“MANAGE, NEGOTIATE, AND CHALLENGE IDENTITIES:” YOUNG ITALIAN-CANADIAN IDENTITIES FROM THE *EYETALIAN* PERSPECTIVE

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Summary. This study is an investigation of identity and Italian-Canadian youth in the post-World War Two period. A thorough examination of the limited secondary literature on this topic, as well an analysis of the works of authors, journalists and others published in the Toronto-based magazine *Eyetalian*, presents the intricacies of hybrid identity for young Italian Canadians. The various essays and other materials published in *Eyetalian* suggest the complex nature of identity which arises from generational differences, a search for identity (and what it means to be Italian Canadian), and the reproduction of traditional cultural values. The analysis proposes that identity for youth of Italian-Canadian descent is extremely elaborate, heterogeneous and fluid.

This study argues that identity politics and discussions about being and becoming Italian Canadian among second- and third-generation Italian-Canadian youth are central topics in *Eyetalian* magazine. Young Italian Canadians are those born to Italian immigrants who arrived in Canada after World War Two, including those who arrived here after that war as young immigrants (those who were born elsewhere but were “formed” here) and many of them have unanswered questions about their identity. This uncertainty is well expressed by one young Italian Canadian who stated: “sometimes I feel like I am on a teeter-totter and I try my hardest not to lose my balance.”¹

This study, however, does not attempt universal answers; rather, it presents an appreciation of the heterogeneity, complexity, and fluidity of identity of second- and third-generation Italian Canadians. The underlying assumption is that ethnicities and identities are ever-changing, manifold and always in negotiation; they are neither static nor homogenous.²

¹ Giampapa, “Italian Canadian Youth and the Negotiation of Identities,” 2.

² Giampapa, “Hyphenated Identities,” 291.

Through *Eyetalian* magazine we are able to see how Italian Canadians manage, negotiate and challenge identities through questions about self-identification, language, culture, and italianità which take place in a variety of settings including home, university campus, peer group social sites, and workplace and multiple worlds (for example, Italian Canadian, Canadian and Italian).³ *Eyetalian* magazine published articles which criticized, reproduced and debated identity issues, all of which highlighted the intricacies of Italian Canadianness and the search for identity, while it also published articles that attempted to reclaim or preserve a variety of cultural values.

Why Not Other Italian-Canadian Media?

Eyetalian magazine first appeared in Toronto in the Fall of 1993 and it ceased publication in 1998. Over these five years the magazine's readership increased from 500 to 12,000 subscribers. The readership was arguably inconsequential given that according to some estimates Toronto is home to more than 500,000 Italian Canadians (the province of Ontario alone includes over half of all of Canada's Italian-origin population). Nick Bianchi, Teresa Tiano and Pino Esposito were the cofounders of the magazine. In 1994, John Montesano, then *Eyetalian's* business and circulation manager, became the magazine's new editor. Four years later, Montesano and then sales director Joseph Barbieri became the owners of the magazine. All of these individuals involved with the magazine were second-generation Italian Canadians. Their experiences and sentiments as the children of Italian emigrants were important factors in their writings and in the magazine they published. It is important to qualify, however, that not all of the contributors to *Eyetalian* named below fit the category of child immigrants or second- or third-generation Italian Canadians; some were young adolescents on arrival or were born from parents of the earlier, pre-World War II immigration.

From the outset, the mere choice of title for the magazine was controversial amongst Italian Canadians because of its assumed prejudicial undertones. In a letter to the editor subscriber Charles DeCarlo strongly opposed the name of the magazine. He argued that it was a "disparaging appellation" given to Italians by the British during World War II and continued to the present.⁴ In response, however, the magazine founders noted that they had chosen the provocative title deliberately as a sign that Italian Canadians are in control of the name and its use.⁵ Esposito explained that

⁴ DeCarlo, "Letters," 7.

⁵ Boase, "New Magazine Salutes Italian Canadians."

"eyetalian" is a composite word meaning "self-examination by Italians living within an English milieu."⁶ Marcel Danesi observed that the magazine's title no longer induced "ethnicist" connotations but something much more refined and culturally appropriate. In his opinion, Italians are less frequently perceived to be "wops" or "eyetaliens" today because they have become part of the North American mainstream.⁷

Eyetalian magazine, as a source of study, has its shortcomings. The magazine focused on Toronto and only made passing reference to other Italian-Canadian communities across the country. Furthermore, although some letters to the editor were written and subsequently published, most readers either did not care to write, or chose to write anonymous hate mail which, for legal reasons, could not be published.⁸ Despite its limitations, *Eyetalian* is a valuable resource in the investigation of the experiences and feelings of second- and third-generation Italian Canadians.

Other Italian-Canadian media productions are not useful for the current study because they do not appeal to the interests and anxieties of Italian-Canadian youth. *Corriere Canadese*, the only Canadian daily printed in the Italian language, for example, was founded by the late Dan Iannuzzi (who created the newspaper in 1954) who went on to establish a "media empire" with *Corriere Canadese* as its chief paper. His "empire" now is operated by Multimedia WTM Corporation (of which Iannuzzi was President and CEO). The Corporation enjoyed a sizeable \$10 million profit in revenue in the first half of 2001 alone. *Corriere Canadese* is licensed under contract to Italmedia Società Co-operativa di Roma. As well, October Press Services, an ancillary to Multimedia, offers Italmedia publishing services at a pre-established price. Multimedia publishes ten other ethnic newspapers under its umbrella. As stated by Pagliocolo: "The entire ethnic press form what Iannuzzi referred to as the 'New Mainstream,' made up of cosmopolitans with a 'citizens of the world' attitude."⁹

Corriere Canadese, however, fails to explore "the emptiness within the Italo-Canadian culture and the inner person." This major Italian-Canadian media outlet neglects to demystify the taboos which affect young Italian Canadians.¹⁰ *Corriere* devotedly showcases the same banal and recurrent material and seldom provides any critical analysis of the news it reports.

⁶ Esposito, "Letter from the Editor," 3.

⁷ Danesi, "Hurtin' Words," 24.

⁸ Ricci, "Banquet Halls," 33-34.

