Italian Accent

EVENTS



Elio Iannacchi



Monica Meneghetti

#VC150
f t i y
villacharities.com



CULTURAL TUESDAYS Italian-Canadian Queer Readings Live Virtual Readings



Villa Charities, in collaboration with The National Public Readings Program, is pleased to invite you to free readings of selected works by Italian-Canadian queer authors Paul Cocchia, Liana Cusmano, Elio Iannacchi and Monica Meneghetti.

Part I

Tuesday, September 28
7:00 - 8:00pm

Elio Iannacchi: Writer, poet and arts reporter for Maclean's magazine.

Paul Cocchia: Author of the award-winning "Cub" and "The Player."

Part II

Wednesday, October 6
7:00 - 8:00pm

Monica Meneghetti: Author of "What the Mouth Wants," a Lambda Literary Award finalist and BI Book Award winner.

Liana Cusmano: Writer, poet, filmmaker, arts educator and 2018 and 2019 Montreal Slam Champion.

TO REGISTER, VISIT:
villacharities.com/culturaltuesdays
Log-in details will be provided upon registration.

With financial assistance from
the Canada Council for the Arts
through The Writers' Union of Canada.



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THE
WRITERS'
UNION OF
CANADA



Paul Cocchia



Liana Cusmano

EVENTS

Book Launch: "Dying Times"

By Silvia Falsaperla



(Photo courtesy of Silvia Falsaperla)

Darlene Madott launched her 9th publication with "Dying Times" on Sept. 26, 2021 in the Toronto borough of Etobicoke. It was a classy affair at the Donna Child Fine Art Gallery, a large modern art space displaying original Canadian painting and sculpture. A large crowd, initially screened at the door for covid protocols, gathered to sip wine served by Darlene's son Marcus at the bar counter and munch on hors d'oeuvres of Swedish meatballs, eggplant fritters, and bite-size pizza strips inside paper french fry boxes with accompanying wooden french fry forks, prepared by none other than the author herself (also known as a consummate hostess) as they listened to a harpist seated in the plush lounge area strumming soothing liquid melodies on her 6-foot harp. A treat indeed to have the three arts—visual, literary, musical—converge in one place. And lastly, the lady herself, slender, white wavy hair tumbling at her shoulders, wearing a black sparkly dress and vaudevillian fingerless gloves, engaged her audience in a lively first-person read. The narrator is a family practice lawyer surrounded by the dying: her sweet mother, her straight-shooting mentor and law partner, and her plum client. The 112-page narrative is made up of vignettes or headings, a weave in which threads are picked up, continued, and criss-crossed, threads that are direct, punchy, reflective, and poetic about strife and tenderness in the family and the legal battling ground of family practice, all under the looming shadow of illness and death—death—the imminent "goneness" that anguishes and mystifies all of us. "Dying Times" is an engaging read that whets the appetite for a second...even a third read. We applaud you, Darlene!

Books and Biscotti Event in Vancouver



Three Vancouver-based AICW members participated in the September 22 online edition of Books and Biscotti. Eloise Carbone, Genni Gunn and Monica Meneghetti read from their latest works; Anna Foschi Ciampolini acted as a presenter and moderator. The bi-annual literary readings event was organized in cooperation with Word Vancouver Festival.

Links:

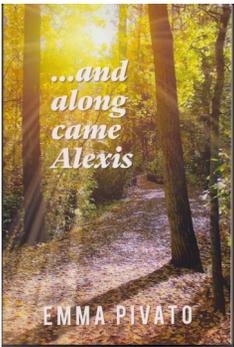
[Facebook Books and Biscotti link](#)

[YouTube Books and Biscotti link](#)

BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT

Summer Reading in 2021

by Joseph Pivato



In recent weeks I have been reviewing the pages of the *Globe and Mail* that are devoted to books and book reviews. Most other Canadian newspapers have very little space focused on Canadian writing. I note that some Indigenous authors and some African-Canadian writers get the occasional book review. This is a small sign that Canadian Literature is slowly changing towards being more inclusive of diverse voices. Here I will briefly mention some Italian-Canadian books that came to my attention over the past year.

