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Bridging the Ocean: Thematic Aspects of Italian Literature of Migration to Canada

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Italian Studies
University of Toronto

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to present an examination of texts forming the Italian literature of migration to Canada, a corpus of writings which comprehends narrative works by writers of Italian background, and in Italian language, but have never been analyzed as a self-contained body. All the authors came to Canada at least for a period in their lives, and have left a varied written record of their experiences in Canada, for the most part either in an autobiographical work or in texts of a more creative nature. Thanks to these texts we were able to observe in literary form the evolution of the Italian migration process to Canada from the 17th-century up to the present-time. Among the authors dealt with are Bressani, Moroni Parken, Duliani, Randaccio, Ardizzi, Rimanelli and Grohovaz.

The investigation highlights those thematic aspects which most distinguish this production, showing both the continuity of inspiration and motifs as well as the diversity of approaches and genres. These narrative works can provide an important contribution to the comprehension of the mental, emotional and more intimate dimensions of the immigrant experience, and hence complement the store of historical and socio-scientific studies now readily at hand.

The fundamental motif underlining this literature is the impossibility for the immigrant of disregarding the impact the discovery of the new world and of the *other* had on one's psyche and the need to span the ocean of his or her inquietude by the act of writing. On the individual level, each of these

works contributes to the immigrant writer's creation of a personal bridge which can join and unite the two shores of his or her experience, thus relieving angst and coherently merging old and new worlds, past and present, Italian background and Canadian experience. In the representation of the life of Italians in Canada these texts also acquire an important cultural function at the collective level, because they allow Italian-Canadians of all generations to recognize the continuity between their cultural past and their present life in Canada, as well as further a knowledge of the immigrant experience "from the inside."

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Introduction

The Discovery of America

As shown by a growing number of studies over the recent years (such as the important volume edited by Jean-Jacques Marchand), the Italian diaspora led to the production of many Italian literatures of migration across the globe, which share several general aspects as well as reflect the uniqueness of the cultural experience of the Italian immigrant in different countries and periods. Such experience has found original expression in the production of literary works in different languages, but our scope here, as it mainly was in Marchand's volume, will be on the literary production in the Italian language, specifically dealing with the Italian immigrant experience in Canada, since an abundant corpus of writings has emerged that finally deserves to be investigated in its entirety. Of course, such literature is not viewed as isolated from the context of the literary experience of many Italian-Canadians in English or French (for example, we cannot ignore Nino Ricci's

work); however, the Italian literature of migration to Canada presents its own peculiarities, which will be at the center of this investigation.

Although the analysis is not exhaustive, it will delineate the main characteristics of this literature focusing on its narrative production. Easy generalizations will be avoided: the variety of its prose, the diversified background of its authors, as well as the different literary levels achieved, compell us to go beyond thematic similarities to discuss several different perspectives on the immigrant experience in Canada adopted in each work. While the approach adopted will generally be thematic and historical in kind, the intent will be to detect patterns that in their sequence and evolution follow the different phases in the cultural history of Italian immigration to Canada and show its continuity within diversity. The texts that will be dealt with are, in fact, so diversified in nature and structure as to reflect more a cultural, rather than strictly literary, evolution. For this reason our approach will be less evaluative and more interested in understanding the core of this literature's inspiration, to delineate motifs characteristic of a single author as well as those typical of this literature as a whole. A biographical approach will be adopted when necessary and meaningful. Since the Italian literature of migration involves a large number of publications, many of which appeared after World War II, only the work of authors who produced works in prose dealing with the Italian experience will be discussed, even though many more deserve to be mentioned. Each of the works considered reflects a particular moment in the cultural evolution of the Italian presence in Canada, which for the purpose of our analysis will be considered from the beginning of the Italian arrival in the 17th century to the present.

The character of Italian migration has kept changing over the years, as has the figure of the immigrant. If in many instances the image of a poor

peasant coming to America in a last chance for survival has become almost stereotypical, the present reality is of an *emigrazione di lusso* (Rubeo). In our literature, the shift is from the literary production of the *emigrante-scrittore* - that is, a person with little education whom the impact of the migratory experience made become a writer and who often produces only one book with strong autobiographical connotations - to the opposite one of the *scrittore-emigrante*, the intellectual or academic who has come to America carrying a national contemporary cultural baggage (though it should be noted that in the opinion of some – for example Sergio Maria Gilardino – these contemporary writers should not be really considered as part of this literature). The literature of migration inevitably evolves into works of increasingly varied approaches and perceptions of the immigrant experience by individuals of diverse social and cultural background and in different periods (male/female, lower/upper class, rural/urban, non-educated / educated, autobiographical / narrative / historical, etc.).

According to the *Testo Unico sull'Emigrazione* "è considerato emigrante... ogni cittadino che espatri esclusivamente a scopo di lavoro manuale." Furthermore, in the introduction to his volume Jean-Jacques Marchand separates "la letteratura *dell'*emigrazione," literary production of the *emigrati*, whatever their thematic context is, from "la letteratura *di* emigrazione," works, written in Italy or abroad, dealing with emigration (xxiii). In the same volume Sergio Maria Gilardino asserts that,

> In ultima analisi, più che l'assenza di cultura, è la traumaticità e definitività del distacco che determina la categoria emigrante.... Il caso, assai diverso invece, di scrittori come Jean Giraudoux (*Amica America*), Emilio Cecchi (*America amara*), Mario Soldati (*America primo amore*), Giuseppe Antonio Borgese (*Atlante americano*) e Giuseppe Prezzolini (*I trapiantati*), rientra piuttosto nella critica e storiografia del fenomeno migratorio, e gli autori stessi si sottraggono al novero degli scrittori emigranti. ("Soluzioni" 173-4)

I fundamentally agree with Marchand and Gilardino, but also believe that a literature of migration so conceived is destined to extinguish itself in the near future. Facing the present nature and limited dimension of Italian migration to North America, one cannot expect the Italian literary production by *emigranti* to flourish over the next generations. Moreover, the literature of migration as envisaged above is only one of the literary forms that deal with the relation Italy - Canada. I would instead accept the fact that many Italians have come into contact with the Canadian social and cultural reality in different ways, that have led both in the past and in the present to the writing of different literary genres, and therefore our study cannot be limited to the literature of migration *tout court*. The literature of migration written by *emigranti* has its own validity and peculiarity in the central motif of the inquietude of the journey; the memory of the lost *paese*, as well as the immigrant experience; and the consequent circularity of the migrant's never-ending, intimate going back-and-forth - themes that in their own way join this literature to the wider tradition. However, the *emigranti* are not the only ones who moved from their country of origin and settled in North America. As Luigi Fontanella writes:

> A volte mi chiedo se sia più bella l'andata o il ritorno / sfuggendomi (come sempre) la parte centrale / la stessa che curiosamente (e paradossalmente) / sta anche prima della partenza e dopo l'arrivo / ma si ha sempre fretta di bruciare i percorsi / nessuno mai che dica: non vedo l'ora di restare. (84)

Fontanella published this poem in 1989, showing the literary continuity of the recent *immigrazione di lusso* with the poetic experience of previous *emigranti-scrittori*.

To prevent the further marginalization of this literature, and to put the whole Italian literary activity in Canada (as well as in North America) into a

more complete context which reflects the past, as well as the present, varied cultural contacts and influences between the two countries, this production should be perceived as a literary example of *La question de l'autre* as portrayed by Tzvetan Todorov. In his work Todorov refers to Bachtin and aims to clarify the role of the *other* in the making of an individual's self-consciousness, telling the history of the discovery that the *I* makes of the *other* and basing his analysis on the 16th-century reports of the discovery of central America (the Caribbean and Mexico). In his opinion, the New World involved the most extraordinary encounter in Western history, the encounter with the absolute *other*, with the diverse. How was this *other* viewed, then, by the Italian immigrant, sojourner, missionary, intellectual, writer or academic over the past century when they came into contact with a completely novel reality? Were they able to establish a dialogue with the *other* in order to achieve a more profound knowledge of themselves, as well as of the *other*? If we were to adopt this kind of *dialogic principle* in our study of works by Italians dealing with their Canadian or North American experience, the Italian literature of migration could be framed as the writing of people who discovered the *other* in Canada and had to relate dialogically to it, that is, the coming into contact with a different way of being and *vis-a-vis* the reconsideration of one's own. Interestingly enough, Costantino Dino Minni published in 1985 a collection of poems entitled *Other selves*. Some writers were able to enter into a dialogue with the other, expanding their own sense of self-consciousness, while others were not able to so participate, remaining at an impasse. The analysis of the Italian literature of migration to Canada should, then, focus on whether these writers were genuinely able to confront themselves with a different reality, and accept the interaction between themselves and the *other*, or whether they

were simply unable to do so, remaining strongly attached, probably defensively, to their pre-migratory way of being.

Many are the implications of our dealing with literary productions in Italian only. Considering the works of *the emigranti-scrittori* limits our analysis mainly to the works of first-generation immigrants, since their Italian-born children had only been partially exposed to the Italian language or dialects in Italy. Therefore, their writings do not usually present an interrogation about one's ethnic identity, but rather are based on an unquestionable Italian background and education. The Italian language is adopted as the means which expresses their personality and experience. Language affects profoundly the inner relations of a literary work of migration in terms of style and its poetic or narrative expression. While many factors shape its linguistic form, the dominant trend is the adoption of an Italian language which, especially in the case of some *emigranti-scrittori*, was affected by the immigrant experience and in some cases (such as that of Samuele Turri) derived from the contamination of Italian with a dialect or the language(s) of the country of immigration. The problem that immediately arises in this respect is with time, distance and register, the latter being deeply affected by the former two. Sometimes, the *shocking* experience of migration reflects itself consciously or unconsciously in the uneasiness of the immigrant writer (such as Maria J. Ardizzi) in finding an appropriate linguistic register. Italian is the language of formal education acquired in Italy, derived from a long literary tradition, and as such cannot express fully the nuances and reality of the migratory experience. Still, the *emigrante-scrittore* considers it as the vehicle which can voice his feelings and can give some prestige to his literary endeavour, as well as having a soothing and comforting effect on the painful struggle he/she is describing. In fact, the

process of writing seems to be for the *emigrante-scrittore* a process of *healing*, of overcoming the traumatic experience of uprooting oneself from one's natural environment to be transplanted into a harsher soil. As is the case with Giuseppe Ierfino and Aldo Gioseffini, the writer will look back at his torn roots, trying to make sense of the travail he had to abide. Therefore, the writer of the Italian literature of migration to Canada tries on one hand to impart to his narrative an original flavour, sometimes inserting loans or typical oral expressions either in dialect, *italiese* or the adopted language to give more realism to his description; on the other hand he feels the need to adapt his language to more traditional literary canons.

If the geographic, chronological and linguistic contours of this literature of migration can be easily set, more complex is the detection of its many other intrinsic variables. The process of *contextualization*, that is, the placement of literature within historical, sociological or psychological contexts, has generally become one of the most influential approaches to literature. According to it, many factors such as history, culture, society, and gender are to be taken into account to fully appreciate the significance of a particular literary text (Bernheimer). However, a literary work cannot be evaluated simply as a direct effect of those factors. As Hillis Miller sustains, the specific literariness of a text cannot be understood "by historical, sociological or psychological methods of interpretation"(102); it has to be analysed rhetorically, and in performing a rhetorical analysis one has to study both the intrinsic and extrinsic relations of literature, conceiving the extrinsic ones as 'intrinsic' themselves. The outer world, in fact, is not simply *reflected* in literature, but it manifests itself in the intrinsic relations of a literary work. According to this form of *contextualization* of literary study, the fundamental questions *Who wrote this literature? When? Why? How?* are

therefore asked viewing the literature of migration from *within*, not from without, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the true nature of this literary experience and its many implications.

The Italian migration to North America was made up of millions of people who came from many different backgrounds, both in terms of their region of origin and socioeconomic position, and they arrived here in different periods. As has been noted in social history, the cultural life of Italians in Canada, in particular, has always been multifaceted involving the cultural inheritance transplanted from Italy and the evolution of uniquely Italian-Canadian forms, the transmitted classical culture of Italy and the lived, folk culture of ordinary people; it has involved cultural expression which reflected local, regional and national attributes (Sturino "Italians"). Within this intricate tapestry of group behaviour five major phases can be distinguished wherein particular tendencies came to the fore. Since the beginning of the European settlement in New France until the second half of the 19th century, the cultural expression of people coming from the peninsula was rather discontinuous and fragmented, linked to the nature of their presence in this country. Settlers were predominantly single individuals who came here for the most diverse reasons and were far from expressing a sense of common nationality. Between 1880 and the late 1920s, instead, cultural expression in Canada's Littles Italies revolved around family, Italian hometown fellowship, and neighbourhood. After 1930 there was a definite swing towards the official, canonical culture as the fascist regime and its local nationalist allies attempted to appropriate Italy's cultural inheritance for their own political ends. The fourth phase of cultural expression was marked by the massive post-war immigration of Italians. The new immigrants had few of the qualms of their pre-war counterparts in expressing their own *italianità*,

and this was especially true of an educated minority. The last phase ran parallel to the consolidation of the Italian-Canadian community after 1970: it involved a cultural consolidation and brought together the metropolitan culture of Italy, the local folk culture of immigrants, and an increasingly important and evolving Italian-Canadian culture defined by the second and subsequent generations (Sturino "Italians").

As one can imagine, traces of these five cultural phases can be found in the Italian literature of migration, which can be divided both diachronically and synchronically into different categories. In fact, as Canadian literature as a whole can be classified into the different types of Exploration literature, Travel literature, Pioneer memoirs and so on, boundaries of the same sort could be set for the literary production in Italian. The first phase can be identified with the report describing the experience of Father Francesco Giuseppe Bressani, who in his *Breve Relatione* presented in detail the hard life a missionary had to face in the attempt to bring the message of God to the native peoples of the 17th-century. Considering the nature of this report, it can be perceived as a literary endeavour typical of a Jesuit missionary who describes his own exploration of the Canadian natural and human environment. The second phase could comprehend works dealing with the harsh experience of the pioneers of Italian immigration at the turn of the century, such as the memoir *Emigranti: quattro anni al Canadà* by Anna Moroni Parken, published in 1896, which presents a first-hand description of the hardships early immigrants had to endure in their attempt at settling in the wilderness. If Moroni Parken's memoir skillfully illustrates the beginnings of mass immigration in a rural setting, Samuele Turri's brief autobiographical account of his arrival in Canada at the beginning of the century gives us the flavour

of the experience of a typical Italian immigrant of the time, illustrating this in a simple, plain, but effective manner.

The third phase - marked by the coming-into-contact of a local sense of *italianità* with fascist propaganda and the difficulties emerging from the 'enemy alien' status of Italian immigrants during World War II - finds one of its most interesting and controversial expressions in the novel *Città senza donne* by Mario Duliani, published in Italian at the end of the war in 1946, a year after its French edition. If the appreciation of this novel is strongly affected by the ongoing debate on the participation of its author with the OVRA (Opera Vigilanza Repressione Antifascismo), nonetheless, it can be regarded as a work in which Duliani, both witness to and participant in the sad episode of internment of some 600 Italians in Camp Petawawa after Mussolini's declaration of war in 1940, shows a profound comprehension of the harsh psychological and emotional state of most of the immigrants and internees. A journalist and playwright, Duliani in his *documentario romanzato* describes his experience in a plain and suspended language, motivating questions about the manner and degree of adhesion of many Italian-Canadians to fascism.

The fourth phase, marked by the massive migration of the 1950s, can find an example in the works of Maria Ardizzi. It is true that her novels, *Made in Italy, Il sapore agro della mia terra, La buona America* and *Tra le colline e al di là del mare* were published in the eighties, but Ardizzi immigrated to Canada in the early fifties and her work portrays the migratory experience of that phase. If the theme of immigration as depicted in her works could be considered as a metaphor of a much broader, universal human experience, the language in which Ardizzi expresses her narrative seems to reflect more her own personal migratory experience and education than the average experience of an ordinary, first-generation Italian immigrant in Canada

during the early 1950s, as most of the main characters of her stories are depicted. Over the years, Ardizzi seems to have found her most appropriate linguistic voice, overcoming a sense of awkwardness and displacement that at the beginning appears to have been felt as a problem, or better as an obstacle to the complete expression of those themes and motifs that were an integral part of her narrative works. The accomplishment of an always-longed-for return is expressed instead by Elena Mac Ran (pseudonym of Elena Maccaferri Randaccio) at the end of her novel *Il diario di una emigrante* published in 1979. Like Ardizzi, she represents the struggle and hardships faced by an Italian woman in Canada over a similar period of time, but Mac Ran's portrayal is particularly moving in conveying the effects of such experience on a sensitive and delicate human being as her protagonist is. Another example of the diversified literary production of this period are Ottorino Bressan's considerations on his experience in the fifties as an *emigrante* and on relevant social issues in *Non dateci lenticchie: Esperienze, commenti e prospettive di vita italo-canadese.* The psychological attitude of the *emigrante-scrittore* is often either one of disappointment over what he was unable to achieve, or of bitter satisfaction for the many difficulties he had to overcome to achieve his/her goal. In short, he perceives the migratory experience as an injustice, and feels the impelling need of letting others know what emigration really means; a harsh experience that leads to the regretted acceptance of the new reality, living in a country that, even though appreciated for the opportunities offered for economic betterment, still remains *other.* The position of the immigrant writer is therefore fundamentally ambivalent: he feels the urgency to portray his experience in the New World while unable to sever the cultural and linguistic ties with his homeland. The literary means of expression is perceived by the author, then, as an effective way of overcoming

the ocean of his immigrant inquietude, as well as social and cultural barriers, and sometimes economic ones.

The fifth phase has seen, especially during the eighties a significant increase in the number of publications by writers of Italian origin; and this is reflected also in the number of works in Italian. The latter can be divided into two main groupings, basically on the *emigranti-scrittori / scrittori-emigranti* distinction adopted earlier. In the first category we find works written by senior immigrants who look back at their migratory experience, either in a purely autobiographical form, such as Aldo Gioseffini's *L'amarezza della sconfitta* - a very detailed account of his own life history or in a more fictonalized form as in Giuseppe Ierfino's *Il cammino dell'emigrante. Biglietto di terza* by Giose Rimanelli could instead be considered as the work of a *scrittore-emigrante*, who observes the immigrant experience in Canada with participation and understanding.

Too often the first generation of immigrants to Canada has been described, even by their second-generation children authors, as the *silent* generation, made up of individuals who, because of lack of education, knowledge of English or French, or material means, were not in a position to create an original body of work, which could throw light on the immigrant experience in Canada. Perhaps, the perception of them as being silent was caused by a subtle form of prejudice which imposed socioeconomic considerations over sociocultural ones: because they were poor and limited in their communicative abilities, they could not write. On the contrary, one aim of this dissertation is to show how, within the limits of an Italian literary production written also by less educated authors, there was already during the early presence in Canada, an attempt to express a universal human experience

appealing not only to other first-generation immigrants, but to a larger readership in Canada, as well as in North America and Italy.

Although the Italian literature of migration to Canada deserves to be considered as a literary production which in fact spans over several centuries, it is still erroneously perceived as a relatively recent phenomenon, mainly based on the writings of post-World War II immigrants. If it is true that most of the texts produced and even referred to in this dissertation were written over the last few decades, it is meaningful to recognize the importance of previous writings to sharpen our view of the evolution of this production and its relation to the Italian presence in Canada. One should also consider this entire corpus of works as an early literary stage in the formation of a significant link between Italian culture as it was expressed in the homeland and Canadian culture, contributing to a better understanding of motifs typical of the later Italian-Canadian literature. In fact, if we recognize the role of this literature and its meaningful contribution to the Italian cultural and literary presence in Canada, themes typical of Italian-Canadian letters in English and French as produced by second-generation authors – such as the sense of cultural isolation, inter-generational conflict, the children's feeling of shame for their immigrant parents, the return journey, the difficult acceptance of pre-set gender roles, and so on – would acquire a richer meaning when sharing the awareness of the previous generation's experience as described through its own writings. For example, the second-generation motif of the return journey would express a different message, would become not a journey of shock and discovery, but of unearthing roots that the literature of migration in Italian had already pointed out to them, thus making the former's encounter less disjunctive and a testimony to the continuity of the first- and second-generation literary experience.

The reality of Canada as a land of vastness and harsh, cold winters has affected remarkably the perception of it on the part of individuals coming from a land that is quite the opposite. Rather small in dimension, with mild winters and, most of all, a high population density, Italy's physical, social and economic environment increasingly exerted not only a material influence, but also a psychological pressure on its people; pressure that contributed, in turn, to the appreciation of Canada both in the making of Italian emigration patterns and in regard to her general qualities and characteristics. When an Italian thinks of Canada, the attractive opposition of spaciousness to overcrowdedness contrasts with the unattractive one of harsh, arctic winters versus mild, mediterranean ones. The image of Canada in the Italian mind seems therefore a paradox, as that of a country where space but also winter seem to be without limits. Nevertheless, Canada has attracted since her earliest days a considerable number of Italians who, with determination, used that tension as a stimulant to adapt to this new environment, and overcome the many hardships and obstacles on the way.

With regard to the present dissertation, in order to better reflect the character of the Italian presence in Canada, a chronological order has been adopted in the presentation of the texts analyzed. This has allowed us to underline the evolution of this narrative production over time and highlight both the continuity of the inspiration, as well as the diversity of the themes treated. In particular, each chapter collects works dealing with a particular theme that distinguishes the immigrant experience in Canada. The first chapter deals with authors who could be considered as the pioneers of this literature as well as of the Italian immigrant experience in this land; the second chapter presents instead the work of a *scrittore-immigrante* who became an *internato-scrittore* and left the only written record available so far

of the internment of Italians in Canada during World War II; the third chapter instead aims to highlight the contribution made by the Italian woman writer's perspective in the representation of the post-war immigrant experience; while the fourth and last chapter presents the works of post-war writers which typically reflect the cultural character of the recent major wave of immigration to Canada.

The Italian literature of migration to Canada - conceived as the works in Italian of those writers who came into contact with the Canadian *other* and were somehow affected by such experience - has produced over the years a quite diversified number of publications that share many thematic similarities in the case of *emigranti-scrittori*, who collectively witness the hardships of the trans-Atlantic odyssey. Their writing is usually twofold, presenting both a narrative and documentary aspect, in the desire of letting others know what the myth of America really involved for them. Besides their representations, one can find also the descriptions given by some *scrittori-emigranti*, such as academics or intellectuals, who depict the land of opportunity from their own perspective, adding another layer to the portrayal of Italian social and cultural life in Canada. Each type has its own validity and can be usefully analyzed in order to better understand the meaning of the meeting of two cultures separated by an ocean. Whether this meeting has led to dialogue or impasse will be the purpose of this investigation.

Chapter one

Images of the Wilderness

In investigating the beginnings of the Italian literature of migration to Canada, the analysis will focus on the first three texts available to us, extremely diverse in the personality of their authors, the period of their composition and their treatment of the migratory theme. If some thematic similarities are to be encountered, it is more important to acknowledge their heterogeneity and to adopt a diversified and flexible approach to this inaugural production. This can better reflect the characteristics of a varied literature composed mainly of the writings of individuals who had very different cultural backgrounds and experiences in Canada. As the writings of the beginnings, they present in embryonic form some aspects of the Italian literature of migration that will be enhanced in the later production.

Each of these early works reflects a different moment in the migratory process, each belongs to a different century, and each presents a different linguistic and formal outcome. Nonetheless, they also share some general common traits: they are all autobiographical, as most works in this literature will prove to be; they are based on the memory of their migratory experience; and they can all be considered *Entwicklungsromane*, or *Bildungsromane* in terms of the change and transformation that experience brought about in their authors' lives. These works show how multifaceted this evolution could be for different individuals over time.

1. A Jesuit Missionary in the Wilderness: Father Bressani

Whenever we approach literary studies dealing with the history of the Italian presence in Canada, Father Francesco Giuseppe Bressani's *Breve relatione d'alcune missioni de' PP. della Compagnia di Giesù nella Nuoua Francia*, published in Macerata in 1653, is usually briefly mentioned as the veritable earliest account dealing with an Italian's direct experience in this country, marking therefore the beginning, if not of a broadly-defined Italian-Canadian literature, at least of the Italian cultural presence in Canada (Pivato, *Survey* 6, 29; Franceschetti "Aspetti" 139). More precisely, the true earliest piece of Italian writing is a letter Father Bressani himself had sent from Fort Orange to the Father Superior in Rome in 1644 and later inserted with a few changes in the body of his *Breve relatione* (Cro, "Letter"). His report is generally considered the inaugural, first-hand account of the encounter of an Italian with Canada, providing an important contribution to the description of this country in the colonial years, as well as an account of the attempt, led by Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century, to spread the Catholic faith

among the native peoples, especially the Hurons. Among today's Italian-Canadians, the figure of Father Bressani still holds particular interest and appeal as that of an Italian who already many centuries ago was firmly determined to come to this country to accomplish an extremely difficult task[1]. However, the significance his report holds in the history of the Italian literature of migration to Canada as well as of the Italian cultural contribution to this country should be considered with particular attention.

In dealing with Father Bressani's *Breve relatione*, it is not feasible to try to give here an exhaustive account of the significance this text holds in the studies of early Canadian history, in the historical and anthropological studies of native peoples, in the history of the Jesuit order and missions in North America, as well as in the importance of Italians in Canada[2]. Considering the scope of this study, it will be more appropriate to focus our investigation on the nature of the literary and cultural contribution made by Father Bressani with the writing of his relation, and more precisely to attempt to comprehend the characteristics of his writing in the context of the first cross-cultural contacts between Italy and Canada. In this respect his report is particularly engaging as the first attempt at describing in the Italian language the 17th-century Canadian landscape, showing the path an Italian-born Jesuit missionary marked onto the still virgin Canadian soil, following in the footsteps of the native peoples, the first explorers and settlers. As in English or French Canadian literature the journals and writings of the first explorers and settlers are considered the starting point of an original Canadian literary production, and even if themselves not strictly of a literary nature, Father Bressani's *Breve relatione* can as well mark the beginning of the Italian literary and cultural contribution to Canada[3].

The presence of Father Bressani in New France in the seventeenth century is a typical example of what Robert F. Harney in his essay entitled "Caboto and Other Italian *Parentela*: The Uses of the Italian Canadian Past" called "the pre-history of Italian immigration to Canada, a time of intermittent contact, of random immigration of adventurous individuals at the service of states other than those of the Italian peninsula" (5). At a time when national boundaries and identities did not have the same significance they would hold much later, and when the coming to this country was limited to the arrival of single individuals, explorers, missionaries and traders, the presence of an Italian-born Jesuit missionary in New France should come as no surprise. Father Bressani is still constantly referred to as among the first Italians to arrive to this country. Yet, as Harney notes, his was a time when:

> being Catholic or being nobly born counted toward identity more than what we now call nationality. Since Italy was also the religious centre of Catholic Europe and long provided clergy for remote areas throughout the world, Italian-born missionaries joined more secular adventurers in the discovery and opening up of North America. (5)

At that time the Jesuit superiors were gradually becoming aware of the qualities and skills needed by a missionary to succeed in his venture in New France. The first Jesuits who arrived there let their superiors in Europe know that titles and degrees were not necessary in that land of forests and wilderness: more than theologians, hard workers were needed (Leed 136). And a hard worker Bressani was, ready to face any obstacle with impressive physical and psychological endurance.

Once back in Europe in 1651, besides his preaching, Father Bressani was able to dedicate himself to the writing in Italian of a short report on the life of the missions in New France and the hardships the missionaries had to face. He humbly presents it as the shorter and more popular version of an extensive

and universal *History* to be written in Latin. Until that moment Bressani's experiences had been known only to a restricted, mainly French and clerical audience. News of his capture at the hands of the Iroquois had been given by Father Barthelemy Vimont in his *Relation* for the years 1643 and 1644, published in 1645, and were later mentioned in the 17th- and 18th-century French historiography on New France (Vimont; Du Creux; Charlevoix). Two centuries after Bressani returned to Italy, Italian scholars became interested in his figure and report; a few essays were published, although mainly hagiographic in kind (Ciampi; Amat di San Filippo; Castellani). But the publication of his report still remained an isolated event in the Italian cultural sphere of the time, contrary to what was happening in France[4].

As he states in the Preface to his report, the *Breve relatione* was meant to go beyond the limits of a French-reading audience, which had been able to appreciate most of the Jesuit *Relations* sent from New France since 1632. Instead his work was to reach an Italian readership that, one can assume, had already become aware of his apostolate in the New World through his preaching and could now be more informed about it by means of a printed text. In his wish to divulge knowledge about the missions, he followed the spirit of the Jesuit order in many ways. Since its origins the Society had tried to give itself a pluri-national character and had introduced the obligatory exchange of letters and their summary and re-publication in the form of reports, making this an effective means to pursue wider communication and recruitment and obtain monetary support (Leed 101, 106). Their missionary method based on academic and humanistic studies, their way of approching non-believers in an informal conversation, and the acceptance of physical pain - of the kind that the founder of the order himself had to endure - as an imitation of the sufferings of Christ and the martyrs: all this is present in

their *Relations*, as it is in Father Bressani's. The Jesuit missionaries were men dedicated to the spreading of the religious beliefs of western Christendom to the New World's Indian society, and to the consequent cultural transformation of that society the conversion would entail.

In its character, Bressani's report reflects therefore cultural trends typical of 17th-century Europe, in particular of the Jesuit order, in its attempt to merge theoretical knowledge with the empirical one. In this respect, it is not a coincidence that he dedicated his report to Cardinal Giovanni De Lugo, one of the most prominent figures in the 17th-century Jesuit cultural elite, whose academic interests went beyond strictly theological and humanistic disciplines and were also directed at acquiring more scientific knowledge of the world, both Old and New, in the fields of natural sciences and (what we now call) cultural anthropology (Frino Zanovello 110, 108, note 6). As Bressani himself states in his dedication, Cardinal De Lugo was particularly influential in the writing of his report, as well as in his education (38: 208). However, even tough the structure and organization of his account reflect that academic orientation, Bressani's report also distinguishes itself from other Jesuit relations in many original ways.

His *Breve relatione* though is properly divided into three parts: as he states in the *proemio*, "Dividerò il tutto in tre parti, la prima riguardarà la natura, la seconda la grazia, la terza la gloria"(38: 216-218). The first part is the most informative and gives detailed information on the location and discovery of New France, a description of the country of the Hurons, the land, the political organization of the native peoples, their customs and religious beliefs. Here the reader is impressed by the accuracy with which he presents his descriptions, softening his precise observations with a sense of respect, almost affection, and sad nostalgia. The second part, the most inquisitive, is

centred on the difficulties and obstacles the missionaries had to face in their efforts to convert the natives, such as the dangers of the journey and their different languages. Bressani has here the opportunity to reflect on the missionary experience, giving an effective and critical overview of the ways in which he and his brothers operated and the impediments in making their religious message understood. The third part, the most apologetic, describes instead the martyrdom of some of the French missionaries at the hands of the Iroquois. In reading this last section one cannot help thinking that Bressani perceives their sufferings as his own, having survived the same hardships and tortures which caused their death.

According to Eric J. Leed, however, the Jesuit missionaries should not be considered as the agents of cultural contact between Europe and other cultures around the world. In his analysis of the cultural impact the Jesuit missionary expeditions (as he calls them) had on several continents, he states that the Jesuits, as members of a strictly regulated religious order, did not represent the European civilization of the 16th- and 17th-centuries. Their lives did not belong to such a reality, but more to that of their own brotherhood, to which they had sworn their loyalty. They expressed the identity of a religious group and their monastic and military brotherhood was something separated from the reality of European merchants and soldiers of the period (Leed 141). In this respect, it is interesting to observe how very little reference can be found in Bressani's report to the political, economic and administrative organization of the French colonies: the governors and traders remain in the background, while he prefers to draw more vivid and detailed pictures of the native peoples at the centre of his missionary work. It is true that at the time of the publication of Bressani's report, diplomatic relations between the Pontifical State and France were in the process of overcoming serious controversies over

issues such as the Jansenist crisis, therefore offering a possible explanation for Bressani's caution in dealing with political issues[5]. It is also legitimate to argue that Bressani deemed it unnecessary to tackle aspects of the colonial experience in New France which were of little concern to an Italian audience, whose political powers were not involved in the exploration and colonization of the New World (Frino Zanovello 106-107). However, one can also realistically maintain that as a Jesuit missionary Father Bressani was less concerned with those issues and from the beginning intended to base his report on his direct experiences in the missions of Huronia, as well as on those of other missionaries. As he states: "della seconda [la missione degli Huroni], doue hò passato alcuni anni, poche cose dirò, delle quali io non sia testimonio di vista" (38: 228). At that time little was known in Italy of the incredible difficulties he and his fellow brothers had to endure and he seems to be aware of the silence surrounding their sacrifices, as well as the curiosity that his mutilations arose. The aim of his report is truly to spread information on the short-lived Huron mission, in the interest of the Jesuit order and of future missionary endeavours, therefore making any political or polemic stand quite inappropriate. Even if the story of the mission of Huronia is one of a lost opportunity, his report is also the act of a survivor who needs to renew the meaningfulness of his struggle and sacrifices and to show how his persistence was lessened only by the will of God.

Moreover, Leed also takes into account how, even if the Jesuits' work was conceived as an important implement of the Counter-reformation war against protestantism, the ways in which they operated in their missions abroad recalled those of the Reform in Europe, with many of its humanistic and reformistic trends (Leed 104). It is true that in New France the Jesuits were inspired by some of the most progressive social and anthropological theories,

as is shown by the opinions held by Father Paul Le Jeune – the first superior of the Jesuit mission in Quebec as well as a converted Huguenot – who defended in his own *Relation* in 1637 (only a few years before Father Bressani's coming to Canada) the native peoples in New France and the prospect of their conversion (Cro, "Letter" 30-32). It is interesting to observe in this respect how also Father Bressani in his *relatione* expresses his own personal defence of the native peoples, in particular the Hurons. Calling them frequently and almost affectionately "i nostri barbari", using the word *barbarians* according to the classic tradition, several times he praises their particular skills and abilities:

> L'huomo dota la Donna, la quale porta tutto il peso della casa, coltiva i campi, fà, e porta, le legna, prepara la cucina, e si carica ne' viaggi de' viveri &c. per il marito; proprio degli huomini essendo solo la guerra, la caccia, la pesca, il traffico in diversi paesi, e di preparar le cose per ciò necessarie, come l'armi offensiue, e difensiue, barche, remi e racchette per andar sopra le nevi; & in questo ogn' vno riesce sì bene che gli Europei stessi non saprebbero meglio fare le cose loro necessarie per i viaggi, alloggiamenti ne' boschi e nauigatione. Onde non sono Barbari quasi, che di nome. (38: 254-256)

Thus he describes the Hurons as an example of 'noble savages' *ante litteram*, who try to survive in an extremely harsh reality. He also mentions their negative sides, but always as those of human beings. To them he opposes the Iroquois, almost always depicted in a negative light. It seems that for Bressani it is not only the 'barbarian' that his reader is ignorant of, but also the manner in which the native and his world can be approached and understood. For these reasons he seems particularly careful in choosing his words, in order to obtain a particular descriptive effect that can also contribute to overcome their mystifications and prejudice.

The compilation of reports had already been an essential component in the expeditions of discovery, conquest and travel to the New World since its

discovery. All these more secular accounts reflected the specific strategic needs of their authors and sponsors and were exceptionally conscious of their audiences. The first reports ever written on the New World were used as references for those who went there later, but those reports reflected notions in which original information was often confused with other material derived from previous accounts (Surdich 95-99). In the case of the missions in New France, the first letters and *Relations* by the missionaries on what had been achieved later became a guide for the missionaries who followed, even though the later reports were much more sophisticated in the organization of their material than the early versions. Bressani's *relatione* echoes in its content and function that of previous *Relations* and is an important link in the long chain of Jesuit reports on New France[6]. His writing follows the example of the Jesuit tradition and contains material derived from, and references to, other reports, quotations or self-quotations (as in the case of his own letters). It moves across several literary genres, from a discourse of a scientific or historical account, to that of a letter or eye-witness record (Cro, "Bressani" 146). Nonetheless, Father Bressani presents his material according to his own experiences, giving his report the originality, freshness and immediacy of a first-hand account but, as a Jesuit observer, never letting his ego get in the way of an accurate and factual narration, aimed at describing the progress made by the Catholic faith in new lands through the committment and self-abnegation of the missionaries or, as he says: "I successi funesti e gloriosi insieme delle Missioni della nuoua Francia" (38: 216).

While today's reader can be impressed by the devotion, humbleness and obedience to the order's precepts that permeates his recounting and by the unwavering faith and zeal that inspire his work, one is also struck by the clarity and linearity of his prose, by the effectiveness with which he

describes in detail the characteristics of the physical as well as human landscape that had surrounded him and his effort in writing a still little-known New World reality in a categorized and logical manner. Faith and knowledge are interwined in his narration, as they were in the tradition of the Society of Jesus, a missionary order that had always considered formal instruction as a means of promoting a catholic and, at the same time, rational transformation of culture (Leed 101). As a religious account his *relatione* shares the characteristics of a systematic and well-organized scientific report, even though in its content much space is necessarily dedicated to those aspects in the life in New France that were of major concern to the missionaries in their work of conversion, and to providing an apology of the French martyrs. In a report mainly founded on scientific and empirical criteria, the clear purpose still remains one of edification. His effort in describing the life of the Hurons, their customs, languages and beliefs, and his effective analysis of their way of life, are conceived within the frame of a tenacious desire to further the process of conversion.

The scientific criteria of the *relatione* find expression particularly in its first part, which is very well organized and effective in introducing to the 17th-century Italian reader a reality whose dimension, primitiveness and 'otherness' is still remote and hard to comprehend. After concisely presenting notions on the location of the colonies, the distribution of the various French settlements and fortifications and the different native peoples on the territory (which will be at the basis of following studies on native groups), Bressani encloses plain descriptions of the land, its discovery, the flora and fauna, and the peoples living there, among more sophisticated and educated interpretations of natural phenomena such as the Canadian climate, the flow and ebb of tides, the large amount of waters and the declination of the

magnetic needle. Adopting an approach that nowadays would be called interdisciplinary, after giving precise indications on the location of New France according to geographic and astronomic criteria and trying to give an explanation of the extremes in the climate based on scientific evidence, he then summarizes how the French started to colonize the land at the beginning of the 16th-century (according to the history written by Champlain) and the main events that led to the Jesuit presence in New France. If in this brief introduction to New France he simply mentions the other European peoples colonizing the eastern territories, such as the English, Dutch and Swedes, later in the narration one can sense that the relations among the Jesuit missionaries and protestant European settlers were not cordial. In the last of his letters that he inserted in the relation (originally written in France to some friends after being brought back from his captivity), in answering questions on the reasons of the hostility of the Iroquois, he writes:

> *Rispondo, perche mi teneuano per lor nemico, non per esser' Europeo, essendo amici degli Olandesi, che sono Europei come noi, ma perche siamo amici, e difensori de' Barbari, che procuriamo conuertire, co i quali essi non vogliono la pace, e noi l'habbiamo non per altro motiuo, che di conuertirli; cosi la prima origine di questa inimicizia è la Fede.... Aggiungete à questo l'odio, che gl'Irochesi portano alla Santa Fede, la quale stimano, e chiamano magia.... mà odiano particolarmante il segno della santa Croce, il quale hanno inteso da gli Olandesi essere una vera superstizione, e perciò hãno ammazzato il buon Renato Goupil compagno del Padre Iogues, e separorno da me quel putto, al quale io lo faceuo fare insieme con altre orationi.* (39: 84-86)

Never in his relation does Bressani allow his observations on the anti-Catholic influence of the Europeans on the natives to become an overtly polemical political statement. Instead, his criticism of European colonists is usually expressed in terms of the obstacles they also were trying to pose to the spreading of the faith among the natives. In describing the difficulties in

converting the Hurons created by the oppositions of the native chiefs, Bressani states:

> Tutte queste opinioni hebbero vn nuouo peso dal dire d'alcuni Barbari venuti di nuouo nel paese chiamati Oenronronnons, i quali haueuano prima traffico con gl'Inglesi, Olandesi, & altri Europei heretici, da quali vero, ò nò, diceuano aver vdito più volte, che noi erauamo mala gente, perniciosa al bene publico, cacciati da' loro paesi, dove se ci hauessero ci metterebbono à morte, rifiugiati hora in quelle contrade per rouinarle quanto prima, ma tutte queste persecuzioni non hanno impedito il corso dell'Euangelio, il quale quì solo ha con esse incominciato, ma continuato.... (39: 138-140)

As a man who sacrificed much in order to preach the gospel among the Hurons and was ready to accept the hardships inherent to missionary work, Father Bressani finds it hard to accept the opposition of other Europeans, caused either by political, religious or economic reasons. However, a more detailed presentation of those reasons were beyond the scope of his *relatione*, meant mainly to praise the courage of those who attempted to spread the faith in the missions that he himself describes as having been "che però sono state stimate da molti le più penose della nostra Compagnia" (38: 246).

In illustrating the natural landscape surrounding him, still at the beginning of the first part, the modern reader is again impressed by the fine balance between scientific knowledge and religious faith. He describes in detail every aspect that he deems interesting to his readership, from the trees, plants and berries to the wild animals and rocks. Even with very little defence against harsh weather conditions and the roughness of the forests, even when describing the crudeness of the life conditions in such an environment, he never expresses any complaint and never looks at nature as a monster, as an evil force opposing his effort of exploring the new land. Instead, he always looks at nature as a creation of God, where every element was created for a specific purpose: "l'acqua, che domanda naturalmente il sommo freddo,...

dourebbe nello stato suo naturale essere agghiacciata contro il suo fine, che è di seruire di lauanda, e di beuanda à gl'huomini, e à gli animali" (38: 222). God shows his love for every being in the land through mother nature: "I cani stessi domestici sono differenti da nostri. Noto solo, primo, che la natura prouida madre per i gran freddi dell'Inuerno gli veste quasi tutti anche i nostri, che nascono nel paese, come cani, porci &c. di doppio pelo interiore, & esteriore, il primo de' quali è foltissimo e delicatissimo" (38: 240-242). Father Bressani, though, does not forget to mention those elements in the landscape that could be of some economic interest as well, such as the presence of precious metals:

> La terra hà miniere di ferro, e certe pietre, che si liquefãno come metallo, che pare, che abbino qualche vena d'argento. V'è vna miniera di Rame purissimo, che nõ hà bisogno di passare per il fuoco, ma è in luoghi molto lontani, e difficili, che ne fanno il trasporto quasi impossibile. L'habbiamo vista nelle mani de Barbari, ma niuno l'ha visitata. (38: 242)

He presents nature as a wise and foreknowing mother, whose generosity has still to be fully appreciated: "... il paese è pouerissimo, ma non sterile, se si coltiua rende con grande auantaggio quel che riceue" (38: 240).

As other Jesuit missionaries in their *Relations*, Bressani finds ways of expressing a sense of isolation and solitude in the face of a landscape totally different in character, scale and peopling from the one he had lived in until then. In his introduction to the second part he refers to those lands as "deserti.... con Terre e Castelli, lontani da Kebek circa 900. miglia, e 4000. dall'Europa...." (39: 44). Later, in describing the mission of the Hurons, he states:

> Qvesta Missione è stata senza esempio, e stentatissima; senza esempio, perche non sappiamo, che altrove i predicatori della fede ne i paesi stranieri, siano andati per far dimora stabile sì lontano dal mare, con impossibilità di soccorso d'Europa per il viuere, vestire, e tutte le altre necessità della natura, Le Missioni si sono communemente stabilite ne' luoghi, dove ò navi, ò almeno

> barche poteuan recare alcun soccorso, e quindi li missionanti si dipartivano per qualche tempo, per terra, ò per acqua in varij luoghi.
>
> Ma la Missione degli Huroni è durata più di sedici anni in vn paese, doue non si può andar con altre barche, che di scorza, che non portano al più, che due mila libre di peso, contandoci quello delle persone, alle quali conuien spesso portar sù le spalle quattro, e sei miglia con la barca, e i viueri tutta la supellettile del viaggio, non trovandosi nello spatio di più di 700 miglia alcun'albergo. Onde siamo stati gli anni intieri senza riceuer pur vna lettera, nè dall'Europa, nè da Kebek, in vn' abbandono totale d'ogni soccorso umano anche il più necessario per i nostri stessi misterij, e sacramenti, non avendo il paese nè grano, nè vino necessarij assolutamente per il Santo Sacrificio della Messa. (39: 46-48)

As Father Bressani made clear in the letter originally sent from Fort Orange in 1644 and later inserted in the relation, that isolation and solitude became unbearable during his captivity, especially toward its end, when he still believed he would be burnt alive:

> *Io desideravo, & aspettavo la morte, ma non senza qualche horrore del fuoco, mi ci disponevo però al meglio, che poteuo, e mi raccomandauo di cuore alla Madre di misericordia, che è veramente* Mater amabilis, admirabilis, potens, & clemens, consolatrix afflictorum, *che era dopo Dio l'vnico refugio d'un povero peccatore abbandonato da tutte le creature, in terra aliena,* in loco horroris, & vastae solitudinis, *senza lingua per farsi intendere, senza amici per consolarsi, senza Sacramenti per fortificarsi, e senza alcun rimedio humano per addolcire i suoi mali*[7]. (39: 72)

As one can see, not only is the motif of the sense of solitude in the vast wilderness already present in Bressani's narration, but also the theme of imprisonment and isolation from the rest of the world, which have characterized, metaphorically and otherwise, so much of the later literary production in and on Canada.