⁹ Pagliocolo, "Big Trouble in Little Italy," 4. CHIN Radio/CHIN TV, *Accenti* and *Panoramitalia* are further examples of ineffective Italian-Canadian publications.

¹⁰ Pagliocolo, "Big Trouble in Little Italy," 3-4.

Pagliocolo states:

Corriere offers its audience predictable content: a daily sports section, a weekly feature on the Catholic Church, and events of regional clubs in the Italian community. Its news briefs, covering world events with a strong focus on Canadian politics and Italian news, are an invaluable service to its older, Italian-speaking audience. Some even say the newspaper, in sticking with a stale agenda, has lost sight of how to best serve an evolving audience whose sense of identity and interests have changed profoundly since the 1950s.¹¹

Accordingly, Max Stefanelli, an ex-lawyer who immigrated to Canada from Italy in 1999, maintains that *Corriere's* content is of no consequence to young Italian Canadians. He boldly suggests that “young kids don’t give a shit about Festa di San Giorgio in the banquet hall of a small community from a small village in the south of Italy.”¹² Pasquale Verdicchio, founding member of the Association of Italian Canadian Writers, claims that he is looking forward to an Italian-Canadian press that addresses the community’s cultural needs, aspirations, and the yearning “to know and to know oneself.” Similarly, Italian journalist Dara Kotnik Mancini contends that it is imperative for first- and second-generation Italian-Canadian writers to move away from the immigrant experience and explore other ways of articulating their culture.¹³

Multimedia Corporation introduced *Tandem* in a “miserable” attempt to fill *Corriere Canadese's* cultural void. *Tandem* is an Italian-Canadian magazine written in English claiming to appeal to the younger generation. Nearly 20% of the weekly’s news articles derive from *Corriere* and are translated into English. *Tandem* is predominantly popular in the Vaughan Italian-Canadian community, to which an entire page called Mainstream/Vaughan is dedicated, and where its distribution to 31,650 homes accounts for its lofty total circulation of 50, 900. *Tandem* enjoys a 20% readership which is not of Italian origin, because it includes interviews with mainstream bands and reviews of popular international movies in addition to Italian cultural news.¹⁴ Until *Tandem's* arrival, *Eyetalian* was the only magazine aimed at young Italian Canadians. Nevertheless, Iannuzzi insisted that *Tandem* was not inspired by *Eyetalian*. He maintained that *Tandem* was focused exclusively on presenting entertainment and news to those who “have an affinity for things Italian,”

¹¹ Pagliocolo, “Big Trouble in Little Italy,” 2.

¹² Pagliocolo, “Big Trouble in Little Italy,” 3.

¹³ Pagliocolo, “Big Trouble in Little Italy,” 5.

¹⁴ Pagliocolo, “Big Trouble in Little Italy,” 3.

whereas *Eyetalian* was concerned with the identity crisis of second-generation Italian-Canadians.¹⁵

What Does the Historical Literature Have to Say?

Before an examination of the contents published in *Eyetalian*, it is important to contextualize the themes and subjects that recur in the magazine. To begin, the current historiography concerning young Italian Canadians is inadequate. The hardships and achievements of the first generation obscure the experiences of their children, including those who immigrated as children. The supposed integration of Italian-Canadian youth into Canadian society as a result of their birth and education in Canada generalizes the nuances of the identity of young Italian Canadians and it is hoped that the present work will contribute to this field of study.¹⁶ The available scholarly and other literature speaks to several issues concerning the identity of young Italian Canadians which reappear in *Eyetalian* magazine. In her works Frances Giampapa, for example, challenges the idea that ethnicities and identities are fixed and constructed in isolation. She suggests that ethnic identity is socially constructed and that it describes one's social relationships to the world.¹⁷

Roberto Perin notes that individualism does not compose a culture because culture consists of a communally lived experience.¹⁸ Benedict Anderson affirms that even citizens of the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.¹⁹ From this it can be argued that even many cultures, in Perin's sense, might exist within an "imagined" community as defined by Anderson. Perin, in fact, maintains that Italian-Canadian identity is "all over the map" and is "extremely complex."²⁰

Giampapa notes that young Italian Canadians experience the "old" through their connections with their immigrant past—that is, through their parents or grandparents—as well as their own notions of *italianità*.

¹⁵ Pagliocolo, "Big Trouble in Little Italy," 4.

¹⁶ I am greatly indebted to Frances Giampapa's 2004 doctoral thesis. I also want to express my appreciation to Professor Roberto Perin, as well as Doctors Angela Durante and Eric Epayseur for their instrumental feedback. I also offer my thanks to my anonymous reviewers for their suggestions.

¹⁷ Giampapa, "Hyphenated Identities," 281.

¹⁸ Perin interview.

¹⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

²⁰ Perin interview.

On the other hand, the “new” involves how Italian-Canadian youth confront their representation and positioning not only within the Canadian world but also within the Italian-Canadian and the Italian world(s). Italian-Canadian youth reproduce expressions and cultural forms to retrieve and conserve their old identity; the customs and practices of their predecessors.²¹ Identity performance can be read through their body, behaviour, talk, and dress and the actions by which participants are judged and positioned.²² Italian-Canadian youth must also contend with the symbolic domination of the cultural elite, which is connected to discourses on ethnic legitimacy, and notions of what it means to be “truly Italian Canadian.”²³ Italian-Canadian youth who fail to conform to gender, sexual, religious, linguistic and cultural norms are alienated. Therefore, a power-knowledge relationship based on a system of regulation and self-compliance operates amongst Italian Canadians.²⁴

Anthropologist Nicholas Harney maintains that at the beginning of the 1980s new meanings entered the whirl of competing images and these created additional layers and greater complexity for the construction of “Italianness.” As a result, young Italian Canadians found new meanings with which they could construct their Italianness; additionally, altered generational meanings of work, education, and gender contributed to inter-generational tensions. Questions of gender hierarchy also arose as young Italian-Canadian women contested archaic patriarchal notions which severely restricted their choices. The pressure which immigrant parents place on their offspring to remain faithful to popular Mediterranean Roman Catholicism also came to the fore.²⁵