I first wrote about Darlene Madott's short stories in *Contrasts* (1985) and then *Echo* (1994). She recently published a novel, *Dying Times* (Exile) which deals with great love and great hatred narrated from the point of view of a woman lawyer. (See the review by Emma Pivato in this issue.)

Adriana A. Davies wrote *From Sojourners to Citizens: Alberta's Italian History* which begins with the settlement of Italian migrant railway works in the 1880s and ends with a review of many professional figures in the arts, sciences, and industry. (Guernica Editions)

Gianna Patriarca published *To the Men Who Write Goodbye Letters*, a collection of poems in a simple language with a strong voice and powerful emotions. (Inanna Publications)

Licia Canton edited *Here and Now: An Anthology of Queer Italian-Canadian Writing* which has been receiving a good deal of attention as the first collection of its kind. (Longbridge)

Giovanna Riccio gives us a unique poetic exploration of our doll culture with *Plastic Republic* featuring the Barbie Suite. It reminds us of the love-hate relationship we have with North American popular culture. (Guernica Editions)

Konrad Eisenbichler edited *Forgotten Italians: The Julian Dalmatian Writers and Artists in Canada* (UofT Press) which includes essays on Mario Duliani, Caterina Edwards, Gianni Grohovaz, Diego Bastianutti, and other creative artists.

In the *Globe and Mail* of Saturday, September 18, section P7, Emily Donaldson's article, "You must remember this" reviews the extraordinary rise of the memoir genre in recent years. She lists over 50 different titles by public figures such as Jean Chrétien and Peter Mansbridge. There are books by actors, musicians, and athletes. She focuses on the memoirs by Indigenous writers like Jordan Abel's *NISHGA*, Tomson Highway's *Permanent Astonishment* and Jesse Wenté's *Unreconciled: Family, Truth and Indigenous Resistance* which deal with the long-term effects of the residential schools. In this context of anti-racism, I must include George Elliott Clarke's new book, *Where Beauty Survived: An Africadian Memoir* which was launched in September 2021.

And finally, I must mention Emma Pivato's *And Along Came Alexis*, a memoir about 43 years of life with a severely disabled daughter. By including both the joys and the sorrows it may help others better understand the invisible world of the disabled. (Guernica Editions)

BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT

Arianna Dagnino's Exploration of Transcultural Approaches in Life

"Mio padre suonava il jazz, a vent'anni, nell'Italia del dopoguerra, senza un soldo in tasca ed echi d'America nelle orecchie. Avrebbe voluto emigrare in Australia come suo cugino, ma..." (Arianna Dagnino, [Il Quintetto d'Istanbul](#))



(Photo courtesy of Arianna Dagnino)

Arianna Dagnino opened the Fall season with an Italian tour of her creative nonfiction, *Il Quintetto d'Istanbul* (Edizioni Ensemble, Roma), a literary account of transcultural approaches in life and in one's creative writing. The book tour started in the Ligurian Riviera and its seascapes (Sestri Levante and Camogli) and then moved on to Bologna (Giardino del Guasto, 29 September). The next legs will include Genova (the event will be hosted in the marvellous setting of Palazzo della Meridiana, 6 October), Milano (Università Bocconi, 14 October), the Lake of Lugano (Botel, Porto Ceresio, 15 October), Torino (Università di Torino, 18 October), and Venezia (20 October, Università Cà Foscari). You can follow Arianna's Italian tour on [her blog](#), or by reading her [monthly newsletter](#).

The book has been published in Italian by Ensemble Edizioni in the "Transculturazione" series founded by Prof. Gnisci (Università La Sapienza) and edited by Andrea Gazzoni.