There is a change in perspective from the first dry definitions of New France at the beginning of the report and the description of the mission quoted above. In the latter, Bressani no longer hovers on that far away territory in order to draw a scientifically reliable map of the missions and the

colonies; instead, in describing the problems he had to face in trying to convert the Hurons, he looks at it more closely from ground level. For him, isolation means missing the means necessary to properly spread the faith and not being able to communicate his message properly to other human beings who are making that land for him a horrible and solitary place, with no chance of receiving comfort from his fellow brothers. What can be considered one of the most interesting aspects of his report is the influence of his Canadian experience on his perception of his missionary work. As a missionary, he always accepted his mission and the risks that it could involve, and he was always able to look at his work with urbanity and patience, with flexibility and understanding, without avoiding criticism of the Jesuit approach to conversion when necessary. When dealing in the second part with the difficulties created by the Hurons' superstitions in spreading the Christian faith, he observes how

> Più d'vn de nostri ha corso al principio pericolo della vita, per non voler in simili casi cooperare alle loro superstitioni....E facile di condannare di superstitione molte leggerezze, e prohibirle come tali, ma non è facile il disdirli, ed' impedire il disprezzo ne' più sensati, che sapevano il secreto. Noi siamo stati vn poco seueri in questo punto, e habbiamo obbligato i nostri primi Christiani, che trouauano della superstitione da per tutto, à priuarsi nõ solo delle ricreationi lecite, ma anche del commercio degli altri, e di più della metà della vita ciuile, finche il tempo, l'esame, e l'esperienza ci hanno assicurato del contrario. (39: 22, 28)

As one can note, in proceeding with his narration Bressani's style becomes less rigid and encyclopedic and more fluent and close to his own experiences. His Jesuit education is re-shaped according to the form, the mold, set by the Canadian experience.

His willingness to accept this new reality and his ability at precise observation are noticeable also in the way he describes the life and customs of the native peoples, particularly the Hurons. As we have mentioned, he is open-

minded in understanding their qualities and skills and sincerely tries to demonstrate how their primitive ways of life are not necessarily uncivilized. It is true that Father Bressani shows particular comprehension of their values and mentality in describing their appearance, qualities and skills, social organization, political life, family, etc.. Nonetheless, while he openly recognizes the importance of a flexible approach when dealing with religious issues, he cannot avoid criticizing those practices and individuals among the natives that oppose acceptance of the faith. The flexibility is only instrumental to the conversion. When dealing with the natives' religious beliefs, with those aspects of their culture directly in conflict with their acceptance of the faith, a sort of irritation and displeasure permeates his narration. Bressani eloquently describes the cultural clash he writes of:

> la necessità d'vna mutazione veramente sostanziale totius in totum per conuertirli non da vna cattiua religione ad vna buona, ma di niuna alla vera. L'obligo, che vn Christiano haueua di rinuntiare non solo alle ricreationi lecite, ma anche a' rimedij delle malattie, trouando essi, ancorche falsamente, della superstitione in ogni cosa, e finalmente l'impossibilità di poter hauere le cariche del paese con la Fede; i Capitani havendo per offitio d'invitare, & esortare à tutte le cerimonie superstitiose, e spesso dishoneste; diciamo solo una parola delle difficoltà, che veniuano dal di fuori, & erano la più parte prese dalle nostre persone. Sono, come abbian detto altrove, tra queste nationi certi come Maghi, ò indouini, che dal primo dì, che ci viddero, s'accorsero bene, che la nostra religione era totalmente opposta alle loro, ò vere, ò imaginarie superstitioni. Onde furono i primi à dichiararci la guerra. (39: 122-124)

One can see how it was impossible for the Jesuit missionaries in New France to adopt the same strategy of conversion followed in their missions in Asia, i.e. to start with the conversion of the leaders of society, from top to bottom, so that their example could be followed by members of the lower classes (Leed 109-130). In Huronia native chiefs and sorcerers were mainly against the acceptance of the faith, which they in turn viewed from their own point of view as sorcery, and the missionaries as wizards, and their practices as spells.

In his religious and missionary fervour, Bressani could not comprehend what the native chiefs had foreseen: that the acceptance of the new religion would entail the transformation of their entire culture. (Quinn vi-vii)

The detachment necessary in the writing of an informative and scientific Jesuit relation, especially for a wider audience, expresses itself also in an austere and controlled register, almost too severe in silencing his inner feelings. One can simply compare Bressani's writing to Father Paul Le Jeune's letter, which Bressani translated and inserted in his relation. After having read the letter Bressani himself wrote in 1644 describing in an extremely factual manner the tortures he had to endure, the modern reader cannot avoid noticing how Le Jeune, describing his own experiences of travel among the Algonquin ten years earlier (as one of the first missionaries to explore those lands) seems quite unprepared to face his hard lot and allows himself to complain about the Indian cabin as an open prison where the cold, the heat, the smoke and the dogs were unbearable (39: 104-118). It seems that Bressani instead considered it appropriate both as a missionary and as an educated author to suppress his most personal impressions in order to enhance the intrinsic, informative and thematic qualities of his narration.

As Stelio Cro has noticed, Father Bressani's *Breve relatione* can be considered one of the first examples of a modern history of the New World, where the reality of New France is presented without mystification. Also, the Jesuit makes in his narration no direct reference to other authors, such as Bartolomé de Las Casas, who in 1551 had defended the native peoples and criticized the methods of Spanish colonization in Central America in a relation Bressani seems to ignore (Cro, "Bressani" 1-46). Citing few sources other than the Holy Scriptures or the Jesuit fathers themselves, he prefers to present Huronia the way he personally had seen it, as an educated missionary, guiding

the reader in his or her own discovery of the new land. As a preacher whose wounds were shown in Italy to the churchgoers and congregation, he is particularly conscious of the impact his experience and narration could have on his reader and of the cultural distance he is trying to bridge. It is probably also for this reason that his narration is based less on theoretical interpretations and more on a factual description of the qualities of Huronia and its people; a description so impressive as to be often referred to in the historical and anthropological studies on the native peoples.

The few times he briefly mentions Italy or compares aspects of the Canadian landscape to Italian ones, he does so simply to give his reader a term of reference, in order to facilitate his or her understanding of such a remote reality. For example, when he describes New France he writes: "E' una parte della gran terra dell'America Settentrionale, distante dall'Europa di dritto circa tremila miglia, ... essendoui l'Inverno gran freddi, altissime nevi, e durissimi ghiacci; e l'Estate caldi non minori di quelli dell'Italia" (38: 220). Later in listing the causes of the extremely cold weather he mentions, "i venti freddissimi, che vengono dalle vicine montagne, che traversano tutto il paese, come gl'Appennini l'Italia, che più frequentemente spirano da paesi freddi, e secchi, che sono corrispondenti à nostri venti maestrali...." (38: 224). At the beginning of his description of the country of the Hurons he writes: "Il Paese de gli Huroni è vna parte della nuoua Francia, che è tra li 44. e 45. gradi di latitudine, e di longitudine circa tre quarti d'ora più verso l'Occidente di Kebek, ma di Roma più di sei ore intiere" (38: 234). In describing the customs of the Hurons he mentions that: "Ne' loro cõuiti, oue conuengono à centinaia, si publican tutte le viuande ad vna, ad vna, & à ciascuna si risponde alta, e fortemente con voce di ringratiamento oh, oh. con la H. che gl'Italiani difficilmente pronuntiarebbero" (38: 254). The tone in referring to his native

land respects the character of the relation, aimed at giving the clearest depiction possible of an experience Bressani seems to think his readership will find hard to picture.

Even if he wrote within the historical contours set by the Jesuit missionary experience, his report can still be considered as the initial moment in the pre-history of the Italian literature of migration to Canada, because already it presents *in nuce* and in the ways typical of its period some of the aspects which will later characterize this literary production, such as the sense of isolation, of imprisonment in the wilderness, the discovery and acceptance of the other, the desire to accept whatever sacrifice in order to achieve one's goal. Also, with respect to later works in this literature, it shares characteristics such as the chronological and psychological position of the author/narrator in relation to a significant moment in his existence. He looks back at those special years remembering his life at the time, in a situation of relative tranquillity. However, in order to avoid any historical distortion of the perception of Bressani's experience in 17th-century Canada, one must underline the fact that there are elements in his work and experience that cannot be considered typical of the later immigrant experience, but simply unique to his own missionary experience and the culture of his time. Still, the modern reader, especially an Italian-Canadian one, will find his *relatione* a fascinating contribution to the expression of a collective imagery of the Italian experience in Canada. If the central symbol for Canada's literature is survival (Atwood), that symbol is undeniably present also in the depiction of the country in the Italian literature of migration. Furthermore, an Italian readership in the homeland, by reading Bressani, could discover a Canadian landscape still little known.

Father Bressani's *Breve relatione* can be considered a significant contribution given by an Italian-born Jesuit in recording in the Italian language the early history of Canada, thus furthering the knowledge of that land in Italy. Since the Jesuit order held such an important position in European religious and cultural life during the 17th-century and in the colonization and settlement of North America - even if it shared little of the concerns and opinions of the lay and secular groups of their time - the Jesuits' presence in New France can be viewed as one of the beach-heads in the gradual and growing contact between Old and New World cultures. And to this Father Bressani contributed with distinction.

2. An Immigrant Woman in the Wilderness: Anna Moroni Parken

If Bressani's relation attests to the Italian participation in the making of Canada since her beginnings, it is only toward the end of the 19th-century that another literary account was written in the Italian language on the experience of an immigrant in the wilderness. The reason for this large gap in the Italian literature of migration to Canada is mainly historical. During the two centuries following Bressani's coming to the new world, the number of Italians arriving in Canada was small and composed of individuals arriving for the most diverse reasons, from political exiles and soldiers to merchants and artisans. It was only in the second half of the 19th-century that a remarkable increase in the number of Italians took place, resulting in the first significant wave of Italian immigration at the turn of the century. For many in this mass immigration, largely labourers, a lack of formal education contributed to the absence of written accounts on their experience in Canada.

Emigranti: Quattro anni al Canadà by Anna Moroni Parken was published in its first edition in 1896[8]. As its title and date of publication suggest, this account allows us to approach and view a new phase in the history of the Europeans and Italians coming to this land, that *new immigration* that so much contributed to changing the character of the Canadian nation. If the historiography on immigration gives an important contribution in the understanding of the patterns of migration, of the push and pull factors that determined such large movements of people to this continent, of the political, social and economic situation that determined their arrival to this land, the reading of a chronicle, written by one of the participants to such a significant movement of millions of human beings across the ocean, adds a different edge to our comprehension of such historical events and completes the more intellectual, but drier and sometimes repetitive, historiographic accounts with a human sense of those events.

Even if completely different in kind, style and approach from Bressani's relation, *Emigranti* does share with it some more extrinsic characteristics: they are both accounts which the author wrote a few years after going back to Italy, basing the narration on the memories of the journey and experiences in the wilderness. They were also both published in Italy, with the intent of making their experiences known in the Italian language to an Italian readership in their homeland. They both share a sincere Catholic faith and are somehow plurinational in character: in fact, according to the biographical information given in the account itself – which we have no reason to believe untrue – Moroni Parken was an English-born woman who lived in England for most of her life until she married an Italian from Lombardy, then moving to Italy at the time of her marriage[9]. She considered herself to be a member of an Italian family, with Italian children and friends

and states it clearly: "Benchè inglese di nascita, sono moglie e madre di italiani...." (76). In the publication of her account therefore she preferred to give a more Italianized version of her name, which was presumably Anne Parken, married Moroni. As mother of five Italian children, and by then having lived in Italy for many years, it was more suitable to write her memoir in Italian for an Italian publisher. Nonetheless, as we will see, her account reflects in its content, ways and cultural traits the experience of British immigrants – in particular English – to Canada in the second half of the 19th-century rather than being typically representative of the Italian immigrant experience of that time[10]. If there were other Italian immigrants in the area at the time, she does not say. As we know, the majority of Italian immigrants in that period were single men, coming to this land mainly as sojourners; women were very few, as were the families accompanying them. Italian men came mainly to work as labourers in costruction projects such as the Canadian Pacific Railway. However, her account is an important and unique contribution to the Italian literature of migration, because it narrates effectively the experiences of an Italian immigrant family (and Canadian settlers) in a period particularly significant in Canadian history. It also contributes to the enrichment of that collective imagery that is so important for today's Italian-Canadians in representing their Canadian past. The experience of this Italianized English-woman can be considered an interesting example of cross-cultural adaptation *ante litteram*, valid especially for the younger generations of Canadianized Italians, who also express a culture which is the result of cultural amalgamation. Moroni Parken's account is to be considered here because it gives an important contribution in Italian to the description of the Canadian pioneer experience at the turn of the century[11].

According to the biographical information inserted in her narration, it can be inferred that her stay in the Ontario Muskoka region took place approximately between 1880 and 1885[12]. Those were, in fact, the years marking the beginning of the new immigration to Canada, when immigrants were coming mainly from northern and western European countries to settle both in farmland and growing cities. Her decision to come to this country was determined by two personal factors: a push factor, that forced her and her family to leave Italy was her husband's poor health together with an unfortunate financial setback; a pull factor was the fact that her own family, father, mother and brother, had already moved to Muskoka from England, enticing her and her Italian family to follow in their footsteps. She would live in the wilderness for four years, as the title suggests, adapting to pioneer life with remarkable flexibility. However, after some time the situation became arduous to manage, because of her husband's continuing illness, the separation from her brother and parents who moved to the southern United States, and a large family to take care of. Thanks to the solidarity of other settlers they were able to survive and returned to Italy with the help of an unexpected inheritance[13].

In her narration her expressions of love and care for her Italian family and friends are intermingled with others of pride in her English background and admiration for the Canadian wilderness. Many are the moments in which she cherishes her family's *Italianità* and the memory of her life in Italy, and abandoning it is certainly not easy (Principe). At the opening of her story, in the first chapter significantly entitled "Verso l'ignoto," the first scene of her waiting at the docks in the port of Quebec is a poignant metaphor of the universal state of anxiety and preoccupation any human being would feel when entering a new world. She is able to convey skillfully a sense of

uneasiness and inquietude that any immigrant must feel when facing the encounter with a new land; a moment of detachment from the homeland. Even if she is coming to Canada to be reunited with her parents and brother, it is still hard for her to leave her home in Europe and face the unknown:

> Era una splendida notte del primo d'agosto: il grosso bastimento che ci aveva portati attraverso l'Oceano si dondolava accanto al molo di Quebec, legato con grosse catene come un mostruoso gigante soggiogato dall'uomo. Il mare era calmo, splendeva la luna: la città era là davanti a noi, sulla montagna: dietro avevamo il golfo di S. Lorenzo colle sue mille isole, e sul molo vedevo una fila di case avvolte nel silenzio e nell'ombra.
>
> Le mie bambine e mio marito malato si erano addormentati in cabina, e tutti i passeggieri [sic], – felici al pensiero d'essere arrivati salvi al porto dopo una lunga e disastrosa traversata, – riposavano tranquilli e sicuri, ma io non potevo dormire.
>
> Me ne stavo sopra coperta, guardando avidamente questa terra nuova e ignota, dove mio padre, mia madre e mio fratello m'avevano preceduta e m'aspettavano. Pensavo alla vecchia terra lasciata, ai cari amici salutati, forse per sempre, in Europa, all'amore e ai dolori, alle dolcezze e ai crucci, che m'avevano circondata laggiù. Avrei trovato altrettanto nel nuovo mondo?
>
> America!.... questa è l'America! la terra sconosciuta quattro secoli fa, scoperta da Colombo, esplorata da Raleigh e Drake! Mi guardavo intorno cercando di scoprire qualche cosa di nuovo, qualche cosa di diverso che in Europa.
>
> Una specie d'esaltazione mi aveva presa e mi domandavo: – se, dopo tutto, non fossimo arrivati al sicuro? Se questo oceano che ci ha visto raggiungere quasi a suo dispetto la meta, facesse un ultimo sforzo e riuscisse a strappare la catena del gigante, inghiottendolo con tutti noi? (7-8)

Many are the elements in this portrayal that convey a sense of profound apprehension: the stillness and obscurity of the city, the absence of any signs that could help her discover this new world finally in front of her, a world that she can perceive but still not comprehend. The important moment of the encounter with the new world is expanded and enhanced in her anticipation of landing, still shipboard and tossed by those insecure waters: symbol of uncertainty, instability and transformation; of death of her old life and birth of a new one. She is on the verge of crossing the last empty, frightening gap between ship and dock that will separate her from Europe and thrust her into

a new life. The ship itself is described as a gigantic monster, but what makes it so is not mankind, who tries in fact with its strong will to tie and subdue it, but the gigantic and monstrous ocean that makes it move of its own motion. The Ocean (written with a capital 'O') made their crossing a long and painful one, and it powerfully symbolizes the depths of the migrant's inquietude, the unknown and the unpredictable, the struggle and effort, the energy and vitality necessary not only to make, but above all to accept the change that such temporal and spacial distance determines on any human being. Ocean the monster is feared as it tries to take control of the ship's destiny even at the last moment, to lead it against men's will in a battle between the conscious and the unconscious, between the rational and the irrational, where the latter would prevail. While Moroni Parken's story is mainly based on her autobiographical experience, her choice of starting her narration with a description, not of her departure from Italy or the voyage itself, but with the moment of the arrival in *America*, underlines the significance of that encounter as the discovery of the *other* and the impact that final moment of the crossing has on the immigrant's inner voice. The newness of the continent, the sense of discovery and the impact of a new vision are underlined by her first referring to it as *America*, not descriptively as Canada as she will do later. In describing her initiation to the new land, Moroni Parken's anxiety is represented by the element of water as well as that of fire, which later destroys the same homes she had noticed on her arrival. Her state of restlessness makes her perceive this incident as a presage, wondering what *America* will reserve for her later (8-9)

However, this preoccupation and awareness of the risks involved were inevitable emotions in her immigrant experience which never subdued her will to succeed in starting a new and challenging life. Especially when

describing her first stay in Muskoka, her hopeful attitude reaches moments of sincere enthusiasm for that new life:

> Quando arrivammo finalmente alla capanna, lasciammo cadere le braccia indolenzite e alzammo la testa ad ammirare il paesaggio intorno. Non eravamo scoraggiati: sembrava che le difficoltà accrescessero in noi il desiderio di lavorare per vincerle e che l'aria stessa fosse esilarante. La vita che ci aspettava era così nuova, così diversa da tutte le nostre abitudini, che il lavoro stesso ci pareva un divertimento. (33)

For her, Canada is not a hostile land. Thanks also to the presence of her parents and brother she can live the gradual process of adaptation to a life radically different from her Italian one as a 'return home': "Ci allontanavamo sempre più dalla civiltà, ma ci avvicinavamo ai nostri cari che ci aspettavano. Era un conforto per me il pensare: 'Anch'essi hanno superato queste difficoltà, anch'essi sono passati di qui'" (13).

Overall her life in the Canadian wilderness is depicted as a positive experience, which even in moments of despair has something to teach her and her family. Later at the end of her sojourn, just before leaving Canada, she writes:

> Io mi preparavo col pensiero all'ardua lotta che mi aspettava nell'avvenire; agli altri, quegli anni di Canadà sembravano perduti, ma io sentivo in me che avevano fruttato: l'avversità e il duro lavoro ci avevano temprato l'animo e Iddio ci aveva dato numerose prove della sua bontà onnipotente là ove non pareva possibile sperare aiuto. (135)

In her representation of how she began a rural life based on manual work in the forest, without the commodities or services of an urban setting, she is to be admired for her strong pragmatism and realism, independent thinking and strong personality.

In other parts of her narration, however, there can be detected a subtle expression of nostalgia for Italy and the conflict her experience is causing. The decision to name their new home *Cordisofia* after a very close friend in

Italy (and to a Sofia Bisi Albini her memoir is also dedicated) hints to the sufferance of the immigrant condition (33). Italy is also mentioned when remembering past habits or treasuring her family's *Italianità*. For example, when she describes their first Christmas in Muskoka, she states:

> Chi l'avrebbe pensato che laggiù, al limitare della foresta vergine, le bambine avrebbero trovato sull'albero di Natale bambole e libri illustrati di Londra e di Milano! Sì, anche dalla lontana Italia, la patria di mio marito e dei miei figli, arrivarono doni delle mie amiche che non si scordarono mai di noi. (38-39)

Later at the baptism of her fourth daughter she says: "'mia piccina cara, sei nata in paese straniero, sei qui fra gente straniera, ma tu sei italiana, italiana malgrado questo.' E guardai mio marito che mi strinse la mano" (60). At the end of her singing a *cavatina* from an Italian opera at a concert she is moved by the applause of an Anglo-Neapolitan young man in the audience: "Benchè inglese di nascita, sono moglie e madre di italiani e le parole famigliari mi echeggiarono fin nel profondo del cuore. Ripetei il pezzo, ma questa volta era cantato in omaggio all'Italia, col cuore rivolto agli amici di là" (76). Intermingled in her narration are also references to Italian habits and sayings (29, 98, 105, 115, 122), but probably the most touching moment occurs when their difficulties in Muskoka become so serious that they start hoping to return, somehow, to Italy:

> Ma ciò che io non palesavo, mio marito lo sentiva così fortemente da doverlo esprimere in lunghi lamenti. Egli era sempre malato, e la nostalgia era diventata in lui una seconda malattia, così penosa e acuta da essere ormai, invincibile. Ogni sera egli diceva alle bambine con voce di pianto: 'Pregate, pregate Dio che ci faccia tornare in Italia' e non sapeva più parlare, ricordare e desiderare che la sua Italia. 'Voglio morire nel mio paese' era il suo incessante lamento quando più si sentiva male .
>
> E io avevo finito a poco a poco a rassegnarmi al pensiero d'abbandonare il Canadà, anzi a desiderare il ritorno (130).

But overall one can say that Moroni Parken's story effectively portrays the combination of elements deriving from different cultures, periods and places,

from her childhood in England, her married life in Italy and her pioneer life in Muskoka. Canada then almost becomes the utopian place where all the different cultural characteristics of her identity could coexist without fearing any loss; rather they merge into a challenging, but rewarding experience.

It is interesting also to notice how in the description quoted earlier of America as the land discovered by Colombo and explored by Raleigh and Drake (8), there is a balanced recognition of historical figures belonging to the Italian, English, and consequently, Canadian pasts. There are other references in her account that, that show not only that she was an educated woman, but most of all, that her perception of the new world was influenced by popular works in American literature, as well as English ones, typical of the bourgeois and romantic taste of the time. In the first chapter, Moroni Parken deems it appropriate to give some brief information on Canada's early history and presents the Indian tribes inhabiting the land in the past as "gli Algonquins, gli Hurons e gli Iroquois, che abbiamo imparato a conoscere nei romanzi di Cooper"(15)[14]. She also mentions the violent takeover by the English of Acadia: "Longfellow descrisse in modo commovente questo fatto nel suo bel poema *Evangelina*"(16). In her later descriptions of the wilderness she makes references to the Indians: "finivo col sognare che si risvegliassero e venissero a noi le ombre dei morti Indiani, seppelliti nell'isola di Bi-Win che chiudeva la baia,"(35) as well as to Indian summer: "Alla fine d'ottobre cadde un po' di neve e per una settimana circa gelò di notte. È il così detto inverno dello *squaw*, ossia della donna indiana, il quale è seguito da due o tre settimane di tempo invidiabile, caldo, chiamato l'estate indiano (sic)"(37)[15]. She makes reference to other common celebrated images of Canada, such as the maple leaf and the beaver (17, 68-69), as well as to the traditional making of the

maple syrup (42-43). Overall, her depiction of the pioneering experience in Muskoka seems to be influenced by her own reading.

If her coming to Canada following her parents and brother can remind us of the pattern of chain migration that was later to characterize Italian immigration to Canada, a pattern that underlined the importance of kinship in the process of migration, the way in which Moroni Parken lived her adventure and the style in which she portrays it express cultural characteristics that were typically English. On several occasions she praises the spirit of the English immigrants. When describing Canada and the policies endorsed by the Conservative government of John A. Macdonald at that time in order to favour the settlement of English colonists and farmers on the Canadian soil, she states:

> Gli emigranti inglesi non sono però, come generalmente gli italiani, la parte più miserabile, più debole, della popolazione che nel nuovo mondo va a cercar fortuna, o scampo a castighi meritati. Sono invece i più coraggiosi, i più forti, quelli che non temono il lavoro e le privazioni, che amano lottare contro le difficoltà e sfidare l'ignoto.
>
> Figli cadetti di famiglie nobili e signorili, padri di numerosa figliolanza che cercano modo di allevarla facilmente e di collocarla, famiglie decadute che sfuggono l'umiliazione della loro mutata condizione, o spiriti avventurosi, là nel nuovo paese trovano tutti lavoro, una terra vergine che li accoglie e dona i suoi frutti in cambio di fatiche che, sebbene dure, non dànno alcun senso di umiliazione. (18-19)

This can be considered the only reference made in her entire account to the Italian immigrants, but, as one can see, they are certainly not presented in a positive light. They are briefly mentioned as a counterpoint to the virtues of the English immigrants, who instead are praised for their many qualities. A modern reader is probably less surprised by her reference to the conditions the Italian immigrants were living in at the time —conditions that were in fact harsh, poor and humiliating, as many Italian travellers to North America noted – and more displeased by her lack of sympathy and understanding of the

causes that led them to be part of the lowest layers of North American society, causes that other observers had tried to comprehend[16]. Her distance from the Italian immigrant experience is noticeable in the tone of her description, especially in the words of moral condemnation for their failure in their homeland: "che...va a cercare...scampo a castighi meritati." That distance is not simply ethnocultural, it is mainly based on a class distinction. Her point of view is that of a respectable English immigrant. According to Moroni Parken, English immigrants were for the most part individuals belonging to the lower, urban middle class, who lived their immigrant experience with dignity and resolution, who fought against unfavourable circumstances with no sense of humiliation. She probably considered herself as a member of those "famiglie decadute che sfuggono l'umiliazione della loro mutata condizione"[17].

Many parts in her narration seem to want to demonstrate how early colonists in Muskoka did, in fact, show those qualities of remarkable resiliance and spirit of adaptation to the most primitive and harsh conditions of life in the still unexplored forests. She herself gives the impression of an incredibly determined woman who practically leads her family in this amazing adventure. The other pioneers are always presented in a positive light, strong men and women who brought not only their hard work to this uncouth land, but also a sense of dignity and civilization. In narrating her arrival in Bracebridge, she gives her first description of the sturdy colonists:

> Eravamo a Bracebridge, città fabbricata sulla collina, colle case di legno tutte eguali, messe in fila alla medesima distanza l'una dall'altra, lungo una strada, come giocattoli di bambini. Qualche pino qua e là non ancora atterrato faceva capire che anche lì qualche hanno prima non c'erano che foreste. Uomini alti e tarchiati, con lunghe barbe, in camicie di flanella e capelloni di paglia, stavano sugli usci fumando, e riposando evidentemente dalle dure fatiche della giornata. Bambini ce n'era dappertutto, sulle soglie, nel mezzo della strada; tutti con un'aria dignitosa e di *self-reliance*, ovvero di fiducia in sè, effetto della loro educazione libera e forte. (12)

Here we can appreciate not only her ability to describe pleasantly the scene in an effective visual manner, but also her admiration and esteem for these pioneers, feelings that constantly permeate her recounting. Similarly, describing English immigrants, she writes:

> Nelle isolate radure ogni famiglia eleva la sua casa, taglia la legna, fa ogni lavoro manuale; giovinetti e fanciulle che hanno compiti sull'antico continente i loro studi superiori, si sentono felici di esplicare cosi nuove facoltà che ignoravano; e nessuno di essi pensa che la coltura intellettuale sia sciupata, perchè sentono che devono ad essa l'intimo piacere che dà loro quella nuova vita, il poter trovare in essa tanta poesia, tanta grandiosità, tanta pace. (19)

According to Moroni Parken, not only are these immigrant families able to make good use of their formal education in the *back-woods* without suffering from any form of brutilization of their ways of living (crf. Harney "Men" 151-176); they are also able to appreciate this new experience as a deeply enriching one, marrying their formal knowledge to the more practical one acquired in the wilderness. Several times she points out how these immigrants were educated and always took care of their cultural interests even in those primitive lands. They always tried to have something to read or study, either a book or verses by Latin poets or English authors such as Scott or Tennyson (31). When they had a chance, concerts were organized where the author herself sang. They tried to make a socializing event out of any occasion of collaboration and solidarity among them, organizing house-warming balls, surprise parties or *bees*[18]:

> Verso le cinque di uno splendido mattino arrivarono dal lago parecchie barche cariche di giovani armati di falci, allegri come se andassero a una festa e non a un lavoro faticoso. Dopo i saluti gentili e cordiali, lo scambio gradito di qualche libro e di notizie dei vicini, si misero all'opera, e non vi so dire che spettacolo allegro e confortante fosse quello per me! Tutti in fila nel prato, colle braccia che si muovevano in tempo regolare, colle falci che luccicavano al sole.... l'erba pareva cadere per incanto, quasi

> fosse opera di un mago. Alle otto scesero dalla collina per la colazione, che si può immaginare quanto riuscisse gaia.
>
> In Europa non si può farsi un'idea di queste riunioni di lavoranti che maneggiano la falce col volto intelligente e gli occhi aperti, pieni di luce: di queste colazioni di giovani robusti che non bevono vino nè liquori di sorta: di questi agricoltori che citano versi latini e conoscono tutti i poeti. È appunto la loro coltura e la loro educazione che fa loro sembrare un passatempo il lavoro, e non dà a un lavoro manuale idea di avvilimento. Quella giornata di falciatura pareva per essi un divertimento come fosse una partita a lawn-tennis. Qui sta la superiorità dell'inglese sopra tutti i coloni delle altre nazioni. (104-105)

In remembering this particular episode, Moroni Parken dutifully conveys her gratitude for the help she received from these young colonists, but what surprises her modern reader the most are the style and images she adopts in describing this scene. Overall in her narration one can appreciate her narrative skills, her ability to depict simply and effectively the character of landscapes and people according to the literary taste of her time. She wrote an account that presents her life in Muskoka with clarity and adherence both to facts and feelings. But in describing the colonists, the wilderness becomes more and more a bucolic countryside, where the harshness of the rural world is mitigated by the positive and civilized spirit of these young English immigrants, who thus show their superiority. They represent in her opinion the quintessence of the good colonist, physically and psychologically strong, well educated, capable in agriculture, morally sound, civilized and amiable, perhaps presented as such as an example for those Italians who were thinking of emigrating.

Apart from the moments in her story when serious situations caused by the harsh weather conditions (such as lack of food supplies and wood for heating) are described, the realism of her recounting is too often lessened and mollified by an idealistic tone that, even if well expressed and somewhat acceptable, nevertheless makes her representation become almost a

mythologization of the immigrant experience. However, Muskoka does not turn into an Eden: in order for that idealization to become complete, the wilderness would have had to be represented as a world where hardships and adversities did not exist or could all be overcome by those courageous pioneers. Instead, her own experience shows us how difficult it was to find a way of surviving even in that idyllic, and yet rough, world. The softened realism with which she describes those hardships is nevertheless successful in conveying the brutality of the environment, the rudeness of a pioneering life in those immense forests:

> Dopo il nostro ritorno a casa cadde la neve per più di una settimana, con tale insistenza da coprire il ghiaccio all'altezza di un metro e bloccarci in casa separandoci da tutti per più di un mese.
>
> Io pensavo a mia madre, a mio padre, a mio fratello come se un oceano fosse tra noi: sapevo che malgrado la pena di saperci così chiusi nel nostro guscio, mezzo seppelliti nella neve, malgrado il desiderio ardente di venire a noi, non l'avrebbero potuto, e il mio spirito andava a loro e mi pareva in certi momenti che si scontrasse nell'aria gelida con quelli di loro, al di sopra di tutto quel candore, nel silenzio solenne della natura addormentata....
>
> Non ci mancava il nutrimento, ma si avvicinava il momento che non avremmo più avuto fuoco. Mio marito si era di nuovo ammalato e io vedevo con spavento diminuire la provvista della legna. Tentai più volte di andar nel bosco a tagliarne, ma la neve era così alta che dopo mezz'ora di faticoso lavoro per farmi una strada m'accorgevo di essere ancora lontana dal bosco. (77-78)

This was the reality of the immigrant experience in the Canadian wilderness, an environment that could turn from being peaceful and idyllic into a threatening and frightening one.

However, like Bressani, Moroni Parken never describes nature as an evil force, but always as the edifying expression of God. Whatever the situation or weather, that beautiful natural environment has the effect of invigorating her both physically and psychologically, purifying her from any kind of contemptible feelings:

> La vita faticosa in mezzo alla natura, in quell'aria sottile ed esilarante mi faceva l'effetto che non lasciasse stagnare le idee, e in certi momenti mi sembrava d'essere sotto l'influenza di uno stimolante.
>
> Tutte le piccolezze, i rancori, i bassi sentimenti dell'uomo non avevano occasione di manifestarsi. Ove tutti sono uguali non c'è ragione di invidie, nè di ambizioni; ove tutti hanno bisogno l'uno dell'altro non esiste che benevolenza e affezione, come tra membri di una sola famiglia. Le nostre più forti commozioni erano prodotte da fenomeni naturali, guidati dalla mano misteriosa di Dio, e ci tenevano come l'anima continuamente in alto; tutto intorno a noi, dal maestoso pino che contava secoli di vita, fino all'umile gramigna che nasceva spontaneamente dalle ceneri delle foreste arse, tutto ci parlava di lui. Non avevamo chiesa. ma tutto era tempio; non c'erano sermoni, ma ogni cosa intorno a noi ci insegnava ad amar Dio. (30)

To illustrate how this immigrant experience in the wilderness was indeed not brutalizing, but in fact enriching and fulfilling, she impressively portrays the natural landscape that surrounded her as a creation of the Lord, where life regains its true fundamental meaning and human beings return to a form of pure communal existence, free from the corruptions of the more developed European society. The Canadian wilderness has a revitalizing effect on her and nature is as uplifting as it is powerful in creating a sense of intimacy with God in such silence and solitude.

Furthermore, a strong sense of solidarity and mutual assistance permeates her description of these colonists' life, but her egalitarianism is embedded in religious beliefs, besides immediate necessity. When it comes to foreseeing the evolution of that simple society, her apperception of social and economic distinctions again finds expression:

> Ognuno lavora la propria terra e perciò non vi sono invidie nè ambizioni, almeno nel presente. Verrà un giorno in cui i più laboriosi ed economi emergeranno e le differenze di condizione si accentueranno anche laggiù. Anche là forse spunteranno quegli odî contro i fortunati che turbano la società del vecchio continente. Ma sono essi giusti? Chi ha conquistato una fortuna deve forse rinunciarvi a pro di sconosciuti? Il trasmettere le proprie sostanze ai discendenti non è forse un dovere? Noi che ereditiamo dai nostri avi i loro difetti fisici e morali, non avremmo il diritto di ereditare anche la loro fortuna,

> che è quasi sempre il frutto di fatiche, di privazioni, o di virtù? Salvo casi eccezionali, la fortuna dunque è un diritto, e il chiamare ingiustizia che uno possieda più di un altro è un'assurdità. (19-20)

These comments seem to pertain more to her social experience in Europe rather than in the New World and indicate how the recollection of her immigrant experience in Canada is influenced, with the passing of time, by a re-acquired Old World perspective, questioning contradictorily those same values she intends to praise. Her egalitarian vision is dissolved by her defence of what she considers necessary class distinctions and privileges, but she still appreciates that moment of utopia for the time it could last and the good it could provide. In this respect her narration recalls those myths of the pioneers and the frontier that were celebrated in early American literature which, as we have noted, was among her readings.

If in her opinion social differences are justifiable, differentiation and inequality of gender are not. Not only does her narration show the critical position Moroni Parken held in her family's life, she is also ready to clearly honour the significant role women play in spreading civilization in the New World:

> In America, là dov'è una donna è la civiltà: intorno alla figura femminile s'aggira sempre l'educazione e il vero progresso; essa è rispettata, quasi direi venerata e la libertà non degenera mai in licenza. Ispiratrice d'ogni nobile opera, d'ogni impresa ardita, la donna obliga l'uomo a inalzarsi al suo livello, ingentilisce ogni costume e purifica ogni sentimento. Forte contrasto con quei paesi ove la donna ha l'umiliazione di dover confessare che non le è possibile di compiere liberamente tutte le nobili opere alle quali si sente portata, perchè non è sufficientemente rispettata dagli uomini. (87)

In her advocacy for women she seems to covertly levy criticism against societies such as the Italian one, where women could not see their role fully and justly recognized and enjoy deserved equality and respect.

It is interesting further to observe that Moroni Parken's account presents some other thematic similarities to Bressani's report. If both of them envision nature as a creation of God and the Ocean as frightening, their life in the wilderness also generates in them a sense of solitude and isolation: "Per molto tempo non potei vincere una certa paurosa sensazione d'isolamento che mi prendeva di notte. Se la Baby piangeva mi pareva che la sua voce dovesse risvegliare e attirare intorno a noi le bestie feroci della foresta..." (35). This motif of fearful isolation and survival is quite common in Canadian literature, influenced as it is by the peculiarities of the natural environment, but it also finds deeper meaning in the immigrant experience itself, with the feelings of estrangement and alienation that the migration process entails. About the first time Moroni Parken ventures outside with her husband during the night, she writes: "La nostra capanna era là nicchiata sotto l'ombra di un immenso faggio e gli alberi neri della foresta formavano intorno al nostro clearing una specie di muraglia" (36)[19]. While these words remind us of Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), this same feeling of enclosure and barrier surronding the author will be expressed later in the work of Mario Duliani. Furthermore, as in Bressani, there is also in Moroni Parken an interest in natural sciences and in a more scientific knowledge and comprehension of the flora and fauna of the land, even though her considerations are far from the sophistication and complexity of Bressani's.

What renders Moroni Parken's account valuable and vital is that her story of migration to Canada and return to Italy is not flattened and homogenized by the perspective of her looking back at those moments, but rather she is able to recreate those years showing the evolving sequence of anxiety, attraction and gradual dissappointment which the Canadian experience created in her. All these phases are effectively presented in the

structure of the memoir, reflecting the transformation that life had produced in her, in an adventure that even in the circularity of a return journey, is still presented as an enlightening experience.

Moroni Parken's use of the Italian language reflects in full the variety of her cultural background. As an anglophone, her Italian shows a good command of the language at a sophisticated literary level (even if one might suspect some editing) enriched with English words typical of the Canadian reality she is describing or of the English character of the people; words which she inserts together with a definition of their meaning, such as *back-woods, clearing* (11), *self-reliance* (12), *steamer* (22), *huckle-berries, cran-berries* (31), *loon* (34), *lean-to* (35), *plum-pudding* (38), *maple* (42), *Front* (44), *bushman, bich-birk* (45), *mosquitos, black-flies* (62), *nurse* (98) etc.. Other times she prefers to use Italian words that are very close in form or meaning to English ones, such as *locare* (18), *possessione* (24), *affezione* (30). There are also inconsistencies in syntax or morphological agreement that seem to derive from the inevitable interference of her mother tongue, but add to the realism of her recounting: "un tratto di terra ove gli alberi erano stati atterrati e cresceva melica e patate." (11) "Durante il breve tempo in cui, senza molte formalità, fu sbrigato il nostro atto di possesso di duecento acri di terreno, con una capanna stata abbandonata alcuni anni prima...." (20), and other such phrases.

Years after her return to Italy she could look back at her life in the wilderness as an adventure and a learning experience, enhancing in her memory the most enjoyable moments and lessening the difficult ones, without however concealing the dangerous situation she had to face. It can be assumed that a certain awareness on her part of the interest and taste of the coeval Italian readership affected her approach to the matter. It is not surprising

that her account was so well received as to be published in a second edition. Rather than portraying the hardships and miseries many Italian immigrants to America were enduring at the time, her narration gives a more attractive, adventurous and detailed description of the pioneer experience in the wilderness, expressing a sense of diversion and moral enrichment, but without hiding the risks of that life. Even when describing the most difficult moments of her life in Canada, her tone is always one of dignified sorrow, never of humiliating defeat.

Considering the number of publications being issued at the turn of the century in Italy on the Americas and emigration, from travellers' accounts to books, guides and popular magazines (Franzina) and also the fact that emigration from the peninsula was increasing, on the verge of reaching its historical height —therefore fuelling an important political and cultural debate on its causes and possible solutions – Moroni Parken's account was particularly attractive for an Italian readership which was curious to know about emigration to North America. What this English-Italian lady had been courageously able to confront in that unknown land, seems to have appealed in particular to a middle-class *Milanese* audience, as well as to a wider and less sophisticated one. Her account is now even more interesting in the context of the Italian literature of migration, because it contributes to illustrate how diversified the immigrant experience in Canada was. The stereotypical image of the poor man coming to a cold land with his cardboard suitcase since the turn of the 20th-century is too restrictive to represent the Italian migration to Canada in full. The important contribution given by this literature is, in fact, to demonstrate how it is necessary to go beyond those traditional images to look for figures and experiences that better reflect the immigrant presence of

Italians in its historical, social and cultural variety. And to such heterogeneity Moroni Parken has contributed with merit.

3. An immigrant in the "terra dei $ tre dollari": Samuele Turri

Although the works by Bressani and Moroni Parken indicate the variety of the Italian literature of migration from its beginnings, it is with the writings of the 20th-century Italians coming to Canada that the *mélange* can be fully appreciated. As mentioned, both the historiography and the visual documentation on Italian immigration to North America have tended to stress those images which while trying to make the historical position of the immigrants more understandable and acceptable underlined their poverty, large families, rural origin, lack of knowledge of the English or French language, and illiteracy; in brief, their vulnerability. Still now, towards the end of the century, those time-worn images still influence the way in which most people perceive the Italian immigrant experience. If the perspective of the immigrant as a victim has tended to prevail, other studies have contributed to revise that position showing the immigrant instead as an actor, trying to control his own destiny (Perin). For this reason we would like to start our analysis of autobiographical writings by 20th-century Italian immigrants in Canada by referring to a text that in itself is an example of how diversified and manifold the attitudes of those immigrants were; often embodying a constructive disposition to change their ways of life for the better. Rather than a literary piece, this form of spontaneous autobiography has no other purpose than to express the need on the part of the immigrant to leave a record of his experience, which he feels was equal, but at the same time

different, from any other and, most of all, very courageous. All immigrants were fundamentally 'heroes' in their willingness to adapt to radical changes in their life, although this was a modest, small-scale heroism based on constant, day-to-day efforts, struggles and battles.