Giampapa also places a great deal of emphasis on language as an instrument of power. The linguistic patterns of young Italian Canadians are multifaceted and the speaker can negotiate identity through the interplay of linguistic codes.²⁶ Marcel Danesi similarly maintains that the ethnolect or “italiese” is the most significant marker of a “hybrid-identity.” In his estimation, post-immigrant generations become increasingly monolingual in English, “having only a receptive, or passive, knowledge of the ethnolect, which they might hear spoken by older members of the ethnic

21 Giampapa, “Hyphenated Identities,” 282-285.

22 Giampapa, “Italian Canadian Youth and the Negotiation of Identities,” 27.

23 Giampapa, “Italian Canadian Youth and the Negotiation of Identities,” 26-27.

24 For power/knowledge relations see Michiel Foucault, “Two Lectures,” 78-108.

25 DeMaria Harney, *Eh paesan!*, 162-174.

26 Giampapa, “Hyphenated Identities,” 284-285.

27 Danesi, “Ethnic Languages and Acculturation,” 99-101.

community.²⁷ Amilcare Iannucci observed that cultural and linguistic loss accelerates with the approach of adolescence in the second generation. The offspring bring pressure to bear on the protective walls of the community from the inside, demanding changes in the customs, attitudes, and even the linguistic habits of their parents.²⁸

Eyetalian: Nature and Content

The remainder of the current study is dedicated to an analysis of the contents of *Eyetalian* in an effort to illustrate how Italian-Canadian youth administer, compromise and contest their identities. Articles which criticize and confront matters of identity, which emphasize the complexities of identity, and which accentuate the conservation of traditional cultural values will be carefully examined. *Eyetalian* writers disparaged social practices within the Italian-Canadian community; deconstructed the binary nature of ethnic identity for Italian-Canadian youth; and conveyed the importance of upholding historical and conventional ideals. All three sections are very much interrelated and key themes of identity and generational differences will recur throughout.

1.) *Criticize, Reproduce, and Debate Identity Issues*

Authors who contributed to *Eyetalian* magazine wrote about topics which created controversy because they condemned prevailing discourses and socio-cultural practices within the Italian-Canadian community. Intergenerational strife was one of the primary topics of *Eyetalian* magazine. The Spring 1994 edition, for example, was titled, "Sex, Religion, and Politics: What a New Generation of Italian Canadians Thinks." The magazine totalled the responses to the questions in a survey which had been mailed to its subscribers, distributed to guests at *Eyetalian*'s winter launch party and handed out at a number of Italian-language classes at York University. Of the more than 200 people polled, the magazine chose the first 100 surveys completed by those between the ages of 21 and 35. This age range best represented a new generation of Italian Canadians, whose identities were in part shaped by the "tensions between the sacred village traditions of their parents and the profane demands of their contemporary urban lifestyle."²⁹

The survey results revealed some interesting statistics about the beliefs of young Italian Canadians. Regarding religion, 85% of the respondents believed the Roman Catholic Church should allow divorce, 82%

²⁸ Iannucci, "The Italian Immigrant," 14.

²⁹ "Sex, Religion, Politics," 17.

denounced the celibacy of the Roman Catholic clergy by stating that priests should be allowed to marry, and 86% stated that women should be allowed to become priests. On the delicate topic of sexuality and gender 60% were not convinced that women truly enjoy the same rights as men, 85% believed that premarital sex is not morally wrong, and 79% agreed that homosexuality is morally and socially acceptable. An overwhelming 98% felt sex education should be taught in schools, 93% argued that artificial forms of contraception are morally acceptable, and 69% believed that abortion should be legal for several reasons other than medical. The poll also showed that 53% of the Italian-Canadian youth participants voted for Jean Chrétien's Liberal Party in the 1993 federal elections, while 24% did not vote at all.³⁰ The poll results clearly indicated that young Italian Canadians (or the "new generation") in Toronto were intensely liberal and socially progressive. The article placed second- and third-generation Italian-Canadian youth in direct opposition to their parents. There was a strong desire among young Italian Canadians to expose and discuss the meaning of their uniqueness.

In addition, a series of articles in the Winter and Summer 1998 issues of *Eyetalian* spoke disapprovingly of the Roman Catholic Church. Elizabeth Renzetti accused the Church of separating itself from the laity because it rejected modernization and a novel representation of religion popularized in television sitcoms. Renzetti claimed that the Church does not embrace television shows which depict it as relevant to modern life. She stated sarcastically that the Church "puts on its most self-righteous vestments and says: Don't you go portraying us as a religion of the twentieth century, you insolent network pups!"³¹ Although the author did not deny that the Church still had a moral hold on her she believed that teenagers knew very little about Roman Catholicism "except for these exercises in nun mockery" and the Church's lack of appeal was the root of the problem. Renzetti alluded to generational discrepancy by suggesting that if her great-aunt—Sister Mildred, a Roman Catholic nun—were still alive she would have been extremely disappointed by the lack of religious knowledge and interest exhibited by Italian-Canadian youth.³²

Lucia Piccinni also criticized the Roman Catholic Church as old-fashioned: "Although surveys trumpet that Church participation is on the rise, some priests and practitioners are quietly worried that, in our rapid-fire

³⁰ "Sex, Religion, Politics," 17.

³¹ Renzetti, "Mass Appeal," 9.