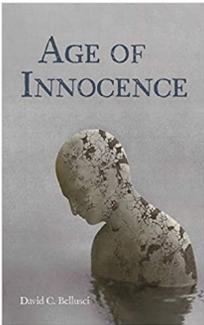
Breve descrizione del *Quintetto d'Istanbul*: Uno scrittore transculturale è un neonomade, un poliglotta, un dispatriato, un instancabile viaggiatore. Si adatta ai vari ambienti culturali in cui scrive e che descrive, ed è così che fa cultura, che la reinventa per il nuovo secolo. Arianna Dagnino incontra in queste pagine cinque scrittori transculturali, il suo Quintetto: nell'anno delle frontiere chiuse, dialoga su un treno per Istanbul con Ilija Trojanow, sorseggia una tazza di çay con Brian Castro, è nuda tra i vapori di un bagno turco con Inez Baranay, veleggia a bordo di un caicco con Alberto Manguel, conversa sognante all'ombra della Torre di Galata con Tim Parks. Pronunciate in una sorta d'immaginario salotto letterario sulle rive del Bosforo, all'incrocio tra Europa e Asia, le parole di questa nuova specie di scrittori sono il materiale alluvionale sul quale si va edificando la nuova corrente letteraria del Transculturalismo.

A Journey of Discovery and Compassion in David C. Bellusci's *Age of Innocence*

by Anna Foschi Ciampolini

David C. Bellusci's latest collection of poetry takes the reader throughout a profound, metaphysical journey through stages of life and consciousness. *Age of Innocence* (Resource Publications, 2020) consists of five segments, each exploring under different perspectives a wide range of human feelings, cultural differences, and the healing power of nature. Starting with the segment in "Book of Nature," centered around the innocence and warmth of an adolescent's approach to life, the narration becomes increasingly complex and multi-faceted, reflecting inner longings and aspects of the human soul. Bellusci's free verses, often displayed on the book page as a visual composition, range from playful images: "From a bay window two cats stare/at foolish busy

BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT



-bodies/carry briefcases, wear backpacks. /Puzzled felines aghast.” (“Unmoved Cats,” *Book of Nature*) to a reflection on impermanence “Shattered across a scent polished floor/pieces of crystal scattered/Czech treasure disappears, /sweeping emotions, fragile history.” in the poem: “Broken Glass or *Rethinking Kleist’s “Das Zebrochne Krug.”* In “Cities and Fields,” the author traces a map of discoveries through images, sounds, smells, and landscape colours across continents and several countries, and through the flow of people and languages encountered, their stories, and their history. However, this chapter of the collection is also mirroring social injustice, a sense of identity and memory, and acknowledging political action (“Tribute to Mandela” and “Soaking Rwanda.”)

The two final chapters in *Age of Innocence* lead the reader through a spiritual journey of purification. The enchanted world of youth, innocence, and discovery slowly changes into a new awareness of human misery, marginalization, and heart-rending loneliness. An indigent woman finds solace feeding pigeons among throngs of indifferent passersby: “Pigeon lady disappeared: / nobody noticed except thrusting pigeons.” (“Pigeon Lady”) A homeless man tries to buy a cup of coffee, a luxury: “Client attempts to pay waving/his dirty coupon.” (“Donut Shop.”) In the poem “Tram I Won’t Forget,” a stranger listening to an accident victim in a hospital feels genuine compassion. Compassion in its purest, highest sense, as intended in the Latin word *compati*, to suffer with, is the focal point of the complete collection. In the poems at the epilogue, it reveals its full power of salvation. Acknowledging human suffering, honouring the dignity of people and bodies ravaged by old age, illness or accidents leads to a reconnection with the redemption that spirituality and nature can offer. Practicing compassion concludes the search, closes the circle: “You fill my empty cups/with your immortality/and delicately knead my/sorrows with your fragrant drops.” (From: “Silent Syllables.”)

David C. Bellusci lives in Vancouver, B.C. He has published seven books. He holds a B.A. in English Literature, an MA in linguistics from the University of Calgary, an MFA in Creative Writing (University of Nebraska), and a Ph. D in philosophy (Dominican University College, Ottawa.)