Samuele Turri came to Canada from the Tuscan valley of Garfagnana in the company of five friends in 1912, at the apex of that mass migration movement which characterized Italian immigration to North America at the beginning of the century. He worked as a labourer in British Columbia for most of his life and never returned to Italy. At the age of 92 he wrote about his immigrant experience in a short, condensed autobiographical document, where he expressively describes the typical journey of an Italian immigrant at the start of the century. This document was considered so indicative and revealing as to be published in Italy as part of a volume edited by Paolo Cresci and Luciano Guidobaldi in 1980[20]. What makes this piece of writing particularly interesting are Turri's ability to overcome the barriers presented by spelling and grammar and use espressions taken directly from spoken Italian, creating an immediate and spontaneous form, as well as a tone reflecting a personality characterized by vitality and good humor. He starts his recounting by describing his journey to Canada:

> Io Samuele Turri l'avventure del povero emigrante allamerica del nord, nel 1912 dove esisteva larimunerazione di $ tre dollari per nove ore di lavoro eguale à lire quindici, volli anche io aggiungere i conpagni nella terra dei $ tre dollari...la fortuna era eminente.
> abbandondo tutti i miei pianeti in Italia per conbinare altri in america.
> il 3 febraio 1912 partito con cinque amici dei miei contorni meglio fare i loro nomi Angelo Guidi Amusse Guidi Cesare Bertucci Pietro Guidi io Samuele Turri...inbarcati il 3 febraio 1912 delle Havre frencia con piroscavo la Provence. forse rammenterete fu vittima di guera il nostro viaggio in mare 7 giorni e notti
> Solo due giorni è notte di tempesta. chi non avuto sperienza come io credevo di non rivare alla terra dei $ 3 dollari.

> Rivati a new york alle ore 10 ant il giorno 10 febraio, una indimenticabile mattina, unfreddo insopportabile, temperatura -40 sotto zero. nellentrata inporto, il mare gelato due piedi. il piroscafo costretto afermarsi finche non rivano i rompe gelo... il personale del disinbarco, con faccia orecchie protetti per qulle condizioni di temperatura, messero il ponte arcato fra lanave è laterra. i 6 emigranti, mormorando, torniamo indietro? sequel dollaro fosse lochetid [messo] in simile climatiche condizioni non nevoglio altro dice... entriamo negli uffici di emissione [ammissione] in Canada acettata è cordialmente escortati al treno CPR qesto dava coraggio per l'apparisenza interna. Recevuti dal condottore cidiede introdozione alle comodita in treno, trattandoci demograticamente, dimostrato come usare iletto, un congegno applicato nella parete esterna meccanicamente sopra il sedile. tutto qesta introduzione in lingua Inglese, noi preteso di avere compreso. conduttore domanda tiket please noi cosa adetto?
> conduttore ripete à ciascuno tiket please
> Risposta no tiket please il paziente conduttore provede un intelpetre anchelui emigrante così formammo il gruppo di 7, 2 sonavano strumenti altri canzone popolare così passando ore didivertimento, bensi mancava vino! no bivite alcoholiche in treno) aquei tempi (questo primo giorno intreno nella terra dei dollari sono ancora 6 giorni e 6 notte per rivare alla nostra destenazione...siamo arivati a Toronto per Onterio il treno ferma 22 minuti fare provigione di cibarie io fui pregato di provedere, sicapisce lostacolo lalingua, Coro alla bottega vicino, unamico al pane unaltro al formaggio, ecc, ecc, pane 5 diti una mano... 6 diti 6 pani un pacco circa un metro cubo... pagato senza sapere quanto porgio $ 10 albottegaio prese il suo avere mi tornò tanta moneta, infretta. ritorno al treno già per partire... Giunto aiccompagni ridendo cosa tianno dato, spugna? il pane strento allamano appena copriva il palmo. saranno anche idollari con quel difetto? viene ora di dormire. agiustiamo illetto mecanico...lamattina alla 7 ore di svelia è colazione, alzati il primo sguardo è divedere dove siamo rivati... vaste pianure coperto di neve non sivede lafine di quelle pianure il sole è luna, sembra sorge dalla tera (26)[21].

As one can see, Turri's brief account begins with the most salient moment in the immigrant experience, the discovery of and arrival in a new land. Looking back at his arrival in Canada, he can portray those first days, re-living the sense of surprise and amazement, but also preoccupation mixed with amusement, which his own discovery of America left vividly impressed on his memory. The language is typically based on the approximate transcription of oral expressions coming from popular Italian and English. Probably, after so many years, with little education and at such an elderly age, it was quite difficult for him to write. He adopts also some *Italiese* expressions, the result of

the acquisition of loan-words and loan-shifts from English in his Italian vocabulary. In general his language reflects a popular, less-educated grammatical form and register, and some expressions in particular reflect the interference of English: *lochetid, escortati, apparisenza, introdozione, preteso, alidey,* etc..

If a document like this can be considered a borderline case between historical source and autobiographical text, it still deserves to be included as part of the Italian literature of migration to Canada for several reasons. Scholars dealing with Italian-Canadian literature written by second-generation writers have described such literary production as breaking the solitude and isolation of the first generation, breaking the silence surrounding their experience (Pivato, "Polysystem" 285-6). While it is true that the majority of first -generation immigrants were not in the position, in terms of their education and social status, to create and promote immediately a literature of their own, the effort made by someone like Turri (who could be considered a very good example of the Italian immigrant in Canada at the turn of the century) should be appeciated even more as a valuable attempt to voice his experience in the manner he could, breaking that silence on his own, without the assistance of social historians or second-generation children. It is true that Canada represented for the typical immigrant a 'land of opportunity' where a person was mainly dedicated to the effort of bettering his or her socioeconomic condition, but an effort like Turri's to put such an experience in writing also indicates how the quest for a dignified existence was not limited to the material aspect: it involved the acquisition of a new life through which they could not only *have* more, but also *be* more. The immigrant was often interested in upward mobility not merely in its socioeconomic meaning, but also in the sociocultural one, thus showing that while succeeding

economically, he was also developing culturally as a human being. Although circumstances forced immigrants to first upgrade their material well-being, this later allowed immigrant families to pursue betterment in the cultural and educational fields. The immigrant process should not be considered as simply deriving from the need of improving one's socioeconomic conditions; rather, the immigrant accepts that painful process as instrumental to reaching a social recognition which can be expressed also in cultural, literary or simple memoir form. Any immigrant's attempt to put one's story into writing comes from the desire to find a lasting expression of his or her experience in the hope of inspiring its comprehension and acceptance, its importance or even 'beauty'.

Samuele Turri's account is particularly interesting because in different moments his brief story is indicative of the history of Italian immigration to Canada. Moreover, the way in which he presents his experience with the use of lively images shows a particular potential for popular story telling. For example, the route he describes was typical of the great majority of Italians when coming to Canada: first debarking at New York and then later taking a train that would lead them to their destination, travelling through Toronto if necessary. Also typical were the author's sense of preoccupation of what lay ahead; the greenhorn's reaction to the cold weather and the English language; and the encounter with the vastness of the land. Later in his recounting, Turri also describes the arrival in Kelowna, B.C. and the sense of ethnic solidarity and camaraderie that surrounded his first years living in Canada. He later tells of the difficulties in finding employment at the beginning of World War I, and how after its end he was among those who helped other *paesani* from his region to move to British Columbia. In few words, he is able to convey the reality of some of the most characteristic aspects of the migration process,

such as life in remote areas and chain migration, and give a representation enriched by a sense of humanity and participation, as only an 'insider' could do. Although Italian-Canadian historiography has made great strides in providing a rational discourse and interpretation of the immigrant experience such as that of Turri's, the Italian literature of migration can also inform our understanding, especially by acknowledging the voice of those among the immigrants who were able to portray their experience in their own words.

What further makes Turri's short account so attractive are the simple but powerful images that fully convey the immigrant's vision of his adventure. Apart from the purely entertaining moments, the half-dreaded, half-humorous simile of dollars being like American spongy white bread (it seems like a lot, but could prove to be almost worthless after working so hard), conveys with good humor the uncertainty and anxiety any immigrant would feel early on and is really emblematic of the immigrant experience, one of the most striking images of this entire literature. Moreover, in describing his first impressions of the wilderness in winter, he is able to convey capably a sense of tension and fear, of silent contemplation that his discovery entails. The vast and open land covered in snow becomes almost ashen in its whiteness, with the rising sun, not warm and welcoming, but rather like a spectral moon, cold and frightening, above a limitless, surreal horizon. The moon later becomes almost a friendly companion when he describes his settling down:

> Io con altri due comprammo una piccola casetta non fenita, sivedeva laluna camminare dalletto tutta lanotte fra le fissure dei muri laterali. questo fu in gugno 1914 in quella estate credevamo finire la casetta per prossimo inverno. nel mese di agosto cominciò laguera paralizato lesperanze di progreso tutte leindustrie fermate... Ermano Pierini... fù richiamato alla patria per atto militare partì nellautunno 1915 Raggiunto à sua famiglia è Regimento dove fù vittima di guera... rimasi solo nella casetta... una delle mie proviste era la caccia in ungiorno provedevo carne per unasettimana, lialtri 5 per laltro necessario passai quellanno. nellautunno il 16 ottobre 1916 presi moglie conlamia casetta...

> chiuse leffissure non più sivedeva laluna camminare dalletto lanotte.... (26-27)

As in the accounts discussed previously, Samuele Turri conveys in his simple manner the sense of solitude and isolation an immigrant could feel in the new world. His short, incomplete sentences seem like the careful, detailed and colourful brushstrokes of a *naïf* painter, who is able to represent reality in a simple but visual manner, that in its plainness and homeliness can still confer a lyric sense to existence.

Samuele Turri's contribution to the writings on the Italian immigrant experience in Canada is simple and brief, but still intriguing. It helps one to observe that experience without preconceived images or clichés, to see the immigrant for what he really was, an individual who could express his own personality among the many others facing the same hardships and aspirations.

In approaching the early stages of the Italian literature of migration to Canada through an analysis of the first three texts available to us, quite different in kind, style and outcome, it was possible to observe how these writings testify to the evolution of this literature in accordance with the migratory experience of Italians in different centuries. In the different works by a missionary, a pioneer woman and an early immigrant male, one is able to observe the impact the first encounter with an *other* world had on them, and how that experience was indelibly impressed on their minds. All of them present this discovery as a positive experience, which while inevitably generating harships and anxiety, had the power to profoundly change their way of being, this being perceived as an important legacy that even after many years was appreciated for what it had given them. In their accounts the

trauma of migration is recalled as a trial, but a rewarding one, that enabled them to acquire an enriched perception of life and led to an important inner transformation. In this respect, there is no *impasse* or refusal of their experience in Canada, no lament or condemnation of the years spent there as a useless waste of time and energy. While it is true that the first two authors returned to Italy, therefore lessening the longing for the far-away *paese*, it is also true that they could have presented those years abroad as a failure and waste, especially in light of the ultimate unproductive results of their stay in Canada. Instead, they treasured the time spent in that far-away land and accepted it for what it meant to them: an important and unforgettable chapter in their lives in which they were able to confront themselves dialogically vis-a-vis a new reality, as they could never have done at home. This attitude is reflected in their narrations, true *Bildungsromane* giving witness to the profound transformation the years in Canada had etched in them. Although all three 'look back' at their arrival and life in Canada and their memory tends to flatten out to some degree that inner human evolution, their writing illustrates representative commonalities of the migratory experience; common threads of overcoming that go beyond social or cultural differences, whether missionary, pioneer woman or immigrant male.

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[1] Besides a high school named after Father Bressani located in Woodbridge, Ontario, more recently an essay prize for high school students was created in his name by the National Congress of Italian-Canadians in Toronto.

[2] The *Breve Relatione* was frequently used as a source in the hagiography of the Canadian martyrs that flourished in the 1930s, as well as in anthropological, ethnic and geographical studies: see Jones; Tooker; see also Comparato.

[3] Father Francesco Giuseppe Bressani was born in Rome in 1612. In 1626 he began his novitiate in the order of St. Ignatius Loyola in Rome, and from 1628 to 1642 studied and taught both in Italy and France, from where he departed to come to New France, only a few months after being ordained a priest of the Jesuit congregation. Since the age of fourteen he had shown determination and a profound desire to join the French Jesuit missionaries in the New World as illustrated in five letters written to his superiors between 1626 and 1628. Father Bressani crossed the ocean for the first time in 1642 at

the age of 30, first settling in Québec for a short period and then, in 1643, moving on to Trois Rivières. As he himself tells us in his report, in the month of April 1644 he left the settlement on the St. Lawrence River in the company of a young French boy and six Hurons with three canoes. Soon, on the first day of travelling the canoes were overturned and later, on the fourth day, their presence was noticed by a band of Iroquois, who captured them, killing one of the Hurons. For more than two months as a prisoner of the Iroquois, Father Bressani lived their nomadic and hardy life. He was forced to follow them in their travels from one encampment to the other and faced harsh tortures and tribulations. He would have been burnt alive had he not been spared at the last moment and sold as a slave to an old native woman, who then sold him again to some Dutch fur-traders, who finally rescued him and took him to Fort Orange in July 1644.

While held as a slave he found the physical and moral strength to write the letter, mentioned previously, to his father superior in Rome, in which he informed him in detail of his life as a prisoner of the Iroquois and the tortures he had to endure. After going back to France and recovering from his physical impairment, approximately a year after his liberation from the Iroquois, he crossed the ocean a second time and was back in Canada in the month of July 1645. For almost four years he dedicated himself entirely to the Huron missions and would have continued in his effort of conversion of the native peoples in the outer encampments, had he and the Hurons not been forced to move back to the French settlement of Québec because of the constant attacks of the Iroquois and the unbearable living conditions. In 1651 he had regretfully to accept his superiors' decision to return to Europe because of his poor health and he never saw Canada again. However, his experiences in the New World were an important component of his office as a successful preacher in Italy in the remaining years of his life. He died in Florence in 1672. On Father Bressani see Martin; Ciampi; Lamalle; Comparato; Menchini; Cro, "Letter" 27; Cro, "Bressani" 141-143.

[4] On Bressani's fortune both in France and Italy see Silvana Frino Zanovello, 105, note 3, 106. Also, according to Ciampi (73) the 1852 French language translation of Bressani's relation by Martin, published first in Montreal and then in Paris, was an important contribution to the diffusion of this text during the 19th-century.

[5] According to Frino Zanovello (106) the year 1653 represents an important moment in the relationship between France, led at the time by Italian Cardinal Giulio Raimondo Mazzarino and the Church of Rome, headed by Pope Innocent X. After serious moments of contraposition with the Roman Catholic Church caused by Mazzarino's persecution of the Cardinal of Retz, Archibishop of Paris, because of participation in the Fronde, as well as by the Jansenist crisis, in 1653 Mazzarino agreed to condemn Jansenism in order to better the French relationship with Rome. Jansenism usually refers to both the doctrine of Dutch theologian Cornelis Jansen (1585-1638), the Archibishop of Ypres, whose work *Augustinus* was condemned by Pope Innocent X as heretical, and the theological current of thought inspired by his doctrine, which flourished in France, the Netherlands and Italy until the end of the 18th-century. According to those theological principles, predestination is emphasized, free will is denied and human nature is incapable of good. Jansenists were often critical of both the Church and State and condemned the Jesuit order for their supposed moral relaxation, as shown later in Blaise Pascal's *Les Provinciales* (1656-7).

[6] By the title *Jesuit Relations* we usually refer collectively to a series of reports sent from Québec to the Provincial Father of the Society of Jesus in Paris and signed by the Québec Superior starting in 1632. In his scholarly edition Reuben Gold Thwaites added to these *Relations* other documents in the form of personal letters, memoirs, journals, etc., such as earlier letters and reports by Pierre Biard and Charles Lalemant

dated between 1612 and 1629 and Bressani's report itself. Among the *Relations*, those written by Father Paul Le Jeune in 1632 and the following ones up to Paul Ragueneau's in 1650 are of particular interest.

[7] For a comparison of the original letter sent from Fort Orange in 1644 with the its version in the relation, see Cro, "Bressani" 152-155.

[8] Quotations are taken from the 1907 second edition.

[9] Several are the allusions in her story that let the reader believe that she lived in Italy and knew Lombardy and Milan quite well: for example, she describes herself as "la figliuola maritata in Italia" (Moroni Parken 27); in describing the All-Bays lake, she says that it was much bigger than the Lombard Lago Maggiore (23); later, she says she prepared a dish according to a Milanese recipe (105); also, her husband uses a Lombard expression ("*El ghe!*")when trying to catch a porcupine (36) and is moved when hearing his native dialect again when returning through Chiasso to Italy (139-140).

[10] In a guide to the Muskoka and Parry Sound districts published in 1879, just one year before Moroni Parken presumably arrived in the area, the ethnic composition of the pioneer population in those districts is thus described: "The quotations of experts place the present population of these free grant districts between 26,000 and 30,000.... Among the minor curiosities of our census may be mentioned the possession of pagan Indians, real *bona fide* and tolerably picturesque pagans in the Parry Sound District. As to the distribution of our people by nationalities, we are thoroughly mixed. We have pioneers from almost every country in Europe, except Turkey, the British Isles being our main feeders, though we have a respectable German and Scandinavian contingent. This year it is to be hoped that a vigorous effort will be made to divert a fair share of the Mennonite immigration to Muskoka. In addition, we have of course large numbers of native Canadians, not excluding those born in Muskoka, which swell our ranks in ever increasing numbers, the average of five to a family being ludicrously below the mark in Muskoka. Until lately, take of English, Irish, Scotch equal parts, sift thoroughly and add a dose of Canadians equal to the whole, would have been a good recipe to get at our Muskoka mixture. Taking up a voter's list at random, it would be now an even bet whether the name of a given man was Canadian or from the British Isles. We have also a sprinkling of intelligent Americans and would like more. Within the last three years the immigration has shown a preponderating Canadian element." (Hamilton 2)

[11] In a recent conference organized by the Frank Iacobucci Centre for Italian-Canadian Studies in the Department of Italian Studies at the University of Toronto on "Giovanni Caboto: Crossing the Ocean" (October 16-18, 1997) Sergio Perosa of the University of Venice, in speaking about texts at the margins of many definitions, told the audience that some time earlier he was asked to be a member of a literary prize committee. When the members received a text written in Italian language by a recent immigrant in Italy (probably from North Africa) with the help of an Italian journalist, they had to ask the notary in what category this work should be considered, either that of Italian or foreign literature. It was decided that the book had to be considered as an Italian text.

[12] In the final paragraph of the last chapter entitled "Alcuni anni dopo," which seems to have been added to the second edition to inform on what happened to some members of her family over the years, she asserts that her son Warwick was 22 years old (at the time of the preparation of the second edition in 1907) -. According to her story, her son was still an infant when they finally returned to Italy.

[13] The fact that Moroni Parken had to abandon her farm was undeniably caused by her personal situation of not being able to cope with such an environment. But Muskoka

overall had a high percentage of abandoned farms over the years (Wodlinger 6). While other parts of Ontario had completed their pioneer phase by 1860, at that time Muskoka had just begun it, both because of settlement patterns and provincial government policy. By the 1850s most of the fertile and more hospitable land in Southern Ontario had already been purchased. In 1872 there were those who praised the qualities of Muskoka as an agricultural land, fit especially for grazing, dairying and stock-farming (Wodlinger 6). But, also, others criticized it as an area of settlement, describing its settlers as belonging to lower classes , "weavers from Scotland, agricultural labourers from England, artisans and mechanics from all parts... They come to the free-grants land of Muskoka... find the conditions of tenure specified on the paper he signs, and sees that it will be five years before he can have his patent, and then only if he has cleared fifteen acres, and has likewise built thereon a log-house of certain dimentions... (If) he have a wife and family they are lodged and boarded for a very small sum at some near neighbour's ... until he and his family have taken possession, but on the first approach of cold weather he starts for the lumber-shanties, and engages himself to work there, receiving from twenty to twenty-five dollars a month and his food. It is certainly a very hard and anxious life for the wife and children, left to shift for themselves throughout the long and dreary winter, too often on a very slender provision of flour and potatoes and little else" (a Mrs. King as quoted in Wodlinger 5). As one can see, the conditions described by this emigrant lady were quite similar to those encountered by Moroni Parken, although her attitude was quite different.

The majority of the immigrants to Muskoka, as to Canada overall, were farmers and merchants, bringing with them the knowledge and skills needed in the wilderness, and among them were Moroni Parken's brother and parents. "This was a romantic period; a period of empire building and colonial expansion. It would be quite natural to expect that the populations of Britain would be subjected to a saturation advertising campaign, encouraging immigration to Canada. The spirit of adventure was very much alive and many wealthy or nearly-wealthy emigrants from Europe came to Canada for a new challenge" (Wodlinger 1-2). "As the settlement increased and more affluent British immigrants arrived, improved farms were purchased and ready money began to circulate in the District. This had the effect of 'capping' the social pyramid. With the growth of the population it appeared that the Muskoka settlement was to be leaping ahead. However, around 1900 a strange phenomena occurred. When the government offered free land grants in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, whole communities packed-up and left Muskoka.... Muskoka could not hold them" (Wodlinger 6).

[14] One should notice that in referring to the native tribes she used the English spelling of their names.

[15] As in this quotation, there are sometimes in her writing slight grammatical mistakes and shiftloans typical of an Anglophone writing in Italian.

[16] Among them we can remember Rossi, Condorelli, Giacosa, who left important accounts of their journeys across the United States. It is interesting that Moroni Parken's account was published in Milan in the same years, and by the same publishing house, which published Giacosa's memoir.

[17] She tells us, however, that if she came from Italy because of financial difficulties, her parents decided to follow their son to Canada essentially for spirit of adventure: "Egli [mio fratello] aveva avuto una giovinezza malaticcia che gli aveva impedito di fare un corso regolare di studi e addottorarsi, e fin da fanciullo, appassionato di tutti i libri di viaggi, aveva sognato di partire dall'Inghilterra sua patria, e andarsene in qualcuno dei tanti bei paesi di questo mondo non ancora popolati e guastati dalla civiltà, a vivervi una vita primitiva, libera e sana. Decise per il Canadà, e il vecchio Papà e la

vecchia Mamma ancora robusti e giovani di spirito, - colla disinvoltura tutta inglese di mutar paese -, lo seguirono." (Moroni Parken, 26)

[18] Moroni Parken, 31, 65, 66-68, 74-77, 124. 134.

[19] "At this time settlers lived a very isolated life, far from each other, and far, not merely from the great centres of civilization, but from those lesser centres which furnished them with the necessities of life. Some had to walk forty miles to Orillia to buy provisions, or to mail a letter. They had to carry their flour home on their backs, over so-called roads of the most wretched description. On one occasion, settlers from the Townships of Draper and Muskoka, finding no flour in Orillia, had to walk a distance of sixty miles to Barrie and 'back' the flour home. So isolated was the life of many a settler in the bush that they almost lost count of times and seasons, and one man was thus encountered who had been keeping Tuesday as the Lord's Day for many months."(Hamilton 8)

[20] In his rich volume *L'immaginario degli emigranti* (27) Enrico Franzina too quotes Samuele Turri as a valid example of the imagery of the immigrants, in which the experience of the journey to America is constantly present as the *incipit* of this literature. Previously in the same volume Franzina maintains that the memoirs of poorer immigrants are usually more immediate, free from those somewhat idle emotions and intentional stratifications of more educated accounts. In the memoirs of less educated immigrants various realistic elements are expressed with naturalness and facility, sometimes combined with symbolic ones (23). Turri is also dealt with in an important article on immigrant autobiography by Gianfausto Rosoli (178-180).

[21] In the transcription of the text Cresci and Guidobaldi's edition is followed, omitting only those parenthetical explanations that seemed unnecessary for a Canadian audience.

Chapter two

Looking through a Barred Window

In the periodization and *contextualization* of any literary production, both extrinsic and intrinsic relations come into play in order to fully comprehend a particular piece of writing, its character and the particular theme it deals with. In the case of Mario Duliani's *Città senza donne*, the Italian version of *La Ville sans Femmes* (published in Montréal in 1946, a year after its French version), the effort of contextualization becomes particularly significant because of the delicate historical period it refers to. Several scholars have dealt with the figure of Mario Duliani from an historical and political point of view (e.g., Bruti Liberati 152-153, 191-192; Harney, *Frontiera* 260, 264, 305; Perin "Conflits"; Salvatore). Considering, however, the nature of the present investigation, Duliani's work, *Città senza donne*, will be analyzed mainly as a literary piece. It is usually referred to as one of the most interesting texts of the Italian literature of migration to Canada because of its

literary quality and description of the internment of about a thousand men, of whom some 600 were Italians, during World War II.

The internment of Italians was adopted by the Canadian government upon Mussolini's declaration of war against Great Britain and France on June 10, 1940. Mario Duliani can be considered a *scrittore-emigrante* who unexpectedly had to face war-time internment, and therefore adversities and deprivations that usually were not experienced by an intellectual or writer coming from overseas, thus forcing him to acquire in prison a direct knowledge of the immigrant condition as experienced by many other Italians in Canada during this era. Duliani published his story at the end of the Second World War, basing his account on notes that he had taken during his internment and which he later re-organized more in a thematic, rather than a chronological order (13, 14). He was released from confinement in October 1943, after 40 months spent at interment camps in Petawawa, Ontario and Fredericton, New Brunswick, and in the years immediately afterwards, he seems to have dedicated himself to re-ordering the notes on which both the French and Italian versions of *Città senza donne* would be based[1].

Whatever his political affiliation and convictions were, it is quite clear that the internment had psychological consequences on him which were reflected in his account, just as this confinement affected the behaviour of other ex-internees who, in the same years, anglicized their names or emotionally dissociated themselves from their previous experience[2]. In his words, Duliani decided to let a larger audience become acquainted with the consequences the internment had on many *enemy aliens* and their families:

> Queste pagine non sono né un "giornale" né delle "memorie". Esse formano piuttosto – per servirmi di una cattiva espressione francese alla moda – un "documentario romanzato", cioè un documento umano vero, sulla realtà del quale la fantasia ha trapunto qualche ricamo.

> Con questa aggiunta, però: che qui l'autore ha partecipato egli stesso all'azione....
> ho raccolto note, osservazioni e impressioni non soltanto su me stesso, ma anche su un migliaio circa di altri Internati che erano con me.
> Il racconto che segue è dunque quanto si può chiamare di più "vissuto"....
> Dal punto di vista psicologico, – poi -- sono rimasto profondamente impressionato dallo spettacolo di tutti questi uomini scossi sconvolti e sperduti per la brusca separazione dalle mogli. (13-15)

These are among the considerations to produce his work given by the author in the introduction to his account, emblematically entitled "Per interderci e per comprenderci" (13). Already in these brief paragraphs, one gets a first impression of Duliani's style and approach to the subject, his willingness to present this unhappy episode in a conciliatory and unpolemical manner, but also his preference to present the facts in a way that leaves room for his own personal re-elaboration of those sad circumstances. He himself warns the reader, stating immediately that his narration is not a strictly factual and adherent description of internment events, but that this experience has been revisited according to his own "fantasia" or literary imagination. The post-War reader cannot avoid presuming that this approach was deeply affected by his need and desire to re-establish his position in Canadian society. His recounting gives the impression that the paragraphs taken from his camp notes are intermingled with others written after his release, in order to give a more methodical presentation of the experience in Petawawa and Fredericton. Even after the editing of his notes, Duliani's writing conveys the impression of a person still tangled and trapped in 'barbed wire', struggling to find a way to rehabilitate himself, while still shading his narration with a sense of humiliation.

If we adopt a different approach from the historian's in analyzing Duliani's work and endeavour to contextualize it in the way mentioned in the

Introduction, we would go beyond the evaluation of the factual information (which can be confirmed and expanded through other sources) and instead concentrate on those aspects, motifs and manners of narration that render his account unique for the comprehension of the experience of internment in the wider context of Italian migration. His book, being neither a documentary report nor a novel, but as he defines it, "un documentario romanzato," which contains the characteristics of both genres, has its own particular relevance in what it reveals of the experience of one internee among others. While lacking the detachment of an historical account, it nonetheless holds the attraction of being the only first-hand memoir available on this tragic episode, even if in its literary achievement it falls short of other *diari di guerra e di prigionia* existing in the literature of Italy as, for example, *Le mie prigioni* di Silvio Pellico (1832) to which Duliani himself makes reference at the end of his book (317).

We should not diminish a book such as Duliani's by measuring it against empirical notions of historical truth. Rather, Duliani's endeavour should be interpreted by considering it in relation to the aspects of the internment he decided to describe, and the way he described them, thus enabling us to appreciate his contribution toward a better understanding of the Italian immigrant experience during this traumatic time. In a way, when reading his account one should be less concerned with Duliani as an individual, and more with those aspects of his imprisonment common to every internee in order to understand what the internment meant in the cultural history of the entire Italian community, as well as in the Italian literature of migration to Canada. In short, Duliani participates in the collective experience of all internees, thereby providing a story that is both his own as well as of all its participants; of Italian immigrants of various political or social stances.

The simplicity and straightforwardness of his style remind us not to indulge in over-elaborate readings: the book was meant to be read by the average audience of the time, by those immigrants who needed to find some sort of explanation for the sad events that marked the life of the Italian community in Canada during the Second World War. This does not mean that we always agree with him or accept the way he portrays life in an internment camp. For many post-War readers, aware of how barbaric life had been in concentration camps in Europe, at times it is hard to consider the Canadian experience in the rather benign light he wants us to. Even if historical information can show that internees often had better conditions of life than those which their families outside had to bear during the war, nonetheless liberty had been lost and Duliani's portrayal of the treatment received is very much affected by what he calls "La qualità ...'romantica'" (14) of his recounting, or more accurately, a poetic license sometimes coloured by personal considerations.

While dealing with an episode that clearly affected the life of the Italian community in Canada, the first version of Duliani's account was written in French, the author being bilingual as his listing of works cited in the volume shows. It was clearly meant for a French-Canadian audience and, its inclusion of an expression of Canadian patriotism (his justification and acceptance of the measure of internment, 15-16), was opportunely aimed at rehabilitating his image before the francophone community to which he belonged, as well as the Canadian authorities[3]. The later Italian version was instead addressed to the smaller group of Italian-Canadians, as both the subtitle *Il libro degli italiani d'America* and the added chapter, *Gli italiani d'America,* leads one to conclude. The fact that in both versions there are numerous references and quotations taken from French literature and culture, and very few from his Italian

cultural background, somewhat distances his account from his Italian audience and presents the author as an educated francophile. On the other hand, Duliani probably considered the experience of the Italians in Canada during the war years of little interest to the larger English-speaking population, which was still hostile to them after the war. But in any case, he lacked a confident command of the English language, as he states in the Italian account (86). Being his mother tongue, the Italian language in which he wrote the second version of the account, was quite simple and direct, but able in its simplicity to convey with immediacy the human drama behind the barbed wire and barred windows, reaching effective forms of lyric expression. Perhaps, the different layout of the French and Italian versions of the book reflected a desire to put initially his Italian identity in the background, or at least to show how the experience of confinement was shared by other ethnic and political groups. For example, in his account he often makes reference to internees of another eighteen nationalities besides Italian:

> La nostra piccola Città è anche una Torre di Babele. Diciannove nazionalità vi sono rappresentate. Vi sono canadesi di origine francese e inglese, tedeschi, italiani, olandesi, russi, ucraini, finlandesi, ungheresi, norvegesi, svedesi, polacchi, spagnuoli, siriani, estoniani, lituani, cecoslovacchi, svizzeri, austriaci, ebrei, ai quali sono venuti aggiungersi – benchè in un campo limitrofo e soltanto per alcune settimane – tre o quattrocento giapponesi. (241)

He is inclined to let us perceive how the circumstance of the internment was truly an multinational one. He was an Italian who shared his status of internee with other Italians, but who also lived that experience with many other individuals of different origins. Their nationality as well as their political orientation was for many of them at the root of their internment – as it was for the Italians – even though their political convictions are never fully

discussed, but simply hinted at, suggesting how different and quite opposite political ideals had been the cause of confinement:

> Tutti costoro professanti le opinioni e le dottrine le più diametralmente opposte le une dalle altre... Vi sono, infatti, fra noi: fascisti e nazisti, democratici e totalitarii, comunisti e repubblicani, monarchici e nichilisti, senza contare un certo numero di MENEFREGHISTI...
> Insomma: la Torre di Babele. Non vi è altra parola per definire la Città senza donne! (242)
> I comunisti e gli ebrei abitano una baracca a parte, e s'intendono bene fra di loro.... all'Ospedale – contrariamente a quello che potrebbe succedere nelle baracche – non vi sono divergenze di opinioni o di razze. Tutti sono curati con gli stessi principii di solidarietà umana[4]. (244)

In his entire account Duliani prudently avoids revealing any political affiliation, but one wonders why "menefreghisti" was printed in capital letters. Perhaps it was simply to give graphically the impression of their loud, arrogant and contemptuous carelessness, transcribing the effect of the typical fascist motto 'Me ne frego!'[5] It could also refer to an attitude of apolitical indifference among some discouraged internees. Also, Duliani avoids manifesting any political or racial antipathy, even though he does not seem to sympathize with either communists or Jews, hinting at their 'mutual understanding'. He surely is always carefully in control of his writing: he suggests, but does not expand on the disagreements or frictions that manifested themselves among different political or ethnic groups inside the barracks. Instead, he prefers to underline how, inside the hospital he was the director of, life was inspired only by harmony and human solidarity. Nonetheless, his narration seems to be influenced also by the Italian political and cultural atmosphere of the previous years. For example, rather than using an expression such as 'compagni di sventura' or similar, which would sound inspired by socialist ideals, he often prefers the military expression "camerati" (135) when referring to his fellow internees. Even if justified by

the militarization of the life of the prisoners inside the camp, this term was used in fascist propaganda and it still holds a distinctive political connotation for a post-war reader. While few references are made to literature or authors from Italy (236), when dealing with the unfortunate declaration of war on June 10, 1940 which led to the unwanted conflict between Italy and France, Duliani talks about Gabriele D'Annunzio as "un grande latino" inspired by "un ideale latino" which favoured, not opposed, the consolidation of relations between the French and Italian people, thus leading Duliani to condemn the Italian intervention (258).

From the beginning of *Città senza donne* we can sense how, even if he was an internee among other internees, he was not an immigrant among other immigrants, though his attitude towards them was based on respect and understanding of their condition:

> il primo giorno in cui ci vedemmo tutti quanti rivestiti dell'uniforme del Campo, qualcuno disse:
> – Da questo momento, siamo tutti eguali!...
> Non è occorso molto tempo perché chi aveva pronunziato questa frase perdesse la sua puerile illusione. Le ineguaglianze del cuore, dello spirito, del corpo e della volontà non tardarono a manifestarsi. (61)
> Un povero diavolo che, nella vita civile, non avrebbe avvicinato un "Signore" che con infiniti riguardi, imbarazzato e confuso, risente, qui, una specie di gioia sadica di esser diventato di colpo "l'eguale" di coloro che gli sono sempre stati superiori. Il fossato delle classi sociali è scomparso. Non vi sono più differenze di ambienti... Il brav'uomo vede un "gentleman" vestito come lui, e ne approfitta per trattarlo come un pari suo. (243-244)

It is interesting to notice how these quotations remind us of similar observations expressed by Anna Moroni Parken in *Gli emigranti. Quattro anni al Canadà* when describing the social composition of the pioneer community she was part of. As underlined in the previous chapter, Moroni Parken viewed that illusory communal life as inevitably evolving into a more realistic hierarchical class structure (19-20). Significantly, Duliani also refers to an

initial sense of equality felt by a few naive internees, but he regards it from his own perspective, without sharing their attitude. He considers that egalitarian vision as puerile and ingenuous, and underlines his point of view with a paternalistic and indulgent tone. Moroni Parken's position is more that of the immigrant's, of one who actually envisioned that social reality and participated in that experience, even if acknowledging it later as short-lived. Duliani's position is instead more that of a writer coming from overseas and living an experience of confinement together with other immigrant men, with whom he had little in common until that moment. Both authors relate, therefore, to the immigrant experience, but from different standpoints. The common experiences of migration and internment do not prevent Duliani from being constantly regardful of the socioeconomic and cultural differences which existed among the internees:

> In questa collezione di campioni di razze, figurano tutte le professioni e tutti i mestieri. Vi sono tredici medici, , due avvocati, due notai, dieci ingegneri, quattro giornalisti, scrittori, professori di musica e musicisti, chimici ed agricoltori, agronomi e proprietari di ristoranti, albergatori e capi cuochi, camerieri e costruttori, terrazzieri ed industriali, commercianti e studenti, maestri di scuola e macchinisti, pastori e marinai, guardiani d'armento e ufficiali di marina, ex poliziotti ed ex ufficiali dell'Esercito, farmacisti ed infermieri, macellai e panettieri, tipografi e fotografi, operai e contadini, borghesi e disoccupati di professione, gente timorata e gansters; persone uscite dai Seminarii dalle Università e dai Penitenziarii. Senza contare il sindaco di una grande metropoli come Montreal – egualmente deputato; quattro Ministri Protestanti, ed un prete cattolico! (241-242)

Playing on the constrast between different professional figures and personalities, in this paragraph he briefly presents the social pyramid of the camp community, showing its particular variety. The fact that Duliani frequently makes reference to members of the Italian population who had achieved a higher social status - like doctors, entrepreneurs, and restaurateurs who were among the leaders in the community and therefore became the first

target of the RCMP in the round-up of individuals considered threats to national security - even if based on the reality of the internment, was perhaps an attempt to present to the larger audience an image of Italian immigrant men contrasting with the stereotype of the poor peasant that so often affected contacts with Canadians.

In Duliani's case, the gap in class, reflected in his constantly present awareness of the different social and economic status of each internee, is mediated by the fact that he is a *scrittore-emigrante*, who not only writes about other immigrants, but also had the opportunity to share their same painful condition and trauma. He is a *scrittore-emigrante* voicing the internment experience of other immigrants in his own personal way; while not an *emigrante-scrittore*, he is at least an *internato-scrittore*, the only one among the internees to leave a written record of that experience. The internment forced him to acquire a perspective of the life in the camp which was common to all the other men imprisoned; therefore Duliani describes that condition according to a collective view, rather than simply an individualistic one. As a writer, he was in the privileged position of having the ability and means to voice what he and his fellow internees endured. While writing mainly for his own benefit and according to his own point of view, he nevertheless intrinsically expresses a *collective imagery* that belongs principally to the migratory experience of all internees, that is, to the internees as immigrants.

In Duliani's work, the internment can be perceived as a disquieting halt and moment of impasse in the on-going migratory process, an instant in time which, in its stillness, contrasts sharply with the image of movement the history and literature of migration typically conveys:

> La sensazione che il brusco taglio prodottosi nel corso normale dell'esistenza, lo strappo violento dall'ambiente affettivo e sociale

> nel quale [noi] eravamo immersi, ha avuto per effetto di stroncare il filo del ricordo col quale il presente si congiunge al passato.... (30)

One should notice how the narrator here finds it more realistic to use a plural subject to convey a state of distress which is not his alone. The experience of the internment is so traumatizing as to alter the internees' perception of time and space. They find themselves abruptly in a new dimention of life, which at first is troubling and disquieting in its newness and artificiality. Later, a sense of sadness and humiliation, but also mutual understanding and empathy, relates Duliani to his fellow internees and creates a very special bonding among them. However, *Città senza donne* is still a first-person account; therefore Duliani's social and cultural background, as well as his personality, are constantly present, giving his portrayal of life in the camps of Petawawa and Fredericton a particular imprint. He is a participant witnessing one of the most devastating experiences for the Italian community in Canada; however, his account is also a personal one, shedding its own style, sensitivity, viewpoint and linguistic register. The objective role of witness is at times affected by his urge to express or *justify* his own personal experience.

Being both a journalist and a playwright, Duliani alternates detailed descriptions of the life in the camp with monologues and dialogues, the latter considered among the parts where he achieves his best results from a literary point of view (Salvatore 522). The hybrid nature of Duliani's work was for him a way to recount his experience documenting and representing at the same time, that is, documenting what *he* wanted and representing what *he* wanted. What meaning can be attibuted to his choices and omissions is a matter to be discussed by historians. For example, why did he give such detailed descriptions of how life was organized in almost every barrack in the camp, instead of informing the reader on the procedure authorities followed to

evaluate the internee's potential threat to Canada's security? Why was he himself kept there for forty months, when others had been released after a short period spent in the camp? Also, were all the Canadian officers so kind and humane, such perfect gentlemen tc the internees? All these questions arise while reading the memoir, showing how for Duliani the purpose of his account was not to give answers, but rather to manifest the tragic impact the internment had on a thousand human beings of different nationality, social status, education, and political affiliation.

In the context of the Italian immigrant experience in Canada *per se* in Canada, the unsettling episode of the internment as portrayed by Duliani can be considered a powerful existential metaphor of the conditions Italian immigrants had to face. This metaphor speaks to the sense of isolation and enclosure within the limits of the immigrants' own communities, as well as vis-a-vis the surrounding Canadian society. The line along which the history of Italian immigration to Canada evolves is suddenly interrupted by a circle, by the enclosure in which the Italian internees found themselves. Significantly, the same shape, a black or red circle adorns the back of their blue prison garb:

> Mi tasto. È proprio vero tutto questo? Non si tratta di un incubo? Sono io che mi trovo nella realtà, e il sogno non è forse al di là del circolo di filo di ferro spinato che ci circonda? Ho proprio vissuto prima di venire qui?... (29-30)
> Si stringono le mascelle e si finge d'essere allegri...
> Allegri anche in queste uniformi di turchino scuro, con larghi cerchi neri o rossi alle spalle, di cui gl'internati di tutte le parti del mondo son rivestiti, e che ci danno l'aspetto di sinistre maschere di carnevale. (37)[6]

After this interruption, the line or course of the immigrant's life would resume again, but in that moment of internment the circle is now part of the immigrant's psyche, enclosing his perception of the environment around him; the circle of fear of an unknown surrounding, the circle of linguistic

and social isolation. As Susan Iannucci maintained comparing Duliani's work to Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), Duliani finds himself like Moodie in the middle of the wilderness, in a prison.

> La notte, maestosa e spaventevole, scende sulla foresta nella quale abbiamo l'impressione di essere sepolti....
> La notte ha poi spento l'ultimo riflesso opalino delle acque intorpidite del povero laghetto che, solo, a un lato del paesaggio, tenta di darci l'illusione che esiste ancora un orizzonte.
> Infine, d'un sol colpo, l'ombra ha fatto sparire le migliaia di alberi drizzantisi, tutt'intorno a noi, come le mura di una gigantesca prigione senza soffitto.
> La gioia dei colori s'è definitivamente perduta nel nulla delle tenebre!
> Tragedia quotidiana della natura, ma particolarmente simbolica quella sera...
> Nulla appare più di quanto è su terra, nulla all'infuori dei raggi dei potentissimi fari elettrici, fissati sulla rete dei fili di ferro spinato che ci circondano, ed i cui pali di sostegno prendono, per un sinistro giuoco di luci, l'aspetto d'innumerevoli forche rizzate per chi sa quale impiccagione collettiva. (27-28)

Moodie wrote metaphorically about the "prison-house" entombed in the forest, and hence early Italian literature of migration to Canada finds its similarities in early Canadian literature; both narrating the experience of early immigrants and, in Duliani's case, about the sense of enclosure he felt – as Moodie did – on the same evening he arrived in camp Petawawa. It is interesting to observe how this first description of the view he received from the barrack's barred window reminds the reader not only of Moodie's depiction, but also of Moroni Parken's description of her arrival in Canada (7-9) and her feelings faced with a nocturnal view of the forest (36-37). All these scenes are, with their nocturnal and darker shades, expressions of anxiety. In Duliani's case, that inquietude, that fear of the unknown is also conveyed through images of death, such as that of being 'buried' ("sepolti") in the forest, and of the poles supporting the barbed wire and powerful lights, appearing as spectral and menacing gallows in the night.