³² Renzetti, "Mass Appeal," 9.

information age, the Church's dense teachings and rigid doctrine, particularly regarding issues of sex and sexuality, have placed it at a distance from its more youthful audience.³³ Renzetti also criticized the avarice and hypocritical nature of Roman Catholicism. The writer asserted that "it's not right that all of this money gets spent on beautiful churches with stained glass windows, but then the ushers pass around a money basket for us to donate money to the poor."³⁴ An article by Michelle Alfano made similar claims about the Catholic Church. She was critical of Pope John Paul II for his conventional stance on sexuality. The writer maintained that modern sexual ethics disturbed the Pope. She added that when abortion is posited as "a clear moral evil" it is not possible for a woman to choose whether or not to undergo the procedure. Alfano concluded that topics such as abortion are not open for discussion in the Church "much less the cafeterias of the world where Western Catholics presumably congregate."³⁵

Eyetalian magazine also was very critical of the larger Italian-Canadian community and the institutions which supported it and this criticism was expressed by exposing the community's limitations and contradictions. Luigi Ferrara, for example, presented Italian-Canadian homes as overwhelmingly pretentious. Ferrara wrote that in a desire to showcase their financial successes, many Italians who had "made it" created houses with two levels, one out-of-bounds space, namely, the upper floor, for the public world of display, and the other, often located in the basement, for practical daily living with all the modern conveniences. In Ferrara's estimation, the monster home represents the triumph of pretense over substance. It is the perversion of one generation's dreams of success into the succeeding generation's "nightmare of ambition." The writer sarcastically concludes: "Monster homes are everywhere! Can monster children be far behind?"³⁶

The superficiality to which Ferrara made reference is the subject of what may have been the most contentious article published in *Eyetalian*. This was written by Joanne Chianello and appeared in the magazine in 1995 with the title "The Armani Generation." In this article Chianello focused on the rampant materialism that she claimed was replacing concern for education among Italian-Canadian students who attended Roman Catholic high schools in the Woodbridge neighbourhood of the City of Vaughan. Chianello painted a portrait of "overindulged, underachieving" Italian-Canadian youth. The author criticized the attitudes and lifestyles of

³³ Piccinni, "The Father, the Son and Sexy Spice," 17.

³⁴ Piccinni, "The Father, the Son and Sexy Spice," 17.

³⁵ Alfano, "Of Popes and Pagans," 22.

³⁶ Ferrara, "Creating a Monster," 8.

young Italian Canadians who live in Woodbridge as backward, sexist, materialistic, and shallow.³⁷ The article was critical of their consumerism and their disinterest in education and their parents' misplaced values for education, traditional gender roles and expectations for their children.³⁸

Chianello's article created furor within the Italian-Canadian community, particularly among those of Italian origin who lived in Woodbridge. At the time of the article's publication, an Italian-Canadian television program, "A Voi La Scelta," dedicated one whole evening to the issues raised in the article. A panel of experts which included Montesano, Danesi, and DeMaria Harney, participated in the televised discussion. The audience consisted of students, parents, and teachers connected to the high school (Holy Cross Catholic High School) which was the target of the article, as well as prominent individuals from the Vaughan area.³⁹ In a letter to the editor Elda Villamagna, PTA Executive of Holy Cross Catholic High School, claimed that Chianello lacked objectivity and endorsed stereotypical assumptions.⁴⁰ Villamagna referred to some of the "condescending and irrelevant images" which Chianello presented. Chianello, for example, facetiously suggested that in Woodbridge, one can observe a monster home being built (really a funeral home), a Cosmetic Surgery Hospital, and "a mall on the fringes of suburbia which you can only find by identifying a sea of maroon skirts" (in reality a Roman Catholic high school).⁴¹ Angela Bonifacio, another letter writer published in the magazine, also took exception to the article. According to Bonifacio, Chianello "should not bring her envy and biases into any future articles she writes on any topic."⁴² Rather than look into the mirror that was held in front of them, the community chose to "slay windmills, ignoring the true beasts hidden within their enclave." The Italian-Canadian community hears the messages from the second generation as "ungrateful disparagements" rather than cries for self-examination and a redirection of the course of identity.⁴³

Eyetalian's criticisms of the emptiness afflicting Italian-Canadian youth, especially those living in Woodbridge, extended to the Gino/Gina stereotype. Esposito's 1996 article ridiculed Italian-Canadian youth's fascination with Chevrolet Camaros. He emphasized the opinion that young Italian Canadians were concerned with "fare bella figura" (public appear-

³⁷ Chianello, "The Armani Generation," 18.

³⁸ Giampapa, "Italian Canadian Youth and the Negotiation of Identities," 75.

³⁹ Giampapa, "Italian Canadian Youth and the Negotiation of Identities," 74-75.

⁴⁰ Villamagna, "Letters," 4.

⁴¹ Villamagna, "Letters," 4.

⁴² Bonifacio, "Letters," 5.

⁴³ Piezzo, "The Crucible of Culture," 135.

ance) and being in possession of material goods “all’ultimo grido” (latest trends). He also claimed that Camaro owners were “somehow exempt from the workaday lifestyle of their fathers and free to down Big Macs instead of Ma’s minestrone.” Esposito also opined that a “souped-up” Camaro could be sighted in front of the local “palaces of pleasure” such as donut shops, billiard halls or fast food restaurants, as well as the local Roman Catholic high school.⁴⁴ In her article titled “Club Zone,” Pina D’Agostino accentuated the Gino/Gina inclination to attend night clubs and lounges in Toronto. D’Agostino stated: “You pretend that you’re something you’re not ... You make \$10 an hour and you pay \$7 for a drink, yet we’re always here.”⁴⁵ D’Agostino also pointed to the absurdity of the Gino/Gina image, above all, the mode of dress, a passion for dance music, and the use of words such as “mint” or “solid” (meaning nice or awesome) and “roffa” (meaning sexual intercourse).⁴⁶

The Italian-Canadian wedding was certainly not immune to criticism from *Eyetalian’s* writers. In an extremely satirical article Renzetti described Italian-Canadian weddings as public spectacles and she demythologized the various weighty rituals that an Italian-Canadian wedding entails including the “dry ice, stretched limos, and lime-green gowns.” Renzetti declared: “Your dress will determine the success or failure of your marriage, so choose wisely and expensively... The dress is the centre piece of the wedding. Everything else—the church, the flowers, the food—must complement the dress.”⁴⁷ The author stressed that weddings have become an excuse to purchase a six-course dinner while making conversation with people you do not know “while the bride and groom smile grimly in anticipation of another ting-ting-ting” (“ting-ting-ting” refers to the metallic sound created by guests at the wedding reception by emphatically striking a glass or plate with cutlery to encourage the spouses to exchange a kiss).⁴⁸ By the same token, Nino Ricci engaged with the notion of dual identity as well as intergenerational differences in his description of his intended marriage to a woman not of Italian origin. Ricci wrote that for the first time in his life he understood what people meant when they talked about cultural misunderstandings. Ricci and his fiancée were determined not to give in to petty argument or to be constrained by parental expectations of what was proper. Nonetheless, because Ricci’s father insisted on paying for the wed-

⁴⁴ Esposito, “Ginomobile,” 12.