This review was published in the following publications:

[A Journey of Discovery and Compassion in David C. Bellusci’s Age of Innocence | Il Marco Polo](#)

[Vancouver: un viaggio di scoperta e compassione in "Age of Innocence" di David C. Bellusci | Fatti Nostri](#)

[Vancouver: un viaggio di scoperta e compassione in “Age of Innocence” di David C. Bellusci | Canadian National Multilingual Newsgroup \(cnmng.ca\)](#)

Lucia Gagliese’s Story Published in Best Canadian Stories 2021

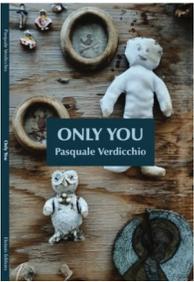
Lucia Gagliese has a story forthcoming in Best Canadian Stories 2021. It is available for pre-order now.

<http://biblioasis.com/shop/forthcoming/best-canadian-stories-2021/>

BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT

The Power of Words in *Only You* by Pasquale Verdicchio

(Ekstasis Editions, 2021)



Language is always about transitions, and these compositions represent transitional moments experienced with others. From a child's first responses to the world, to a mother's last words, from the incongruities of cross-language dialogues, to the frame narratives of lives lived within multiple cultural contexts, the words contained within these pages are the expression of a need to shave communication as close to silence as possible. *Only You* is an invitation to contemplate our singularity not as individualism but as communal and participatory.

About *ONLY YOU*

Only You etches a range of poignant poetic and compositional spaces, the most intriguing of which is the space of "between." In these poems, buttressed with a useful note on his poetics of translation, Pasquale Verdicchio offers us a look at an imagination "unobstructed by borders." This is a writing that keeps us on our toes as we carefully cross through unpredictable traffic trying to find the way home.

Fred Wah

The motif that comes across most strikingly in Pasquale Verdicchio's new gathering is a movement across borders & languages, with a deep sense of poetry, whatever else it is, as always, a form of translation: of the self-speaking to itself & others while en route. In this the poems as such are sharp & clear, the sightings of a man who moves from place to place & notes the contours of the people & the things that speak to him, for which the culmination, curiously & powerfully, is a full-barreled essay on translation that fuses identity & history with language & with languages as such: a true intermingling of poetry & poetics.

Jerome Rothenberg

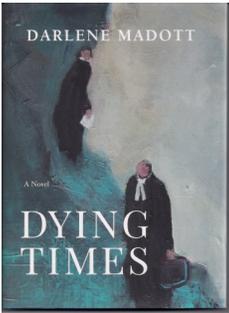
Pasquale Verdicchio's words are clusters of unexpected silences, fruits and stones gathered on his way to the desert. He pilots a vehicle that electrically-magnetically moves entire locations into others, without there ever being a location. He transports us to the other side which is also this side. Verdicchio calls it *translatio*, and carries himself and his galaxy across universes that blend into one. The temporal intervals between spatial dimensions are emotionally charged from having seen the end and called it life, or as he says, 'Lovingkindness'.

Antonio D'Alfonso

BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT

A Review of *Dying Times* (2021) and *Here and Now* (2021)

by Emma Pivato



On the plane home from Toronto, this September, I read *Dying Times* by Darlene Madott (Exile Editions). By the time I finished I could not find the right words. I only knew how I felt: somehow, less alone in the world. Darlene has written a very brave and honest account of the simultaneous dying process of three people she knew very well and was close to in various ways. She has the rare capacity to weave threads together to reveal their deeper meanings. Psychologists call this ‘paradigmatic thinking’ - and it is an enviable quality. In this book Darlene dissects her relationships with her mother, her sisters, her law partner and a particularly vengeful client. She examines clashing perspectives and the resulting hurts and jealousies, as well as hard-wired personality traits and the affect that those possessing them can have on the people to whom they are the closest. Darlene sees the value of parsing the human mind instead of merely cataloguing it, of looking closely at the behaviours, emotions, and twists of thought that drive us all forward in our quest to find our meaning and place in the world.

On a final note, I appreciate the author’s erudition, the aptly chosen quotations throughout that drive her various points home. Thank you, Darlene, for writing this book! I will now search out some of your other books such as *Making Olives and Other Family Secrets – Ripasso* (2014) and *Stations of the Heart* (2012).