The feeling of enclosure and isolation is similar to the one the Italian immigrant experienced in the numerous *Little Italies* he settled in. The first Italian immigrants had already endured the life of their crowded communities and of the boarding-houses, where men were forced to live in abysmal conditions without the comfort of their wives and families. What Duliani portrays in his account recalls those days, and one really questions if the life in the first immigrants' dwellings was much dissimilar from the one described. Perhaps the most charming moments in the depiction of internment are those that let the camaraderie of the immigrants come alive through the barred windows and the wired fence of imprisonment, with the sharing of common anxieties, the sense of solidarity, their ability to adapt to radically new environmental conditions, and the shared desire to be re-united one day with their families:

> Tavole di legno con larghe panche sono collocate nel mezzo delle baracche. Attorno a queste tavole si riuniscono durante la giornata gli amatori di "scopone", di "tresette" o di "briscola"... Oppure si accendono calde e vibrate discussioni che hanno l'utilità evidente di far perdere un po' di tempo...
> Ma se si vuol trovare una nota personale bisogna allontanarsi da quelle tavole....
> E in questo cantuccio ci si riunisce a gruppi di tre o quattro.... Questi intrattenimenti sviluppano un'atmosfera tepida, raccolta, irradiante d'intimità. Si scambiano convenevoli, come in un salotto; ci si fanno complimenti, ci si offrono sigarette, quando se ne hanno beninteso....
> Se qualcuno ha ricevuto "un pacco", si offrono biscotti, dolciumi, leccornie... Una tazza di caffè....
> E poco a poco, insensibilmente – dopo aver esaurito tutti i "si dice" sulle prossime "liberazioni di massa" – si comincia a sgranare il rosario delle confidenze, ci si abbandona all'angosciosa rievocazione del passato...
> – Un giorno mia moglie mi disse...
> – Una volta, mio figlio maggiore, tornato a casa dalla scuola...
> – Mi ricordo di una bella ragazza che abitava poco lontano da casa mia...
> E così di seguito...
> Finchè l'emozione sale alla gola. E nessuno dice più niente. Perchè nessuno può più parlare. (44-45)

This all-male reality inevitably presents to us images similar to the existence of the early Italian sorjourners in Canada, with their need to find comfort in each other's company, to overcome their fear of the unknown by making a social event out of any little occasion. If there were no bars on the windows, it would seem as though we were observing the life of Italian immigrants inside a boarding house at the beginning of the century. These scenes and images therefore reflect a *collective imagery* that goes beyond Duliani's individual vision and reflects more profoundly the human reality of the Italian immigrant experience, giving those descriptions the power of recalling a humanity, meaning and feelings, that belong most of all to the Italian immigrants' past.

However, as it has been observed when dealing with Samuele Turri's brief testimony, the immigrant experience was also characterized by vitality and a good sense of humor, traits that can be found also in the life at Petawawa and Fredericton. Duliani inserted in his narration numerous anecdotes (57-58, 87, 88, 103, 105-106, 113-114, 130-132, 139-140, etc.) that show how the prisoners tried to do their best in order to make their life in the camp more bearable:

> Le serate all'Ospedale, fino all'ora della chiusura della luce elettrica, erano relativamente divertenti. Salvo i casi gravi, messi nei letti all'estremità della sala, gli altri ammalati si alzavano per sedere alle tavole, attorno alle quali giocavano a scopone, a dama o agli scacchi... O ancora si raggruppavano per chiacchierare e raccontarsi storielle.... (112)
> Questo questionario quotidiano forniva tuttavia l'occasione di lanciare frizzi e scherzi sulla nostra situazione, frizzi che finivano per far ridere tutti. Per esempio uno diceva:
> – Il medico militare ha detto stamane che tutti gli internati saranno divisi in due grandi categorie.
> – Ah, ah?... – domandavano gli altri ansiosamente,
> – In quali categorie?
> – Una composta da quelli che non saranno liberati, e l'altra da quelli che rimarranno qui...
> Il buonumore col quale si accoglievano queste *boutades*, era un segno dello stato d'animo generale, migliore, in fondo, che alla superfice, che regnava nella "Città senza donne". (116)

As Duliani observes, the internees were trying to deal with their long imprisonment by humoring themselves in whatever way they could. Their social life was relatively full, with the organization of banquets, concerts, movie shows, sports and the like, all events that were aimed at rendering their existence less painful. In any case, one should appreciate Duliani's own sense of humor in depicting lighter moments, effectively conveying through dialogue the atmosphere present in the barracks during those social gatherings.

Several observations could be made about the title of Duliani's personal account, *Città senza donne*. The title reflects a disappointing tendency on the part of the author to reduce all the problems the imprisonment had caused to the impact it had on the internees' family life. The two terms *Città* e *donne* contrast with each other: if the latter gives a sense of warmth and fullfilled life missing in the camp, how could we really have a *city* without women? If we can surmise that in Duliani's view the term *Città* was used to indicate how civil life in the internment camp was, that same word has on today's reader a rather different effect, expressing the irony of a form of social organization based less on civility and more on conflict and constriction. What is important to notice is that the absence of women, peculiar to the life of this camp community, had already been endured by early immigrants, who re-live the sense of exposure and danger felt outside the protective family circle, finding themselves instead in an enclosure that contains but also isolates them, separating them from the rest of society (Harney, "Men without Women"). In the internees' case, this creates an inner turmoil and restlessness which contrasts with the static, routine life in the camp. *Senza Donne* literally means without the presence of a woman to comfort them, but also without their

children, their ordinary everyday life and serenity: all things that had already been endured by many of the Italian workers in Canada.

It is interesting to observe how in the introduction to the book (11-17), after explaining the nature of his "racconto ...vissuto" and expressing his reaction to the psychological distress the separation from their families had on these men (as well as giving a favourable evaluation of the way they had been treated) Duliani uses the metaphor of the traveller who has to pass customs, to represent the situation he found himself in:

> Quando medito infatti sulla mia avventura, mi fo l'effetto di un viaggiatore che giunge ad una stazione di frontiera. Tutti devono scendere dal treno per la visita dei bagagli.
> Davanti ai doganieri, mostrando la mia valigia, ho detto con certezza:
> – Niente da dichiarare!
> I doganieri mi hanno detto:
> – Può darsi che non abbiate nulla... Ma ad ogni buon conto, per misura di precauzione, passate nell'Ufficio accanto, per una verifica completa...
> – Ma...
> – Mille scuse! La legge vuol così!...
> E bisogna rispettare la legge.
> Allora sono entrato "nell'Ufficio accanto"...
> La verifica si è prolungata... Un'ora... Ventiquatt'ore... Quaranta mesi!...
> Ma adesso che la verifica è fatta, ed è finita, e ch'essa è completa; come sono contento di poter circolare liberamente, con la mia valigetta alla mano!
> Nessuno ha più il diritto di sospettarmi! La valigia non contiene assolutamente nulla di "proibito", nulla che possa nuocere a questo bel paese che amo, e che sono sul punto di adottare definitivamente per mio! (16-17)

The internee is like the migrant, the traveller who is just trying to go along his straight path and is stopped at the customs office to disclose what he has in his mind, interrupting the line of an on-going movement. In describing the sudden interruption of his journey, Duliani does not forget to underline his total innocence or inoffensiveness, his compliance to the Canadian law, as well as his love for this country, against which he does not feel any resentment for the past, but only love and hope for the future. It seems that the function of

the introduction is mainly to set the tone of his memoir, letting the reader realize immediately how his account was not an attempt to protest unfair treatment by the Canadian government, but quite the opposite, a way of reconsolidating a relationship with the government and other Canadians that seems to be perceived as damaged by the stigma of the internment.

There are also several direct references to the immigrant experience, showing how it permeates not only the actual life in the camp, but more interestingly and intrinsically, the imagery that is present in its portrayal, and those images can be either painful or entertaining. While in the foreword to the Italian edition Duliani declares his intention to complete a book on the 'problem' as he defines it, of the "Italiani d'America" (24), later he refers to the camp dormitory as the hold of a gigantic immigrant ship, where loud discussions and card games are mingled with moments of angst and sorrow:

> "Quando tutti siamo coricati e, nella baracca, non c'è più altra luce all'infuori del riflesso dei fari elettrici esterni, si ha vagamente l'impressione di trovarsi in un gigantesco vagoneletto o, meglio ancora, nella stiva di un bastimento di emigrati...(44).

Here one can conprehend how the immigrant experience is not simply shaping their material life inside the camp, but also how the only chronicler of the internment adopts migratory images to fully convey the nature of the experience of confinement. Italian prisoners are able to mold the harsh aspect of the camp by tending vegetable gardens and creating "quattro o cinque terreni di boccie [sic]" (47) as they had done in their Little Italies. So similar is the internee's ordeal to that of the immigrant's that there are many moments that seem to be an explicit reminder of the immigrant condition and of how each internee had experienced similar deprivations before:

> Questi [prigionieri], formando un gruppo, andranno al bosco ad abbattere alberi. Quelli, anch'essi a gruppi se ne andranno su autocarri ad una quindicina di miglia dal Campo a lavorare alla

> ricostruzione di un ponte. Altri si contenteranno di mansioni più modeste. (38)

This image remains impressed in the reader's mind as describing more than the internees' condition, the hard life many Italian labourers had to endure when working at clearing the wilderness or constructing new infrastructures, such as railroad lines. It also refers to the profits the Canadian National Railway made even from the internment by employing camp labour. Other parallels between the immigrant and internment experiences are provided by the recurring image of people coming and going, as in the migration process (46, 264-265, etc.); the initial disorientation after arriving at the camp: "Sono io che mi trovo nella realtà, ed il sogno non è forse al di là del circolo di filo di ferro spinato che ci circonda? Ho proprio vissuto prima di venire qui?" (30); the adapting to a novel unsettling reality, where anguish is contained by the distracting new world condition (47-48); the uncertainty of their future and need to *arrangiarsi* (56, 62, 114); the suffering of their women left alone to wait for them, and worries about their wives' and daughters' moral integrity (213-237); the charity to people who got ill, but also selfishness of others, as well as the function of the camp hospital similar to that of the pharmacy in the home village, where people met to have a chat and get information (84-120); the comforting role of music and popular songs such as "non ti scordar di me" (198); the creation of their own newspaper, *Il Bollettino* (263-264); the molding of the camp according to common customs, such as the growing of a vegetable garden or the creation of *bocce* fields (46-47); the sad psychological effects of depression and the inability of some to adapt to the new environment (119); the importance of food on the Italian character and the obsession of not having enough to eat (126-127, 129-130); and as already discussed, the hope that living in a new world, old class distinctions would be

overcome, as in the camp where everyone was wearing the same blue prison garb with the red circle on the back (37).

Immigration was imprinted upon the life, the psyche, and the physical endurance of these *immigrati-internati*:

> La maggior parte degli uomini nudi che scorgo stesi al sole, appartengono ad una generazione usata, già sul declino. Parecchi fra di essi non hanno avuto un'infanzia felice. Giunti giovanissimi al Canada, coi loro genitori emigrati, trenta o quarant'anni or sono... hanno lavorato duramente prima di riuscire... Vi sono qui degli uomini ricchissimi, che hanno penato come bestie da soma all'età in cui i loro piccoli compagni andavano a scuola. La povertà segna con un suggello indelebile. Lascia traccie che gli anni non cancellano. (73)

In this description of the immigrants, Duliani seems to have acquired a particularly profound insight into the reality of the Italians in Canada, of the pain and struggle they had to face when working in, as Samuele Turri puts it, "la terra dei $ tre dollari." This represents a valuable quality in Duliani's portrayal of the internment: his ability to depict those men both as individuals and in choral scenes of significant effectiveness. The tribulation of immigration is now before him, and he can understand it because he had never been so close to it:

> Uno spettacolo attristante fu quello dei marinai siciliani, napoletani, ed in generale, del Sud dell'Italia allorchè gli Alleati cominciarono lo sbarco nelle regioni abitate dalle loro famiglie. Fino allora essi ricevevano notizie de (sic) casa ogni tre mesi per il tramite della Croce Rosa (sic) Internazionale, ed anche a mezzo di parenti abitanti gli Stati Uniti. Ma dal momento in cui le operazioni militari effero (sic) principio non ricevettero più nulla. Per essi l'ora della posta era diventata una specie di supplizio. Li vedevo che uscivano dalla baracca e si allontanavano cupi e silenziosi, come per sottrarsi ad una prova superiore alle loro forze. (173)

Duliani is totally aware of how the war has worsened the suffering of emigration. In this respect, he always shows in his writing to be particularly considerate of his fellow internees' feelings and privacy, referring to them by

their profession and where they came from, rather then revealing their identity (Kuitunen 513).

Compared to the works in this literature already dealt with, *Città senza donne* attests to the continuity of some characteristics and themes present in this original production. It can be considered a *Bildungsroman*, because it manifests the inner, painful and profound transformation Duliani and his fellow 'comrads' had to undergo as immigrants and internees: "questo sordo lavorio di trasformazione che stava operandosi in noi" (48). The men we meet in this account are not innerly the same men they were before the internment. By virtue of its melancholy and regretful tone, the narration evokes the tenor of those days, recounting those past events whose sad effects are still present. However, the representation of that experience is also affected by later considerations, as we have seen in Moroni Parken's depiction of her immigrant experience. In Duliani nature is also never depicted as a monster; on the contrary it is appreciated for its beauty, vastness, the changing of the seasons, the wild animals, and the comforting role its presence had. And it is depicted as the call of a freer and more natural existence than the one led in the camp (36, 66, 216, etc.).

Duliani's book has been contested in the past, because it is difficult to express an opinion on his writing without taking into consideration its many omissions and its personal viewpoint. But it is worth reading apart from the 'facts' behind the internment. Under its plain and easy-to-read surface lies the inner turmoil of this varied humanity, the profound intimate conflict of Italian immigrants that only rarely are we able to observe so closely. Through the barred windows of Duliani's description and the imagery of migration it evokes, we can attempt to understand how these people really were and

glimpse at their lives as immigrants, seeing how difficult it was to be an Italian in Canada in those times.

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[1] Mario Duliani was born in the heart-shaped peninsula of Istria (in today's Croatia) in 1885. He began his career as a journalist and playwrght very young, writing for *Il Secolo* of Milan at the age of seventeen and four one-act plays presented in two *Milanese* theatres a few years later. In 1907 he moved to France, becoming later the editor-in-chief of *Il Secolo*'s Paris bureau, as well as foreign correspondent for *Il Messaggero* of Rome. During the period he remained in Paris he also dedicated himself to the writing of eight French-language plays, including *Le règne d'Adrianne* which received the Prix Brieux from the Académie Française. It was in 1936 that he moved to Canada, thanks to the sponsorship of Eugène Berthiaume, Canadian consul in Paris and editor of Montreal French-language daily *La Presse*. In 1937 he founded the French-language wing of the Montreal Repertory Theatre. Between 1940 and 1943 he was interned in the camp of Petawawa, Ontario and later in that of Fredericton, New Brunswick. The autobiographical novel on his internment - *La ville sans femmes* - reflects his experience over those years. He died in Montreal in 1954 (Mazza 158).

[2] It is hard to quantify how many Italians changed their names. According to Kenneth Bagnell scores of them did so: "men who had been Rossini became Ross, Riccioni became Richards, Giccomo became Jackman and others going back beyond even the memory of their Italian past, became Smith and Jones" (101).

[3] Duliani could reasonably expect a warmer reception for his account in French Canada than in English-speaking Canada, since French Canadians had been overwhelmingly opposed to the country's participation in World War II and to conscription, just as they had been during the First World War. English Canadians, on the other hand, saw Canada's participation in the world wars as part of its obligations to the motherland.

[4] It should be observed how this quotation shows the influence of the French language on Duliani's writing with the expression, "le dottrine le più diametralmente opposte."

[5] The Roman, vulgar expression 'Me ne frego!' [I don't give a damn!] was well-liked by Gabriele D'Annunzio and the fascists, in part, because of its allusive meaning. It was D'Annunzio's idea to have this motto written on the banners of the legionaries in Fiume, Croatia (1919-20) with the meaning 'I don't give a damn of the dangers, of death.' During that crisis, Fiume had asked to be annexed to Italy, therefore the Italian poet and novelist occupied the city with the help of a column of volunteers and the more-or-less overt support of the Italian military in the area. With the treaty of Rapallo, Fiume was declared a free city, but D'Annunzio defiantly did not accept the agreement, so the government evacuated the legionaries by force. From that moment on the expression became a favourite one of fascist *squadristi* during the twenty years of Mussolini's dictatorship.

Even if we know that Duliani was in France at the time, one cannot avoid noticing how these events took place near Duliani's hometown, probably leaving a particular impression on him for their political significance.

[6] Duliani explains how the black or red circles on the back of their garbs were intended to aid soldiers when aiming their weapons at internees if they tried to escape.

Chapter three

In the Eyes of a Woman

Whenever we consider the image of the Italian immigrant woman as portrayed by second-generation authors in the recent Italian-Canadian literature in English language, one of the books that comes immediately to our mind - besides *Lives of the Saints* by Nino Ricci - is Frank Paci's *Black Madonna*. The vision of the Italian immigrant woman conveyed in this novel is particularly powerful with its darkness, silence and despair, and effectively expresses a perception by second-generation writers of the character and role the Italian woman played in the settling of her family in Canada. Especially for those not directly in contact with the reality of the immigrant experience, the image of the older black-clad lady, watchful but reserved, and slightly hunched by the weight of years of obedience and resignation, still affects stereotypically the vision of the Italian immigrant woman in Canada. If second-generation women writers, such as Mary Di Michele and Gianna

Patriarca, have expressed in their poetry their difficulty in accepting a cultural background which considered women as less or inferior, the contribution of post-war Italian immigrant wives, mothers, sisters and daughters to the social mobility and well-being of their families has been underlined in historical and sociological studies, which have showed how these women were able to break the traditional mould of dependent, mild-spoken and reserved caregivers inside the home and participate in the process of socioeconomic betterment of their families (Iacovetta; Sturino "Role")[1]. More recently, several publications on Italian-Canadian literature have underlined the particular merits and characteristics of the literary production by women of Italian background showing how these writers have considerably participated in the literary and cultural espression of the ethnic and immigrant experience, with specific reference to women's condition and point of view (Pivato, *Echo* 151-194; Tuzi; De Franceschi)[2].

However, even though these images and investigations refer undoubtedly to the reality of the immigrant experience for the majority of first- or second- generation Italian women, it is time for scholars in Italian-Canadian studies to recognize the variety of experiences and contributions characterizing the Italian cultural presence in this country also in its feminine expression, in order to avoid the repetitiveness that has characterized recent research. The interpretation and evaluation of the Italian-Canadian literature in any language has for the most part followed the contours of ethnicity, generation and gender when, in fact, sociocultural and especially class differences and distinctions deeply affect the writing of any immigrant. Future studies should take into account the diverse social, economic, educational and regional backgrounds of the Italian immigrants, in order to better reflect an experience that is much more complex and

heterogeneous than it is usually understood to be. Such variety and diversity is reflected in the literature under investigation and finds expression in the literary production in Italian by women.

First-generation Italian women contributed to the writing of the Italian literature of migration to this country in an original and multifaceted way, testifying how their partaking in the cultural life of this ethnic group was not limited to the domestic and family sphere, to the passing on of old rural customs, traditions and values to their Canadianized and urbanized children. They were also able to express a vision of their own of the immigrant experience, which, while showing the diversity of their roles, backgrounds and experiences, significantly completes and enriches its portrayal by male as well as by second-generation writers, voicing the inner inquietude and profound impact such experience had on any immigrant in its more universal and human dimension.

It is therefore of great significance to attempt here to pinpoint the character and motifs of such literary contribution, underlining the originality of the female perspective and the particular sensitivity with which the migratory process has been explored by Italian women writers in Canada. If the texts analyzed so far were mainly based on the memory and direct autobiographical account of the author's experience in this country, most of the publications considered in this chapter are instead true literary endeavours, testifing to the creativity of the immigrant as one of the outcomes of his or her migratory experience. Although the following authors were in part motivated by their life history and often took inspiration from moments and episodes of their own personal journey, still they have attempted to go beyond a strictly autobiographical account and narrate stories in which the realism of their novels replaces the factual account of the works analyzed in

the previous chapters, nevertheless poignantly reflecting an intense universal experience.

1. The *popular* fiction of Elena Maccariti Randaccio

Under the pseudonyms of Elena Albani and Elena MacRan is conceiled the identity of one single writer: Elena Maccariti Randaccio[3]. Under the name of Elena Albani she published her first novel, *Canada, mia seconda patria* in 1958, followed in 1976 by *The Sound of a Harp*, novel originally written in Italian and translated into English, and by *Diario di una emigrante* in 1979, both published under the pseudonym Elena MacRan. Our investigation here will focus on the two novels published in Italian.

When approaching the novels by Elena Randaccio one can immediately perceive the lightness, fluency and readability of her prose, as if writing to her came as an effortless, pleasurable task. Her narrative is much different from the laboured and willful style and technique adopted, as we shall see, by Maria J. Ardizzi in her novels, as well as from the autobiographical tone characterizing Matilde Torres's personal account. Especially with regards to *Canada, mia seconda patria* Elena Randaccio's writing seems to take inspiration from the simple desire to tell and write an entertaining and captivating story to a non-demanding audience, without any eagerness to produce a *magnum opus* expressing an overtly pervasive authorial presence or imposing narrating voice. Nevertheless, even though her style is characterized by straightforwardness and simplicity, she is able to show in her two novels a certain degree of versatility and adaptability to different social subjects and situations. In fact, although the *popular* character of Randaccio's writing is particularly manifest in her first novel *Canada, mia seconda patria*, her second

novel published in Italian language, *Diario di una emigrante*, is narrated in a more convincing and realistic way, even though in the latter her recounting is in particular characterized by plainness, clarity and fluidity[4].

In Randaccio's first novel *Canada, mia seconda patria* the tone and style of her recounting clearly recall the most popular production in Italian literature - not written by acclaimed literary authors but created by more commercially successful writers - those *romanzi rosa* such as Liala's, whose romantic novels were based on easy sentimentalism and happy endings[5]. Liala's numerous books were a typical example of the influence Gabriele D'Annunzio's style and taste had on later literary popular production, a snobbish and mythicized style which through the pretentious and elitist works of its imitators (such as Guido da Verona) reached a *petit bourgeois* audience as well as a less educated one made of seamstresses and typists, as the readers of Liala were. It is interesting to recall in this respect that Randaccio's lengthy first novel was published by the publishing house Sirio, which had specialized in the publication of romance texts (Pivato "Italian-Canadian" 571). Also, the fact that she preferred to publish under a pseudonym reflects a tendency typical of the more popular literary production.

Both of the novels by Randaccio here reviewed are centred on the life experiences of two young Italian women coming to Canada, but the protagonists come from completely different sociocultural backgrounds. The different lifestyle of the main characters seems to be deliberately reflected not only in the two plots, but also in the tone and ways of narration adopted in the representation of each story. In *Canada, mia seconda patria* the protagonist Claudia Moreni is a very young woman of middle class background from Ferrara who followed her entrepeneurial husband to Canada in March 1940, a few months before Italy's declaration of war (2). Her story does not reflect at

all what is usually considered the typical experience of an immigrant woman and this does not seem to be the aim of Randaccio's writing in this novel. Even if coming to Canada to follow her husband, as many immigrant women did in real life, Claudia is accompanied by an old maid who will stay to take care of her and her baby girl, especially after her husband has to return quickly to Italy to supervise his business before the international situation degenerates and leads to Italy's participation in the war. When Italy enters the war in June 1940 all communications between Claudia and Michele are interrupted. In Canada, Claudia does not have any relatives or friends, but neither does she have the preoccupation of having to support herself and her family in her husband's absence. Her husband Michele has left her with a steady income from real estate investments in Canada and therefore she can lead a comfortable, though lonely, life. The story in fact begins in Montreal in 1944, after years during which Claudia has not received any news from or about her husband. She then tries to get out of her state of sheltered isolation by taking up a job as a typist just for the enjoyment of it, even though she has never worked in her life and does not need the money. After an initial episode of morally-unpleasant misunderstanding with the unmarried owner of the company she works for, her naiveness, innocence, sadness and beauty will attract the proprietor himself. After leaving her job she is able to widen her circle of friends thanks to Bruce and his family, becoming involved in the social life of the Montreal elite, with parties, dinners, country residences and, let's not forget, horse riding! The melodrama of her feeling dangerously attracted to her wealthy Anglo-Canadian friend but, at the same time, still loving the silent ghost of a husband to whom she is still married, makes her take the risky and adventurous decision of going back to Italy as a clandestine, when the country is still at war, to reunite finally with her husband[6]. Of

course, Michele was killed earlier in a bomb raid. Having to face the tragedy of the war alone, her only comfort is to see her native land and her beloved zia Stefania before her aunt dies, leaving Claudia as the heiress of her aunt's large estate. But even at a distance Bruce has kept a loving, watchful and preoccupied eye on her, and reaches her in Italy to help her overcome the tragic consequences of the war and be forever at her side once back in Canada.

As one can see, Randaccio's first novel was not intended to represent the real, ordinary experience of an immigrant woman in Canada, but instead to give expression to a lower/middle-class woman's wildest dreams, according to the popular romantic literature of the time. The novel is indisputably based on the representation of a way of life which was exactly the opposite of the one led by an Italian immigrant woman, a fantasy characterized by no hard work, no financial concerns, no extended family ties or obligations, no hardships or tribulations. Its purpose was therefore not to give a realistic representation but rather a fantastic and entertaining one, based more on common dreams and reveries than on the harsh reality of immigration for the majority of Italian women in Canada. Having likely been intended for a less-demanding or less-educated female readership, either among young women such as seamstresses and typists in Italy or immigrants in Canada, the novel gives a version of Canada as the dreamland of romantic opportunity, according to the taste of so much popular romantic literature, as well as of the romantic comedies and dramas typical of the Italian cinema as well as Hollywood's production of the '30s and '40s[7].

Therefore, one would ask oneself whether this novel should be considered among the contributions to the Italian literature of migration to Canada and among the texts usually listed in Italian-Canadian literature in any language. Although its subject matter does not represent the reality of the

immigrant experience and could displease or even irritate a reader who is aware of the difficulties characterizing the journey to Canada, it should be acknowledged nonetheless that, as the work of an Italian immigrant author, *Canada, mia seconda patria* is still a product of the popular culture that immigrant women knew and brought with them. In fact, it represents the literary effort of an educated woman who came to this country and had both the skills and the cultural background to create an attractive fable, i.e. a fictionalized version of the immigrant experience according to the content, taste and style of popular readings such as the *romanzi rosa*, to which at least some immigrant women had been already exposed. When reviewing novels of this kind, the scholar should be able to comprehend their meaning not simply in terms of their literary quality, which is undeniably minor, but more in sociological terms. We are, in fact, dealing with a kind of literature which is placed twice at the margins of traditional, conventional literary art. It is produced both geographically and socioculturally at the borders of the officially acclaimed Italian literature. This popular form of literature, also referred to as *letteratura di massa* or *paraletteratura* is very seldom recognized in volumes on Italian literary history[8]. If we were to adopt a critical, de-centralized and post-colonial approach to this sort of popular writing, taking into account theories and positions already expressed in the field of ethnic minority writing and the *letteratura dell'emigrazione* as conceived since the publication of Marchand's volume, then also *Canada, mia seconda patria* should be accepted and recognized for its *meaning*, i.e. as one literary and sociocultural expression of the Italian immigrant woman's presence in Canada, an expression prompted by the pleasure of writing in Italian, the recollection of the homeland and the fantasizing about the new land, still in

the hope of voicing a free inspiration nurtured by her immigration experience.

Randaccio's second novel in Italian language, *Diario di una emigrante* (published in 1979) represents, as the title suggests, the story that most refers to a real immigrant woman's experience in Canada; the main character in the novel distances herself from the stereotypical image of the passive and obedient wife and mother. Between the publication of her first and last novel, the latter published after she had been in Canada for almost 30 years, the author seems to have been inevitably affected by her long stay in this country, during which she was able to better understand, through her own experience and that of other women, the character of the Italian immigrant journey to this land. Realism replaces here the fictional world of her first novel, presenting the story of Climene, a young woman who, like Claudia in *Canada, mia seconda patria*, has to follow her beloved from the northern region of Emilia Romagna to Canada before the beginning of World War II. However, the regional origin of the two female protagonists is the only characteristics which these characters have in common and share with the author.

Climene comes in fact from a very poor family of farmers who live in the remote hamlet of Paraviere, to which the novel is dedicated. She gets engaged to a respectable emigrant from her *paese*, Adelmo, who comes back home from Canada to find a woman to marry. She will leave her native village to join him in Montreal, where he has already returned, but without revealing in her letters to him or her family that she is pregnant with his baby. Once in Canada, she learns that just before her arrival he had to marry an Italian-Canadian girl who also got pregnant. For Climene a beautiful dream that nearly became true is instead turning into an almost unbearable tragedy: she

is poor, she cannot go back to Italy, she does not have any relatives there to help her and her only friend is a southern Italian girl, Catina, whom she met during her voyage. So she decides to stay in Canada, work as a maid to support herself and give her child up for adoption. With the help of Catina and her family she is able to overcome this tragic moment and find a southern Italian husband by proxy, Beppe, with whom she will have two children and an economically successful life. In fact, she will work hard first at their farm and then at a motel she decides to purchase while her husband is interned during World War II. After the war, life for her and her family brings economic stability and serenity, even though Climene constantly reminisces of her lost love and child and dreams of returning to her native village. It is only with a return journey to Paraviere that she finally realizes that her family's life is now in Canada: she accepts it, but after her children's marriages and her husband's death she finally returns to Paraviere, to spend her last years on her mountains.

Although this *Bildungsroman* was published in Italy, in its conception and subject it seems to have been thought of mainly for an Italian-Canadian audience made up mostly of women aware of the immigrant experience (although the novel could effectively help a non-immigrant to understand the reality of that experience). Even though not every incident in the plot represents ordinary occurrences in the life of an Italian immigrant woman in Canada, nevertheless Climene's story is so far the depiction of that experience in a literary work that in its simplicity and unpretentiousness most realistically portrays the life of such a woman, effectively adhering to her disposition, sensitivity and psychology. What makes Randaccio's story so believable is the effective combination of the subject she presents with the means of her representation, letting her own voice successfully become the

voice of the protagonist, creating a character who shares a common immigrant experience with the author, but nevertheless stands on her own as a work of imagination, without any overtly autobiographical connotation. The author appropriately chose to narrate her story in the first person, giving to her recounting a sense of immediacy and intimacy characteristic of a diary. If on the one hand art usually tries to transcend real life, on the other this fictionalized representation of an immigrant woman's life ends up being not so far from reality. Here is how the novel starts:

> Io sono nata in una piccola, sconosciuta frazione dell'Appennino. Sono poche case con la Chiesa parrocchiale, a tre vallate di distanza, la scuola, fino alla quinta elementare, di fianco alla Chiesa. Più vicina a noi della Chiesa parrocchiale è l'Abbazia antica di Monteveglio sul ciglio dei calanchi, con il piccolo Cimitero accanto, in declivio. Noi andavamo a Messa all'Abbazia perché non vi era da scendere e salire il monte, ma solo da percorrere la cresta dei calanchi e molti dei nostri morti erano sepolti là. (5)

The reader can immediately notice how this fictionalized autobiography is based on the memory of the narrator's life journey, a journey that in its circular movement will bring her back at the end of her novel to her home village.

As in many other true accounts by immigrants, the story starts with a description of Paraviere and the preference of presenting the protagonist's experience in the first person gives the recounting a sense of realism and sincerity. The recollection of past events is effectively portrayed in simple and essential images as if impressed in Climene's mind. This is probably the strongest aspect of Randaccio's portrayal: we see both Italy and Canada through the eyes and words of an immigrant woman, we see who and what have left an indelible mark on the protagonist's memory, without any attempt to present those images in an over-elaborate way. Through the presentation of this woman's life as a first-person account, the reader becomes implicitly a

participant in her story-telling as her distant and silent confidant, as a diary with which she can share secrets not known even by other characters in the story and reveal the suffering and inquietude hidden behind her image of a strong and determined woman.

The introductory paragraph quoted above can be perceived also as an image as summarizing some of the elements and motifs which will be recurrent and at the basis of Climene's account: there is her native village, constant reminder of her peasant origin and of the 'soil she is made of', to which she will always want to return; there is the parish, centre of the social life in the village, in which she seems not to take part, being more an observer and outsider rather than a participant; there is the school, symbol of her brief childhood and the *calanchi*, those steep mountainous furrows, symbol of the joyful moments in her early life; there is the abbey, symbol of her mother's love and devotion; and the small cemetery, where she and Adelmo will be buried, back together in their own land. Either in Italy or in Canada, this image will always form the transparent background in Climene's narration.

As one can see, the autobiographical character of this literature continues to be presented either in a real or fictionalized form, but there are other aspects of the Italian literature of migration which find expression in Randaccio's novel. As a truthful representation of the immigrant experience, the prevailing peasant origin of the Italian immigrants to Canada is here represented through the example of a woman who, like many in real life, had to start helping on the family farm at a very young age, and was forced to abandon elementary school: "Bruno e Torquato, i due fratelli più giovani, cominciarono ad andare a scuola quando io smisi. Li vedevo partire la mattina presto con Edmea e mi veniva da piangere. Ma io dovevo aiutare mamma e papà

e su quei dirupi anche due braccia giovani erano preziose". (12; also 5-6, 8-9). The motifs behind the high levels of illiteracy among Italian immigrants in Canada finds here a simple but effective representation. The first pages in the novel effectively convey the particular bonding existing between the peasant family and the natural environment surrounding it, a relationship not merely instrumental to their subsistence but also pacing their existence through the changing of seasons and other natural events: "Gli avvenimenti più importanti della nostra vita continuarono ad essere le nascite dei vitelli ed i raccolti". (12) Seasons not only regulated their work in the fields, but also influenced Climene's moods and feelings:

> Ricordo che alle volte, mentre sedevo su un sasso che dominava la valle, pensavo a come sarei andata via volentieri, oltre i monti, verso i grandi orizzonti pieni di cielo. D'inverno soprattutto lo pensavo spesso. D'estate invece ero molto felice. Cominciava la mia felicità con i ciliegi in fiore, continuava tra i fiori ed i frutti fino al tempo che le foglie delle viti diventavano rosse. Cominciava con le rondini, ecco, che volavano torno torno l'aia, scivolavano nei dirupi, risalivano nel cielo. D'autunno si raccoglievano sui fili in tante. Era molto triste. (6)

Already at a young age, facing a life made of hard work, poverty and sacrifices such as leaving school, Climene finds herself day-dreaming of going beyond the circle of mountains embracing her to reach those "orizzonti pieni di cielo," a description of what lies beyond her valley that already anticipates her migration to Canada, a land indeed of wide horizons and skies. Although the sense of bonding with her land, with the soil, will never abandon her, the description of the cyclical succession of seasons shows how that same land could be perceived differently according to the different moments in her life and the different seasonal light projected on it: the happy luminosity of the warm and glowing summer or the sad, grey and gloomier light of autumn and winter. Nevertheless, when thinking of her village as an immigrant in Canada, her sense of nostalgia illuminates it with a different light, making it

become a place of the heart and soul: "D'inverno lassù soffiava molto vento, ma d'estate si stava freschi, e ci pareva che ci fosse un po' di aria del Paradiso." (8) As with the reality of many Italian peasant immigrants, who tried to recreate their gardens in the new land as a way of mantaining their bond with nature and a habit that was always part of them, later in Montreal, once married with children, Climene will decide with her husband to purchase a farm outside the city, where she can continue to work and live in the natural environment that most suits her (55-56): "ero nata contadina e sapevo che la terra non tradisce mai." (62)

The freshness of the few pages on Climene's childhood is even more evident through the adoption of a child's point of view, when describing the patterns and events that most characterized her early life as a peasant girl in Paraviere. Randaccio effectively transmits the sense of playful enjoyment on the mountainous farmland and how children perceived the events taking place around them: "Papà non era molto religioso e non andava a messa. Mamma invece era religiosissima.... Aveva anche insegnato il Catechismo in Parrocchia e noi sapevamo di Dio molte cose che gli altri non sapevano e, a scuola, in religione non abbiamo mai deluso mamma." (9) The sense of ingenuity and candor is ably expressed in this paragraph as in others, even though Randaccio's plainness of style verges sometimes on over-simplification. Although Climene's point of view will be coherent in the novel through her life experiences, Randaccio keeps the personal unity of the first-person narrator consistent through the different stages in her life, from childhood and adulthood to old age. It is Climene who looks back at her own life journey, reminiscing what she was as a child and young woman.

The reality of emigration is introduced fairly early in the novel (17), when Climene, already 27 years old - quite late for the customs of the time and

place - gets engaged to Adelmo, an emigrant to Canada. Until her engagement, Climene had lived the life of any young woman in rural society who did not get married, and was becoming the spinster dutifully available for her family's needs (18). The description of her life before meeting Adelmo is in fact a saddening representation of a single woman's condition in the peasant society:

> Io ero ormai una ragazza di vent'anni e, dalla finestra sulla nostra casa sul monte, cominciavo a seguire gli amori delle mie coetanee. Molte erano fidanzate da alcuni anni. Io invece non avevo nessuno. I miei erano molto rigidi e non mi avevano permesso di andare mai ai balli in paese e neppure nelle cascine all'epoca dei raccolti. Eravamo anche, come sapevo, molto poveri. Ero, me ne ero convinta, non bella, né florida, né loquace. Mi sentivo invecchiare senza sentirmi donna. Eppure sapevo di essere brava. Ero capace nei campi, come un uomo, in casa sapevo fare di tutto: cucire, cucinare, fare il pane, lavorare a maglia e filare la lana e la canapa. Ma nessuno si faceva vivo sul nostro monte e nel mio cuore. In Parrocchia ero la peggio vestita e gli uomini, immobili dalla loro parte, guardavano le altre. Fuori dalla Chiesa, gambe in spalla, riprendevo la via del ritorno senza che uno sguardo o un complimento mi seguisse. (13-14)

For a young woman who was neither attractive nor rich, it was difficult to find a husband; her parents had also made life difficult for her because of their strict interpretation of social conventions, reducing even further her chances of socialization. This aspect of Climene's youth reflects a pattern of behaviour that was quite common in Italian families, either before or after immigration, which, in Climene's case, helps the reader-confidant understand her psychological state when meeting Adelmo. Emigration could mean for her a chance to escape from the social pressure and environment which is making her life unhappy, besides the poverty she lives in. That social pressure can be considered one of the most common motivations for a woman for emigrating. Observers commonly view the material betterment of the family as the main factor behind emigration, but social and psychological circumstances also play an important role, especially for a woman. Very few women could decide about emigrating on their own: the majority left their home village or town to follow

their relatives, mainly husbands, fiances and fathers, on whom they were forced to be dependent. As Climene herself says, a woman has to get married ("una donna deve sposarsi" 51), and in order to do so she could be influenced to accept the reality of emigration.

It is also interesting to observe how, according to the peasant and immigrant mentality, all her abilities of hard worker and caregiver - to be appreciated by Adelmo, and later by Beppe, who in Canada need a strong and reliable woman able to face the hardships of the immigrant's life - are presented in Climene's own words in a truthful, albeit disagreeable listing inconsiderate of her as a woman and person. This description of her 'good' qualities reflects a way of looking at herself and a mentality that truly dominated in Italian rural society and was shared by both sexes, based on a consideration of the practical ways in which a woman could contribute to the well-being of her family, taking into account what she could give rather than who she was. That pragmatism becomes more admissible when Climene describes the qualities necessary in an male emigrant's woman:

> Come è uso frequentissimo dell'emigrante operaio, Adelmo Toschi aveva deciso di sposarsi al paese d'origine. Secondo, appunto, l'uso, chiedeva ai suoi di cercare la ragazza. Bella possibilmente, brava e capace innanzi tutto.
>
> L'emigrante ha la vita dura e solitaria. Una donna diventa il suo mondo, una roccia sulla quale issare la sua vita, uno sfogo per il morale e per il fisico, un aiuto, un conforto, un incoraggiamento, il principio dello scopo della sua condizione di emigrante. Occorre che quella roccia sia forte e non crolli. Quindi bella sì, scriveva Adelmo, possibilmente; brava, seria e capace innanzi tutto. (17)

But even here, when a woman's fundamental importance in an emigrant's life is recognized, it is viewed as instrumental to the emigrant's well-being: she plays a significant role in her husband's life, but still as his caregiver and provider. Nevertheless, this description of the position assumed by a woman in the immigrant process deserves to be underlined for its veracity and

profoundness, realistically describing the important human part played by almost all Italian women in Canada.

The reality of an Italian woman's immigrant experience finds expression also in Randaccio's description of Climene's voyage to Canada. From the moment of her departure from home and later from the port of Genoa up to her arrival in Montreal, we can observe how that important voyage was lived and viewed by a woman. Some scenes allow the reader to view how aspects of the immigrant journey as described by historians could be experienced in real life: the farewell to the family, both to her mother at home and her father at the port, are intense moments of suffering, as well as excitement (31-33); the life on the big ship, where immigrant women joined together with a sense of common apprehension and solidarity, is effectively portrayed in the description of life inside the cabin:

> Nella mia cabina eravamo in quattro. C'era una sposa italo-americana che era venuta in Italia a trovare i parenti ed era molto pratica di navi e ci insegnò diverse cose. L'altra era una vecchia madre che andava a raggiungere i figli a Toronto. La terza veniva a Montreal e si chiamava Catina. Erano tutte del sud dell'Italia e più anziane di me. La sposa aveva vestiti vistosi e molti gioielli finti. La vecchia madre e Catina erano sempre vestite di nero. Quando non c'era la sposa la vecchia madre si toglieva le scarpe perché non era abituata a portarle. Aveva l'aria triste e persa e teneva sempre il Rosario tra le mani. Catina era grassottella, allegra, affettuosa. Andava presso suo fratello che aveva una grande famiglia di otto persone. Forse perché veniva a Montreal, forse perché parlava un italiano più comprensibile, divenimmo intime. Io le raccontai di Adelmo, lei di casa sua e di tanti parenti vivi e morti in tutte le parti del mondo. (35-36)

These four women in the ship cabin represent a truthful image of the coming of Italian women to Canada. They are all travelling across the ocean to join their loved ones and will contribute to the welfare of their families overseas.