⁴⁵ D’Agostino, “Club Zone,” 19-20.

⁴⁶ D’Agostino, “Club Zone,” 19.

⁴⁷ Renzetti, “Wedding Wonders,” 9.

⁴⁸ Renzetti, “Wedding Wonders,” 9.

ding, the ceremony much resembled the “usual Catholic one.” Much to the dismay of Ricci’s wife-to-be, the reception would also include the infamous “receiving line.”⁴⁹

The always forthright Nino Ricci wrote a succession of satirical and controversial articles in his regular “Private Eye” column in *Eyetalian* in which he chastised Toronto’s Italian-Canadian cultural elite. For instance, in “Cultural Spin Cycle,” Ricci decried the presence of patronage networks in the Italian-Canadian community. He used the example of *Eyetalian* magazine which struggled for five years to nurture the untapped talents of young Italian Canadians and which earned praise in every quarter. Yet, according to Ricci, in a community full of “spenders” who do not hesitate to “drop 50K over lunch for some big name charity, particularly if in doing so they can garner prestige outside the Italian community, *Eyetalian* has been unable to find a single patron willing to make a substantial ongoing contribution to the magazine’s existence.”⁵⁰ Ricci was also extremely critical of CHIN and its founder Johnny Lombardi. Ricci claimed that for CHIN Italian-Canadian culture consists primarily of folk dances and picnics, and that “literature is something Dante did once and which need not be bothered with any more except in the occasional cookbook or biography of Claudio Villa.”⁵¹ Ricci, through his writing, attempts to illustrate how the Italian-Canadian community is overflowing with nothingness. One of the few subscribers who took the initiative to write a letter to the editor claimed that he was contemplating “scrapping” his subscription because he was suffering the effects of the “foolish and incredible rubbish” which constituted the “*Sun*-like journalism” that is found in Ricci’s “Private Eye” column.⁵²

In summation, *Eyetalian* challenged, usually through ridicule, numerous characteristics of the Italian-Canadian community and appeared rebellious to many. *Eyetalian*’s writers were candid and audacious and did not express loyalty to the Italian-Canadian community or to its institutions. *Eyetalian* tackled popular beliefs within the community concerning religion, gender, politics and socio-cultural practices. Ricci, in particular, confronted the Italian-Canadian mass media and its unwillingness to represent second- and third-generation Italian Canadians. The generational conflicts and divergences between young Italian Canadians and those of the first or

⁴⁹ Ricci, “The Italian Wedding,” 42-44.

⁵⁰ Ricci, “Cultural Spin Cycle,” 42

⁵¹ Ricci, “Ricci on Ricci,” 44.

⁵² Milazzo, “Letters,” 4. The author’s criticism of Ricci’s column suggests that it was only worthy of publication in the populist Toronto newspaper the *Sun*.

immigrant generation were also blatantly apparent. As a result, *Eyetalian* sheds light on the dilemma of identity often experienced by Italian-Canadian youth.

2.) *Complexity of Italian Canadianness and a Search for Identity*

Eyetalian magazine also depicts the dichotomous nature of identity for second- and third-generation Italian-Canadian youth. *Eyetalian's* writers expressed the "dual burden" of having one foot in one culture and one foot in another. In "Life After Sainthood," Ricci conveyed his sense of cultural displacement and the feeling of being between cultures as he was growing up. He spoke about the challenge he experienced in attempting to move from one non-evolving culture (his household) into a world which is in flux and in which values are different or changing or are in conflict with those espoused at home. There was a clear divide in Ricci's mind between what transpired at home and what took place in the world outside of that environment and for him the rift between cultures tended to be widened by the "home grown habit of maligning the mainstream culture." The novelist explained that because immigrants have a propensity to try to resist the culture where they settle, they either "demonize" or portray it in negative terms.⁵³

In a subsequent column Ricci discussed his unconscious Canadianization and the difficulties encountered while trying to escape the inevitable pressures experienced by Italian Canadians of the second or third generation. Home ownership, for instance, is an essential measure of a married man's success within the Italian-Canadian community; a measure which is embedded in heterosexist ideals. According to Ricci, "you can earn a thousand honours, you can be voted Prime Minister, but if you don't own a home then in the eyes of an Italian parent you're still no better than any bum on the street."⁵⁴ Ricci felt victimized by the cultural pressure of home ownership because, although he owns a non-Italian-looking house, he succumbed to his immigrant roots, and became very protective of his property when he witnessed "non-Italian high school kids" tossing empty Coke cans into his forsythia bush.⁵⁵ This anecdote from Ricci is difficult for at least two reasons. Firstly, Ricci makes a generalization between "Italian" males and home ownership. Secondly, Ricci makes an assumption that his reaction was caused by his immigrant roots. In his column titled "In Which Our Hero Descends into Identity Hell," Ricci described a trip he

⁵³ Ricci, "Life After Sainthood," 20.

⁵⁴ Ricci, "Confessions of A Closet Neo-Con," 34.