This summer I read *Here and Now: An Anthology of Queer Italian-Canadian Writing*, edited by Licia Canton (Longbridge Books). Its breadth and scope are truly impressive! It begins with explorations and/or critiques of the existing literature by three separate researchers in the area. These are then followed by almost fifty different entries: personal stories, poetry, fictional stories, interviews and more. And the range is vast. The book includes new writers and experienced writers, young people still struggling to come to terms with their sexual identity and old people who have seen it all and lived through it all. Anthony Portuese, in his short but poignant vignette about his dying grandmother, tells us how he could not bring himself to talk to her about his gayness, even though she obviously knew already and was prepared to accept him for who he was. Frank Canino, age 83, shares matter-of-factly on how he negotiated this way through the different eras from a time when gayness was almost unmentionable to our present much more open society. He also tells us of the love, security, and satisfaction he has found with his husband of 46 years. There is something in this book for everybody and much that the cisgender portion of the population can learn from it.

BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT

La poesia di Diane Pacitti tradotta da Anna Foschi



Diane Pacitti

Nel mese di settembre un articolo di Elisabetta Sancino sulla produzione poetica di Diane Pacitti è apparso sul blog letterario italiano *Versante Ripido*. Le poesie di Pacitti dedicate all'esperienza migratoria italiana in Canada sono state tradotte da Anna Foschi Ciampolini. Diane Pacitti è stata inclusa fra i finalisti del concorso Accenti 2021 con la poesia *Unfoundland*.

<https://blog.versanteripido.it/2021/09/13/the-scarlet-letter-di-elisabetta-sancino-in-bilico-tra-loceano-e-il-sole-la-poesia-errante-di-diane-pacitti/?fbclid=IwAR2Y8Yr44ft2PfhDcLXMWL2yrgS4mC>

Sylvia Fiorita Smith Explores Life Between Two Cultures

by Gina Valle



Who didn't grow up hearing about how much our families missed their beloved fig trees, a staple in any home or neighboring field in Italy? Fast forward to Canada, the land of endless winters, where our families yearned for the sweet fig, and how to cultivate it in North America. Sylvia Fiorita Smith's *Figs Beneath the Snow: Unearthing the Poetry Within* takes us into the mind and heart of an Italian-Canadian writer who, above all else, tries to put a landscape of understanding on growing up Italian, actually Calabrese, inside the home and Canadian, actually as a bilingual Montrealer, outside the home. The metaphor of the figs is the foundation of her understanding, of what she knew, and the metaphor of the blanketing Canadian snow is what she lived in her classrooms, her neighbourhood, with friends and then later with her own

husband and children.

In this first book of poetry, Fiorita Smith's writings span a lifetime of experiences which examines spirituality in our lives, the people who inspire us and those who disappoint us, the family ties that bind us, being raised in an immigrant home, making peace with being bipolar, how anger and grief can define us, growing up in working class Montreal, and the full spectrum of life from birth to death. Although Fiorita Smith had been writing for a while, this collection of over ninety poems came to fruition during the time of covid, where so many of us were inside, and at home with an expansive amount of time for reflection. On that note, one of the opening sections of the book reveals how covid eventually became a spark of hope for Fiorita Smith, amidst the greyness and uncertainty of the pandemic.

Sylvia has a direct dialogue with the reader, where, with a preamble to each poem she provides context in addition to insights that instantaneously brings each poem to life. She writes with honesty and fervour. *Figs Beneath the Snow: Unearthing the Poetry Within*, not only unearths the reality of what it means to live with one culture inside the home and another in the larger Canadian landscape, but just as importantly, when we have the courage to express our creativity beneath the surface, we build resilience and compassion.