There are other moments in the novel which refer emblematically to Italian women's conditions both in their rural world and in their adopted

country, as well as moments which underline Climene's struggle to acquire a more active and decisive role in her family's life, sharing equally with her husband the role of provider for her family. For example, when meeting Adelmo just before their engagement, she says: "Papà mi disse di sedere con loro e io sedetti e mi sentii molto importante perché non ci sedevamo mai con gli uomini" (23). Women standing behind their men eating at the table was in fact the most common way of serving their meal. Also, when referring to premarital pregnancies, Climene seems to conceive them as something very natural, even though social conventions at the time viewed them as morally unacceptable and scandalous:

> Poi ci fu la brutta storia di Carmela che ebbe un bambino e fu cacciata di casa. Mia madre disse che eran cose che succedevano a quelle che andavano a servizio in città. Ma io sapevo che anche in campagna succedevano, soltanto che in campagna la gente è onesta e sposa la ragazza, mentre i cittadini sono viziosi e disonesti.
>
> Anche per Edmea [her sister] fu così. Me lo disse lei. Si sposarono subito. (15)

Only in her rural world could the naturalness of a pregnancy be accepted and respected; outside that human and social environment it would loose its intrinsic meaning. In the entire novel Climene never expresses any shameful regrets for her own unplanned pregnancy, or for that of others. As with the birth of calves, her feelings for her own involuntary gravidity are natural and spontaneous. Her true moment of despair arrives not when she discovers that she is pregnant with Adelmo's baby, but when she realizes that her happiness is ironically an impossible dream, that life beyond the boundaries of her valley can lead to betrayal: "Mi fu chiaro che ogni cosa era irrevocabile: Adelmo, mio figlio, casa mia. E mi sembrò che non esistesse più un luogo nel mondo per me e per mio figlio..." (42). "Moralmente, io, Adelmo e nostro figlio vivemmo un meraviglioso sogno, il sogno più impossibile che

avessi mai potuto immaginare" (49). In the entire novel she never blames Adelmo for what happened to her, but seems instead to accept courageously full responsability of her own actions. Her decision to give her child up for adoption, showing her ability to reach the most sensible, painful decision in her life makes Climene become a true heroine, who accepts the reality of a poor, single immigrant woman's condition and the social conventions of the time. In this respect Climene represents another impressively strong figure (as Moroni Parken conveys in her personal account):

> Non ritornai sulla mia decisione, non vidi mio figlio, non seppi se fosse maschio o femmina. Mi ritrovai di nuovo sola, senza Adelmo né mio figlio. Era finito un periodo della mia vita, eppure, ancora oggi, mi sembra di portare, nel luogo più recondito del mio essere, una immensa cicatrice, e Dio solo sa di quanto amore e di quanto dolore è fatta quella cicatrice.
>
> Ritornai a servizio. Guadagnavo bene, mi feci qualche vestito, ripresi una più frequente corrispondenza con casa e cominciai a mandare loro regolarmente dollari....
>
> Ciccio [Catina's brother] mi mostrò diverse fotografie di giovanotti del suo paese desiderosi di emigrare, i quali, per accelerare le pratiche e non so per quali altre ragioni cercavano moglie per procura. (49-51)

Through all these painful hardships, Climene gradually acquires a growing sense of her strength and autonomy. She has become a financially independent woman, who is able to help her own family and take important decisions on her own, being not simply an instrument to her family's well-being but its true head. Her strong will has not been overwhelmed by her secret tragedy, but instead she has acquired even more determination in trying to achieve more for her husband and children. She becomes the leader and organizer of her Canadian family's life, even if always respectful of her husband's role. After getting married to Beppe, she continues working as a maid and stops only when her second child is born; she is the one who has the idea of buying a farm outside Montreal, a financial solution that, as in the old days, can let her contribute to the family's support while taking care of her

children (54-55); she is the one who works on the farm and provides for her family during her husband's internment:

> Beppe era venuto in Canada portandosi dietro una grande passione: il fascismo. E quel po' di tempo che gli restava libero se lo prendeva per correre di là dal fiume, in città, nel quartiere italiano, alle adunate fasciste.... A Beppe diedero un incarico che lo inorgogli molto, portava il gargliardetto. In tal modo era spesso sulle fotografie sui giornali. In quel periodo Mussolini era considerato molto anche all'estero e io mi sentivo fiera di Beppe. Tenevo con più cura le sue camicie nere che quelle bianche. In casa avevamo un grande ritratto di Mussolini e, di fianco, un gargliardetto pieno di frange dorate....
>
> Ricordo bene quella sera. Avevo messo i bambini a letto e finivo di rassettare la cucina quando bussarono alla porta. Andai ad aprire e mi trovai di fronte due ufficiali. Chiesero se c'era Beppe.
>
> - Sì - disse Beppe e venne avanti.
>
> Dissero che doveva andare con loro. Io dissi che poteva andarci il giorno dopo. No, subito, dissero. E così lo portarono via ed io rimasi a casa da sola, la notte, per la prima volta da che eravamo sposati e non potei dormire e avevo freddo e una strana paura. Poi per giorni cercai di sapere dove era e cosa volevano da lui. Quando riuscii a parlare con qualcuno mi dissero che Beppe aveva portato il gargliardetto nelle adunate fasciste. Lo avrebbero tenuto per accertamenti. E così andò in campo di concentamento. Come Ciccio, come tanti tanti altri che eran stati fascisti. Non si sapeva quando sarebbero tornati.
>
> Io mi trovai sola e capii che con due figli, le vacche, le galline, i maiali e la terra non sarei mai riuscita a cavarmela. Ma una campagna rendeva bene a quei tempi e per qualche giorno cercai disperatamente di resistere.... Ma era, per me, come vuotare un lago con un bicchiere. Mi fu facile trovare da affittare la fattoria. Non volli venderla benché ci avrei guadagnato bene. Innanzi tutto volevo che Beppe ritrovasse quello che aveva lasciato, in secondo luogo ero nata contadina e sapevo che la terra non tradisce mai. Ed avevo due figli.
>
> Con il pianto in gola, un piccolo gruzzolo di dollari e molta volontà partii per la città. Per via dei bambini non potevo andare a lavorare. Così affittai due stanzette e cercai lavoro a casa. Feci diverse cose, dalla sarta alla cappellaia, al ricamo di cifre per uniformi. Riuscii anche a mettere da parte un po' di soldi. (61-62)

As we can see, Climene's account gives us the opportunity to observe the episode of the internment from a woman's point of view. She is one of those women who were deeply missed by the internees in *Città senza donne* by Mario Duliani (see chap. 2). Not only does her simple recounting counterbalance and complete the description of that delicate moment in Italian-Canadian history

from a female perspective, it also refers succinctly to aspects of that episode that are constantly referred to by historians when analyzing the factors which contributed to the imprisonment of Italian-Canadians at Italy's declaration of war in June 1940. For example, the RCMP imprisoned those in the Italian community who were most visible in their socio-political activities; also, the initial positive opinion about Mussolini by Canadians in general had encouraged Italians in Canada to perceive fascism favourably. However, what the reader can really find intriguing about Randaccio's description of an Italian woman's life in Canada during World War II is the absence of lamentation and Climene's strong determination not merely to overcome the difficulties created by her husband's internment, but even to make good of them and become a successful entrepreneur. While at this point the reader could be curious about the sources of information for her realistic representation, her writing is surely to be appreciated for its contribution to a more emphatic understanding of the Italian woman's condition during the war, close as it is to the perceptions and feelings that belonged to many immigrant women. In her unaffected and down-to-earth approach to the state of an Italian woman in Canada, her simplicity could have led to sentimentalism. Although sometimes that seems to be the case, for example with the recurrent ritornello, reminder of her passion for Adelmo "il desiderio disperato della mia terra sotto la schiena e del cielo stellato negli occhi" (27, 54, 68) or her hidden torment described as an immense inner scar (50, 58, 72, 89, 111), Randaccio shows the ability to refrain from mawkishness, being always in control of her literary means of expression and never yielding to excessive melodrama or bad taste. An example of this can be found in her description of Climene's state of mind during the three years of her husband's internment:

> Avevo 38 anni, Rosa sette, Dino sei. Andavano a scuola lì vicino. Sentivo che Beppe sarebbe tornato a casa tra breve.

> Possedevo una terra ed un Motel. Eppure non ero proprio serena. Forse per questo ho sempre lavorato tanto, ho visto tutte le albe ed ho vegliato con tante stelle. Se mi fermavo, un dolore prolungato mi attanagliava il cuore ed era un dolore fatto di tante cose e di niente. Mi sentivo allora estranea a me stessa, ai miei figli, al luogo dove stavo. E non ero soddisfatta di me. E quando seppi che Beppe tornava non capii più perché, dopo averlo tanto atteso, mi sentissi così piena di angoscia. (64-65)

When dealing with Climene's turmoil and pain, when expressing her inner troubled voice, Randaccio achieves her best results. The best moments in the novel are those in which the inquietude and conflict of an immigrant woman are expressed in a way that effectively conveys the impact of the migratory experience, letting the reader comprehend the human dimension of that struggle. Towards the end of the novel, when spending her last years in Paraviere, Climene says:

> E io sono così serena e in pace anche se nessuno, a parte Edmea e suo marito, mi capisce. Qui peggio che in Canada. Perché qui la gente non sa vedere, mentre in Canada tutti gli emigranti sanno vedere e ti leggono il cuore perché hanno provato e sanno. Quello che non sanno è ritornare e rivivere, ritornare bambini, tra la propria gente morta, sulla terra propria. Ma io ho saputo e comincio a riconoscere ogni cosa intorno a me. Ogni cosa che tocco, ogni fiore che raccolgo, ogni stella che vedo, ogni profumo che sento. (110-111)

Her experience as an immigrant in Canada has given her the ability to look at life with a crystal-clear view, appreciating things that those who remained cannot even see. Emigration widens the dimension of the human experience, deepening one's awareness, imparting strength to the human being who takes part in that process, making him and her richer not merely in material terms, but more significantly personally and spiritually.

Climene's / Randaccio's narrative is interesting for other aspects as well that constantly reflect the reality of the immigrant experience. For example, the perception and encounter of a northern Italian immigrant woman with her companions coming from the south (35-36), the latter

forming the vast majority of the immigrants coming to Canada; and her awareness of the cultural and linguistic regional differences affecting her relationship with the protagonist's husband and other immigrants from the south (36, 38, 43-44, 52, 56-57, 65-66, 91,101, 103-104, 106-107). Yet, being all of peasant background, they easily share a sense of affinity and companionship that surpasses the cultural differences existing between them. This seems to be one of the autobiographical aspects of Randaccio's recounting. She herself was a woman from the north who perhaps experienced in her social life the differences in language, mentality and customs that characterize Italian regional cultures. Other interesting aspects of her recounting are her description of Climene's contacts with the Italian consular authorities in Montreal (39-40, 45-47, 48), as well as the differences in mentality between her and her Canadian-born children - all of which contribute to give a thorough portrayal of an immigrant experience (82-88, 94, 96-98, 100).

In the entire novel the linguistic register does not naturalistically reflect the national or regional varieties or the social differences presented in the story; instead they are homogenized in a easier, plain and unadorned literary idiom (for example, *ciglio* or *declivio* in the first paragraph of the novel (5) belong more to a traditional literary lexicon). Nevertheless the humanity in the story and the expressiveness of the imagery go beyond the literariness of the language, creating an agreeable effect. Randaccio is not interested in experimenting with a new, more nuanced and realistic idiom, and in the whole novel expressions are almost never adopted that are coloured by dialects or French or English (apart from Climene herself when using the more popular form *nozzo*, 15, 24[9]); instead, the linguistic differences will be clearly mentioned in the narration, hinting at a linguistic reality that was probably too complex for the author to be effectively portrayed on the page

(36, 38, 39, 44, 70). It should be acknowledged, nevertheless, that her language and style are deeply embedded in the syntax and organization of spoken language, as we can observe in the following:

> Io ho fatto solo la terza elementare, ma ho ripetuto la terza tre volte, poi sono stata dimessa perché non era permesso ripetere ancora. Non è che non mi piacesse studiare, ma noi abitavamo molto lontano dalla scuola, io ero la maggiore di quattro fratelli, mamma non aveva molta salute. Così frequentavo la scuola quando potevo. (5-6)

Especially in the two last clauses in the second period, no conjunctions are used to link the period in an articulate form, instead they are simply put one after the other, strengthening the impression of an oral monologue. Neorealistic concerns, however, do not seem to influence Randaccio's writing. The simplicity in the articulation of the first-person narration reflects the immediacy of the spoken word, particularly in the dialogues, where her writing reaches quite effective realistic tones. But her true understanding of a woman's experience in Canada is filtered through a register and sensitivity that tend to soften the perception of a much more abrasive reality, reflecting the author's own sensitiveness and poise. Although the register in her recounting tends to be monotonous and invariable, reflecting the single first-narrator's linguistic option, the linearity and simplicity of the narrative conveys a linguistic sense at the intersection of a popular literary register and ordinary language use. While her style can be perceived by some as simplistic, especially in the first pages where Randaccio conveys the candor, innocence and point of view of Climene's childhood, the end result is a direct consequence of difficulties common to many authors of post-war Italian literary production.

Finding the right balance between the traditional Italian literary language and the ordinary linguistic expression of lower classes was a

problem that affected considerably Italian neorealism. Before and after World War II Italian writers and intellectuals of different ideological background participating in this movement tried to overcome the obstacle of being bourgeois educated men in order to give a non-paternalistic, truthful representation of the life of the rural or urban proletariat. Such commitment was meant to go against the previous aristocratic and existential literary motifs and substitute them with democratic, social and historical issues. However, it became clear that a very wide gap existed between the sociolinguistic reality of that peasant and blue-collar Italy to be described and a language such as literary Italian, which had been for centuries means of expression of a literature conceived as art and style. Traditional Italian literature had been an expression of class, a character that made it difficult to transform and bend to the needs of a more originally "popular" or neorealistic literature. The absence of a realistic language was reflected in the different solutions attempted by neorealists, in works where contents roughly prevailed over the ways of expression, or others in which pseudopopular or pseudorealistic structures were experimented with (Petronio 881-2). On the other hand, Italian neorealist movies such as *Roma città aperta* by director Roberto Rossellini, *Sciuscià* and *Ladri di biciclette* by director Vittorio De Sica, were able through the cinematic means to overcome the linguistic obstacles affecting the literary production and realistically condense powerful images of long-lasting intensity.

Therefore, one can comprehend how difficulties of this sort could affect also the writing of an unknown writer such as Randaccio, who lived her quiet life in a remote land and whose linguistic choices were inevitably influenced by her upbringing, skills and seemingly less intellectual readings, as well as by the time and spacial distance and isolation from the homeland created by

immigration. If it was hard for neorealist writers to create a finely-tuned linguistic discourse, that task was probably beyond Randaccio's possibilities, plans or expectations. Her writing seems to be more influenced by literary models belonging to a less committed and sophisticated literature, a *popular* literature more aimed at entertaining rather than at tackling serious social issues. However, her linguistic solution is nevertheless to be considered an interesting achievement for an immigrant writer, who honestly tries to describe the journey of a fictionalized immigrant woman in terms and ways that in themselves are a reflection of her own personal experience.

It is probably this kind of text that can attract an Italian-Canadian audience which is still searching for literary works it can somehow relate to and identify with, for a collective imagery that can powerfully represent its past and present. Curiously enough, Italian-Canadian literature's most fortunate and successful novel - Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints* - is also the story of a strong-willed, but also erringly pregnant Italian immigrant woman. This book was received by a young second-generation Italian-Canadian audience much better than the author's subsequent production, considered depressing and difficult to relate to in their representation of the main character's inner conflict[10]. If accomplished second-generation authors such as Nino Ricci, Frank Paci, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco and Mary Di Michele, to name only a few, have led Italian-Canadian literature to important literary achievements, it is also through the Italian literature of migration that a meaningful tie between past and present, between Italy and Canada can be maintained. The recognition of the cultural continuity between Italian literature in Italy, Italian literature in Canada and Italian-Canadian literature in English and French can assist the Italian-Canadian audience in acknowledging their cultural background, in overcoming that *angst*, that

quest of identity that too often has been perceived as the main motivation of second-generation authors.

The latest production by second-generation authors in English and French can be considered as the advanced expression of a literature that finds its cultural continuity in a process that started with the texts here under investigation. As we shall notice, from an initial production based mainly on the presentation of the authentic reality of the immigrant experience (like the texts analysed in chapters 1 and 2), this literature acquires over the years more creative and literary forms of expression. Even though strictly autobiographical works will constantly accompany a more creative production, the Italian literature of migration will show in its evolution a gradual adoption of more imaginative forms. Besides the modes and conditions characterizing the first coming of Italians to this land, this overall literary evolution reflects to some degree the pychological changes taking place in an immigrant's mind when coming to a new land. At first there is the impact of the discovery of a new reality, when the effort of understanding, accepting and coping with a new world and a new way of life dominates the immigrant's psyche. It is understandable, then, how the first texts of the Italian literature of migration to Canada (Bressani, Moroni Parken, Duliani) do, in fact, give a very factual description of that reality. Later, however, various social and cultural factors contribute to a change of approach and perspective on the immigrant theme. After World War II, as we shall see, the immigrant writer has the means, and has acquired the skills, to create a literary form that also gives space to his or her imagination, that enables him or her to rise from the physical, concrete dimension of the immigrant experience to a more intellectual and imaginative one. This process begins and is carried through the literature here examined and continues in original work in Italian-

Canadian literature in English and French. More recently, the latest works by second-generation authors show the development of immigrant themes as expressed in sophisticated works common to the Canadian mainstream production. Even though they do not refer directly in their work to the previous production in Italian, in sociocultural terms their writing represents a natural evolution from cultural adaptation to integration. A long thread, then, can be seen joining the various phases of the Italian literary production in Canada, a thread that in its evolution recalls the process of psychological and cultural adaptation of the immigrant to a new reality: it will be only after having adapted to the new land that the immigrant will move from a strictly factual narration to a more imaginative one, still partly nurtured by the impact of migration.

Randaccio's *Diario di una emigrante* does represent that kind of passage. Even if it is based in general terms on an experience common to many Italian immigrant women, that experience becomes a source of inspiration for a novel that is at the same time realistic and pleasurable. The purpose of literature is multifold, but with respect to the Italian literature of migration to Canada its production tends to address issues and be written in forms that allow its readership to bridge the ocean of inquietude and change generated by the immigrant experience, thus creating a spatial, temporal and cultural link between Italy and Canada, between past and present. *Diario di una emigrante* can offer in its unpretentiousness this bridging: it shows not only with its subject what an immigrant woman's life could be like, but also how the author, an immigrant woman herself, was able to express the whole sociocultural dimension of emigration/immigration in a literary context. It is the true work of an immigrant woman writing about an immigrant woman and sharing the psychological dimension of that condition. This is what attracts the most in

Diario di una emigrante: the tone and method of the narration seem to harmonize effectively, both in its merits and flaws, with the motifs and situations described, presenting her story according to the ways a peasant immigrant woman could have lived, perceived, but also imagined it. Not only does the story or plot in itself convey the human dimension of the immigrant experience, it is also the point of view, imagery, empathy, the succession of dialogues and descriptions that truly voice an immigrant woman's mind. It is through texts like these that the true human dimension of the immigrant experience can be perceived in a manner that no historical text can convey with such immediacy.

One could ask oneself whether an immigrant writer should try to write according to models and canons that belong more to the recognized traditional official literature, or whether it should reflect instead the sociocultural, educational and linguistic background of the people who participated in the immigrant process. Do *emigranti-scrittori* have to write as such or should they try to write as *scrittori-emigranti*? When we review their work should our expectations be totally unaffected by our awareness of the immigrant's experience? The significance of the recognition of this literature for the preservation and assertion of Italian culture in Canada is too important to be unjustly denigrated by considerations of style and literary quality. These texts are reflections of a sociocultural reality that is far distant from that on which traditional methods of literary criticism are based. If we had to consider Italian immigrant novels simply in terms of their quality and style, they would barely receive any recognition, especially in Italy. The texts contributing to the Italian literature of migration to Canada have to be considered instead as the literary expression induced by the process of migration, which had such tremendous impact on the emigrant's / immigrant's mind and soul to make

him or her become (or be once more) a writer, whatever her background or education was. As other cultural expressions, this literature too has to be allowed to develop its own peculiar ways and role within the Italian literary world, in order for this literary production, at the farthest geographical and sociocultural boundaries of the Italian literary world, to be fully recognized and appreciated. The role of this literature is that of a nourishing soil, a humus, that in the richness of the human experience it portrays, can be considered as the fundamental, fertile ground for more mature literary endeavours.

In the writing of her novels Elena Randaccio shows indisputably those qualities and abilities that have been recognized in *Diario di una emigrante*: She is able to structure her material in an effective and captivating way, using a language appropriate in register and lexicon to the kind of story she presents and the point of view she adopts. Her writing follows her imagination in depicting situations and characters and truly entertains the reader. Also, she seems to be consciously playing on some aspects of her female readership's psychology, according to the popular taste of the time. In *Canada mia seconda patria* she presents what was probably considered a woman's daydream out of an aspiration to amuse herself and others. Later, in *Diario di una emigrante* the real immigrant experience comes to the fore, breaking the surface of a tale that could still be perceived as simple and smooth, but nevertheless depicting the harsh reality of immigration through references to circumstances and historical facts that have truly affected the life of the Italian community.

The two novels by Randaccio could be considered as the two sides of the same coin, by means of which the significance of the immigrant experience is conveyed on one side through unrealistic fantasy and on the other through

fictionalized realism. Some of the novels by immigrant writers of both genders testify to the tendency of having their motivation, imagination and creativity persistently dominated by the portrayal of the immigrant experience, so that the migratory process constantly permeates their imaginative and literary efforts. In their literary imagination they travel along the line of their immigrant experience but they do not necessarily move or depart from it towards other sources of inspiration. On the contrary, Elena Randaccio is able to let her imagination flow easily into her narrative in forms not strictly motivated by or directly pertaining to the immigrant leitmotif; however, Canada becomes for her a source of inspiration both in popular and more realistic terms and the Italian woman's true immigrant experience finds in her narration an effective representation.

2. Maria J. Ardizzi's *Ciclo degli emigranti*

One of the most original and prolific writers of the Italian literature of migration is Maria J. Ardizzi[11]. She is the author of four novels and a long poem: all four novels, *Made in Italy* (1982), *Il sapore agro della mia terra* (1984), *La buona America* (1987) and *Tra le colline e al di là del mare* (1990) deal with the Italian immigrant experience in Canada, though only the first three make up the trilogy entitled *Il ciclo degli emigranti* and the last one is strictly based on the protagonist's meditations during a return journey to Italy. Her only poetic work, *Conversazione col figlio* (1985) deals instead with her youngest son's death from leukemia.

Although Ardizzi is often remembered as the winner of the 1980 Ontario Arts Council Prize for her first novel *Made in Italy*, her subsequent novels show a growing mastering, and control, of her literary medium of

expression[12]. In fact, if *Made in Italy* can be appreciated most of all for the author's effort to tackle quite complex issues in an original way, it is with her later novels that Ardizzi finds a manner of combining inspired motifs with a more fluent and unpretentious writing, better adhering to the subject presented. In her first novel the reader strongly perceives the presence of the author, and especially her will and effort to be a writer, to succeed in her literary endeavour. Later on, Ardizzi is more at ease with the process of writing itself, being able to subdue the author's point of view in the recounting of stories that are striking examples of the struggles and inquietude underlying the immigrant experience. All novels deal with the protagonists' quest for a more truthful and meaningful existence: the experience of emigration/immigration represents the opportunity to acquire a wider and more profound view of the meaning of life, focusing on aspects, details and elements that according to Ardizzi are not usually perceived by those living a stationary existence.

Recurrent themes and motifs in Ardizzi's work are in fact those that most commonly refer to the difficult but enlightening process of adaptation induced by migration. It is through immigration that the protagonists realize and must come to terms with their own frailty, with the absence of acceptable values and models of behaviour that renders their new life even more painful or incomprehensible. Nora, Sara, Pietro and also Anna, the protagonists in each of Ardizzi's novels, all try to find an answer to their many questions. A return journey to their Abruzzese home village constantly occurs in Ardizzi's novels, assisting each main character in comprehending the meaning of their existence, only partially satisfying or disappointing as that meaning may be. The return journey is commonly interpreted as a moment of epiphany, leading to the comparison of two temporal and spacial dimensions constantly present

in the immigrant's mind, which leads in turn to a higher level of awareness of the influence of one's roots and her/his native cultural value system. It will be here investigated how the protagonists of Ardizzi's novels realize that their search is determined by their inability to fully accept certain convictions on which both the old world was, and the new one is based and how they recognize this inadequacy through the magnifying lens of the migratory experience. The initial refusal leads to the absence of a comprehensive and reassuring system of values and beliefs, which then induces the character to look for an answer within her/himself.

According to Ardizzi's narrative, neither Italy nor Canada can be a faultless or immaculate heaven, but everywhere each individual has to commit her-/himself to beliefs and values that can only exist through a constant effort and quest for honesty and truth. Every attempt to compose that inner division between old and new world in an unmistakable form proves to be illusory, because everywhere time leads to change and no position can be immutable. Unaware of the consequences emigration would have on them, each of the main characters in her stories had left their home village without finding a new one, restlessly wandering in search of a true wholeness they could feel as their own, but having instead to identify themselves in a series of shattered fragments of a split image hard to recompose. The inner conflict between the two worlds of their experience becomes, then, the main source of a never-ending search for unity, consistency and honesty; a search which has different outcomes in each novel. There is Nora's inability to communicate her real self and the growing silence surrounding her; there is Sara's acceptance of her own split image; there is Pietro's acknowledgement of the impossibility of unity in his life; there is Anna's hope for a way to bridge her own personal ocean of solitude between the shores of her past and present. What

characterizes Ardizzi's significant contribution to the Italian literature of migration is her representation of the immigrant experience not simply through a factual description or chronicle of coming to Canada, but through the portrayal of that process as an existential metaphor on the human condition, articulating for the first time a narrative that gives to this corpus of Italian migratory texts a richer and more penetrating substance.

Made in Italy

Ardizzi's intention to give us a profound description of the immigrant's human condition is clearly expressed at the beginning of *Made in Italy*, with a quotation from the Bible (Ecclesiastes: I, 4 - 9-11) in which the reader is reminded of the immutability of such condition: "niente di nuovo avviene sotto il sole"; life has gone on in so many innumerable cycles that we have lost the memory of them. The quotation is followed by a poetic prologue on the human condition depicting man as a vagrant who travels across lands and in so doing "Hai inseguito sogni per mondi nuovi, / ignaro del vero che avevi accanto;" (xv). While these two verses acutely portray the psychological reality of the immigrant's experience, the prologue as a whole, however, seems too descriptive for a poetic composition, adopting a linguistic register which has no symbolic or metaphorical resonance. Expressions such as "a spintoni" tend to flatten the language in a narration which overtly recalls prosaic literary expressions. Nevertheless, these tones are mitigated by the legitimacy of the theme clearly introduced from the start. In fact, the entire novel is in Ardizzi's intention an invitation to meditate on man's universal condition, in order to find that shore where he can finally repose: "Se non trovi quel minuto, /

resterai un'onda senza approdo; / non saprai mai che la tua casa è tutto il mondo, / e che ogni uomo ha il tuo stesso cuore." (xv)

The reader is then introduced to the twilight of Nora's life, a lady in her late sixties who narrates in the first person her own journey across worlds. Compared to the story of an immigrant woman as depicted by Elena Randaccio (MacRan) in *Diario di una emigrante*, where the story is presented in plain chronological order to give the impression of a diary written by the protagonist herself, in Ardizzi's case the structure of the novel reflects the complexity and profoundness of the author's / protagonist's investigation. Scenes of Nora's present life, mainly in her home in Willowcrest Court, a dead-end street of an elegant neighbourhood in Toronto, are intermixed with flash-backs in which Nora reminisces and reconstructs her past existence, in a constant search for a common thread that could give to it an acceptable logic and meaning, in order to find in the past the answers to her present interrogations. After the war she left her home village in the Italian central region of Abruzzi with her three children to follow her husband Vanni and seek a better life in Canada. As is the case with many Italian immigrants coming to Canada during the '50s, Vanni/John becomes successful as an entrepeneur in construction and all her three children integrate in their own way, her sons in their professions, her daughter as a professional's wife. But Nora finds it hard to adapt to and assimilate completely that Canadian lifestyle and seriously questions values and behaviours. Her relationship with her husband had over the years changed from one of love and passion to one affected by disagreements and lack of communication, as well as by John's tacit affairs, until his sudden death in Italy (where he had gone on a trip), which gave her the opportunity to make her own return-journey. Most of the members of her family are now caught in quite troublesome situations. Nora is

particularly close to her youngest son Matteo, who still lives with her, and tries to follow her eldest son Andrea's life and give him some advice, but is quite critical of her daughter Amelia, not being able to accept most of her social concerns as justified or reasonable. The silence, speechlessness, and lack of communication, that more and more affect her contacts with the world outside her home, tend to influence also her family life, since she is unable to express effectively her thoughts and feelings to her children. The tragic conclusion of the novel, with both Matteo and his girlfriend Jane murdered by her ex-husband, Andrea and his wife Peggy burnt to death in a freak accident and Nora's total paralysis, bring the story to a silent, perhaps melodramatic, end.

As one can see, the Italian literature of migration enters with Ardizzi's work a new phase, in which introspective analysis, dissociations and ambiguities can also characterize the immigrant woman's condition and are explored in their complexity. *Made in Italy* has in fact the merit of presenting for the first time tough problematic themes and motifs pertaining to the immigrant's life without trying to soften them or render them more acceptable or pleasurable. Instead, Ardizzi pursues the difficult task of presenting the intimate life of an immigrant family through the tired but proud voice of a strong matriarchal figure, who courageously does not hide, but instead exposes in all their tragic senselessness and harshness the inner conflicts affecting her life as an immigrant woman, as well as that of the other members of her family. In trying to find a coherent solution to the protagonist's own questions and doubts, no diplomatic or tactful approach is adopted; instead Ardizzi's prose reflects the narrator's defiant need to uncover the petty hypocrisy, emptiness and consequent disappointments in an immigrant's life, a need which thus molds Nora's personality and rebellious

quest for integrity. Among the protagonists of Ardizzi's novels, Nora is undoubtedly the one who seems to be closer to the author's own strong personality, even though the text is by no means of an autobiographical nature, apart from some aspects that could have been inspired in general by her own experience of life and migration from Italy to Canada (for example, her own journey from Abruzzi to Canada)[13].

Several are the levels that seem to overlap in the narration, affecting the point of view adopted in the recounting of the story, as well as the reader's critique. The first-person narrator gives to *Made in Italy* the character of a fictionalized memoir - similar to what we have just observed in Randaccio's *Diario di una emigrante* - but the end result is much different. Overall, what strikes the reader is the ironic discrepancy between the more subjective dimension of what Nora-the-narrator claims and says to be, and the more factual dimension of her real actions and conversations as a character in the novel, as she herself relates them. For example:

Nora the narrator	Nora the character
"Non ho bisogno di nessuno, per quanto mi riguarda." (4)	"Matteo è ancora mio." (13)
"Non parlo, non dico nulla. Ad ognuno la propria esperienza; ad ognuno il privilegio di giungere, un giorno, al proprio approdo." (5)	"Se solo trovassi il coraggio di rivolgergli domande precise.... Ma non posso! Ogni vita ha due dimensioni: la vita esposta, convenzionale, e la vita interiore, contraddittoria." (69) "Temo di non saper trovare quella parola.... Adesso ci avvicinano i silenzi." (70)
"Quest'età... mi dà il privilegio di esprimere verità senza rischio. Faccio uso di questo privilegio come della mia ultima, ostinata forma d'integrità." (5)	"il mio rifiuto alle sottomissioni, i miei orgogli irriducibili, la mia aspirazione a un'integrità che, forse, non esiste, non mi hanno condotta in nessun posto." (145)

The assertive tone characterizing Nora's intimate reflections on herself contrasts with the lack of confidence she manifests when relating to others.

Nora the narrator recounts past and present events and expresses a resolute personality and will to show the consistency of her being and the unwavering opinions on which she based her understanding of life. She claims to know what is right and wrong and seems to be able to interpret everything assuredly and logically. Yet, as the protagonist, when having to interact with the other members of her family, when having to face the reality outside her home, or simply when expressing her inner turmoil or investigation, she does not totally demonstrate the confidence she herself declares. She is not able to convey to those around her her feelings and beliefs effectively, ironically exposing the fractures in her being and remaining very often speechless, rather than deliberately silent. The firmness she claims as hers fades away in a lack of self-assurance. Even though the protagonist is characterized by the silence surrounding her, the kind of narration adopted by Ardizzi is nevertheless quite explicit, direct and overt in the presentation of Nora's thinking. Nora's first-person narration presents, therefore, an ironic quality: she claims to be someone when we also observe her doing something inconstistent with her declarations. Thus, the reader can appreciate the true essence of her being, as well as of her immigrant experience, from the ambiguities, contradictions and discrepancies in her recounting. The real essence of this character derives not from her inner monologues, but from those moments of uncertainty which generally accompany her participation in her family's life, viewed within the restrictive space of her home. The reader sometimes remains perplexed and questions what the real organization of Ardizzi's narration is. In fact, one wonders whether those ironic ambiguities are really deliberate inconsistencies in the character as it was outlined by Ardizzi, or whether they originate to a certain degree in the author's uncertainty in commanding her narrative in its representation: "Ero

tornata a casa. Ma dov'era, veramente, la mia casa? Poteva essere il mondo; poteva essere ovunque. Non sono i mattoni posti l'uno sopra l'altro a stabilire la nostra casa. La casa è dentro di noi." (126) Apart from the realistic reference to the feeling of displacement of the immigrant, the irony in this statement derives from the reader's perception of the absence of the "house" as balancing core in her life, as a space defined on her own feminine terms instead of male ones; however, the analogy adopted sounds quite banal.

The beginning of the novel is particularly effective in introducing us to the main character of Nora and her state of mind: "Mi desto nel mezzo della notte, vittima di non so quale oscuro malessere. Dall'intimo, sento risalire il brivido che conosco. Ma non è paura: forse è la gravezza del silenzio che pare carico di presagi..." (1). This opening sentence immediately conveys that sense of deep inquietude, in this case even *angst*, that in most of the narratives considered so far has been identified as the feeling that most commonly characterizes the immigrant's condition. Nora is immediately presented as a person living in two dimensions, that of reality and the other of memory and dream:

> "L'immobilità della stanza, e l'isolamento nel quale giaccio, compongono sfocate immagini familiari, deformate dall'insidia di un sogno che non vuol finire. Tento di rendere consistente l'inconsistente: ma il sogno s'annebbia e si spezza.... Ricordo appena una faccia: zia Tina....
> Tutto è quieto: ma non sono sola. Ultimamente, non sono mai sola. Pensieri ricordi, facce dimenticate, mi assalgono d'un tratto, mi conducono per lontane strade percorse, mi abbandonano a mezza via. (1-2)

As one can see, Nora's split self comes instantly to the foreground: she is divided between reality and dream (which she even tries to confuse in her awakening), past and present, Italy and Canada, life and death[14]. The disclosure of her most intimate state of mind shows both the alienation determined by the immigrant process, as well as a sense of tiredness commonly associated with

old age. In this respect Ardizzi's portrayal of an older immigrant woman's psychological state is more believable than that presented by Susanna Tamaro in her best-seller novel *Va' dove ti porta il cuore*, which conquered a large Italian readership in the homeland with her representation of a memoir written by a grand-mother for her grand-daughter. However, even though the main characters portrayed in these two novels are different in every respect, in comparison Ardizzi's Nora gains in realism what it looses in literary consistency and efficacy. That of Nora is a split identity, which is represented through a prose that is also incoherent and discontinuous. That lexical and stylistic fragmentation, however, seems to reflect more the author's own detachment in time and place, rather than the protagonist's alienation. Ardizzi is always battling to render an effective portrayal of characters and situations through what she deems is a necessary, aesthetically acceptable literary means. For example:

> Negli ultimi tempi, il passato è la mia sola compagnia, ed indugio in esso impietosamente, temendo che presto, molto presto, mi mancherà il tempo di comprenderlo tutt'intero. La morte potrebbe giungere da un momento all'altro a rompere il filo della mia vita divenuta gabbia. Non mi difenderei; non invocherei: opporrei la dignità del silenzio ad un epilogo che non offre scelta. Sono entrata in una dimensione nella quale il tempo ed il luogo sono incommensurabili: di dove vengo e di dove vado, sono domande che appartengono al passato e al futuro; la ricerca delle risposte alle quali non posso rispondere s'è trasformata nell'appiglio al presente. (2)

The reader is immediately struck by the awkwardness of the language, in particular by Ardizzi's lexical choice, which does not seem to adhere closely to the character's realistic portrait. The motifs of Ardizzi's writing seem to be enclosed in a structure too rigid to adequately convey them: "indugio in esso impietosamente", "la mia vita divenuta gabbia", "il tempo e il luogo sono incommensurabili," reflect a preference on the part of the author for expressions and syntactical solutions which in the end are too studied and

overelaborate, detached from the subject described. Later the issue of language in Ardizzi's works will be dealt with more specifically. Here it is more appropriate to focus on the motifs of her narrative, which, as the above quotation illustrates, explores and examines the intricacy of the immigrant's mind.

Nora's will to comprehend her past, without renouncing her dignity, her incumbent sense of death, the image of her life as a prison or cage - which, as we have already seen, is one of the most recurrent images in this literature - an overwhelming sense of time and space, are motifs which will be constantly present in Ardizzi's / Nora's narration and pinpoint her as the first character in the Italian literature of migration truly investigating and questioning her human condition. Nora is wearily aware that her journey is coming to an end: the only answers she can still obtain are those that can come by linking her past to her present, which could still offer hope for some peace of mind. Her personal investigation seems to be generated by a hidden or unconscious fear that the pieces of the puzzle in her life are not as clearcut as initially thought, even if she proudly declares the contrary. They keep changing shape, forcing her, as any human being, to re-assemble them, over and over, reaching only an open conclusion. In an immigrant's case that investigation becomes even more important and meaningful because it tends to search for the validity of the choice of emigrating. The tragic events that will lead the story to its conclusion, will show how *Made in Italy* too can be considered in a way a tragic *Bildungsroman*, depicting the spiritual dismemberment and crisis of the immigrant's identity. The novel shows how a strong-willed character like Nora has to recognize even in her old age that life has in its cyclical movement always something to teach, that integrity could be something to aspire to even though not necessarily achievable. Also, her own

search of the *other* shore has showed to her that the "approdo" is not to be found, leading to a painful disillusionment.

Nora's split identity becomes even more evident with her mirror-reflected image, which Nora feels estranged from, as if time did not have on her inner self the same eroding effect that it had on her body and physical appearance (6-7). Nora claims to be always the same, rigidly identifying with an uncompromising ego, but a reader would question the veracity of such a position, wondering whether this inflexibility is on the contrary another result of the immigrant experience, which leads some individuals such as Nora to defensively refuse (at least partially) its consequences at a personal level, while other immigrants are more willing to accept both the material and individual changes that could emerge from it.

The first pages of the novel (chapter one) present a strong start for the story, where the intimate landscape is set in a contradictory entanglement made up of the exploration of self and the solidity of experience, the refusal of social conventions and the acceptance of her role in her family, the hope for a life beyond death and her inability to maintain true communication with the real world. Ardizzi introduces us realistically to Nora's meditations, but her character's acceptance and recognition of the cyclical order of things, as they present themselves in her old age, contrast on the one hand with a sense of bitterness - although never defeat - mingled with indomitable pride and an unremitting hope on the other. In this respect Ardizzi's writing seems effective in reflecting such an orderly maze of intense emotions and does not deny even those aspects in Nora's personality that could come across as unattractive, even though comprehensible:

> Vicina ai settant'anni, conosco quanto basta per assistere con coraggio al susseguirsi di vicende che ripetono il loro ciclo antico quanto il mondo. Meraviglioso privilegio concessomi dagli anni!...

> Aspetto, senza fretta, la conclusione di uno spettacolo che so come andrà a finire. (2)
> Alla mia età, scorgo tutti i fili che guidano le elaborate manovre per camuffare le magagne. La mia incapacità al compromesso rende la mia compagnia piuttosto sgradita.... La mia relazione col mondo esterno è quella di spettatrice di una farsa che non fa ridere. (16)

However, her awareness and wisdom seem to be presented also ironically as a justification against her own isolation, a solitude which according to Nora was a personal choice determined by her refusal of any form of social compromise, as well as by a generational gap. The reader could suspect that that position could derive ironically from her inability to relate to the *other*:

> Non parlo. Non dico nulla. Ad ognuno la propria esperienza; ad ognuno il privilegio di giungere, un giorno al proprio approdo. Se dicessi che la società commette un grave errore mettendo i vecchi a tacere, sarei coperta dalle risa....
> Questa età che taglia fuori dal consorzio umano e che sembra porre la vita a riposo, mi dà il privilegio di esprimere verità senza rischio. Faccio uso di questo privilegio come della mia ultima, ostinata forma di integrità. Niente pennellate colorate a celare il legno marcio di una costruzione in rovina;... L'inganno ha la scorza fragile: ne penetro le pieghe, ne palpo il mollume, ne peso l'inutilità. E non dico nulla. Anche tacere è un mio privilegio. (5)

Here, as repeatedly in this *silent* novel, Nora proudly asserts her independence, even at the cost of denying her need of other people, her children, or even that Canadian 'society' that always remains distant and aloof ("Non ho bisogno di nessuno, per quanto mi riguarda." 4). According to Nora, her silence derives not from an inability to speak for herself; rather it represents ironically her intransigence in not surrendering what is left of her being, affirming her right to live at least her last years uncompromisingly. However, since her speechlessness tends to represent itself often in the novel, one could suppose that the silence surrounding the narration of the novel is caused more by her difficulty in coming to terms with the traditional woman's role and the sense of estrangement and

disorientation determined by the immigrant experience. The condition of the immigrant woman is presented as a tragic trap: ironically, she is given the choice between speaking without having a true influence on the events happening around her or remaining silent and in this respect Ardizzi's Nora recalls the tragic figure of Assunta in Frank G. Paci's *Black Madonna*, an immigrant woman who commits suicide (Verna 533). But Nora's innermost voice still expresses in the narration the irrepressible turmoil of her existence. Her silence is one of the elements that present themselves constantly in the novel, together with her refusal of insincerity and artifice. Her speechlessness is a pillar of her search for consistency, for a genuineness which more than referring to her Italian past is an integral part of her own way of being. However, it is also a camouflage of her own disillusions and disappointments, that relate mainly to her role as woman and immigrant. Ardizzi's Nora never questions directly her identity as such, but at the end of her life she has to come to terms with the meaning of her own contradictions, which derive mainly from her fundamental refusal to accept obediently and with convinction the traditional female role model which ironically she had to play all her life. The entire novel is a long, silent meditation on her existence, interrupted - and not the reverse - by moments of interaction or dialogue with her family members. That silent narration seems to have started right in front of the mirror which reflects an image that Nora feels the need to correct and recompose. The silent ending is ironic in the way it imposes on Nora the most unbearable consequences of her muteness as she motivates it in the above quoted paragraph: her silence will turn into a physical torture that literally places her in the position of mute spectator who cannot interfere in other people's destiny. Facing the final tragedies in her life, Nora will have to acknowledge that the meaning of our existence goes beyond any possible

belief and experience, and an immigrant woman has to adapt, as any other human being, to a condition in which certainties are only an illusion and the search for the other shore will always be part of our way of being.

Later Ardizzi gives through Nora's voice a clear description of the immigrant condition:

> Il significato della parola emigrante mi ha sgradevolmente colpita solo dopo aver emigrato: e mi ha colpita per le implicazioni che balzano alla superficie solo quando sei emigrante.
> Nella mia infanzia ho sempre sentito di persone partire per diversi luoghi del mondo; ho veduto quelle persone tornare e ripartire. Portavano con sé aria di benessere e di raggiunta stabilità. Nelle nostre brulle terre chiuse dal Gran Sasso, l'estero è una parola che non fa impressione. So di persone che hanno conosciuto molte città straniere e che non conoscono il capoluogo di provincia. Quando l'idea dell'estero vagheggiata da John venne ad interrompere il fluire delle nostre vite, accettai il mutamento con la sorpresa, e la curiosità, con cui lo avevano accettato altri. La convinzione che ogni parte del mondo potesse essere anche mia, e che altrove le persone non sarebbero migliori o peggiori di quelle conosciute, non mi diede l'idea della perdita o del distacco. Evidentemente concepivo un mondo che mi ero arbitrariamente costruita. Non avendo il sospetto di disuguaglianze e pregiudizi, supponevo un mondo che appartenesse a tutti. Ed anche quando ho scoperto che il mondo non appartiene affatto a tutti, e che le disuguaglianze non sono soltanto nel linguaggio, ho conservato la mia convinzione, la sola forza che mi permettesse di sentirmi ovunque a casa mia.
> Per quanto mi riguarda, io sono Nora. I luoghi forestieri non mi spaventano; i personaggi importanti non mi intimidiscono. Le apparenze non mi danno mai le risposte definitive, e al di là di ogni volto che incontro sul mio cammino, leggo la mia stessa vita. Dopo aver conosciuto il significato della parola emigrante, sono rimasta tale e quale. Emigrante? Una parola che invece, ha slargato il mio orizzonte: siamo tutti emigranti, anche se restiamo immobili nel nostro mondo, tra la nostra gente. (15-16)

For anyone who has experienced in some form the reality of emigration, these words come as one of the most truthful descriptions of the immigrant process. The strength with which Nora wants to affirm her individuality seems to derive both from her personality and her condition as an immigrant woman, who ironically wishes to maintain the essence of her being beyond any external change in space or time. Again, the immigrant experience

fundamentally allows the human being to be more conscious of his or her condition, and therefore to accept more responsibly the process of personal change intrinsic in an individual's existence compared to someone who has never left. Through their journey emigrants move to a higher level of comprehension. While those who remained behind may have travelled and advanced in their lives, they rarely moved to that more profound discernment and personal growth of the emigrant. Moreover, Ardizzi makes through Nora references to some recurrent aspects of the immigrant experience such as the discontinuity existing between the small-scale, rural background of the common emigrant (who usually did not truly know the major urban centres of his homeland) and the wider dimension of the North American landscape with its big and developed metropolitan areas. Also, the perception of emigration in Italy as a necessary evil to better one's economic condition becomes something habitual for those left behind. Further, the urge to leave makes the emigrant never totally aware of what is being left behind or has to be faced. Nora had to discover that many distinctions could divide humanity besides the expected linguistic ones, such as social, class or ideological differences. But she is determined to hold on to her convictions, maintaining that the essence of humanity is the same everywhere and at any time. Although in itself acceptable, this determination seems to be ironically an act of will which is provoked by the profound inquietude this character has expressed since the beginning of the novel. Ardizzi acutely presents Nora's demand for such unyielding belief in order to overcome the consequences of the inevitable sense of estrangement, and displacement, as well as emotional distance that emigration has generated in her. Instead of accepting differences, instead of acknowledging and dealing with distinctions, establishing a dialogue with the *other*, Nora contradictorily and defensively retreats within her own self,

claiming her individuality as the basis of the universality of experience. If such a position has its own truth and validity, the reader finds the character of Nora ironically even more universal in her own contradictory way, because she manifests with her deliberate obstinacy and disdain of the ways of the *other*, those same faults and weaknesses of humankind that she wishes to avoid. In Nora's case, Ardizzi presents the emigrant's experience as a circular movement which brings her, after attempting to 'migrate' towards the *other*, back to her own self.