⁵⁵ Ricci, "Confessions of A Closet Neo-Con," 34.

took to Italy in order to discover his Italian identity. Upon his return from “la bella Italia,” however, Ricci felt like a “mongrel hybrid.” He declared that: “We’ve been ruined by the assimilationist juggernaut of hegemonic discourses ... We’ve been forced to opposite sides of the irreducible chasm between margin and centre.”⁵⁶ Ricci eloquently concluded that ethnicity is a social construct, identity is “plurivocal and unfixed,” and multiculturalism is the “institutionalization of the ethnic ghetto.”⁵⁷

Several other *Eyetalian* writers shared Ricci’s thoughts on the unfixed or changing and changeable nature of ethnic identity. In “Half-Breed,” Renzetti wrote: “I’m searching, searching. I look in convents and self-help books and I decide that the only way I’m going to find what I’m looking for is to rediscover my roots. I decide to reinvent myself as my Italian grandmothers, only with more labour-saving appliances.”⁵⁸ Renzetti, like Ricci, believes that identity is fluid and that young Italian Canadians seem to have “semi-permeable identity membranes.”⁵⁹ In “A Portrait of the Artists,” Luisa Mastrobuono conducted an interview with Toronto filmmakers Patricia Fogliato and David Mortin. The films which Fogliato and Mortin produced were considered controversial in the eyes of the Italian-Canadian community because they spoke to the “mysteries at the core of identity.” The conversation between Mastrobuono and the film directors essentially revolved around being “outsiders.”⁶⁰ In fact, when both directors were in search of funding for their film *Enigmatico*, a sales representative from CHIN told them that “if you can raise enough money outside of the community, then you must be too Anglo.” Fogliato claimed that

spiritually, intellectually, even physically, we seemed to fit into neither of the worlds we occupied—neither our parents’ loving but often personally-repressive immigrant community—nor the libertine, beach-blond vacuity of Anglo-Saxon Canadian culture. We were the misfits of the community, bicultural schizophrenics.⁶²

Clearly, the meaning of Italian Canadian as a description of identity is very open-ended.

Idella Sturino added another dimension to the discussion by expressing

⁵⁷ Ricci, “In Which Our Hero Descends into Identity Hell,” 34.

⁵⁸ Renzetti, “Half-Breed,” 8.

⁵⁹ Renzetti, “Half-Breed,” 7.

⁶⁰ Mastrobuono, “A Portrait of the Artists,” 12.

⁶¹ Mastrobuono, “A Portrait of the Artists,” 14.

⁶² Mastrobuono, “A Portrait of the Artists,” 12.

the difficulty of growing up with a Calabrese father and an Anglo-Canadian mother and being labelled the family "mangiacake." Sturino recalled that when her relatives appointed her the "family mangiacake" the label made her realize she was living in two different worlds. She remembered comments by her Italian relatives such as "that's all you can eat? She's such a mangiacake."⁶³ In a letter to the editor, Antonio Iacoviello took exception to Italians calling most non-Italians "cakes." Iacoviello maintained that we all deal with a sense of who we are and our identities can be unique if one accepts both sides of their heritage and is proud of both. Iacoviello observed that every time he visited his Portuguese partner's home he was asked to taste his father-in-law's new wine: simply because he was of Italian background it was assumed that Iacoviello was a connoisseur of wine.⁶⁴

The complexities of ethnic identity were compounded by discussions of gender and sexuality. *Eyetalian* writer Michelina Pallotta Bellicoso suggested that socialization within the immigrant Italian family, along with the expectation to maintain traditional values, has created personal conflicts for second- and third-generation Italian Canadians. She specifically referred to the roles which men and women are expected to occupy in the family structure. According to Bellicoso, women's changing roles strain the Italian male who was raised in a traditional Italian family. In her psychotherapy practice, the author stated that she would often hear a husband, who was raised to be a breadwinner, say to his wife, "You don't need to go to work anymore, stay home and raise the children, I can support the family with my income."⁶⁵ In Bellicoso's estimation, young Italian-Canadian men have difficulty recognizing their wives' needs. Young Italian-Canadian women who are employed outside of the home must often deal with the pressures of "running a household, being a nurturer, as well as maintaining demanding careers which keep them out of the house for extended periods of time."⁶⁶ These challenging expectations frequently cause women to experience guilt. Bellicoso also discussed the situation of a young adult who is single and who attempts to move out of the family home and live independently. Bellicoso argued that the Italian-Canadian family views this as an "act of betrayal" and reacts with "outbursts of anger, bouts of depression and attempts to control." Conversely, Canadian society supports separation from the family. The writer presented this as another instance of the contradictory messages received from Italian-Canadian families which are opposed to those

⁶³ Sturino, "Growing Up the Mangiacake," 26-27.

⁶⁴ Iacoviello, "Letters," 7.

⁶⁵ Bellicoso, "Mixed Messages," 7.

⁶⁶ Bellicoso, "Mixed Messages," 7.

received from the wider Canadian culture.⁶⁷

In her short fiction piece “You Can’t Be Too Strong,” published in *Eyetalian*, Michelle Alfano wrote about a young Italian-Canadian woman’s struggle to uphold her proper place in the family and accept the consequences of her actions which caused difficulties for her entire family. When the young protagonist learned that she was pregnant out of wedlock she immediately sought an abortion to avoid tarnishing the family name but she did so without saying a word to her parents. Speaking of the incident that led to the pregnancy Alfano’s protagonist observed:

I was just sick and tired of that nice-Italian-girl shit. I wanted to experience something other than what I had been experiencing. So I let my words and desires flow over me and other people like a river, blindly.⁶⁸

Likewise, Ivana Barbieri addressed the stigmas experienced by young Italian-Canadian women. Because of her family circumstances Barbieri was branded the daughter of “una divorziata,” and regardless of her actions or motivations, “due to the absence of her deadbeat dad,” she was set up to fail.⁶⁹ In “Breaking the Chains,” Stephanie Cipollone was appalled by the fact that many young, Italian-Canadian women do not take advantage of the opportunities which lie beyond their relationships. In Cipollone’s opinion, although many relationships “endure the trials of puberty and high school,” it is unfortunate that they are allowed to stand in the way of setting and achieving personal goals. What concerned the writer most were the effects of accepting these traditional roles.⁷⁰ These articles clearly exemplify how young Italian-Canadian women challenge existing gender norms and struggle against them.

The subject of language retention and its significance for the identity of young Italian Canadians is also given some attention in *Eyetalian*. In his article titled “On the Language,” Elio Costa argued that language allows Italian-Canadian youth to tap into and keep in touch with the culture of their origins. Otherwise, continued Costa, it becomes a “truncated version of a culture which is no longer Italian, but becomes Italian Canadian.”⁷¹ In response, one might suggest that Costa is placing unfair expectations on young Italian Canadians because, even if standard Italian is prevalent, the

⁶⁷ Bellicoso, “Mixed Messages,” 7.