Figs Beneath the Snow is available on Amazon and on: https://oxygenpublishing.com/sylvia-fiorita-smith_author/

BOOKS AND OTHER PRINT

LIKE FIGS BENEATH THE SNOW

They will die over the winter
In this land,
They do not belong here,
But you brought them anyway,
Now you must tend to them,
Shield them from the bitter winds and snow,
You bury them beneath the earth
Before the frost arrives,
They bend but do not break,
Yield to your gentle but firm urgings,
In the dying light of late autumn,
They lie sheltered, peaceful, quiet,
Know nothing of the storms that rage above,
A blustery season passes while they, unaware,
Fooled into thinking they are home,
Reward you with blossoms and fruit in time,

The ritual repeated for as long

As they need you and you want them,
They wither with the years,
Forsaken, too much responsibility,
They have outgrown your pleasure
And your patience,
You are gone now too,
Leaving behind a legacy
That until now, lay buried in my heart,
Tended to by those who came after,
Remaining no longer silent,
Like figs beneath the snow.

~ Silvia Fiorita Smith

From: [Figs Beneath the Snow: Unearthing the Poetry Within](#)

MEMBER SHOWCASE

Quella lontana selva oscura

di Pier Angelo Piccolo

Ero partito, di buon mattino in una splendida giornata, con un carico speciale di viveri: pizze, pane appena sfornato, spaghetti, lasagne, ravioli, ragù, parmigiano.

Con la popolazione mondiale chiusa in casa, solo io attraversavo le strade deserte, perché lavoravo per Rosario, che produceva prelibatezze italiane giorno e notte.

A volte, raggiungevo il vicino confine: gli americani stavano morendo come mosche, causa virus e, senza di noi, per la fame.

Nel vecchio furgoncino della Ford, viaggiavo tranquillo tra boschi infiniti e un silenzio surreale, una natura tornata selvaggia in pochi giorni su territori già molto rispettati da secoli, dai nativi.

Scaricai qualche cassa al pub del vecchio Dan, esemplare di maschio duro, con gli occhi chiusi per via del sigaro fra i denti.

Poi, passai al Chubby Club, all'incrocio con la Winchester Avenue, il locale di Dick Peterson, dove si esibivano belle signore *curvy*, anche se ufficialmente chiuso per pandemia, ma si sapeva che lì continuava tutto come prima.

Presto mi avviai alla vicina, piccola città di Chippawa, dove tutto era fermo a due secoli fa.

Attraversare il ponte sul Welland River faceva sempre una bella impressione, era quasi completamente ghiacciato e gli uccelli invernali vi passeggiavano leggermente, sembrava indossassero i pattini.

Di solito, essendo un ponte levatoio, lo issavano verso il cielo per far passare grossi bastimenti che, dopo aver navigato varie miglia, tra canali e chiuse, giungevano al grande lago Ontario. Di là, alla fine, avrebbero imboccato il lungo fiume San Lorenzo, per entrare, poi, a solcare l'Oceano.

Percorsi la strada sulla riva del fiume, che porta al ristorante greco di George, un locale che pareva una grossa imbarcazione, dai colori bianco e azzurro, proprio a ridosso dell'ansa.

Il parcheggio, di solito impraticabile, era deserto.

Entrai, nel gran salone c'era solo lui, seduto ad ascoltare musica. Quando mi vide, si alzò e mi venne incontro con entusiasmo, felice di aver incontrato un altro sopravvissuto a eventi catastrofici.

Il ristorante era aperto, ma solo a quelli che avessero avuto il coraggio di venire a prender la roba "take away", pagare e poi sparire, senza avvicinarsi al ristoratore per più di sei piedi.

MEMBER SHOWCASE

Tutte le innovazioni tecnologiche continue e il fatto di vivere nel Nordamerica, aggiunto alla catastrofe di un virus terribile che minacciava l'umanità intera, mi rimandavano a un tempo perduto, a quando ero bambino e guardavo, assorto, i film di fantascienza che parlavano di queste cose.

Quelle pellicole erano in bianco e nero, adesso il futuro lo stavo vivendo a colori.

Scaricai quasi tutta la consegna a George ma, quel poco che restò in furgone, lo avrei dovuto portare in un posto che non conoscevo.

Dalla ricerca su "Google Maps" vidi che la mia destinazione si trovava molto lontano, in un posto sperduto, fuori da ogni centro abitato, nel bel mezzo della selva oscura.