It should be observed, moreover, that in this novel the protagonist never expresses openly any nostalgia or desire to return to Italy and her hometown:

> Un giorno [Amelia] mi ha detto perché non me ne torno al paese mio se sono tanto ostinata a non accettare questo luogo. Chi mi ostacola ormai? Non ho potuto dire che né i miei luoghi, né questi luoghi, rappresentano per me il punto di approdo. Non ho potuto dire che non c'è approdo per chi è alla semplice ricerca di un mondo privo di inganni. (11-12)

Once again, the reader could find Nora's way of expressing her search for integrity slightly disagreeable or irritating; however, this passage is also further proof of the recurrent presence in the novel of words such as "approdo" or "inganni," which testify to the author's inspiring motifs. Earlier we mentioned that the immigrant woman's condition can result in a trap; here that sense of imprisonment already described is confirmed as the direct consequence of emigration / immigration, which has left Nora caught in between two worlds she cannot identify with. Although at Vanni's death in Italy she had to return to her home village, when seeing those places after so many years there is no homesickness, only her painful awareness that time has changed her and those places forever:

> In una specie di stupore, ritrovavo brandelli di me stessa man mano che mi avvicinavo ai luoghi miei. Nulla era più tale e quale.

> I miei genitori erano morti. La casa fuori dell'abitato abbandonata, era stata venduta da Michele qualche anno prima, con i terreni. Non c'era più una casa mia dove tornare. Non sarei passata nemmeno sullo stradale, per non scorgere, nei luoghi della mia infanzia, presenze forestiere. (122-123)
> «... Mi dispiace , John!... Sei tornato a morire qui... L'avresti mai creduto? Io, non potrò tornare a morire qui, invece... e non perché non voglia. Semplicemente perché tra me e questi luoghi s'è spezzato il filo... Riconosco i luoghi, ma i luoghi non riconoscono me... I miei luoghi sono rimasti intatti solo nella fantasia, e non posso possederli che con la fantasia... Vuoi saperlo? Non ho più un vero posto. Non appartengo a nessun luogo... e appartengo a tutti i luoghi...» (125)

The roots of the immigrant's inquietude are here presented in all their complex entanglement: besides the sense of displacement, it seems that the true meaning of the immigrants' search - and, for some, consequent urge to write - is to reconnect somehow in their inner self that thread which they know is forever severed.

Ardizzi's *Made in Italy* is particularly valuable in its original representation of immigrant women's condition in society. This is the motif that inspired some of the best moments in the novel, with its criticism of patriarchal traditions present both in the old and new worlds. In addition to the already mentioned representation of the state of entrapment, the novel offers a collective portrait of women through a wide range of figures: Italian, Italian-Canadian or Canadian; old and young, first and second generation, dependent and independent. If we try to rearrange these female characters in a somewhat chronological or spacial order, the evolution of women's condition, with reference to the Italian-Canadian immigrant woman, could be traced. At one end of the spectrum there is Nora's mother; the silent, dependent and subservient Italian wife and mother who thinks according to a male-ruled mentality. She is the necessary means for male authority and she does not realize it; she complies to patterns of behaviour that go strictly to the advantage of her husband and son, expecting her daughter to do the same, be

submissive and never expect anything for herself apart from hard work and her role as caregiver of the family. She is the *black madonna* always clad in black:

> ...irragiungibile sotto un involucro sempre eguale, stava dietro il banco con l'impassibilità di una statua appena rimossa dalla nicchia. Aveva movimenti lenti e misurati, non levava gli occhi su nessuno, educata com'era stata al riserbo e alla modestia. La sua voce, quando parlava, era bassa, con improvvisi toni striduli e spezzati.... Ubbidiva ad antiche leggi di costume, che volevano la donna forte come una quercia nel corpo e vuota come il sambuco nel cervello. Non l'ho mai udita contraddire mio padre, né redarguirlo: impersonava, alla perfezione, il simbolo della donna approvato dalla tradizione. (21)
> Se oggi mi domando cosa conosco di mia madre, non saprei dirlo: essa è passata nella mia vita senza lasciare tracce profonde, una persona equilibrata ed arrendevole, ligia al ruolo che la vita le aveva imposto, incapace di un gesto di rifiuto, mai sfiorata dal sospetto di un cambiamento. (22)

A feminist reader inevitably assents with Nora's point of view: we can acknowledge this motherly presence reduced to a silent and immobile statue, with no initiative, emotion or influence on her own children's life, but cannot feel close to her. Her personality was totally curbed to meet standards and expectations set by the male-dominated society and only her voice betrayed her frustration and lack of fulfillment. Like other Italian-Canadian women writers, Ardizzi here expresses the impossibility of accepting a female role based fundamentally on a total lack of respect for the woman as such, as well as for the contribution women give to their families and the rest of society. This refusal of a woman's role so conceived is already expressed by Nora in her childhood. The sense of chronological or spacial displacement on the part of an immigrant woman is not caused, therefore, only by immigration itself, by her inability or refusal to identify with the traditional value system at the basis of social life in Canada, but also by the recognition that in her homeland certain convictions about gender equality, now dominant in western society, were lacking. Nora did not have a female role model she could accept;

therefore, her rejection of past models and the lack of a positive example and direction contribute to her inquietude, which her immigration experience enhances even more. In Nora's case, her quest for independence originates from her rebellious personality and suggests that freedom and autonomy can be achieved through any individual's effort, without any attempt on Ardizzi's part to give a more feminist or theoretical motivation. When referring to women's condition, as well as the absence of appreciation of the importance of education (3, 24-26) the old world is depicted according to characteristics and a way of life which, if it can attract for its simplicity and humanity, also dissatisfies because of the lack of equalitarian attitudes which are ordinarily considered essential in contemporary society. For a reader it is comforting to recognize how those male-dominated patterns of behaviour for both men and women and the convictions inspiring them have gradually evolved in Italy during the post-war period - particularly during the '70s and '80s - to more equal and mutually-respectful forms. It should be acknowledged, however, that contemporary Italian society is still more male-dominated than North America. This time lag seriously affects the general perception of Italian-Canadian women's own ethnic background, leading sometimes to a draconian refusal of one's heritage (see how those feminine concerns have been voiced in the works by De Franceschi, Di Michele and Patriarca). Ardizzi's/Nora's solution to resort to their individuality to overcome changes and barriers is consistent with the character's development in the novel: beyond anyone's beliefs the only true presumed certainty is her individual self, which reflects a much more universal experience.

Other Italian female characters in the story are also presented as unfulfilled and unhappy. There is Emilia, Nora's brother's (Michele's) first "girlfriend", who for years accepted his visits at her home as a sign of

commitment. Instead, the calculating Michele decides to marry in the end a much younger girl, Lina, who, through her kinship ties, will give him the opportunity to emigrate to Canada (89-92). Both women are victimized here, even though only one of them has to face overtly negative consequences. Also, Vanni's five sisters are initially described briefly as unhappy spinsters (47). However, Nora's critical attitude towards other women is not limited to the ones who lived in Italy. Her daughter, Amelia, is always described through words which announce Nora's impatience and irritation for her only daughter's habits and behaviour. Amelia is one of the most interesting characters in the story, a woman who epitomizes the Italian-Canadian way of life. She has chosen to dedicate her life to her family and participate in any social activity and event that can contribute to their prestige. The mentality of *la bella figura* is clearly expressed in Amelia's own words when describing the damage her family's reputation could receive by her daughter Anna's unplanned pregnancy: "Apparteniamo a una certa classe, noi! Abbiamo una dignità da conservare. Con questa scelta Anna ci dà uno schiaffo in faccia" (39-40). Also, Amelia is particularly convincing because she conveys the sense of anxiety and fear of being useless that most distinguishes those women who have obeyed the traditional roles of wives and mothers:

> "A volte ho l'impressione di non conoscere affatto i miei figli.... Ho vissuto soltanto per loro, e scopro che non mi danno nulla in cambio.... Una donna si annulla dietro i figli e il marito, e poi viene chiamata noiosa! A volte mi domando se marito e figli meritino davvero tanto sacrificio...." (40-41)

Amelia's grandmother, that silent statue observed earlier, would have probably expressed the same thoughts had she been given the opportunity. Amelia's life is the Canadianized version of the same figure seen two generations earlier, with the addition of the desire to climb the social ladder and show off personal and material achievements. Amelia's generation is the

one that more than any other faces the contrast between old and new worlds. She grew up in the old world, absorbing patterns of behaviour typical of the rural society which she never questioned, and is the caregiver in a family where roles are instead changing, giving younger generations more independence and emancipating women from models that are now difficult to accept. In the succession of generations, rejecting her mother's type of role, Nora was given no choice but to adapt to her life as wife and mother, even if struggling for her own autonomy. Her daughter, Amelia, has been assimilated instead into that traditional role even more profoundly than her mother, and now finds it extremely difficult to cope with a rapidly changing society in which Anna, the third generation, heads toward the affirmation of her own independence. Nora's support for her grand-daughter's decision to get married and have the baby comes as no surprise: Anna can choose to do what for Nora was impossible, i.e. go against the hypocrisy and mediocrity (45) which characterized both patriarchal societies in Italy and Canada. Nora's behaviour seems to be inspired by those ideals regarding women's freedom and emancipation present in contemporary society. But it should be recognized that Nora's search for a non-traditional role as a woman was already felt to be necessary in her childhood, when the role-models traditionally considered 'positive' were instead, in her eyes, quite negative.

Other female characters in the novel are not of Italian background, such as Mrs. Turner, Peggy and Jane. With regard to the last two, Ardizzi ably conveys her protagonist's uneasiness in relating to these women because their attitudes seem to express an autonomy that Nora had always wanted to obtain for herself (106-109). Ironically, the tone of this first-narrator's recounting is a defensive one: she pretends to be strong in order to hide the insecurities deriving from her upbringing, experience and lack of real

interaction and confrontation with others. In fact, Nora fundamentally knows that, even while she tried to be emancipated in her life as these women are, she has failed in gaining that independence which would have truly expressed her personality. The character of Mrs. Turner refers to that Canadian social environment with which Nora rarely interacts, and the painful impact the immigration experience had on many Italian women (96-101). In fact, the narration of her life in her first house on Manning Avenue synthesizes the brutalization the emigration process could impose on those who were not strong enough to cope with a radical change of environment. It also implies the lack of values or point of reference which could greet the immigrant upon arrival, again trapping her or him in a situation in which social and moral disorientation could easily take over. In Ardizzi's recounting, Nora's encounter with a troubled Canadian woman not only refers to the common female condition as victim of a patriarchal society present in both the old and new worlds, it also illustrates that sense of universality of the human experience which goes beyond any linguistic boundary, and which the first-person narrator had referred to earlier as her most immovable conviction.

Ardizzi's novels never express doubts or a reconsideration of one's ethnicity or ethnic background as such. The search portrayed in Ardizzi's novels is of an existential nature. Ethnicity, or one's *italianità*, represents the limits within which Nora's character explores the changing reality of her self and the values her existence should be inspired by. It is not her ethnic identity as such which is to be debated, but the values and points of reference that her background conveyed to her. Over the years she lived in Canada Nora has been trying to maintain a headstrong self, and the ethnic character of her being, especially regarding the honesty and humanity of the rural world she comes from, has given her fundamental support: "C'è stata sempre, da parte

mia, una taciuta fierezza di ciò che sono e di dove provengo: un'emigrante con l'instruzione della quinta elementare, priva di smancerie, difficile da raggirare, consapevole della mia identità." (15). Nevertheless, when Nora looks back at her life in Italy there is never a mythologization of Abruzzi or expression of nostalgia as the longing for something lost forever. As someone who comes from those places, even at a spacial and chronological distance, there is no need to discover, but only to find some sort of continuity between what she was and what she has become. For example, at the very end of the novel Nora will state: "Il mio coraggio è ancora tutto con me... è il mio marchio 'Made in Italy.'" (216) It is only by going back to one's origins that one can find a meaning in existence. That world is observed and represented in very objective terms - even though ironically limited to the heroine's point of view - and Nora never lets her painful feelings of separation take over in her depiction of life in her small town (122-123). Nevertheless, the constant irony in Nora's attitude is to try to enclose in rigid sets of ideas and positions what is instead constantly changing and fluid. Ethnicity represents the personal boundaries within which Nora has to deal with change as a constant variant of her identity. What really is at the centre of Nora's search is not a questioning of her ethnic character, but of the customs and beliefs that characterize that culture, and the change that time and emigration have produced on them.

With respect to the Italian culture, criticism is directed overtly and covertly, aside from the way the role of women was viewed, to many other aspects related to that background both in Italy and Canada. For example, there was no real interaction among the members of her family, but relationships were mainly based on the power stemming from pre-defined social roles (24-28). Also, the hypocrisy of social life in her small town is epitomized by life in

the *piazza*, that circle which already in Italy had enclosed her existence within a very limited and morally controlled boundary:

> La domenica pomeriggio, nel piazzale davanti alla casa, ... mio padre s'intratteneva a discorrere con gli amici che venivano a visitarlo...: il prete...; un impiegato del comunc...; il direttore dell'ufficio postale.... (22)
> Se avessi voluto, mi sarei potuta vestire a festa come Michele, ed andare a passeggiare sulla piazzetta del paese: ma tale svago non mi attraeva: camminare avanti e indietro nel breve spazio chiuso tra la chiesa e la fontana mi pareva una sottomissione ad abitudini che detestavo. E detestavo del pari le tradizioni muffe come i muri, erette a muraglia davanti ai destini.
> Nel mio paese non c'era posto per chi non si conformasse alle regole comuni. Le donne non avevano scelte: il giudizio delgi anziani le accompagnava dalla nascita, e se nel percorso accadeva loro di sbagliare, il giudizio sfavorevole restava appiccicato loro tutta la vita, come una condanna. Il bene e il male poggiavano su principi che non erano scritti in nessun libro. Coloro che giudicavano erano coloro che avevano più da nascondere: ma l'età, o la posizione sociale, dava loro un autorità tacitamente accettata. (23-24)

Already when dealing with *Diario di una emigrante* we have seen how social roles and control could add psychological pressure on a woman both with respect to her participation in the life in her native village and to emigration. Here the *piazza* described by Ardizzi effectively conveys that sense of pressure and most of all control that belonging to a closely-knit community could entail. While in Abruzzi she experienced the negative side of the coin represented by community life, any positive aspects of that sense of belonging are totally missing in Willowcrest Court, where control and judgement have been replaced by silence and estrangement. The enclosing, albeit suffocating, circle of the *piazza* is transformed in the open, and therefore unprotective, semi-circle of Willocrest Court (17), and the mentality at the centre of the Italian *piazza* has not evolved yet into a social system that Nora can find reassuring, fair or acceptable. On Willowcrest Court Italian community life has been replaced by those behaviours typical of contemporary Canadian society,

with its stress on individual or professional achievement and lack of authentic human relations and communication:

> Willowcrest giace appiattita nel silenzio: il sole cade con allegrezza inutile sulla strada e sulle case dall'aria morta. Porte sprangate. Finestre sigillate. Di molti residenti della strada, non conosco nemmeno le facce. Le case rappresentano un punto di passaggio, mai di approdo: le persone vanno e vengono, con le loro masserizie, senza il tempo di affezionarsi al luogo. Il mondo di Willowcrest è un mondo assai diverso da quello della mia giovinezza, nel quale si entrava dalle finestre e dagli usci sempre spalancati. L'ambiente è formato da gente rispettabile: rispettabile al punto di non aprire uno spiraglio su sé stessa, rivestita del perbenismo borghese sotto il quale pullulano gli orgogli e langue la solitudine. (73)

Openness and frankness, as the positive aspects of life in the new community, have been replaced by asocial models of conduct, inspired by those petit bourgeois ambitions already expressed in Italy. Social control and judgement have been recreated, however, in the social environment Amelia belongs to. Even if not physically recognizable as in Italy, there is an invisible community to which Nora's children belong (77-78). Though Amelia expresses the desire to be part of that community in an honorable position, Nora could not care less (36, 132, 136). The social life in the community is mainly based on superficial contacts and appearances; Amelia herself states that: "Ho tante amiche, ma nessuna nella quale fidare. Se solo sapessero... Sparlerebbero alle mie spalle...." (40) The hypocrisy which in Nora's opinion characterized social life in Abruzzi, and which was an aspect of that life she was presumably glad to depart from, has ironically reproduced itself in Canada. But the protagonist continues in her Canadian suburb, as well as she did in her Abruzzese hometown, to remain outside the *piazza*. As she states: "La mia incapacità al compromesso rende la mia compagnia piuttosto sgradita: le mie vicine di casa hanno smesso da un pezzo d'invitarmi a bere il caffé e a pettegolare in loro compagnia; il mio telefono è muto...." (16) In her words, her original rural

world already expressed a lack of belief in itself, showing its appetite for goals and ambitions that are typically petit bourgeois. When meeting Nora for the first time, Vanni tells her brother "[Le mie sorelle] Si recano in trattoria ed ordinano il vino dalla botte. Sono contadine ruvide, che dello stile non hanno neppure l'idea." and Michele replies "Nora non è proprio una contadina." (31) Also, when describing Vanni's pre-migratory psychological state Nora underlines how,

> Vanni non aveva mai amato la fattoria. Detestava l'odore asprigno della terra e delle bestie; i lavori della campagna, con i quali non aveva mai avuto consuetudine, e che nella sua mente aveva sempre identificati con una condizione inferiore, accendevano in lui, adesso, una certa astiosa insofferenza, gli mettevano addosso una incontrollata smania di evasione. (86)

These passages are interesting not only because they show the absence of mythologization of the rural world as such - though Nora remembers the period she spent on the Morattis' family farm with appreciation for the spontaneity of a life close to nature (66-67) - but also because they present those ambitions for socioeconomic mobility which will contribute to the gradual demise of the social structures typical of the rural world and the adoption of those predominant in the new one. The desire for a more bourgeois life is represented by Vanni's adoption of a more Canadianized version of his name (8), but his drive for social and material betterment is not shared by Nora, who cannot see major changes in her role as wife and mother, apart from those stemming from her own decision to go to work (110-112). She knows her autonomy could only derive from a freedom she had to gain on her own, but now towards the end of her journey Nora unwillingly admits that she was unable to achieve this.

To comprehend even further the character of Nora's female condition, one should consider the role her home plays in the novel. "La prima

ambizione dell'emigrante italiano è possedere la casa.... [La casa] testimonia l'essere e l'avere." (99) The house is the female emigrant's space defined by walls erected by male immigrant ambition. The house represents the boundaries of her experience in a multifold way: it represents her point of view, her universe, her prison (93), and her Italian background inserted in the Canadian environment. The first-person narrator is most of the time telling her story from inside her home; she views the world outside, both concretely and metaphorically, through the windows of her household, through which light enters the rooms invariably by infiltrating rays. Almost all chapters in the novel begin, in fact, with a reference to a view from a window, which, if effective in giving the feeling of the beginning of a new day or time passing, is however ambiguous in rendering a repetitivity that could belong either to the character's experience or to the author's limited ways of rendering such static existence.

Nora's home is the place where tradition wanted her to stay, where she was wife and mother. She was able to play her feminine role, however, within walls and boundaries which were set by the patriarchal society represented by her husband. Her permanent desire to expand this limited space was finally realized by her decision to go to work, which inevitably was received by her husband with surprise and anger (110-112). However, she repeatedly talks about the home, furniture, garden, money, as John's (10-11, 73, 136, 156) and regretfully admits: "Sa di essere stato lui [John], dopotutto, sempre il più forte?" (136). In a moment of sincerity, Nora-the-narrator ironically admits how her attempts at autonomy were fundamentally unsuccessful, leading her to a sort of estrangement from her husband. But even after his death, Nora is still dependent on Vanni, still reluctantly conforming to the mold of a social role she sincerely wanted to break. She could not break away from him even

after she knew he was cheating on her both in Italy (63-66) and in Canada (114), manifesting one of the forms of traditional male chauvinism.

As an intense description of the condition of the Italian immigrant woman, *Made in Italy* adopts effective narrative modes in the portrayal of the inner conflicts characterizing the protagonist's explorations. What renders this reading so interesting is the successful blending of introspective analysis, memory, dream and irony, which effectively represent the immigrant woman's human experience. The presence of these different modes of narration makes Ardizzi's prose particularly rich and complex; the different levels of representation and point of view mentioned above are enriched by the adoption of these different narrative dimensions, which contribute to giving much significance to the entire narration. It should be noticed, however, that although the reader can appreciate Ardizzi's aspiration for a more in-depth and powerful representation of the intimate human struggle affecting the immigrant process, that task is difficult to achieve for her in its entirety. The situations imagined are so complex and powerful and their portrayal so demanding that they are not always presented in a coherent way, leaving at times situations and psychologies only partially explored. The parts played by the different characters do not always present the necessary complexity. The impact of Ardizzi's prose is the outcome of her remarkable will to produce a worthy literary work; still in its tone and structure it manifests a strain to succeed. In *Made in Italy* her prose does not really flow and progress as the result of an irrepressible surge of inspiration, but is more characterized by a sense of will power and self-mastery. Instead of letting out the continuous and immediate flow of her interesting imagination, her writing is constrained by the pipes, tubes and junctures that hydraulically try to control and guide that stream of inspiration into a more clearly and rigidly structured prose.

Il ciclo degli emigranti

As mentioned previously, *Made in Italy* was the first novel of the trilogy *Il ciclo degli emigranti* dedicated to the Italian immigrant experience in Canada. The second novel, *Il sapore agro della mia terra*, and the third one, *La buona America*, are different from Ardizzi's *opera prima* in the way that they both present a simpler structure and representation of such experience: events are presented in a plain chronological order, the portrayal of the main character's migratory experience is described in a more persuasive manner, predominantly without the adoption of a first-person narrator, apart from those sections in *Il sapore agro della mia terra* written as the protagonist's diary. In both novels Ardizzi presents the story of the two immigrant protagonists without resorting to the use of flash-backs as found earlier. Instead, their journey to Canada is presented with less articulate techniques and contrasts of temporal levels, in distinction to those adopted in *Made in Italy*.

Already in her first novel the reader could detect the prose to be more fluent in those parts of the story dealing with the protagonist's Italian past. In *Il sapore agro della mia terra*, Ardizzi, probably reassured by the success of her first novel, seems to confide more in her writing and allows her imagination to come across as the real source of inspiration, rather then being overruled by a willful effort. If on the one hand the narration is simplified, on the other it gains in fluency. Although in the second novel the underlying motifs of her narrative are still those related to the immigrant experience as existential metaphor, the image of the immigrant woman depicted here presents its own peculiarities. In fact, from the tragic existential crisis of *Made*

in Italy, Ardizzi moves on to represent an immigrant woman's inquietude generated by the impossibility of joining the two shores of her experience. Sara, the protagonist of *Il sapore agro della mia terra*, is constantly searching for a way of merging her unconnectable past and present, knowing that each of them cannot represent the totality of her being (175). The images on the cover of the book are an explicit visual representation of the gap affecting Sara's inner core: the picture of a young woman is set above two landscapes, each dominated by the figure of a young man: a priest in an Italian rural background versus a white-collar professional in a metropolitan one. Although Nora's quest and interrogations lead her to spread the fragments of her identity even wider, Sara's search to overcome her inner division directs her at least to a sort of compromise, or an acknowledgement of the disconnected nature of her self. Her new life in Canada cannot totally replace the longing for someone and something she could never have in her homeland. Much of Sara's personality is similar to Nora's, with the same rebelliousness and desire to pursue an education, as well as be respected as a woman. (7, 26).

Interestingly, more than half of this novel is set in Italy, where life preceding emigration is described with particular effectiveness and gives the entire novel a collective dimension not to be found in Ardizzi's other works. The book is divided in three parts: "La Marghera - 1938" describes life in Italy, the second one "America - 1948" describes the Canadian experience and the third one "10 anni dopo" is dedicated to Sara's return journey. The life in rural Abruzzi is described with participation and adherence, reflecting a profound knowledge of those places and their people. The episodes in the life of Sara's family are given with realism and proportion, presenting their struggle for survival with rare effectiveness, and setting their human endeavour within

the natural circle of hills and mountains surrounding them. The natural bonding with life in the countryside reminds the reader of Randaccio's description of the seasons and timing coming from the birth of the calves. Some scenes are vividly portrayed, such as the violent moments of the war, with the killing of two German soldiers, or the accidental death of Sara's younger sisters. Also effective is Ardizzi's representation of Sara's father's growing insanity and accidental death, as well as the figure of Santa, who expresses the pagan and superstitious component of rural life. The moments of accidental violence are more convincing than those portrayed in *Made in Italy*, probably because inspired by true events (Arteni 32). Ardizzi is able to convey effectively the psychological attitude of most characters in the novel, such as all members of Sara's family, as well as Don Fabiano's crisis, Don Amilcare and Don Alfonso Almaviva's class distinctions.

Poignant also is the portrayal of other psychologies introduced in the second part in the novel, such as Uncle Joe's and his son Larry's. Joe is another effective representation of the Italian immigrant who has achieved materially as much as he has lost in his personal life, and who now tries with all his means to recreate a family around him, but without success. His death, alone in the basement of his house, after spending his last moments talking to a spider on the wall, underlines the tragedy of his immigrant experience (237). Uncle Joe is the typical example of how it is not by means of money that the old world, its values and traditional roles can be maintained in the new one. If some forms of the social life of the *paese* are still present in Canada, such as the sense of solidarity and participation in gatherings and family celebrations, that is not enough to transform Uncle Joe's dream of wholeness into reality (174).

In this novel pivotal is Sara's return journey, which she undertakes in order to verify her sense of belonging to a person and place. Here Ardizzi returns to the first-person narration and presents pages of Sara's diary, in which the protagonist realizes that her life is now in Canada. The sense of displacement typical of the immigrant experience derives from the constant impulse to look at one place from the other shore, and therefore with a constantly changing perspective (193). The emigrant tries to overcome such a sense of alienation by inevitably creating for him/herself illusions: the novel ends with Sara thinking of recreating in Canada a new Marghera, in her constant, never-ending attempt to merge past with present. That merging, nevertheless, will take place in an absolute dimension: "I sogni che cadono non importano.... C'è un assoluto nel quale tutto, prima o poi, si risolve...." (249)

As with her previous novels, *La buona America* is introduced by a biblical quotation: "L'uomo, nell'abbondanza, nulla intende; ma simile ai bruti, egli scompare. Salmo 49 (48); 21" (ix), which succinctly relates the theme underlying this novel's representation of the immigrant experience. Pietro is a young emigrant who leaves Abruzzi with the clear intent of making money and decides to go to Toronto to work for an uncle in his supermarket. Uncle Tom is, however, much different from the Uncle Joe met in *Il sapore agro della mia terra*: he does not 'call' his relative out of sentimentalism but out of interest and greed. Contrary to Uncle Joe, Tom does not appreciate Pietro's family's thought of sending him some original *pecorino* from his native town. The quality and taste of the original cheese has no value compared to the quantity available in his store (17). Ardizzi always tends in her novels to de-mythicize a particular aspect of the immigrant experience. In *Made in Italy* it was the sense of nostalgia for the lost paese, in *Il sapore agro della mia terra* it was the American dream, here it is material achievement as well as the

kinship pattern which favoured, but also exploited, relatives for the financial benefit of the first immigrants in the chain. Pietro will, in fact, decide to leave his uncle's inhospitable home and live in a boarding house. Later Pietro will meet Annie, "una di quelle meravigliose donne che tante volte si è soffermato a guardare sui cartelloni pubblicitari e nelle riviste illustrate (30-31). In reality Annie is not as wonderful as she appears in Pietro's eyes. She is a woman of Irish background who supports herself and her secret daughter by working as a waitress, with no particular ambitions other than that of being independent, self-sufficient and having a good time. It is Annie who will introduce him to the "American way of life," a way of living which is overtly and covertly criticised by Ardizzi in her previous novels.

In fact, in *Made in Italy* Nora critizes her son Andrea's excessive will to succeed professionally without being available for his family (150-155). Nora also effectively conveys the sense of a sad humanity represented in the large, falsely content display of the 'plaza' she regularly goes to for her shopping, underlying how her sense of isolation increases when she steps out, not having even the simple opportunity to talk to others (161-165). In *Il sapore agro della mia terra*, the circle of mountains surrounding Sara's existence in Abruzzi is replaced in Canada by a rather unpleasant environment. As Sara herself says on her arrival in Toronto when the impact of the new world is keenest: "Io vedo solo case dai tetti a punta... Io sento solo odore di benzina"(149). In *La buona America* Annie symbolizes the seducing new world, the world that Pietro wants to possess and be part of: "Guarda il cielo sopra i palazzi: il cielo della notte, in una città americana, pensa, sentendosi sciolto da invisibili nodi, da vecchie costrizioni. In quel cielo crede di vedere Annie" (32). However, those invisible knots are still there and tie him to a tradition in which relationships between men and women are again not based

on mutal respect and interaction, but on power, control and rigid roles to be maintained: "Lui si ritrae, come se di colpo scivolasse indietro, perdesse tutto il potere che aveva creduto di avere su di lei: e pensa che Annie non è una donna dei suoi posti, non può parlarle come parlerebbe a una donna dei suoi posti" (42). The impossibility of a steady relationship between the two will bring them apart, but even after Pietro gets married to Mara, a young woman from his *paese*, he is still obsessed by Annie, mainly by his inability to have her as *his*. He will not truly have her since he is not able to fully participate in a society that does not accept him, as Annie does not. Pietro will succeed in his profession as one of the many Italian entrepeneurs in construction, will have house, wife, children and money, but not acceptance. Pietro's own return journey will show also to him how that unity is impossible, and to the reader how this character's search for the mythicized woman/place is based on the inherited lack of true, solid convinctions which the new world amplifies.

If the theme of immigration as depicted in her works can be considered as a metaphor of a much broader, universal human experience, the language in which Ardizzi expresses her narrative seems instead to reflect more her own personal migratory experience and education, rather than the realistic, average experience of an ordinary, first-generation Italian immigrant of peasant background in Canada in the early 1950s, as most of the main characters in her novels are. It was observed earlier in dealing with Randaccio's prose in *Diario di una emigrante* how the choice of language was a problem that affected for different reasons writers both in Italy and in Canada, especially after the input given by neorealism in Italy. Over the years, Ardizzi seems to have found the most appropriate linguistic voice, overcoming a sense of awkwardness, of displacement that at the beginning in *Made in Italy* seemed to have been felt as a problem, or better as an obstacle to the complete

expression of those themes and motifs that were an integral part of her narrative works. From novel to novel we witness the merging of her Italian language with her subject, a slow process that leads the reader to appreciate a linguistic register that is no longer felt as pure literary form detatched from the situation described but, on the contrary, tends to get closer to, and be a realistic expression of, themes and feelings of the characters portrayed.

Ardizzi seemed to have been, at the beginning of her literary career, particularly aware of the problems and difficulties that an Italian immigrant woman writer had to face in writing abroad in her own language:

> E' molto faticoso scrivere in italiano in paese straniero. Il maggior ostacolo consiste nel non poter seguire dal vivo l'evoluzione della lingua. [...] Ciò di cui ho sentito, e sento una forte mancanza, è il contatto diretto con la lingua italiana, che all'estero diventa stagnante. (Boccotti 7)

We cannot but agree with the novelist on the effects that immigration has on the native Italian speaker, although it has to be underlined how in Ardizzi's work the question of language seems to be a very complex one, involving not only the writer's personal linguistic experience, sensitivity and background, but also the particular social and linguistic reality that she is describing, in itself very rich and diversified.

With regard to the writer's personal experience, not only does immigration seem to alter linguistic registers and the perception of one's mother tongue, but also that experience reflects in Ardizzi's works her most intimate feelings regarding both her own departure from the country she still feels strongly attached to and her settling in a country so culturally different from the one she grew up and was educated in. The language in which Maria Ardizzi writes is, more than the real means of expression of a lower-class immigrant, the means through which she experiences a desired return journey to a dimension of life, to a space and a time, that she can now find only

in her own memory; a return-journey lived within herself that enables her to express that part of her personality, of her ethnic and regional background, of her education and culture, that can only be encountered again in her own creative inspiration rather than in reality. This happens both in those passages in which she describes the peasant life in Abruzzi and in others where events take us to the new Canadian urban landscape. In both settings Maria Ardizzi is there, more than Nora, Sara, Pietro or Anna, going back to a linguistic dimension that only in the later novels matches completely the one she is representing. When her characters are in Canada, very few are the linguistic changes that reflect the major evolution and transformations that occur in their lives; very few are the hints to such a different linguistic reality. It seems that the writer's main concern is not for a totally realistic representation of the emigration experience from Abruzzi to Canada; rather her use of language seems to reflect more her deepest feelings on the migratory process. She presents the double loss of abandoning a culturally rich world which she seems to miss very much, and at the same time, of not finding in the new country a cultural and linguistic reality she can identify with, or simply just like - both with regard to the mainstream literary environment and the Italian-Canadian reality. Even though we can say that in her work Ardizzi moves towards a better representation of her literary world using a language increasingly more appropriate to the narrative matter, still her language remains mainly her own, as it is the only means that allows her that return journey to a land of nostalgia and memory that will always be part of her inspiration.

Made in Italy was published almost thirty years after Maria Ardizzi's departure from Italy. From the beginning we can observe how the writer seems overly and excessively concerned with her linguistic performance, and

instead of abandoning herself to her inspiration, she tends to enclose her narrative flow in a linguistic form and style that remain too rigid and detached from the characters and action she represents. This produces a sharp contrast between the language of the writer and the realism of the main character narrating the events. The presence of Ardizzi's own personal linguistic register creates such a gap between the character of Nora and the linguistic as well as psychological representation of it, that the reader finds it hard not to hope for another character who can truly embody those language connotations and the concomitant way of observing and commenting. The reader wishes for validation of a woman with little education who never wanted to refuse her peasant background as the character of Nora is presented to be (her father did not let her continue school after "la quinta elementare"). Instead of trying to find a language that can fully express the character in all its aspects, by moving downwards towards a human reality that, while perhaps linguistically unsophisticated, is rich and expressive in its own simplicity, with a regional linguistic and cultural background all its own, Ardizzi prefers to use in the portrayal of her characters a standard Italian so elaborate that the character of Nora in the end cannot maintain her own linguistic and psychological coherence. The desire to use an elegant and refined register that can elevate her language to what she seems to consider an adequate literary level causes the separation of the linguistic element from the thematic one. In contemporary writing the literary language does not need to be considered as such, to be very refined or use sophisticated nuances to represent a world like the one of the peasants in Abruzzi or of the Italian immigrants in Canada. Instead of trying to elevate the tone of her literary language unnaturally, inappropriate to the psychological and cultural reality of her characters and of the world represented, the author could have been

more confident from the beginning in her own inspiration, imagery and themes, which in themselves were able to evoke, even in very simple linguistic terms, as we see in her later works, a world of fascinating human reality and charm.

The uneasiness Ardizzi seemed to have felt in *Made in Italy* with regard to language reflects itself in some particular aspects of it; for example, in the overuse of abstract nouns, which more than anything else tends to render the language stiff and overtly crystalized, expressing a conceptual background that cannot be part of the mentality and culture of the people she is describing:

> Nella ruvidezza della mia persona e nei miei modi bruschi, c'è un retaggio che il tempo ha stagionato. Noi di provenienza contadina portiamo le tracce della terra come un marchio che ci distingue. (7)
> C'è stata sempre ,da parte mia, una taciuta fierezza di ciò che sono e di dove provengo: un'emigrante con l'istruzione della quinta elementare, priva di smancerie ,difficile da raggirare, consapevole della mia identità....
> Il significato della parola emigrante mi ha sgradevolmente colpita solo dopo aver emigrato: e mi ha colpita per le implicazioni che balzano alla superfice solo quando sei emigrante.... Ed anche quando ho scoperto che il mondo non appartiene affatto a tutti, e che le disuguaglianze non sono soltanto nel linguaggio, ho conservato la mia convinzione, la sola forza che mi permetesse di sentirmi ovunque a casa mia. (15-16)

These short passages are particularly significant - and many others could be quoted- because they show not only the presence of many abstract terms which hardly represent the linguistic and semantic background of a woman as Nora, but remind us also of other elements that characterize Ardizzi's writing, such as the presence of linguistic structures that echo forms and tones typical of a language fairly common in Italian schools in the recent past, where formal language meant good language, where naturalness and directness, simplicity and clarity were not considered attributes of a literary language: "Smettila con quell'acciottolio di stoviglie" (34) says Nora a little abruptly to

her daughter Amelia; also, towards the end of the novel, "Non ode!" (172) says Peggy referring to a paralyzed Nora. It seems that in her evaluation and choice of expressions, Ardizzi prefers to use forms that are, in her opinion, beautiful in themselves, used because they are aesthetically relevant, not because they are able to reflect and describe adequately the situation she is creating on the page. In this way it can be seen how her language reflects her innermost experience, the return journey to her self, that is and can be part only of Maria J. Ardizzi, the writer and the woman. In fact, the same language, the same tones and registers are not only totally acceptable but also moving and overwhelming in Ardizzi's most private work, *Conversazione col figlio.*

In maintaining herself present in her language, Ardizzi tends to neglect any linguistic distinction, either social, cultural, temporal or spatial. She is aware, as she says, of the existing linguistic differences, but it is not her intention to describe and report those differences in her works. In *Il Sapore Agro della Mia Terra*, she gradually abandons herself more and more to her inspiration and, as it happened sometimes in *Made in Italy*, those moments are the most effective and satisfying ones, when the language is no longer the barrier that makes her writing a matter of determination and will, but rather the medium in which her real narrative vein is sublimated in a style that finds its own full expression. The narrating voice of this book can be easily recognized as that of Sara, the peasant girl from Abruzzi who in Canada becomes a university instructor. Yet, if some scenes in the narration make the style and the tone of the language realistically acceptable - as in Sara's diary, in her conversations with Don Fabiano, or in other moments where the narration reflects a point of view that can be only hers - nevertheless, here too the language is still mainly that of Maria J. Ardizzi. It is a language which adheres more closely to the narrative matter, but also a preoccupation for the

word in itself, which renders explicit even aspects in the narration that do not need to be such. The language gets closer to the substance and the psychological characteristics of the characters, but it is still felt as a form. The linguistic differences among characters and settings are often mentioned, but not represented. We are told that this or that character speaks dialect or English, but there is little to describe, or even give an impression, of what that linguistic experience would be like. We know that it exists, but not how it exists. If the writer does not tell us explicitly that some characters speak in dialect, nothing would make us suppose that they are doing so. The only direct references we have to *Italiese* in the book are at the end of the first part, when the cities are mentioned from which the people in the paese receive parcels and goods: Filadelfia, Pizzesburghe, Clivelande, Nuovaiorche e Bruccoline (139).

As Vittoriano Esposito underlines in the introduction to *La Buona America*:

> Troppo viva e sofferta è la presenza dell'Ardizzi nel mondo che descrive, per potersi calare in una impersonale indifferenza; troppo vigile e partecipe, sul filo della coscienza, è l'attenzione che presta alle cose e alle umane passioni, per potersene distaccare totalmente e con freddezza (p.5).

Ardizzi is still present in her literary work and will always be, and the language will reflect this passionate desire of living the migratory experience of her characters as her own, in adherence to a world that will always be part of her being and her memory, a world to which she will always try to return.

3. Life before emigration: Matilde Torres

Brief mention will be given here to an autobiography which is also regularly referred to in bibliographies compiled on Italian-Canadian

literature (see those by Joseph Pivato). The contribution of this text should be acknowledged as a work produced by an Italian author who emigrated to Canada, even though the subject matter puts it to a certain degree at the periphery of the Italian literature of migration to this land. In fact, although Matilde Torres recounts how she emigrated to Canada for love, no mention is made of her life after coming to this country. The approach to her narration reflects, however, a psychological state which is common of a person who emigrated to another country and had to change her previous way of being. Torres presents in *La dottoressa di Cappadocia* a well-written account of her life in Italy previous to emigration, describing effectively the life in her small town and how she became the family practitioner of the small village of Cappadocia. Also from Abruzzi, Torres tells a story which is common to many Italian petit bourgeois *brave ragazze*, those young women who diligently pursued a higher education to become then respected teachers or professionals, without experiencing much outside the restrictive but well-arranged circle of family, school and professional life. In her case, however, she decided to give up a secure and gratifying career as a medical doctor and marry an Italian-Canadian from Toronto. Her days in college and the promising years of young adulthood, with her involvement in a regional folk dance group, her graduation from university, the longing for achievements not only in the academic and professional fields, but also in her personal life, are conveyed efficiently. Her writing reflects her in-depth knowledge of, among others, both classics and science, even though it is an approach that sometimes the reader can find disproportionate in its display of erudition. The best moments of this autobiography occur when Torres presents landscapes and figures of the rural villages where she lived and worked. Then the humanity of her experience as a female doctor comes across as the most

rewarding aspect of her profession. The precision and perfectionism deriving from her medical background is accompanied by her acute sensitivity and perceptiveness, presenting her patients, as well as other people in the community, as well-rounded figures, full of amiability and vitality.

However, the whole meaning of her recollection of those years preceding her coming to Canada is clearly explained in the introduction to Torres's autobiography by Aroldo Buccilli:

> *L'autrice ha trasfuso nel testo (sono sue parole) la sua anima. Come ogni emigrante che approda in una terra straniera, anch'essa ha subito un processo di spersonalizzazione. Si è sentita deufradata del* suo *nome (da Matilde Torres a Maria Gentile), della* sua *indipendenza (incapacità di esprimersi in un inglese fluente, di girare la città, della* sua *laurea (ha dovuto ripetere gli esami), della* sua *patria, della* sua *famiglia... Di qui il bisogno prepotente di recuperare la* sua *identità, di ritrovare* se stessa, *ritornando alle origini, dove sono le radici della* sua *formazione morale e culturale. Ha potuto fare questo soltanto ora che ha superato molti ostacoli ed ha acquisito quella sicurezza e serenità interiore che le ha permesso di rivivere il passato (da una lettera da Toronto del 4 gennaio 1982).* (6)

Buccilli refers to the content of a letter Torres herself wrote to him, describing her feelings of loss of identity, disorientation and displacement caused by her immigration to Canada. He effectively and clearly describes the reasons that led Torres to write her memoir of her experience as the doctor of Cappadocia, because she needed to come together and find herself again by meditating on the way she was. Therefore, although the content of this autobiography does not describe directly her migratory experience, the text should still be mentioned in the Italian literature of migration to Canada. The reason for this can be found in the urgency to write a book like this and the function it had of giving the author the opportunity to redefine herself after immigration, when such radical changes in her identity as a woman, an educated person, and a professional made it necessary for her to express a way of being which provided continuity within her. The decision to emigrate usually entails some

risk-taking; the impact of the new social and cultural environment inevitably affects one's perceptions and confidence. Matilde Torres had experienced all that and, as a consequence, when circumstances allowed her to do so, she needed to reaffirm her identity through an act of recollection. It is worth noticing how both Ardizzi and Torres, authors of similar regional and social background, even though of different literary outcomes, wish to affirm in their writing a strong personality and will. Perhaps it is only a coincidence, but it could also be a result of the urgency and reaction on the part of the immigrant writer to re-assert her/his individuality after the profound changes caused by immigration have taken place. After enduring a difficult process of adaptation, Torres proudly finds again both the strength and conviction to bridge the consequences of the migratory experience and reconnect with her past.

The three women authors considered in this chapter have introduced us not only to the originality of the feminine point of view, but also to a fundamental change and widening of perspective in the Italian literature of migration to Canada. The strictly autobiographical works considered in the first two chapters have been followed by a new, post-war production in which the reality of the immigrant experience has been transformed by the realism of a literary creativity broadly inspired by such experience. With the new wave of immigration after the last world war, women have increasingly contributed to an enrichment of this literary production, articulating their narratives and motifs in a much more complex and profound way. If Randaccio's creative work is to be appreciated for its closeness to the immigrant condition, if Torres's memoir is fundamentally based on an immigrant educated woman's desire to express herself for what she still is, it is

with Ardizzi's novels that this literature of migration reaches a richer and more intense expression.