⁶⁸ Alfano, “You Can’t Be Too Strong,” 29.

⁶⁹ Barbieri, “What a Disgrace,” 7.

⁷⁰ Cipollone, “Breaking the Chains,” 20.

⁷¹ “On Language,” 16.

culture still remains an Italian-Canadian one. According to Perin, for example, "any Italian Canadians defining themselves as Italian are deluding themselves, because they do not live in Italy."⁷² Alberto Di Giovanni proposed that once you lose the language, there are certain elements of the culture which can survive, but most of it expresses itself in a subculture. Di Giovanni felt that international languages teachers could not deliver an adequate program without curriculum development and teaching aids, all of which have been continuously eliminated over the past few years by provincial government cuts.⁷³ Marcel Danesi supported heritage language teaching because "not only does it appear to make the child a better learner but it also promotes a sense of worth and respect for all cultures and languages."⁷⁴ *Eyetalian's* Angela Lomuto commented that when she was growing up various dialects were the primary languages not only for socializing with neighbours but also those which were spoken in nearby banks and stores. Lomuto added that "today, when I walk down those same streets, this is no longer the reality as English has become the cross-generational language."⁷⁵ A fundamental question arises from the language dispute: Are we discussing an Italian-Canadian culture or an Italian one?

The complex nature of identity for second- and third-generation Italian Canadians is strongly illustrated in *Eyetalian* magazine. Its writers demonstrated the dichotomies which torment young Italian Canadians. Italian Canadians are called upon to be resilient and to maintain equilibrium between the expectations of their Italian households and mainstream Canadian society. As we have seen, writers like Nino Ricci outlined the difficulties of being a "half-breed" and of conceding, even if unconsciously, to traditional Italian customs. The intricacies of dealing with gendered expectations were also emphasized in *Eyetalian*. Women writers articulated the constraints of the female experience in a structure that allowed them little agency but which placed immense pressure on them to preserve family dignity. The question of language highlighted the competing discourses concerning Italian Canadianness. Hence, writers discussed the quandary of existing in two different worlds but belonging completely to neither. The various articles published in *Eyetalian* also admirably explain how historical events and traditional practices are strongly associated with ethnic identity.

3.) *Reclamation and Conservation of Traditional Cultural Values*

⁷² Perin interview.

⁷³ "On Language," 16-17.

⁷⁴ Danesi, "Course Language," 17.

⁷⁵ "On Language," 16.

Eyetalian magazine noticeably exposes the reclamation and conservation of older cultural values. *Eyetalian's* writers expressed concern for the loss of tradition and the difficulty in preserving it in the Canadian urban context. Although the magazine might be criticized for being nostalgic and folkloric it is also owed some praise. In this sense, the quarterly is well-balanced and is able to give a picture of the versatility of identity for Italian-Canadian youth. The magazine discusses Italian-Canadian cultural values which perhaps inevitably shape second- and third-generation Italian Canadians. This includes historical events and moments, superstitious practices, and unique aspects of Italian-Canadian culture which a number of Italian-Canadian youth still hold very dear. The preservation of certain traditional values is clearly a vital component of ethnic identity for Italian-Canadian youth.

Articles on the history of Italian Canadians served to create collective memory. Some recounted the hardships endured by Italians in the new world. In "Murder or Self-Defence," Franca Iacovetta retold the story of Angelina Napolitano, an Italian-Canadian woman who lived in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario and who, in 1911, axed to death her husband Pietro while he slept. In Iacovetta's interpretation Pietro Napolitano's masculinity suffered a crisis because of his inability to purchase a home for his family. This challenge to his masculinity resulted in domestic violence and Pietro's insistence that Angelina engage in acts of prostitution.⁷⁶ The story of Angelina is exemplary for young Italian-Canadian women and shows that southern-Italian immigrant women were not necessarily powerless and acquiescent in the face of harsh patriarchal demands.

Michael Mirolla, in his article on the internment of Italian-origin individuals after Mussolini's declaration of war on Great Britain on 10 June 1940, rehearsed the story of the "approximately seven hundred men and women [sic]" of Italian origin who were arrested and held at Camp Petawawa in Northern Ontario during World War II.⁷⁷ In "On the Line, 1961," Frank Colantonio reminisced about his involvement in Toronto's labour strike of June 1961 which shook the construction sector. The actions of Italian immigrant strikers, lead by workers like Colantonio and others, affected significant construction projects like the new Toronto subway line that was then being built. The strikers were able to secure the support of the commercial construction union locals of the Toronto Building Trades Council. At the same time, they provoked the anger of the builders, and the police came down much harder on the strikers than they had in previous labour disputes. In fact, forty-three men were arrested following

⁷⁶ Iacovetta, "Murder or Self-Defence," 12-13.

⁷⁷ Mirolla, "Camp Petawawa," 11.

"pitched battles." As articulated by Colantonio, one man was admitted to hospital with a fractured skull and those arrested "sang folk songs while awaiting their court appearances." It became a "high-profile fight" that ultimately involved the provincial government and helped to bring about positive change in the construction industry in Ontario.⁷⁸

In "1982 Remembered," Montesano wrote about the enthusiastic celebrations amongst Toronto's Italian Canadians in 1982 following the World Cup victory by the Italian men's national soccer team. Montesano claimed that "the party in 1982 was a watershed moment" that marked the transition from the "struggle that came before it and the prosperity which was to follow."⁷⁹ From the writer's view point, it was the day that the community came of age in Toronto; when those of Italian origin went from "being garlic-stenched labourers and seamstresses to Canadian citizens." Montesano also observed that even though Italians have organized for more meaningful matters, "for better or for worse, they have not had the same impact on our collective memory."⁸⁰ Further, he does not neglect the possibility that such events cultivate a sense of communal belonging, or an imagined community. In Montesano's estimation, the World Cup is an uncomplicated way for Canadians who still identify with another part of the world as their place of origin to "take pride in that place on an international stage." According to Montesano, the "frenzy" of Italian-Canadian celebrations could be "disregarded as nationalistic and superficial but I suspect that it is much more."⁸¹ Long after *Eyetalian's* demise similar celebrations occurred in Toronto in the summer of 2006 when the Italian men's national soccer team was crowned World Cup champion for the fourth time in the competition's history.