Mi inquietava pensare di doverla raggiungere: presto avrei, purtroppo, scoperto il perché.

Era un posto fuori dal mondo, come ce ne sono tanti qui, nel grande bosco chiamato Canada.

NEW MEMBERS

Kielan Ellis



Kielan Ellis is a director and producer from Toronto, Canada. He is the founder and creative director of Geminus Studios

ANTHONY MOLLIKA

Anthony Mollica è Professor emeritus of Education, Faculty of Education, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, dove ha insegnato corsi di metodologia per il francese, l'italiano e lo spagnolo dal 1984 al 2003.

È stato autore o curatore di più di sessanta volumi sull'insegnamento della seconda lingua e direttore delle maggiori riviste canadesi di lingua.



Ha tenuto conferenze alla Università per Stranieri di Siena, alla Università per Stranieri di Perugia, e all'Università di Venezia, "Ca' Foscari", oltre che nelle maggior Università italiane (Università di Roma "La Sapienza", Roma Tre, Federico II di Napoli, Aldo Moro di Bari, Gabriele D'Annunzio di Pescara, Sacro Cuore di Milano, Università degli Studi di Torino, Università degli Studi di Genova, ecc.) Per molti anni ha insegnato in corsi per l'insegnamento della lingua seconda presso l'Università della Calabria. Fuori d'Italia, ha tenuto conferenze all'Università degli Studi di San Marino, in Slovenia, in Serbia, in Brasile, in Grecia, in Germania, in Francia, in Olanda, a Malta e in diverse Università dell'Australia (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane), degli USA e del Canada. È Professore (status soltanto) dell'Università di Toronto Mississauga.

NEW MEMBERS

Luigi Spadari



Luigi Spadari est actuellement enseignant de français au secondaire. Il a obtenu une maîtrise en éducation dont l'essai portait sur l'enseignement de l'écriture pour les adolescents. Il a également obtenu une maîtrise en anthropologie. Dans le cadre de cette formation en recherche sociale, il a publié un mémoire intitulé *Le processus identitaire dans le soccer chez les Italiens de Montréal*.

De plus, il a été rédacteur en chef pour des organisations en relations interculturelles, en alphabétisation populaire et en intégration jeunesse. Il a également publié des articles, de courtes nouvelles et des poèmes.

Felicia Zuniga

Felicia Zuniga has written articles for *Westjet Magazine*, *Calgary Herald*, *Avenue Calgary*, *Swerve*, *UCalgary Alumni Magazine*, *New Trail Magazine*, *Mount Royal University*, *Birthing Magazine* and *Profile Magazine*. Her poetry has been published in literary journals including *CV2*, *The Canadian Journal for Poetry and Critical Writing*, *The Antigonish Review*, *Montreal Writes*, *Existere-Journal of Arts & Literature* and *FreeFall Magazine*. She has provided freelance writing and editing services for corporate clients such as ATB Financial and Goldray Glass.

She has a Master of Journalism degree from Carleton University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Honours English, with a Creative Writing Concentration, from the University of Calgary. She lives, works and writes in Calgary.



TESTIMONIALS

Caroline Morgan Di Giovanni

AICW member since 1996



In 1984, with the help of Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Prof. Robert Harney, and Alberto Di Giovanni, I produced the anthology *Italian Canadian Voices: 1946-1984* (Mosaic Press: 1986). At a conference in Vancouver in August 1986, many of those writers decided to form the AICW. Three and a half decades later Italian Canadian authors continue to provide Canadian literature with unforgettable voices through best-selling books, academic positions, major awards, and Poets Laureate.

Frances Garofolo

With Gratitude to the AICW



Congratulations on your 35th anniversary! I discovered the AICW while researching my mother's genealogy. Through many Zoom workshops, readings, and cultural events, I was inspired to write short stories, poetry and prose using themes from both her life story and mine. A supportive, engaging group of writers, and a vibrant association welcomed and supported me. Throughout this pandemic, they have given me motivation and encouragement to continue my writing journey.



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