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[1] As we know, Italian women started to come to Canada in larger numbers after World War II, following their husbands and families to the new land. Previously, and especially at the turn of the century, Italian immigration was mainly made up of single men, sojourners who came with the intention of returning to Italy once they achieved their financial goal.

[2] The role of the Italian woman in Canada has been dealt with in several conferences and publications. In 1992 the Mariano A. Elia Chair in Italian-Canadian Studies at York University organized its 9th lecture series on Italian-Canadian Women. Also, the Centre for Italian Canadian Studies (now Frank Iacobucci Centre) in the Department of Italian Studies of the University of Toronto organized a symposium on the contribution of women to the many aspects of Italian culture in Canada, the proceedings of which were published in volume 11 of *Italian Canadiana*. Moreover, an article by Maddalena Kuitunen entitled "Today Italian-Canadian Women want to leave kitchen for campus" was published in a special issue of the *Toronto Star*.

[3] Elena Maccaferri Randaccio was born in Bologna in 1921 and died in Montreal in 1988. She was trained as a school teacher in Bologna before she came to live in Canada with her husband (Pivato, e-mail; Spada 156). According to Pivato her immigration to Canada probably took place in the late 1940s and after which she lived quietly in Montreal (e-mail; "Italian-Canadian" 571). In both Mingarelli's and Spada's accounts on the Italians in Montreal, information is given on Salvatore Randaccio, the writer's husband. Also born in Bologna, he was an engineer who worked in Italy till 1950. Later in Montreal he became a successful businessman and governor of Loyola College (Spada 200; Mingarelli 131). With regard to her pseudonyms, it seems that she preferred to adopt them to conform to a custom common among writers of Italian romantic literature, as we shall see later in this chapter. In particular, *MacRan* is clearly formed by the combination of the two first syllables of her Italian last names, which curiously gives a Scottish effect. I am grateful to Joseph Pivato for the biographical information he provided me on Elena Maccariti Randaccio.

[4] When using the adjective *popular* to describe Randaccio's writing, its meaning needs to be clarified in order to avoid the possible confusion caused by its elusiveness. In fact, when referring to Randaccio's work, *popular* does not have, of course, any numerical connotation, i.e. referring to what appeals to the most people, or serving the interests of the people (Fiske 322). Rather than referring to the meaning given to the term in recent cultural studies in North America, its use here refers more to the Italian literary context, mainly to the *letteratura di consumo* or *paraletteratura*, a phenomenon started in the 19th-century literary industry and mass society, as well as referring to a certain degree to that *letteratura popolare* conceived as a series of texts produced by and for the popular classes and differentiated from a sociological point of view from the higher classes' *letteratura colta*, though over the centuries the *letteratura colta* influenced the *letteratura*

popolare. It will be clarified later, when dealing with *Canada, mia seconda patria,* in what way Randaccio's production can be considered part of this literature.

[5] Liala was the pseudonym of Liana Negretti (1902- 1989), prolific and long-lived author of *romanzi rosa* of particular success and fortune, such as *Signorsi* [Yes, sir!] (1931), *Trasparenze di pizzi antichi* [Transparencies of old laces] (1943), *Ombre di fiori sul mio cammino* [Shadows of flowers along my way] (1981) and *Frammenti di arcobaleno* [Fragments of a rainbow] (1981) (*La nuova enciclopedia*). It is interesting to observe how Elena Randaccio too preferred to use a pseudonym in the publication of her novels.

[6] It is obvious here that Randaccio is taking artistic license with her story, since immigration during the 1930s was minimal and travel between Italy and Canada ceased altogether with Italy's declaration of war in June 1940.

[7] According to Antonino Spada *Canada, mia seconda patria,* "is a love story.... Not one line shows that she understood Canada. The title is a misnomer. The action is arbitrarily set in Canada, and could easily have taken place anywhere else. Indeed, the artificial melodramatic story line of the 19th century variety would be more convincing in a European background. The Italian language she uses is a perfect type of the last century, post-De Amicis and very beautiful." (Spada 156-157)

[8] For example, Liala and her *romanzi rosa* are given brief mention in *La nuova enciclopedia della letteratura Garzanti* (537), or in Petronio's *L'attività letteraria in Italia* (802), but find no reference in such important manuals as Sapegno's *Compendio di storia della letteratura italiana.*

[9]One can presume that this form *nozzo* is a local dialectal expression meaning 'pranzo di nozze'.

[10] The purpose of Nino Ricci's fiction is certainly not that of addressing issues of interest only to Italian-Canadians as his 1990 Governor General's Award for *Lives of the Saints* shows. However, it is true that his fiction has been at the centre of interest of a wide Italian-Canadian readership, which has perceived him as the writer who most significantly voices their human concerns. However, when students in my 1995-96 and 1996-97 courses in Italian-Canadian studies both at York University and the University of Toronto were asked to comment on the novels he had published so far, *In a Glass House* received as much criticism as *Lives of the Saints* was praised, because it was considered in its representation of the inner conflict of his main character too depressing and discouraging. Even if these comments can be considered as a superficial reaction to his writing, they manifest the need on the part of this readership for texts that can fill the gap between historical and analytical texts and literary ones, which they perceive as far-fetched and non-representative of their way of being.

[11] Maria Josè De Dominicis Ardizzi was born in Leognano di Montorio al Vomano in the province of Teramo in Abruzzi in 1931. Of middle-class background (both her parents worked for the public postal service), she came to Canada in 1954, after marring Toni Ardizzi. She attended high-school at a private Catholic boarding school in Rome, years that she considers fundamental for her upbringing and education. After graduating she started working in Italy as an elementary teacher, but interrupted her career to follow her husband to Canada, where she devoted herself to her family (she had three children) and later to her painting and writing (Arteni 31-40).

[12] The prize was conferred thanks to the English translation by Anna Maria Castrilli (1982).

[13] The author had the opportunity to meet Mrs. Ardizzi in person in Toronto in May 1993.

[14] Zia Tina was, in fact, an aunt who lived with her during the war on her in-laws' family farm. (81-87).

Chapter four

A View from Within

The character of the Italian immigration to Canada after World War II influenced significantly the ways in which Italian culture and consequently its literature of migration were expressed over the recent decades. Before dealing with some other texts which were produced by post-war immigrants, it is necessary to describe briefly here the cultural impact of the second major wave of Italian immigration to Canada, which helped transform the Italian cultural presence in this country. In fact, during the post-war period the mass of Italian immigrants who came to this land brought with them a different sense of their culturalbackground, affected as it was by the way Italians had lived in their home country before, during and right after the conflict. The destruction of the war had left scars on the devastated Italian soil, as well as on the confidence of some in the possibility of bettering substantially their livelihood in a land which had already disappointed them too many times.

After proud moments of nationalistic ambition or expansionist illusions characterizing the history of the peninsula during the first half of the 20th-century, the hostilities had left Italy shattered, causing the gap between economic conditions in northern and southern Italy to become even wider.[1] The new Italian immigrants in Canada had therefore a direct experience of the twenty-year-long fascist dictatorship and its propaganda, as well as of the war and its sad consequences, which inevitably left indelible marks in their memory. One can comprehend therefore the impact this new and significant wave of immigration had on the Italian community, especially in Toronto, which came to be the major settlement of post-war Italian immigrants.

Because of its quantity as well as quality this new wave of immigration had a particular effect on the whole of Canadian society, as well as on the ways in which Italian culture was expressed in Canada from the late forties and fifties. As we have seen in the introduction, periods in the history of the Italian immigration to Canada can be distinguished according to the cultural patterns and expressions characterizing each period. With regard to post-World War II immigration, which came to an end during the seventies, two clear-cut demarcations can be seen separating and distinguishing post-war Italian cultural expressions from those of the pre-war period and from more recent cultural processes in Italy. On the one hand the direct experience post-war immigrants had with fascism and the war in their homeland made a significant cultural difference with those Italians who were already resident in Canada at the time; on the other hand the Italians who came mainly during the fifties and sixties were, in turn, not particularly affected by the political and administrative changes and economic improvements taking place in their home country, especially after their emigration. In fact, in those same decades Italy was to live its most important economic boom in history, transforming

itself from a battlefield and debris of a defeated country, whose destiny was decided by the resolutions adopted by the winners, into one of the world's economic superpowers. Even if they came to Canada after the June 1946 referendum which transformed the Italian state from a monarchy into a republic, most of those men and women emigrated to Canada at a time when the changes induced by Italy's post-war 'miracle' were still underway. Therefore, the ways in which they looked back at their life in Italy can still be defined as *pre-republican*, as it was not substantially affected by the political, economic and social changes taking place in post-war Italy. Also, the experience of emigration itself inevitably had some repercussions on the immigrants' psychology and the way they perceived their country of origin. Post-war immigrants' writings attest how they frequently tended to look nostalgically back at Italy and its way of life as they left it, an unchanged, crystallized rural world, unaffected by time and characterized by poverty as well as simplicity, honoured traditions and a human sense of community, as well as a new solidarity derived by the experience of the war. Few of them witnessed the economic changes which took place in the country after the war and rather remember - and after record - their *paese* the way they left it many years before.

As with the works considered so far, writings by post-war immigrants present the reality and humanity of the immigrant experience as no historical, statistical or sociological study can. Although it is true that the availability of literary and autobiographical texts in Italian language by Italians who lived in Canada (at least for a certain period in their lives) before World War II is not abundant, this sort of primary resources have been augmented thanks to the post-war immigration (Rosoli 175).[2] This latest production expresses a collective experience and dimension that was missing

in most of the works considered so far, being the fruit of writers who had quite diverse experiences in Canada, were separated from each other both in time or place, and as well came from quite diverse homeland backgrounds. Even though it is true that the first phases in the migration process presented a serious obstacle to an immediate expression of their immigrant life experience, it would be incorrect to say that Italian immigrants were not *able* to voice their feelings because of their lack of knowledge of English or French, the fatigue due to their hard work and their scant education. First-generation Italian writers have instead shown an ability to overcome gradually these difficulties, acquire their own means of expression and give their own important and original contribution to the assertion of Italian culture in Canada. According to Joseph Pivato, these writers have demonstrated that "unconquerable creative spirit (...) that has kept our Italian culture alive in North America" ("Friulano" 5). Together with the works by women considered in the previous chapter, the production by first-generation, post-war immigrant writers considered here play a momentous role. In fact, they represent another segment of that bridge that joins the two shores of the Italian immigrant experience, contributing to clarifying its meaning, especially to younger generations of Italian-Canadians who wish to comprehend their cultural background.

According to the classification that was already presented in the introduction, the post-World War II immigrant writers discussed in this chapter can be grouped according to the two categories of *emigranti-scrittori* and *scrittori-emigranti*. Most of the writers belong to the first category, reflecting coherently the reality of post-war immigration to Canada, mainly made up of people with little education and among whom some became writers after coming to this land. The contribution given by more educated writers is

relatively limited, but still significant in representing their position and/or participation in community life. However, this literary production reveals a quite diversified and complex nature, characterized as it is by different narrative structures, models and purposes. As Gianfausto Rosoli recently observed, "The dividing lines between popular, professional and semi-professional writing are not easily drawn, given the multiple interplay of styles and expressive levels" (176). Such interplay is present particularly in the writings overviewed in this chapter, where the autobiographical nature of the inspiration finds expression through representations which reflect both in their approach and means of creative representation the complexity and richness of the immigrant experience. What fascinates the reader is the possibility of entering the mental world of the immigrant and understanding his thoughts and emotions, observing the reality of his experience from within. Therefore, it is preferable to give here an accurate account of some of the texts available, since their large number makes it impossible to deal here with all of them in a worthy manner. This selection tries to reflect more the main characteristics and typology of post-war immigrant writing, rather than be based on judgements of 'value' or personal preference. In consideration of the nature of this literature, it is believed that most writers usually mentioned in bibliographies in this field deserve to be considered in future studies, to underline the collective character of a literary production that truly reflects the significance of an immigrant experience lived by hundreds of thousands of people. Therefore, the analysis presented here is not exhaustive, but represents a first attempt in dealing with the main features of this post-war literary production.

1. A storyteller of immigration: Giuseppe Ierfino

One of the most prolific writers among the *emigranti-scrittori* is Giuseppe Ierfino. He is the author of four books, all privately published in Toronto. His first literary endeavour is entitled *L'orfana di Cassino* and was published in 1986; the second one, *Il cammino dell'emigrante*, was published in 1992 while his third, *Vita mia est* was released in 1998. These volumes reflect the author's desire to spend his leisure time writing and each of them averages about 200 pages.[3] Ierfino can be considered a very apt example of an *emigrante-scrittore*: in fact, after emigrating from the southern region of Calabria (from where a large percentage of post-war Italian immigrants to Canada came[4]), he spent his entire adult life working first as a seasonal labourer and then as a motor-man with the Canadian National Railways. The hardships of this blue-collar work have not stopped him from cultivating his own interest in writing, showing how both reaching financial security and pursuing his own literary expression were important to him.

As the titles suggest, each book is slightly different in subject matter, but they all reflect the author's original approach to his writing. The first one, *L'orfana di Cassino*, pre-dates the immigrant experience and is the story of a family set in Cassino during World War II, when that town was ravaged by on-going fighting.[5] It recounts how the daughter Felicetta is the only one to survive the senselessness of a war. Many characters are presented in the novel, which distinguishes itself for its involved action and intricacy of plot, and tells how, after fighting in Africa, Felicetta's father Federico comes back to Cassino in the hope of finally being reunited with his family. However, not very far from him his wife Marisa is killed trying to save the life of a baby, leaving her children alone and homeless after their house is destroyed by a

bombardment. Felicetta and her little brother Richetto then wander in search of a shelter and are inevitably exposed to the dangers of the war, such as hunger, bombardments, and brutalization (as that of the woman who runs an orphanage where they are taken after their mother's death and who tries to profit by keeping children virtual prisoners). Later during an attempted rape of Felicetta, it is her father who saves her from the violence of soldiers, but the two do not recognize each other. Federico has in the meantime become the leader of *partigiani* and takes part in a series of partisan actions. His son Richetto later dies accidentally playing with a bomb (a similar accident took the lives of Sara's little sisters in *Il sapore agro della mia terra* by Ardizzi) and the only member of his family he is reunited with just before dying is his daughter Felicetta. The author repeatedly inserts in the narration considerations on the absurdity of the war, and how humanity needs to avoid such conflict.

Ierfino's second novel, *Il cammino dell'emigrante* deals, as the title suggests, with the experience of Italian immigrants in Canada, though the second, third and fourth chapters in the book present a totally fantastic story on pioneers in Canada from the second half of the 19th-century up to the 1930s. Since this story follows a chapter presenting the author's reflections on the immigrant journey and introducing the up-coming account on Italian immigrants, this brief 'Canadian' insert on the encounter of native peoples and settlers could be considered a homage to his adopted country, expressing his love for the Canadian environment and forests, as well as an appreciation for what he calls "l'alto senso morale della vita, per cui seguendo attentamente usi e costumi dei nostri pionieri, scopriamo che anche noi abbiamo ereditato gli stessi usi e gli stessi costumi..." (34). As in *L'orfana di Cassino*, the two plots in this book are quite rich and enthralling, absorbing the reader in the

complex sequence of events presented. The story is based on the life of a number of main characters around whom many other secondary characters are presented, and what is remarkable is Ierfino's presentation of the events from different characters' points of views, moving from angle to angle and from one situation to another in order to represent parallel events or actions of the characters. The narration of the story is sometimes suspended by the author's personal considerations on immigration or other aspects of life, or by direct references to the work of the southern Italian scholar Vito Teti (3) or the great writer Alessandro Manzoni (58, 115) when describing towns or natural landscapes. The book begins with a personal consideration on the part of the author that holds particular importance for the comprehension of the purpose of his writing. He, in fact, states that "L'emigrante dietro il suo cammino ha una lunga e drammatica storia che, secondo noi, anziché essere descritta, dietro investigazioni ed inchieste, potrebbe meglio essere narrata da chi l'ha vissuta o da chi ne ha fatto esperienza" (1).

The representation of the life of Italian immigrants is centred on two couples: Pasquale and Maruzzella, and Aldo and Angelina, even though, as Ierfino himself states in the introduction to the novel, his main intention is to give a portrayal of the contribution made by women to the migration process (VII-IX, 58).[6] In this respect, his decision to begin his narration by dealing with the first wave of immigration to North America is particularly interesting.[7] Most characters belong to the fictional community of Miramonti in Calabria. Pasquale decides to leave his wife Maruzzella and son Pietrino to go to North America to seek his fortune. Even though there is no urgent need to do so, he prefers to follow the example of many others at the beginning of the century. Maruzzella is not happy about his decision, partly because he leaves her alone with their son, a strange child with premonitory visions whom the

people call "il pazzo di via San Francesco" (59) and whose predictions will all come true. After Pasquale's departure, Maruzzella is left with the burden of taking care of their entire property, being alone as many other women were at that time. This loneliness made her appear as defenseless and as easy pray to the arrogant *dongiovanni*, whose attempts of taking her are unsuccessful thanks to the help of a neighbour, Giovanna. The latter is the mother of three boys and also wife of an emigrant, Settino, who is presented at the beginning of the story in Argentina, from where he is unable to return home, living in a state of solitude and destitution. There are many women in their neighbourhood who are wives of emigrants: they are called "le donne di San Francesco" (65), struggling on their own to cope with the consequences of emigration.

In the meantime, Pasquale, the emigrant "con la valigia sulla spalla" (70) has reached New York, where he starts working as a common labourer tunneling sewers. Pasquale epitomizes the Italian immigrant adventure in North America: he has to face periods of unemployment, living in overcrowded boarding-houses or railway-cars and moving in a never-ending journey from city to city in order to keep working. He reaches Niagara Falls and works in local construction. He also saves his friend Aldo from committing suicide out of the despair caused by his wife's infidelity. Previously in New York, Aldo also had an affair with an Italian widow, Angelina, who does not want to continue the relationship with him since he is married. Pasquale had advised his friend to go back to New York and take care of his new family, but Aldo could not find Angelina anywhere. So the latter joins his friends working at the construction of a bridge over the Niagara Falls. Pasquale and Aldo work together until Pasquale receives a letter falsely informing him of his wife Maruzzella's infidelity, so he leaves at once. Meanwhile in New York, Angelina

has a baby girl, Rosalba, but she now finds herself in a very troublesome situation. Since she is homeless and destitute, the American authorities want to force her to give her child up for adoption, so she escapes to Toronto. For his part, Pasquale reaches New York with the intention of going back to Italy, though he is convinced that the accusations against his wife are false. However, just before leaving he changes his mind, fearing the embarrassment and humilitation deriving from those allegations, which could still harm his family's reputation with his fellow *paesani*. So he goes to Halifax and later New Brunswick, where he works again in the construction of bridges and finds accommodation in boarding-houses, studies to learn the English language, and is appreciated at work for his skills as a foreman. During this time his *paesani* in Italy have informed Maruzzella of the false accusations against her, sent in revenge by the *dongiovanni* who harrassed her. Concurrently, Angelina has found shelter in Toronto at the home of Teresa, yet another Italian immigrant widow, and they help each other sharing work, accommodation and childcare. Later, at Christmas time, Aldo, who has found housing not very far from them, feels like helping a little girl whose mother is in the hospital dying of cancer, without knowing that she is his daughter. He finally finds Angelina, discovers his paternity and marries her just before she passes away. All the while Maruzzella and Giovanna have been asking themselves what to do in order to join their husbands and decide to leave Miramonti, Maruzzella to go to New York, Giovanna to Buenos Aires. Maruzzella is then wounded trying to save the life of some fellow travellers when their ship faulters and lands in a hospital in New York for two months. At the same time, Aldo is joined by Pasquale and they work together for a while in Toronto, but then the latter leaves to go to work elsewhere. Ironically, just after the train leaves, Aldo is asked by a lady if he knows a certain Pasquale: the lady is Maruzzella, who just got off the

train from New York. Far away in Argentina, Giovanna is able to be finally reunited with Settino, who until then lived with many other Italian immigrants in a very indigent and humiliating state. Maruzzella instead will not be as lucky. Her *paesani* will be able to reach Pasquale in British Columbia, letting him know the good news that Maruzzella is waiting for him in Toronto. But just before his departure to finally be with his wife he is killed in a tragic accident in the construction of yet another railway bridge. Aldo will also die on his job, so Maruzzella goes back to Italy bringing with her the orphaned Rosalba. The novel ends describing how, after World War II the next generation leaves Italy forming the second, but similar, wave of emigration to Canada.

Giuseppe Ierfino's third volume, *Vita mia est*, is not a novel but rather a book which collects short stories intermingled with the author's personal observations on different, mainly historical, subjects. The narrative parts, probably Ierfino's best outcome, present his very fluent and pleasant narration of the legends regarding the origins of his Calabrese hometown, Mammola (Reggio Calabria), followed by other popular stories of brigandage and emigration, as well as of the effect major historical events had on that small town, recalling what was told to him by elderly people. He effectively transforms their oral recounting into a written text, in which initially the reader follows the story of Peppino and Marinella, who very long ago built Mammola's first home, and were joined by other ordinary people over the centuries, together with Saracens, barons living in castles, hermits and saints, and brigands. Ierfino later presents his own considerations on the recent world wars and other major events which affected the south of Italy, including Garibaldi and the *Risorgimento*, intermingling the reflections with the recounting of other popular stories on the dramatic experiences of the

Calabrese. It seems from the tone of his writing, as well as from some statements in favour of Italian unity, that he wanted to respond with this volume to the attacks made by a recent Italian political party, the *Lega Nord,* against the Italian state, advocating the secession of northern Italy from the south. The selection of topics is focused on a heart-felt defence of Calabrese culture in order to assist younger generations in the appreciation of their background, in his opinion too often misrepresented or undervalued. At the end of the volume the author has also added a diary of his own migratory experience, "Ricordi di vita migratoria" (161-180); a last, honest account of his personal journey, and of significant interest not only in itself as an autobiographical document that further contributes to our knowledge of Italian immigration to Canada, but also as a source that shows how many of the episodes represented in his writing on emigration are a free adaptation of real life occurrences.

As we have seen, in Ierfino's novels the plot is quite rich and intricated, it follows the events in the life of the protagonists as well as of several other characters, and is full of treks, unexpected or missed encounters, revelations, premonitions, dreams and prayers, and recalls immediately the storytelling of the popular *canterini* or *cantastorie.* In fact, contrary to other *emigranti-scrittori,* Ierfino's aim in writing is not simply to give a 'factual', almost literal portrayal of his own immigrant experience. Even though a final part of his last book deals with his "Ricordi di vita migratoria" (*Vita* 161-180), that migratory experience has already become the source of inspiration of a more creative writing, which in turn expresses a more literary intention. The author abandons himself to his imagination, giving a representation of possible real life experiences - either related to emigration or other significant main events - that can truly convey his sincere interest in

humane causes. He expresses his heart-felt condemnation for any war, any form of violence, any unjust form of social difference or exploitation. He is able to overcome a tendency common in these writers to deal parochially with their hometown or region of origin, or to write their one-and-only account of their experience as immigrants in Canada. The impact emigration had on Ierfino was instead more powerful, making him expand his horizon and release the inevitable inquietude of the immigrant experience through the recounting of events filled with action and imaginativeness. With particular reference to his work on the migration process, the dimension of memory so common in immigrant writing is expanded by means of Ierfino's fantasy, transforming the ordinary individual account into a saga of wider proportions.

Ierfino's writing is an example of that "interplay" between styles and expressive levels as described earlier by Rosoli. When we read his novels (the first two are defined "romanzo" on the cover) the reader perceives immediately how his recounting is characterized by a rich texture composed of several significant elements. The driving and fundamental force in his writing seems to be the immigrant's desire to express his individual and personal view on emigration and other subjects, manifesting his ability to be a complete, dignified person, as well as a good worker. In so doing, he relies on the cultural models of narration which he brought with him, originated either from local popular traditions of oral story-telling or the popularity of masterpieces of Italian literature, such as Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi* (1st ed. 1827, 2nd ed. 1840).[8] In Ierfino's case, those models are particularly interesting. In fact, when reading his work the reader is reminded of the influence played by the popular tradition derived from medieval chivalric literature, such as the folkloristic performances of the Sicilian puppets (*pupi)*

and other kinds of entertainment still seen in Italy (Franceschetti "Italian" 637).[9] As Antonio Franceschetti states:

> Generally speaking, the Italian chivalric tradition is characterized by storytelling that is pure fantasy. The authors seldom concern themselves with how credible the elements of a situation are or how realistic the psychological motivations of a given character in a specific circumstance may be. Totally absorbed in the development of their stories, as a sequence of events and episodes very similar to those of a fairy tale, they are not interested in the plausibility of their creations. Any pretext, or no pretext at all, might lead the author to continue the story, even if the conclusion or the various intermediate adventures had very little to do with the beginning. (639)

This description of one aspect of the Italian chivalric tradition can be adopted here in the analysis of Ierfino's work, because it reflects also the nature of this *emigrante-scrittore*'s writing. Even though Ierfino's recounting does not share other characteristics of such tradition (for example, in his work there is no sense of irony, satire and almost no comic situations), it still presents many elements that belong to the popular form of storytelling derived from that literary production. As we know, the oral diffusion in Italy of the chivalric legends was assisted by medieval minstrels, called *canterini* because of the name of the poem, or *cantare*, which they used to sing or recite. These *canterini* were extremely popular during and after the Middle Ages and "their last survivors could still be heard well into the twentieth-century" (Franceschetti "Italian" 638).[10] Sometimes these minstrels were able to develop a series of *cantari* as texts of a certain length organized in episodes, the endings of which were told in a subsequent telling, in order to attract a good audience each time. Hence, the plot of the entire text could end up being quite weak, but the public was interested more in the adventurous and fantastic depicted in each episode. Thus the *cantare* was interrupted at a culminating moment. Later a different technique would be adopted, that of the *entrelacement*, by which the story of each character would be left aside to deal

with that of other characters and be continued later in the same way, interrupting and continuing each story repeatedly and creating a particular intricacy in the plot. Moreover, common themes of this tradition were not only limited to chivalric legends, but also included stories derived from "classical myths, historical episodes, religious topics, fairy tales and popular short stories" (Franceschetti "Italian" 638).

Although Ierfino's prose does reflect the nature of an *emigrante-scrittore*'s writing, with its reference to real life circumstances and experiences, and is based on a narrative form which does not share any metric concern with the *cantari*, there are still many structural and thematic elements in his recounting that connect his work to that popular literary tradition, with his own personal use of the interruption of narration; interruption of a particular episode right at the end of almost each chapter in order to create curiosity and suspense for the fate of the characters. As well, we find the adoption of the *entrelacement* in order to move from one story line to another for each of the main characters. At the same time, his writing seems also to be broadly influenced by the themes and model of narrative construction of the Italian romantic novel as shaped by Manzoni (1785-1873) - with its representation of the story of the poor and humble in which imagination should not distort the historical truth - and later by French naturalism and Italian *verismo*. In his masterpiece, Manzoni presented the young, humble protagonistic couple Renzo and Lucia as positive heroes who prove their moral nobility over those who oppress them. Manzoni is referred to in each of Ierfino's books, either by direct mention or by reference to some of the most reknowned figures or descriptions in his masterpiece, such as the *bravi* or the opening depiction of the Lombard landscape surrounding Lake Como.[11] Manzoni's fame and influence were able to survive later literary

movements (such as *verismo* and decadentism) and become a common, popular reading in Italian schools, as is still the case at the present time.

As we have seen, Ierfino's aim in his novels is to tell enthralling stories, rich in action and almost adventurous, narrating episodes of sacrifice, courage and even small-scale heroism. *L'orfana di Cassino* had, in fact, already shown his preference for a complex plot, with characters accidently encountering one another in their wanderings (often in search of each other), sometimes even surprising the reader with truly unexpected or unrealistic turns of events, such as Federico's discovery of his mother's lost identity (100-102) or his encounter with his daughter without recognizing her (108-110). The brief description of the characters' personality and psychology is simply intended to motivate their actions and enrich the plot, rather than give a realistic and well-rounded portrayal of figures. This approach and narrative technique are adopted again in *Il cammino dell'emigrante*, where the experience of the Italian emigrant is described as a long journey which links him/her to two continents. The motif of the long journey and search is present in both of the above-mentioned literary models, but Ierfino elaborates them in his own personal way. As with storytellers, the intricacy, suspense and numerous stories in the plot keep the reader absorbed in the reading, even when describing turns of events that do not seem to be realistic or plausible. For example:

> [Angelina] fu dimessa dall'ospedale.... Intanto la banca le aveva sequestrato la casa con tutto quello che c'era dentro, per cui Angelina, dopo due mesi dalla nascita della bambina, si trovò sulla strada con Rosalba in braccio e una valigia....
> Altre donne, intanto, passeggiavano intorno a quel muro dove Angelina si era fermata, quando un'altra donna l'avvicinò con maniere minacciose dicendole che quello era il suo posto. La poveretta cercò di dirle che non capiva di quale posto parlasse.... Angelina non fece in tempo neppure a reagire, che, una camionetta della polizia con le sirene a tutto volume arrivò e si fermò proprio dove era lei. Quelle donne erano sparite tutte, e così la polizia prese solo lei. «Ma perché mi hanno preso?» si

> domandava la poveretta senza capire cosa le stava succedendo.... Capì tutto benissimo, invece, il giorno appresso, allorquando un giudice cominciò ad interrogarla: «Da quanto tempo fai la prostituta?» «Prostituta? Ma io non sono una prostituta», rispose subito la poveretta.... (84)

Also, suspense is many times created by the omission of the ending of a particular scene at the end of a chapter, which is presented in a subsequent one. This is the ending of chapter six:

> Perché Pasquale non aspettò l'amico? Perché lasciò la valigia con dentro i regali della moglie? Perché non era alla stazione ferroviaria nonostante il treno non fosse ancora partito? Pasquale era scomparso. «Mio Dio!» disse Aldo, dopo averlo cercato dappertutto «Oh, le cascate! [the Niagara Falls, where Aldo had previously attempted suicide]... Fa che non sia vero, Signore!» e intanto correva verso di esse... (81)

Chapter seven begins with some general considerations on the participation of women in the migratory process and the reader learns about what happened to Pasquale only in chapter eight. This technique is adopted again in the description of events at the end of chapters nine to fifteen, and even the ending of the novel is somehow left open: "[Rosalba] Forse in quel momento sognava di poter stare accanto al figlio, alla nuora e ai nipotini..." (211).

Ierfino lets his imagination run free in order to write a captivating story, without any particular concern for historical accuracy or consistency of the wider plot or picture. For example:

> Si può dire che il ponte sul Niagara fu costruito completamente da Italiani. In quella costruzione erano tutti 'paesani' ed erano sempre pronti ad aiutarsi l'un con l'altro. Accadde che uno di loro, mentre lavorava su quella roccia, disgraziatamente precipitò nel fiume e non ci fu scampo. Il giorno del funerale... non si lavorò e fu messa una striscia nera, e, quando, il giorno dopo, il cementista finì di spianare il suo cemento, lì sopra scrisse a ricordo: «Paisan, we will remember you».... (79)

It could be that this accident happened at some other construction site where Ierfino worked, but there seems to be no historical record that this incident took place near the Niagara Falls.

Every chapter is rich with either dramatic or surprising events, with the presentation of many intense situations such as accidents at work, attempted suicides, the sinking of a ship, deaths of courageous workers or sailors, homelessness, poverty and degradation, lost and found loved ones, as well as faith, births and deaths, predestination, revelation and discovery; all presented with sincere, moral understanding. The way Ierfino structures his novel is therefore intended, as the title itself suggest, to underline the itinerant nature of the immigrant experience as well as maintain the reader's interest and attention. In this respect he truly seems to be the *cantastorie* of immigration, focusing more on the development of a captivating story rather than giving a full-fledged description of characters' psychologies or ambiances. On the other hand, Ierfino professes the moral defence of the poor and weak, such as wives of emigrants left alone, widows or orphans, and he denounces the oppression of higher social classes over the lower and humble ones. In so doing he recalls in his own way Manzoni's themes:

> Purtroppo nella società umana vi sono persone che pensano che la loro fine sia molto lontana, come pure chi pensa che la vita è breve per cui bisogna godersela anche a costo di spregiudicatezze a danni degli altri. Da qui le uccisioni senza alcuno scrupolo, come le ruberie e le spoliazioni fatte senza riguardo. Per costoro ciò che conta è il dio denaro. Una volta ricchi pensano di essere i padroni o i più potenti. (137)
> è vero che la mancanza di lavoro o di una degna occupazione spinsero i nostri concittadini ad emigrare, ma è altrettanto vero che i vari signorotti, tipo don Mino, con la loro superbia e la loro esigenza di rispetto stufarono molti concittadini nei vari paesi, che, stanchi di sentirsi umiliati sol perché non avevano un lavoro, preferirono espatriare. E si può affermare, senza tema di smentita, che i vari signorotti dei paesi con la loro superbia collaborarono, magari inconscientemente, all'impoverimento di braccia e di operose intelligenze in molti paesi della nostra sfortunata Calabria. Ma questi uomini sono protetti dalla sorte

> sino a un certo punto, e quando la buona stella non brilla più, cadono inesorabilmente. (141)

As one can see, Manzoni's condemnation of the gentleman Don Rodrigo finds an adaptation in the experience of the Calabrese emigrant who left Italy to avoid his own Don Mino, a dishonest public servant who stole money from the poor.

Ierfino moreover celebrates the civilizing work of the immigrant, seen as a courageous 'soldier' who never gets any medal but has to keep fighting all the time:

> L'emigrante non badò mai ai pericoli che poteva correre e quando uno malauguratamente sul lavoro ci lasciava la pelle, un altro volontariamente lo sostituiva così come vengono sostituiti i caduti sul fronte. Con la differenza che i soldati vengono spinti nella lotta con la forza, mentre l'emigrante ha sempre affrontato volontariamente i pericoli.... Ma la grande differenza sta nel fatto che mentre il soldato spara e distrugge quanto il lavoratore ha costruito sul fronte del lavoro, l'emigrante edifica e costruisce per il progresso dei popoli e delle nazioni senza vedersi riconosciuti i suoi meriti ai quali non bada, perché ciò che a lui interessa di più sono il lavoro, la libertà e la pace, e quando egli parla di pace intende la pace con giustizia. (9-10)
> [l'emigrante] ha costruito case, palazzi e grattacieli; strade ponti e ferrovie; ovunque egli arrivò, sudando e lavorando instancabilmente, seminò benessere e ricchezza che in seguito diedero altro benessere e altra ricchezza e così nacquero le fabbriche, le industrie e le grandi industrie con conseguenti nuove abitudini, nuovo modo di vivere, nuova civiltà. (57)

This defence, as well as the constant celebration of the emigrant's courage and heroism, set the tone of a narration in which episodes in the lives of Italian immigrant families are represented as taking inspiration from patterns or events which characterized the history of Italian emigration, but revising them according to the author's own personal experience and with a good amount of imagination. In this respect, Ierfino prefers to distance himself from his recounting and represent the first early wave of Italian emigration in order to rely more on his fantasy, rather than the second recent one to

which his own migratory journey belongs, thus showing, in this respect, his preference for a more inventive and less realistic depiction. Motifs typical of the immigrant journey are presented, such as the hard work and solitude of the immigrant away from his family, the sense of sincere friendship and comraderie with his fellow immigrants, the preoccupation for the moral integrity of their women, and the like. Also, Ierfino underlines the socioeconomic and class differences which added pressure on the immigrant to improve his own condition (69-70), and he presents Pasquale as an immigrant worker who is not simply looking for better economic conditions, but who is trying to estabilish a different kind of relationship with either his American or Canadian employers, a rapport based on respect, equanimy and mutual understanding:

> Pasquale fu il primo a far cambiare sistema agli operai che dipendevano da lui: li faceva riposare all'ora del cofee-break e anche fumare una sigaretta. Approfittando di quei dieci minuti di tempo, li avvertiva, gli raccomandava la precisione e soprattutto l'attenzione a non farsi male durante il lavoro. In tal modo i suoi operai procedevano con più ordine e sveltezza.
> L'ingegnere aveva trovato in Pasquale l'uomo che cercava da tanto tempo e se lo teneva caro. Accadde, però che un giorno si dovette assentare perché fu colto da una febbre influenzale e così venne sostituito da un suo collega. Costui, quando vide gli operai seduti a prendersi il caffè, rimase sorpreso. «Cosa fate?» disse loro «Tornate immediatamente al lavoro, altrimenti vi mando tutti a casa». Questi poveri uomini si alzarono impauriti, ma Pasquale disse loro: «Sedetevi!» e, rivolto all'ingegnere: «I miei operai li comando io. Lei deve badare a dirmi ciò che si deve fare e noi tutti eseguiremo. Non saranno certo questi dieci minuti di tregua la causa della mancata produzione, sono i comandi sbagliati e dati in fretta che fanno perdere tempo e lavoro. Noi il caffè ce lo prendiamo seduti così quando riprenderemo il lavoro operiamo più svelti e più precisi. La frusta si adopera coi cavalli non coi lavoratori, sig. [sic] ingegnere. E credo di essermi spiegato». (99)

The same spirit seems to inspire Ierfino in his writing, a desire to express the dignity of the immigrant, who out of necessity lived performing hard and sometimes dangerous work, but who also was able to give his own personal and coherent portrayal of the Italian immigrant experience.

It should also be observed here that his last volume, *Vita mia est*, is particularly significant for its presentation of the author's interest in popular storytelling and legends, which confirms the influence this tradition had on his writing. If in his previous novels, acts of heroism, armies, parallels with queens, kings and castles (*Cammino* 61), bishops and churches, and horse-riding are sometimes briefly mentioned, by reading Ierfino's last book we can comprehend where some cultural patterns in his recounting are derived from. In fact, his narration of the legends and popular stories of Mammola are filled with young lovers, courageous humble people, hermits, Saracens, brigands, evil *baroni* and castles, taking their inspiration from the southern tradition of oral narration to which the *cantastorie* also belonged. In *Il cammino dell'emigrante* humble immigrants to North America and Argentina have replaced the simple people of Mammola in their search for peace and a stable family life.

Even though sometimes his narration could be felt as over-abundant with events or unnecessary observations and details, Ierfino's narrative is worth particular consideration for its richness, dignity and humbleness. His work shows how an Italian immigrant in Canada not only can participate in the recording of his own migratory experience, but also how that experience can render him a writer who, relying on cultural and literary models derived from his Italian background and education, attempts to express the subjective dimension of immigration with honesty, spontaneity and naturalness. Perhaps sometimes the choice of sad situations portrayed reflects his own sorrow for the human struggle endured with immigration. His spontaneity is reflected in the language adopted, where the reader can sense Ierfino's desire to express himself in an appropriate language, conveying the immediacy of his inspiration. Ierfino is undeniably a writer who is able to organize and

structure his material effectively and create moments of action, pathos, mistery and expectation. Perhaps his work could gain from some editing, especially with regard to the few typographical or grammatical errors still present, which nevertheless add to the sense of the personal and craftmanship in his work. Giuseppe Ierfino is a true *emigrante-scrittore* who is able to convey his total participation and dedication to his writing and for this he deserves our respect and appreciation.

2. The bitterness of emigration: Aldo Gioseffini

The *emigrante-scrittore* who best exemplifies the experience of a Friulian immigrant in Canada, as well as globally, is Aldo Gioseffini with his book *L'amarezza della sconfitta*, published in 1989. It is something between a literary document and a very detailed personal record of his migratory experiences, and is significant for both literary and historic studies, in the way that it portrays the life of an immigrant through Gioseffini's memories from his childhood to the present-day. He describes in detail what that immigrant existence really was, without aiming to present himself as an artist, but simply and modestly as a hardworking immigrant who feels the impelling need to express his bitterness for Italy's shameful defeat during World War II and for his inability to complete his migratory parable in a circular movement that would bring him back to Friuli, where his emigrant condition could finally find its meaning and conclusion. If History is made of many individual stories, then Mr. Gioseffini's personal account is definitely part of History, not only because it tells a story many Friulian emigrants can relate to, but also because of the structure of the book itself, where chapters dealing with his personal experiences are interwoven with others expressing his own

considerations on many historical, social and political issues. He indirectly affirms his right to participate in the writing of Italian immigrant history not as a simple story-teller, but as a participant in history, showing awareness of the meaning his experience has in the more general historical process from the 1930s to the 1980s. What makes his historical account so fascinating is that we can look at one immigrant's experiences through his very own eyes, observing events, presented chronologically, from his perspective, without the need of any intermediate interpretation or speculation of the sort historians have usually to rely on.

With respect to its literary aspects, if the Italian literature of migration has to be analyzed and evaluated according to new and different critical parameters, then Aldo Gioseffini's work has to be understood and appreciated for what it really is, a kind of literary expression that more than showing ability in mastering language and style, is meant to convey the intense and meaningful experience of a human being, of a man who wants not to be portrayed but instead to portray himself, in the effort of letting others know his own truth.[12]

At the beginning of his account the author states:

> Il sottoscritto Gioseffini Aldo, nato il 30 novembre 1928 a Carvacco, comune di Treppo Grande, in provincia di Udine. Grado d'istruzione quinta classe elementare, la maggioranza dei miei anni vissuti all'estero come emigrante (operaio edile). Non sono mai appartenuto a nessun partito politico; per moltissimi degli avvenimenti che racconterò in queste pagine non potrò fornire tutti i nomi, i luoghi e le date precise, a causa dei grandi e diversi vuoti di memoria dovuti all'età e a una dura vita di lavoro continuo per guadagnarmi un salario per sostenere i bisogni della mia famiglia. (...) Perciò mi limiterò a descrivere la mia vita, che credo assomigli a quella di milioni di miei compratrioti emigrati. Le mie critiche e accuse verso una certa società si basano solo su ciò che ho visto, provato, sentito e sulle informazioni trovate nella stampa italiana e estera. Questo è per me un dovere di coscienza, che mi spinge ad esprimermi e rendere note in pubblico le mie opinioni, soprattutto riguardo a molti fatti sociali importanti, tenuti in silenzio da troppi anni dalla stampa, come pure da diversi governi. Chiunque legga

> queste pagine e le opinioni qui espresse, sappia che ho sempre amato l'Italia. (1)

As we can see, Mr. Gioseffini expresses himself in a clear-cut yet rocky style, and presents his immigrant figure not as that of a helpless victim but as an actor. His approach to his own migratory experience shows determination, awareness, confidence, pride, resoluteness and the desire to voice his opinion on many aspects of both his life and the political and social climate in Italy and many of the countries he worked in. The stereotype of the poor peasant becoming an exploited immigrant in many European countries and overseas is substituted in Gioseffini's story with the image of a strong character fighting for his own dignity and independence, and voicing his passionate need for justice.

Aldo Gioseffini's immigrant experience, as that of many others from Friuli, is particularly interesting for the number of countries he visited, as well as the periods in which he worked there. He emigrated with his wife and three children to Canada in 1963, and settled in Montreal, where his knowledge of the French language was an asset, but Canada is only the last of the countries Gioseffini worked in during his many migrations. His immigrant story starts in 1932, when, at the age of four, he and his mother from Friuli joined his father in Paris. That will be the beginning of a long journey, that will take him from Friuli to France, from Germany and Switzerland to Canada and the U.S.A., from the Artic to Algeria. The chapters in his book where he describes his childhood in Friuli and his early recollections of the life in a rural village are particularly charming, as well as those where he portrays his first experiences as a little Italian immigrant in France, when he had immediately to face on his own how immigrants were discriminated against, especially when he started school:

> In autunno [del 1932] cominciò la scuola pubblica a Menilmontant. La scuola era un fabbricato bello e grande. Cercavo di fare del mio meglio, e lì incominciarono le prime liti con i ragazzi francesi, provocate dagli insulti diretti a me perchè ero italiano e straniero. (2)
> Devo precisare che questa situazione durò sino al 1939 e mi aveva profondamente traumatizzato per tutta la durata della mia adolescenza. Quei fatti contribuirono a farmi diventare più patriottico, ad irritarmi, a diventare violento e a portare rancore. Se avessi accettato di farli insultare me e il mio paese, facendo la pecora, forse la tensione avrebbe potuto attenuarsi, ma questo non era certo il caso. (8)
>
> [Nel 1935] Una volta misi ai piedi un paio di zoccoli nuovi portati dal Friuli, che colà mettevamo per tenere i piedi bene al caldo, mentre d'estate si andava scalzi. A Parigi però si andava con le scarpe tutto l'anno; quel giorno dunque andai a scuola con gli zoccoli ai piedi. Al baccano che facevano al contatto col suolo e sulle scale, e sui pavimenti, tutti gli scolari si misero ad osservarli, poi a schernirmi e a ridicolizzarmi; cercavo di non farmi vedere e di muovermi il meno possibile e la sera, quando arrivò mia madre dal lavoro, le raccontai piangendo di rabbia le miserie della giornata. Essa mi rispose che all'indomani sarei ritornato a scuola con le scarpe e che gli zoccoli li avrei messi per casa. (9)

He probably could wear those zoccoli later on in Friuli, where his family often went back in moments of emergency, as when his sister was born or someone was sick. In the pattern of migration of the Gioseffini family, Friuli represented the place they frequently went back to, as if they considered emigration as the inevitable yet temporary solution to their problems, constantly relating to their region of origin as their home and the place where they could heal from the hardships they had to face abroad.

The *tensione* the author experienced as an immigrant child in France, accompanied him during his migrations around the world and can be considered as the inner motivation that led to the writing of his autobiography. The continuous tension between the old and the new worlds, between a place you intimately relate to and another one you need to stay in, between expectations and harsh reality, between coveted justice and actual injustice, is shown in Gioseffini's work through his need to openly and

directly express his opinion on almost any issue - from Japan to Lee Iacocca, from Quebec to Tv commercials - but especially on problems affecting political and social life in Italy during and after World War II. Even if his account was written in Canada, and about half of it deals with his life on the new continent, the most profound meaning of his story relies on the inability to accept the new world as his own and the longing for the lost *paese*, the incapacity on the part of the immigrant of truly accepting the other and so living in a sort of impasse .

The psycological attitude of the *emigrante-scrittore* is often either of disappointment for what he was unable to achieve, or of bitter satisfaction for the many difficulties he had to overcome to achieve it. In short, he perceives the migratory experience as an injustice, and feels the impelling need of letting others know what emigrating really means, a hard experience that leads to the regretted acceptance of the status quo, the impasse of living in a country that still remains other, the reality one has constantly to confront himself with, but not feeling part of it. The literary means of expression is perceived by the author as an effective way of overcoming social and cultural barriers, and sometimes economic ones. The discovery of America is for the immigrant, in the end, a very hard one: it is hard for him to participate in a dialogue with the other, even if the coming into contact with a new reality leads him to achieve a more profound knowledge of himself. In his desperate need to bridge the ocean, the central core of his motivation in writing is still Friuli, where he would like to go back. At the end of his account, Gioseffini states:

> Aspetto il tramonto della mia vita. Non avendo nessuna assicurazione medica e nessuna previdenza sociale in Italia, non potrei stabilirmi colà, per mancanza di mezzi. Le dure necessità che in gioventù mi costrinsero a cercare lavoro altrove, mi costringono ora a continuare a vivere all'estero. (...) Vivrei volentieri nella casa dei miei genitori, in Friuli, ma la privazione

> dei diritti INPS e le ingiuste leggi che governano il regime della proprietà mi impediscono di riavere quel poco che i miei hanno racimolato in tanti e tanti anni di stenti e di lavoro all'estero, cui avevo partecipato modestamente anch'io. Forse è giusto che spiri in terra straniera, visto che son sempre stati questi paesi che mi hanno fatto guadagnare il pane. Ma il pensiero è dove sono nato, e dove ho nutrito i sentimenti che mi hanno fatto quello che sono. (243)

Gioseffini expresses sincere gratitude for the country he now lives in and where his children will live in the future, but his ties to it are more instrumental than personal. In his experience the life of the immigrant is in fact a paradox: he accepts to go around the world in order one day to be able to stay at home. In his view, Italy and her people had to accept the injustice of an unfair and dishonourable defeat, as the emigrant has to accept the injustice of not being able to obtain what he cherished the most.

Language affects profoundly the inner relations of a literary work of migration in terms of style and its poetic and narrative expression. Many factors shape its linguistic form: considering the works of the *emigranti-scrittori*, as Gioseffini's, the problem that immediately arises is with time, distance and register, the latter being deeply affected by the former two. The shocking experience of migration reflects itself consciously or unconsiously in the uneasiness on the part of the writer to find an appropriate linguistic register. Italian is the language of formal education acquired in Italy, derived from a long literary tradition, and as such cannot express fully the nuances of the reality of the migratory experience. Still, the *emigrante-scrittore* considers it as the vehicle which can voice his feelings and can give some prestige to his literary endeavour, as well as having a soothing and comforting effect on the painful struggle he is describing. In fact, the process of writing seems to be a process of healing, of overcoming the traumatic experience of eradicating oneself from one's natural environment to be

transplanted into a much harsher soil: he always looks back at his torn roots, trying to make sense of the travail he had to endure.

It is to be hoped that in the future other contributions will be given by other emigranti or scrittori to this literature, in order to discover what the immigrant experience was for many others, and let their *zoccoli*, as Gioseffini's, resound onto this new Canadian soil.

3. An immigrant wanderer: Giose Rimanelli

Another book deserves to be considered here which defies many definitions usually adopted in the study of the post-war Italian literature of migration to Canada. In fact, *Biglietto di terza* (1958) by Giose Rimanelli can be considered, in part, as a contribution to this kind of literature, as well as to a more broadly defined Italian literature on Canada.[13] This partly autobiographical, partly fictional account is based on Rimanelli's experiences during ten months he spent in Canada in the fifties, which are, as he clarifies in a note at the end of the volume "pochi, veramente pochi per capire a fondo la singolare complessità di un paese...." (231). Nevertheless, Rimanelli was able to present in his book an effective portrayal of Canada both as a country of Italian immigration and an immense land ready for a wanderer/observer to discover. Later in his life Rimanelli not only moved more than once across the ocean from Italy to North America, but constantly travelled across the North American continent, working at several universities in the United States and often visiting Canada. Therefore, although his account of his Canadian experiences surpasses the boundaries usually adopted in the analysis of post-war immigrant writing, it would seem legitimate to consider Rimanelli as a *scrittore-emigrante* (since he was already a distinguished author when he

first came to Canada) who wrote an account which can be considered a contribution to this production similar to the example set previously by other authors commonly mentioned in this literature, such as Father Bressani.

In the interplay of narrative approaches and genres that characterize the Italian literature of migration to Canada, Rimanelli's book could be considered as a hybrid between an account on Italian migration and a diary of travel across the vastness of this land. About two-thirds of the volume deal with life in the Italian community of Montreal and represent a more autobiographical part, followed by an essentially fictional narration describing events taking place outside that community and across Canada. After receiving letters from his mother in Montreal, who asks him to spend Christmas there with his family, the first-person narrator makes his journey to Canada on one of those ships specialized in the transportation of poor immigrants to the new world. The title of the book refers in fact to the third class steerage where the immigrants traditionally travelled. He joins his family in Montreal, where he meets unknown relatives and tries to adapt to a new environment, as his parents and brothers did. He makes friends in the community as well as among some Canadians of different background and explores the country. He finds a girlfriend and a job working for a local Italian-Canadian newspaper, *Il Cittadino Canadese*, where he realizes that he has to adapt his language to the Italian pidgin spoken by the immigrants. After loosing his job because of a fire which destroys the typography, he works one night as a waiter and then decides, thanks to his brother's financial help, to hop in his car and travel around until he reaches southern Ontario, where the car is stolen by Peg, a hitchhiker he trusted. Without the car and sufficient money to go back to his family, he finds work as a tobacco harvester

in Dehli. At the end of the season he goes back to Montreal, but decides to return to Italy.

As Rimanelli himself states: "Molte storie che qui ho raccontato non sono vere, ma sarebbe ugualmente impossibile affermare che le storie narrate siano esclusivamente un prodotto della fantasia" ("Nota" 231). As with other writers in this literature, the Canadian experience had such an impact on him as to inspire a less factual and more creative representation of their life in this country. Along these lines, Rimanelli's fictionalized account is particularly effective and distinguishes itself for its balance between sincere human participation and comprehension of the immigrant experience and a more intellectual curiosity for an unknown land. In his depiction of powerful images on Canadian life he shows a keen sensitivity and skill, as well as a more mature and advanced humanistic and literary background. To strenghten the autobiographical effect of his writing, he adopts the first-person narration and starts his recounting in an epistolary form, presenting a series of letters between parents and son.[14] This form is particularly pertinent to the reality of the Italian immigrant experience during the fifties, when writing letters was still the most common way of keeping in touch with loved ones. Also, the letters appropriately reveal the differing impact the New World experience had on the Canadian-born vis-a-vis Italian-born immigrants, the first being confused and disoriented in a country which should be felt as one's own, the second full of anger and intollerance for a country which he thinks is only deceiving him: "e a pensarci bene l'America è un bluff tondo cosí e noi ci trattano da somari" (9). Also, the father's letter is significant because it hints to sociocultural differences distinguishing post-war immigrants from the pre-war ones: "E poi degli italo-americani non ti voglio parlare, son tutti pazzi

sfuriati e pensano solo a fare *bisinisse*, e se la cosa continua diventeremo anche noi nevrastenici..." (9).

Sharing the same accommodation on the *vapore* with the poor emigrants of rural background, the narrator travels to Canada as a conscious observer of the immigrant plight. He crosses the ocean while looking straight in the eyes of these southern people and sees the fear that the journey is provoking in them:

> All'imbarco a Napoli, i contadini meridionali sono saliti sul vapore con lo sbigottimento negli occhi. In compenso, nessuna fiera campionaria, nessun mercato provinciale a sabato sul mezzogiorno... niente insomma può gareggiare col cicaleccio fitto, stridulo, di volta in volta drammatico o paradossalmente comico che riempie l'area di questo porto quando una nave di povera gente sta per andarsene. (16)

He knows where these people come from, comprehends their perspective and shares it. He does not observe their journey from the top deck or upper classes compartments, but puts himself in their same condition, seeing what they experience and perceiving the inquietude and angst that will be with them during the entire journey. He emphatically understands their pain and their struggle, their mentality and way of being; in this, truly being a *scrittore-emigrante*. Rimanelli shows perspicacity and an excellent sense of observation, as well as humour, being able to detect and underline in his writing those moments and details that more than others convey characters or differences in the people he meets during his Canadian adventure. Very few elements are usually enough to describe the personality or social reality of the people he encounters. One example is the young immigrant couple, with the husband playing the part of the expert traveller (since he went to Africa) and, in contrast, his wife who tries to nurse her baby while being startled at the sound of the siren or at the words coming from the air through a speaker; they are later humiliated when rudely ordered down to the hold of the ship by a

waiter (16-18). The narrator also describes the terror on the emigrants' faces when they realize that what they thought was a red cushion on their cots is in fact a lifejacket and that the sea, which has always been a nice panorama to look at from home, could become a deadly menace on the voyage. As Rimanelli acutely observes: "Quella parola *salvagente* li aveva riportati di colpo a uno stato di precoscienza, alla visione squallida della loro inerme nudità in balia di una nave che - dal momento che c'erano i salvagente - poteva benissimo anche affondare" (19). That terror becomes intense out in the ocean, when the emigrants have to perform a drill with the lifejackets on and prefer to keep them on after the trial is over.

Later, Rimanelli registers not only the tension created by discovery of the new world, but also the uneasiness produced by different class manners. Many of the peasants turned immigrants are not accustomed to middle-class expectations, as is the case with "L'uomo dalla salciccia nera" (20-24). Moreover, when describing the final part of the journey, Rimanelli makes reference to the tragedy of the Titanic. The priest on board, when their ship reaches the area of the 1912 disaster, asks everyone to pray for the victims of that catastrophe and that reminds him of the first time he heard about the Titanic, from a Piedmontese emigrant who had already sailed by that same area (25). Although the sinking of the Titanic is not usually remembered in Italy as a tragedy related to the history of Italian emigration and of those *bastimenti* which crossed the oceans carrying millions of people to the new world, some Italian immigrants knew about the tragedy or, indeed, could even have been on that 'unsinkable' ship.[15] It seems that over many decades the Italian emigrants, especially through return journeys, were able to form a collective memory of their own, which added a mythical dimension to their own image of America. In fact, when reaching Newfoundland and still on board, one of them

said: "Per questo l'America è bella, c'è da passare il mare" (26). Almost as a short poem inspired by Italian *ermetismo*, this sentence effectively conveys the sense of the immigrant journey: the expectation, the fear, the inquietude that has kept him/her in suspense until he/she finally reaches sight of the new world and the unknown land does not seem as threatening any longer. The anxiety of the journey to the new world makes *America* even more attractive and converts the immigrant into a poet. As already observed in Moroni Parken, approaching land the ocean of the immigrant's inquietude now becomes a calmer sea, but the tension is still there and the relief of overcoming the dangers of the journey combines with the exciting attraction the foreign land holds on him. Finally, the new world is in front of him, but the first greeting of a fisherman off the cost of Halifax is far from welcoming: "Allò, D.P.!" (26). The moment of discovery is spoiled by the first encounter with racism, prejudice and discrimination, but at that moment only the narrator is aware of it. As Rimanelli says, only later would the immigrants appreciate the sound of those words, and the anger and scorn with which they would be pronounced. "Il presagio dell'America, anche qui nel Canadà, si annunzia dunque con la sua grande, solenne e ignominiosa voce razzista. Ma, per noi europei, è un'esperienza che val sempre la pena di tentare" (27). In these few words Rimanelli is able to powerfully describe the spirit of the migratory experience: the average immigrant will defy all obstacles in order to obtain what he seeks, even the most demeaning ones, because the advantages coming from new opportunities of socioeconomic improvement still outweight the humiliation deriving from discrimination. Not only would the Italian immigrants have to learn how to ignore humiliating and desparaging epithets, they also had to learn a vital question: "Do you have work for me?" (26).

Just as he is effective in describing disheartening moments, Rimanelli is also able to contrast those moments with more pleasant and even entertaining ones. His description of the disembarking of the immigrants and their first reactions when discovering the new world makes the reader smile. In particular, the narrator's observations and his recording of conversations with the ladies wearing the Salvation Army badge, even though slightly coloured by an anti-British or anti-colonialist bias, are even comical (28-31). The narrator then proceeds to describe the journey from Halifax to Montreal on a special train organized for the immigrants. The sense of on-going discovery of a country vast as a continent is alternated by insightful descriptions of some very human figures met along the way, such as the lame railway conductor and the Calabrese mother looking desperately for her arriving son. The new country is itself depicted as a disquieting ocean of limitless land:

> Incominciava l'angoscia, il fastidio di essere chiusi nel treno, in quel treno con lo spazzaneve davanti, che fischiava e scuoteva e una volta aveva ucciso un orso nero. E capii che quest'angoscia era la voce stessa del Canadà, lo Stato senza limiti come viene definito, la voce del Canadà implacabile che si fa sentire con le sue distanze, il suo infinito. Neve, neve e infinito. (37)

The angst experienced on the sea is prolonged in this immense and infinite land, which under the immaculate cover of winter snow conveys its implacable nature. That vasteness covered in snow conveys a sense of emptiness along with limitless hope. Both ocean and land seem to be, again, a powerful metaphor of the inquietude of the immigrant experience.

Somehow, Rimanelli finds himself in a particularly advantageous position, where he is able to adopt the point of view of both a simple immigrant and an informed observer. His family ties in Canada allow him to know the immigrant experience first-hand; at the same time his background

as a writer allows him to adopt a more detached and critical approach. He is able to penetrate perceptively and emphatically into the immigrant's mind and understand his or her psychology, but also to convey his approval or criticism of different aspects of the Italian reality in Canada. He does not adopt an acritical philo-immigrant attitude: he shows as much solidarity for the Italian immigrant as much as he simultaneously dislikes certain characteristics of the immigrant experience. For example, once arrived in Montreal the narrator meets his younger brothers and a maternal uncle, *zio Pat*. They are all presented as typical examples of the Italian immigrant 'success', but not always with an approving eye. His critical observation goes beyond the supposedly loving feelings for his distant kin ("i miei parenti sconosciuti dai sentimenti sconosciuti e ai quali nessun vero amore, se non quello leggendario e smorto della memoria, mi legava" 42-43). and moves from person to person, succinctly highlighting the personality of each. In particular, the narrator expresses his sense of unpleasant irritation at this newly-found rich uncle, who boasts about his money and the way he gained it (even if it did not seem to be totally legal) while being dismissive of culture and education:

> «Questo è lo zio Pat» disse mia madre presentandomi a un omaccio cordiale ma dall'occhio freddo di dittatore. «Possiede un ristorante che vale ottantamila dollari, quindici lotti di case, e in banca un liquido di oltre centomila dollari. È stato il più fortunato dei miei fratelli.»
> «Sí, è vero, questo, e tutto fatto col sudore della fronte, senza rubare» disse lo zio Pat.
> «Sicuro, senza rubare. Ma com'è quella storia delle macchine a *records*, durante la crisi? chiese con malizia Gino....
> «Finiscila, Pat» disse mia madre. «Hai visto il mio figliolone?»
> «Sicuro, e dall'aspetto mi piace. Cos'è diventato, sorella, un avvocato hai detto?»
> «Oh, molto di più, Pat: uno scrittore.»
> «Scrittore, già. Uno che si inventa delle storie.» (43-44)

The uncle with lots of money and little education meets the nephew with little money and educated. Class distinctions are recreating themselves in the new land, but there is still little consideration for more refined abilities or knowledge. However, when Uncle Pat leaves, the sense of solitarity and kinship reappears among the rest of the family, humble people who just wanted to work and have some security:

> I rimasti, sparito il riccone, ritrovarono la loro conversazione di gente alla buona che ha lavorato e lavora.... Una conversazione discreta e gaia, di gente che ha rinunciato alle grandi ambizioni, se ne hanno avute, e si è adattata, vivendo ogni giorno come vive la città e il mondo, magari ognuno con la sua piccola fissazione in testa, il mito della pesca, il mito della Bibbia e delle orazioni, il mito del lavoro onesto, scrupoloso. Vecchi immigrati anch'essi, e in un certo senso con quella mentalità rimasti. (47)

After years of struggle, the myth of America, of a new land of opportunity, has been transformed into the myth of hard and honest work, which can still somehow sooth the inquietude of the immigrant. In their simplicity and unpretentiousness these immigrants seem to have reduced their expectations to finding in Canada nothing more than a good job.

Later the first-person narrator describes his immediate family and their life in Canada, conveying his mixed feelings about the effects the migratory process had on them. At the beginning he writes that, "la situazione della mia famiglia... potrebbe essere presa a modello e simbolo della maggior parte delle famiglie dei nuovi immigrati.... nel racconto di essa vi sono i termini per un racconto generale sulla vita attuale dei nuovi pionieri canadesi" (49). The critical observer is perfectly aware that his family's condition can be considered a typical example of the immigrant experience. This personal closeness to their struggle as well as his detatched and acute scrutiny allows him to see both positive and negative consequences of the transplantation. In fact, it is true that Canada has given his parents the

opportunity to work, but at low-payed, menial jobs which put a heavy strain on them. More fortunately, after working hard for some years as labourers, his brothers were able to obtain better, financially-gratifying positions: Antonio as a restaurant owner, Gino as a hairdresser. Their effort at economic betterment was also modelled on the instinctive art of *arrangiarsi*, as Antonio shows when explaining why he never pays for a streetcar ticket:

> «Tanto nessuno ti controlla» diceva «e se io risparmio i cinque cent del tram, alla fine dell'anno posso contare già su qualcosa. Siccome l'America delle rapide fortune probabilmente non è questa, ma tuttavia anche questa si chiama America, io sono venuto qui per *far l'America*.» (49-50)

The Italian immigrant tries in whatever way he can to make his immigrant experience turn into a financial success, and if the *America* of quick and easy fortune is not Antonio's, at least he attempts to create one of his own, whatever it takes.

Therefore, if there is an appreciation of the costly, but objectively real economic betterment brought about by immigration (and the episode on "Il ragazzo del w.c." hints to its darker, more unfortunate side, 57-61), the recognition of those material advantages is accompanied by an acute observation of the sociocultural and sociolinguistic effects of uprootedness. The narrator observes how his brothers participate, each in their own personal way, in the process of acculturation and adopt intermittently French and English, as well as Italian, as their languages in everyday life. He effectively records dialogues, exchanges and expressions, showing a particular sensitivity, at the same time ironic and respectful, for a linguistic phenomenon that characterizes the migration process, with the combination of words and morphological and syntactic structures derived from Italian, Italian dialects, English and French and which can result in "Quanto money tu days?" (60). All along, his narration is enriched by these Italo-Canadian

expressions, also listed and translated at the end of the volume in a glossary for the benefit of an Italian, non-immigrant readership (230).[16] In this respect Rimanelli distinguishes himself from the authors considered previously, who did not try to recreate consistently in their writing the rich linguistic reality of the Italian community in Canada. This Italian-Canadian jargon, as Rimanelli calls it, or ethnic koine as it is defined by linguists, is instead ably recorded in *Biglietto di terza*, where he also describes a conversation with Carmelina, a woman visiting him in his office at the *Cittadino Canadese*:

> «Che mi racconti, Carmelina?»...
> «Avevo una giobba in una farma, poi lavorai in un magazzino di chendi e poi in una fattoria di brosce. Qui era ezzorraite, facevo molta moneta, comprai la uoscemascin, il refrigeratore, la tivì. Poi il bosso mi slaccò e andai a loffare davanti alla muvi. Fui in sciomaggio per due manzi, ma ora ho un'altra giobba e son contenta, jè.» (131)

Perhaps this recording of the "parlata italo-americana" (130) is also fictionalized to a certain extent, but it still effectively portrays the linguistic reality of the Italian community in Montreal. In appreciating the character of this koine, Rimanelli also inserts (and more than once) a short riddle which seems to refer to the narrator's Uncle Pat, among his considerations on the nature of this language:

> A volte però il gergo italo-americano genera scherzi divertenti, intuizioni pittoresche, nate da una spontaneità serena a cui non si può rimproverare un termine errato per amor di grammatica. Una strofetta famosa, che si cantava fra i nostri immigrati intorno al '40, ... dice:
> Era smarto il dabben uomo
> Conosceva il bisinisse
> Era amico del polisse
> E in collegio non andò. (77, 132-133)

Although the narrator expresses his awareness and respectful amusement for this jargon and justifies the need to adopt it in the publication of *Il Cittadino* in

order for the newspaper to be better understood by its readers, he also comments that,

> Di questo passo fare il giornale diventava una sciocca fatica, per quanto non mi fossi mai illuso di potere fare meglio.... Per dolermi tuttavia della mia posizione c'era un piccolo, irrilevante particolare che ai miei lettori probabilmente non interessava: non intendevo dimenticare l'italiano. (134)

This intimate disposition with regards to language choice and his fundamental preference for standard Italian reflects an attitude on one hand common among post-war Italians living in Italy, and on the other hand reflects a certain irritation at what he considers is the Italian immigrant's attitude of non-appreciation of culture and education: "Gli italiani del Canadà han sempre ritenuto che la cultura serve poco o nulla, poiché molti di essi sono diventati ricchi sfruttando soltanto un innato, paesano buonsenso" (119). It is important to underline this attitude on the narrator's/Rimanelli's part, because it is this position (more than the fact that *Biglietto di terza* is his only book on Canada) that makes him a *scrittore-emigrante* who expresses his reservations and difficulty in totally accepting the cultural effects of Italian immigration to North America. The immigration process has given these people the opportunity to improve their material conditions, but they still have to acquire the means which can lead them to an appropriate appreciation of their background and culture, as well as education. According to Rimanelli, language for them is an optional cultural expression, while for a writer like him it is fundamental. In this respect, his perspective distinguishes itself from the *pre-republican* attitude common among post-war immigrant writers and reflects more an approach influenced by the contemporary Italian cultural milieu.

Rimanelli dedicates parts of his account to the description of past and contemporary events in the life of the Italian community of Montreal, with

references to the World War II internment and various aspects of its cultural and social reality. However, the narrator views the visit to his immigrant family also as an opportunity to become acquainted with the wider Canadian reality beyond the restricted circle of the Italian immigrant experience; he is willing to discover the *other*. In fact, he later describes his cultural and spatial exploration of not only Montreal, but also Toronto and southern Ontario, meeting majority Canadians or others of different ethnic backgrounds. Twice in his wandering, once in Montreal and later in southern Ontario, he finds himself on a bus called *Nowhere*, which allows the narrator to enhance the description of his journey as a random discovery of the new world. He also deals with some Canadian poetry and describes lively discussions with some Canadian acquaintances on the character of the country and its differences compared to the old world; debates which allow Rimanelli to represent the clash between European and Canadian attitudes, values and perspectives. Through the words of the Parisian and bohemian immigrant painter Max Roger, an overt criticism of North American society is expressed, where "il mito del lavoro diventa una corsa alla ricchezza" (86) and the constant search for 'more' will, in the end, bring totally nonsensical results. Max says: "questa sorta di lavoro, per me europeo, ha il sapore di un peccato capitale quotidianamente commesso contro la libertà personale, che è la libertà di essere anche poveri e cornuti" (88). Later, however, the first-person narrator will express also his appreciation of a Canadian society which did not experience feudalism, even though it presents its own vertical social distinctions based on religion, language and income, rather than on the European division between elites and masses (99). It seems that the author himself is more inclined to express a moderate criticism of the excesses of

North American capitalist society, the democratic character of which is not disputed but, on the contrary, valued.

Later, Rimanelli's account changes register and becomes a fictionalized diary of his adventure on the road. Wandering around southern Ontario, he tries to understand the spirit of the country, its history and its culture. His journey is not only across lands, but also across time and cultures. As Father Bressani many centuries earlier, Rimanelli is interested in discovering the *other* men of the new world, and shows a profound anthropological curiosity for native culture, its myths and legends. He devotes an entire chapter of his account to the narration and comprehension of those beliefs (159-169).

Rimanelli's narration then acquires the quality of a North American movie or as he says "un racconto ideale per Somerset Maugham" (218), describing the life of tobacco harvesters in southern Ontario. In this spacious Canadian environment, he sets the story of a school teacher from Pennsylvania who, like the first-person narrator, has come to Dehli to make money; the teacher then has an affair with a young Italian-Canadian widow, owner of the plantation. However, when the American decides to leave at the end of the season, he is shot dead by the woman. The passionate murder seems to be adopted here to exaggerate the sharp contrasts in models of behaviour and values between Italian-Canadians and North Americans in general, both showing their faults and weaknesses.

The book ends with the narrator's explanation of his return to Italy:

> Io dico che tutti gli uomini che hanno patito torti, hanno sofferto l'usura della società e l'impostura del bisogno, dovrebbero venire qui per sentirsi liberi. Ma per restare in questa terra devi aver rotto i ponti col passato, e alle tue spalle, sulle tue rive lontane, non devi avere più nessuna voce che ti chiami. Diversamente il Canadà potrebbe diventare la tua pazzia. Affrontare l'inumano: è l'unica legge che qui vive.... E fanno bene ad amarlo tutti gli immigrati che le sventure dell'Europa hanno spinti su queste coste. Il Canadà ha chiesto loro soltanto le braccia. Ma io sono già vecchio spiritualmente per rimanere qui. (219)

We know that after the publication of the book, Rimanelli was still spiritually young and decided instead to be in voluntary exile in North America. Nevertheless, these last words acutely refer to the conflict in the immigrant's mind, for whom it is strenuous, if not impossible, to severe the bridges that link his present being to his past.

4. The intimate struggle of Gianni A. Grohovaz

The post-war literary production in Italian language by immigrants in Canada distinguishes itself for the presence of different kinds of texts, some of them purely autobiographical, others of a more creative kind. There are also texts which describe the life of the Italian community in Canada. In this respect the work of Gianni A. Grohovaz deserves to be mentioned.[17] Significantly, Grohovaz's own literary production comprehends works of diverse genre and natures: he first produced two collections of poetry, *Per ricordar le cose che ricordo* (1st ed. 1974, 2nd ed. 1976) and *Parole, parole e granelli di sabbia* (1980), which are considered among his best literary achievements, followed by a series of volumes on the life of the Friulian community and other community organizations;[18] he wrote a one-act play, a volume collecting his radio commentaries, ... *e con rispetto parlando è al microfono Gianni Grohovaz* (1983) and a posthumous novel, *Strada bianca* (1989).[19] He was also the author of several articles published in local newspapers and magazines and for several years was editor of *Il Giornale di Toronto*. His large production and its variety attest to the very energetic and generous personality of their author. However, to reflect the character of the

present dissertation, our investigation focuses here on the last two volumes just mentioned, ... *e con rispetto parlando è al microfono Gianni Grohovaz* and *Strada bianca*. These two books, completely different in subject and character, reflect two sides of the life of an immigrant in Canada, the first one deals with community involvement and altruistic participation, the second with the memory of one's homeland, including bitter remembrance of the Second World War.

The position Grohovaz holds within the Italian literature of migration to Canada presents some general similarities with that already observed for Duliani. Both writers came from a geographical area (Istria and Dalmazia) which formerly belonged to Italy, and both were directly affected by events of the last world conflict (even though in different ways), with profound consequences on them and their writing. As already seen, Duliani can be considered an *internato-scrittore* who shared the experience of the internment with other Italian immigrants in Canada. However, Grohovaz's own experience as a deported person deeply influenced him in his activity as journalist and writer, so that he could be viewed as a *deportato-scrittore*, a writer for whom the human and political dimension of deportation set the tone and subject matter of his writing. Among the writers presented here, Grohovaz is the only one whose Canadian experience surpasses the immigrant condition to extend to one of exile. In his writing one can perceive a sense of inner tension and constant interrogation, which accentuates his commitment to social and political issues, as well as reflect his more intimate attempt to solve his personal questioning about historical and political events which affected him directly. As he describes in *Strada bianca*, he fought in the Italian army during the war and was captured by Tito's Yugoslavian partisans around Fiume. But then, as he illustrates in the preface to the novel, at the end of the

conflict in 1945 at Yalta the resolutions of the victors, Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt, made him undesirable in his own homeland. His homeland was no more and he could never return. The sorrow caused by these tragic circumstances is expressed with open heart and great human intensity in *Strada bianca.*

With the liveliness of a text meant for a listening audience, *e con rispetto parlando* deals with several issues either of general interest or pertinent to the Italian colony, which are of a particular significance in comprehending how Italian culture was expressed and viewed within the community in the early eighties. According to the subject at hand, the reports express either Grohovaz's sense of good humor and irony or his strong criticism for any form of administrative mismanagement or political injustice, and are inspired by his ability to discuss in a lively manner social and political issues. He critically analyzes the relevant situation or topic at hand, fearlessly denouncing or heartily praising initiatives of either international or local resonance. The commentaries dealing with the life of the Italian community in Toronto are particularly helpful in understanding in what ways Italian-Canadian culture and public opinion were evolving almost two decades ago. Reading through the volume one can observe how the topics are quite disparate, ranging from Pinocchio's 'birthday' to the growing habit among youngsters to draw grafitti all over the city; from how to behave at Christmas to the campaign against smoking promoted by the Columbus Centre; from the amusing Canadian habit of putting signs on one's lawn in favour of this or that political candidate, sometimes mixing them with those announcing "on sale", to the need for competent Italian-Canadian administrators to take charge of the interests of the community. As well commentaries on the Italian-Canadian press and other important community institutions play a large role.

The first report entitled, " Trent'anni in Canada e tanta amarezza in cuore" (1) is a sad personal note on the thirtieth anniversary of his arrival in Canada in 1950. Later his polemic tone seems to reflect his desire to awake in the listener a sense of civic reponsibility and commitment to contribute to the common weal of the Italian-Canadian community. As Gianfausto Rosoli writes, "[Grohovaz's] largely overlooked poetic and literary works reveal a profound understanding of the migrant world" (178).

Although in *e con rispetto parlando* we come to know Grohovaz, champion of social and political causes, it is with his posthumous novel, *Strada bianca*, that the deep suffering of his experience as a "D.P." comes to the foreground. The subject of his war experiences is presented in the form of a fictionalized memoir within a frame set in Canada, and the narrator ably contrasts scenes which depict the life of lumberjacks in a Canadian wilderness covered in immaculate snow, to other episodes in which the protagonist Ivan recalls significant moments in his life taking place during his childhood, as well as during and after the war. The whiteness of the snow on a land that even if harsh and hostile still conveys a sense of newness and taintlessness, contrasts with the darkness and despair of the war scenes. Compared to the wilderness encountered previously in Moroni Parken, Grohovaz's description of the protagonist's life as a lumberjack in the forests of Ontario is particularly powerful with its masculinity, harshness and brutality. The rudeness of that life in the bush powerfully reflects the rawness of the protagonist's history of pain and anger. Still, that white Canadian landscape, as the white road of the title, can be considered an expressive image of what Canada meant to the author, a land where there is still something uncontaminated by the black depravity and evil experienced in the Old World past, a land traversed by a road that leads to justice and freedom, and more

personally for the author, the hope of having one day the liberty to choose where one will call home.

In this final chapter some texts belonging to the post-war Italian literature of migration were examined in order to clarify the main characteristics and typology of this production. What distinguishes this corpus of texts is fundamentally their rich and poignant diversity in the representation of the intimate personal dimension of the immigrant experience in Canada, which nonetheless manifests a continuity of inspiration and motifs to earlier Italian literature of migration.

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[1] Though fascism had proclaimed itself to be against emigration - since it had been viewed as an embarrassment for a self-proclaimed powerful nation - both the legislation introduced in 1928 to stop emigration and Mussolini's encouragement in favour of high birth rates contributed to the formation of an enormous reservoir of labour power (Ramirez 5). That availability perfectly met the needs of a fast-expanding North American economy and many families in Canada and in Italy wished to renew the chains of migration severed by the war. Within the single 1951-1961 decade the newcomers outnumbered the older Italian-Canadian immigrants by four to one: in 1951 there were only 150,000 people in Canada of Italian origin and 450,000 in 1961 (Harney 21; Ramirez 8). Morover, if at the beginning of the post-war period immigrants came from regions in the north of Italy such as Veneto and Friuli, later the bulk of this migratory movement originated in southern regions such as Molise, Abruzzi and Calabria (Harney 21).

[2] For extended bibliographical information related to primary sources on Italian immigration to Canada see the endnotes in Rosoli's article.

[3] Giuseppe Ierfino was born in the commune of Mammola (Reggio Calabria) in 1930 and came to Canada in 1957 after a brief migration experience in France. Before being hired as a driver by the C.N.R. in 1966 - a job which he kept until retirement - his first experiences working in Canada were harsh and humiliating. After going to Montreal and realizing that no work was available in that city, he travelled to Kitimat, B.C. hoping to be hired as labourer in construction work. In his second novel he mentions how hard life was for the immigrant, sometimes forced, as we have seen with Samuele Turri, to hunt wild animals or fish to feed himself (*Cammino* 4-5). After a month, he finally found a job, but since he feared finding himself unemployed again because of a labour dispute that could result in a general strike, he decided to move to Prince Rupert, where he was hired by the local municipality. He was able to escape a fire in the boarding house where he was staying, as well as other life-threatening incidents. He had emigrated with the intention of going back to Calabria after four or five years and having his own farm there, but changed his mind and decided to "call" for his family. He moved to Toronto in 1965, where he still

lives with his wife and four children (Vita 161-173). His fourth publication, *L'eroico coraggio non si ferma*, is a booklet for children and inspired by the tragedy of the space shuttle *Challenger*.

[4] According to Clifford J. Jansen, over the period 1955-1980 Canada's Italians tended to come heavily from Calabria, representing 17.7% of the total of records of cancellations in Italian communal population registers (60).

[5] In the Introduction to his latest book *Vita mia est*, Ierfino states that he decided to write *L'orfana di Cassino* after visiting the town in 1978 and seeing with his own eyes the heavy destruction and death that the war had brought to Cassino in 1943. The town is situated in the province of Frosinone (Lazio). Later the town was totally rebuilt, together with the famous Abbazia di Montecassino.

[6] At the beginning of the volume the author also inserted an historical preface about Italian immigration to Canada, entitled "Periodi di emigrazione italiana verso il Nord America" (IV-VI) where he also mentions some figures and the role of multiculturalism in the ethnic composition of Canada.

[7] As we know, the first major wave of Italian immigration to North America took place between 1880 and 1920 and was preceded by another important one to South America, in particular to Brasil and Argentina (Ramirez 5-6). These early waves were made up of sojourners, mainly male emigrants who intended to go back home. Women took part in larger numbers in the migration process to North America after World War II. Ierfino also makes reference to Italian emigration to Argentina.

[8] Ierfino, a few times in his work, makes direct reference to Manzoni (*Cammino* 58, 115); also, as will be analyzed later, situations presented in his novels, such as orphanages, poverty at Christmas and destitute people remind us of the popular tradition inspired by the novels of the Italian *verismo* and French naturalism.

[9] The diffusion of the *Chansons de geste* in Italy was favoured along the route across the Alps followed by French pilgrims to Rome; in the south of Italy it was also favoured by the presence of the Normans, who brought that tradition directly from France.

[10] "Originally, they [the *canterini*] wandered from place to place, performing in the castles and palaces of the rich as well as in public squares for the pleasure of the humble people during local festivities" (Franceschetti "Italian" 638).

[11] In 17th-century Italy the *bravi* were bandits who sought refuge at a great gentleman's manor and would offer their services receiving impunity and support in exchange. Famous are the *bravi* who, at the beginning of Manzoni's novel, warn the parish priest Don Abbondio not to marry Lucia to Renzo, since their lord was infatuated with her.

[12] See Sergio Maria Gilardino, "Introduzione," in Aldo Gioseffini, I-XXVII.

[13] Giose Rimanelli was born in Casacalenda, in the province of Campobasso (Molise) in 1926 and is defined by Spada as "an Italian immigrant" (155). His father was Italian and his mother Canadian-born. He travelled extensively across Europe, the United States and Canada. His first novel, *Tiro al piccione* (1948), deals with the partisan war and was translated into English through an American bursary. "The critics were very sympathetic to the young man who put much sincerity into the autobiographical part of the book, and there are pages which reach the heights of good literature in any language." (Spada 156) This novel was later adapted by the distinguished Italian director Giuliano Montaldo for a film. He came to Canada after the war and for some time worked as an editor in Montreal for *Il Cittadino Canadese*. After only ten months he went back to Italy, where he wrote *Biglietto di terza* (1958), which was published by the major publishing house Mondadori. Since 1960 he has lived in "voluntary exile" in the United States, where he taught at such

reknown American universities as Yale, New York, Berkeley and SUNY, Albany. He also taught at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. According to Spada "he joined the peripatetic world of discontented writers." As a writer, he was very prolific and produced narratives, poetry, essays, children's literature, and edited an anthology of modern Canadian stories (Spada 155-156; Vitti 314-315). For bibliographical information on Rimanelli's work see Pivato's bibliography (47).

[14] In consideration of the fact that Rimanelli's mother was Canadian-born while his father was Italian-born, it seems that the letters at the beginning of the account refer to autobiographical events, since the mother in *Biglietto di Terza* writes about going back to Canada, the unknown country where she was born.

[15] According to an article recently published by *Il Corriere della Sera*, is an elderly Italian lady claims to have been named Salvata [saved] by her mother, who survived the tragedy of the *Titanic* when pregnant with her, while her father perished in the disaster.

[16] Numerous are the publications on *Italiese* and its characteristics, among which are those by professors Gianrenzo Clivio, Marcel Danesi, Domenico Pietropaolo and Arturo Tosi. For some bibliographical information see Franc. Sturino, *Italian-Canadian Studies: A Selected Bibliography*. Toronto: Mariano A. Elia Chair and MHSO, 1988, 37-58.

[17] Giovanni Angelo Grohovaz was born in Fiume, when the city was still part of Italy, in 1926 and died in Wasaga Beach, Ont. in 1988. After surviving the horrors of World War II, he emigrated to Canada in 1950, where he worked at 27 different jobs, the first of which was as a lumberjack in the forests of Northern Ontario. That experience was to have an indelible impact on his mind, as is shown in his posthumous novel *Strada bianca*. From that moment on he dedicated his life to writing and fighting for the low man on the totem pole. As a journalist he contributed to several newspapers and publications such as *La Verità* of Montreal, the *Corriere Canadese* of Toronto (which he also co-founded), *Il Giornale di Toronto*, *Toronto Notte* and *Panorama*. He was also a senior fellow researcher for the Multicultural History Society of Ontario and a co-founder of the Italian Immigrant Aid Society. He participated passionately in Italian community life through several organizations and contributed to the building both of Villa Colombo and Columbus Centre. As a proud Alpino, he organized Italian War Veterans' Day for eleven years, as well as Italian Orphan's Day.

[18] *Twenty-fifth anniversary, 1957-1982, Club Ricreativo San Quirinese. San Quirino di Pordenone* (1982), *The First Half Century of the Famee Furlane of Toronto* (1982), *To Friuli from Canada with Love, May 6 1976* (1983), and other booklets for community organizations such as the Coro Santa Cecilia, the Società Femminile Friulana di Toronto and the Società Pescosolido di Toronto.

[19] The play is entitled *From Franders Fields to the Italian Alps*, (Toronto: Coro Santa Cecilia, 1975).

Conclusion

Bridging the Ocean

It was the aim of this thesis to present an examination of texts forming the Italian literature of migration to Canada, a corpus of writings which have never been analyzed in their entirety. Although not exhaustive, the investigation has tried to underline those thematic aspects which most distinguish this production, showing both the continuity of inspiration and motifs as well as the diversity of approaches and genres. Even though the amount of texts available by Italian immigrants to Canada is not large, still these narrative works can give an important contribution to the comprehension of the mental and more intimate emotional dimension of the immigrant experience, as no historical study can. Thanks to these texts we were able to observe the evolution of the migration process to Canada from the 17th century to the present time, either closely following the immigrants when relating about their own personal experience in autobiographical texts,

or assessing the impact their new life in Canada had as a source of inspiration for more creative and imaginative works. The fundamental motif underlining this literature is the impossibility for the immigrant of disregarding the impact his/her discovery of the new world had and which the *other* had on his psyche, and the resulting need to bridge the ocean of his or her inquietude by writing. These texts allow their authors not only to describe the character of the immigrant experience from the point of view of a participant, but also to maintain spacial and temporal links with an Italian cultural background which otherwise would be seriously compromised if not severed. On the individual level, each of these works contribute to the immigrant's personal creation of a bridge which can join and unite the two shores of his experience, relieving his angst and coherently merging old and new worlds, past and present, Italian background and Canadian experience. In the representation of the life of Italians in Canada these texts also acquire an important cultural function at the collective level because they allow Italian-Canadians of any generation to recognize the continuity between their cultural heritage and their present life in Canada, as well as furthering a knowledge of the immigrant experience "from the inside."

Morover, it should be acknowledged that more than representing the myth of *America*, this corpus of texts tends to convey a celebration of the hard-working immigrant and the personal costs the pursuit of economic betterment in a new land would entail. These writers recognize how Canada has given them the opportunity to achieve better socioeconomic conditions, but the myth of the land of opportunity is offered through the coloured lense of the immigrant's anxiety and hard struggle. The one mythical dimension that can be detected across this production is that of sacrifice and hard work. Each of these texts have presented an important side of the migratory

experience: the missionary effort, the pioneers, the internment, the women's role in the process of adaptation, the post-war wave. Each has allowed the reader to penetrate with insight into the immigrant's mind and understand his perspective and his effort to make his immigrant experience justifiable and worthwhile. This literature also gives us the opportunity to overcome common stereotypes about the immigrant, and perceive him or her as an individual who, in fact, came to Canada to achieve personal, as well as material, improvement. Also, a better knowledge of this Italian literature of migration to Canada will allow to interpret the Italian-Canadian literature in English or French as a literary production typical of second-generation writers, with a perspective not always shared by first-generation immigrants. To conclude, the literature written by first-generation writers of Italian background in Italian language gives the Italian-Canadian audience a means to understand the link between their present and past. On one hand readers will comprehend the ocean of personal struggle in almost any Italian immigrant journey; on the other hand, this literature offers the bridge that allows Italian-Canadians to overcome the distance created by time and space.

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