Articles appearing in *Eyetalian* augmented the reader's knowledge of traditional socio-cultural practices. These articles also speak to a binary nature of identity, as well as the fact that Italian cultural values have become normalized in the everyday lives of many second- and third-generation Italian-Canadian youth. Rita Simonetta discussed the southern-Italian tradition of interpreting dreams. Simonetta talked about a dream she had when she was younger in which her "teeth fell out." After hearing about this dream the writer's grandmother warned her that "questo sogno non è buono, figlia mia! (This dream is not good!)."⁸² Simonetta recounted: "My nonna, using a dialect, sang, in a nursery-rhyme style which would

⁷⁸ Colantonio, "On the Line, 1961," 18-19.

⁷⁹ Montesano, "1982 Remembered," 32.

⁸⁰ Montesano, "1982 Remembered," 32.

⁸¹ Montesano, "1982 Remembered," 32.

⁸² Simonetta, "In Your Dreams," 13.

send chills down the spine of any child, se cadono i denti, a qualcuno dei parenti (if your teeth fall, so will one of your relatives).”⁸³ The writer explained that “dream interpreters” like her aunt and grandmother are a “dying breed.” Their sons and daughters, argued Simonetta, do not share their traditional beliefs. They may have heard that a particular dream they had one night could be an omen but they are not too concerned when they get up in the morning. In spite of this, Simonetta’s friend recently asked her “what it means when you spill water on a table?” Simonetta, in response, told her that it was a good dream, “knowing full well that it wasn’t.”⁸⁴

Similarly, in an article on the evil eye, DeMaria Harney discussed the preservation and reproduction of popular Mediterranean Roman Catholic beliefs and symbols in Toronto’s Italian-Canadian community. Harney’s young Italian-Canadian friends all have key chains with a red horn or pepper attached and were convinced that the key chains doubled as charms to ward off the evil eye. The writer noted that although his friends may or may not understand the tradition of *malocchio* or evil eye they had enough respect “for the culture of their parents’ generation to buy the prescribed amulet.”⁸⁵ In Canada, continued DeMaria Harney, the belief is beginning to whither and, for many, it has lost its more detailed meanings and understandings. Some young Italian Canadians hang the “corno” from the rear view mirrors as good luck charms with little thought given to its more complex history. To wear it or to utter the phrase “fuore malocchio” (for protection against the evil eye), claimed the writer, reveals the way that the culture replicates itself across generations and oceans.⁸⁶

Elizabeth Cinello, in “Nuts, Fruits, and a Hag,” described the mythic role of “la Befana” who, for many Italian children at Christmas, “calls the shots.” Cinello remembered how every 5th January she and her eight siblings placed their socks and shoes by the chimney and waited for la Befana to arrive and deliver gifts of fruit, nuts, and candies into the designated footwear. La Befana flew on a broomstick through the cold winter night, crawling down every chimney in town to see if the children within had been good or bad. The archetypal rhyme is: “La Befana vien di notte (La Befana comes by night) con le scarppe tutte rotte (with her shoes old and broken), ed il naso alla romana (she comes dressed in the Roman way), viva viva la Befana! (long life to the Befana!).”⁸⁷ La Befana, explained Cinello, is not only a “viable Christmas spir-

⁸³ Simonetta, “In Your Dreams,” 14.

⁸⁴ Simonetta, “In Your Dreams,” 14.

⁸⁵ DeMaria Harney, “Horns, Hands & Hunchbacks,” 10.

⁸⁶ DeMaria Harney, “Horns, Hands & Hunchbacks,” 11.

it, but one of the oldest surviving symbols of an ancient matriarchal tradition resembling the prominent and powerful mother-goddess.”⁸⁸ Today, la Befana’s importance in the celebration of Christmas is waning. In Canada, few teachers, even those of Italian origin, tell the story of la Befana to their students. Nevertheless, Cinello affirmed that la Befana is a lasting symbol of female heritage which will probably be “flying around well into the twenty-first century.”⁸⁹ In “All in the Cards,” writer Dan Bortolotti addressed the topic of Italian card games (for example, *tressette* and *briscola*) and their prevalence among Italians in North America including Italian-Canadian youth. During a visit to Venice, Bortolotti and his companion decided to sit on a public bench to play a game of Italian cards. The writer also discussed how card games in North America, in comparison to Italy, have been modified and North Americanized. A bystander in Venice in fact asked Bortolotti and his partner: “Cos’è questo gioco (What game are you playing)?” Tressette, replied Bortolotti but the Venetian man, in disgust, exclaimed: “‘Tressette’? In due (with two players)? Bah!”⁹⁰ Bortolotti suggested that the North American-Italian community has embraced card games with great enthusiasm and he concluded that “watching a group of old Italian men playing briscola in the midst of a Canadian winter suggests that they are also an excellent indoor recreation to enjoy when there is too much snow to play bocce.”⁹¹ Hence, the writer argues that Italian cultural customs, such as card games, have been naturally adapted for the North American culture.

In “Basic Knead,” Sasha Chapman seems to challenge Bortolotti because she feels that cultural practices, like bread making, should be transplanted and closely practiced following traditional methods. According to Chapman, the art of breadmaking has been lost, and the whole endeavour has been turned into either a chore or some brand of black magic. The writer argued that in the modern world more people eat “machine-made Wonderbread than hand-made Tuscan country loaf and almost nobody makes their own bread.”⁹² “When I tell people I make bread,” she added, “they all look at me as if I am a magician, a miracle worker, or someone with way too much time on her hands.”⁹³ Chapman dedicated much of her article to instruct and inform her readers about breadmaking but she may have

87 Cinello, “Nuts, Fruits, and a Hag,” 15.

88 Cinello, “Nuts, Fruits, and a Hag,” 14.

89 Cinello, “Nuts, Fruits, and a Hag,” 15.

90 Bortolotti, “All in the Cards,” 14

91 Bortolotti, “All in the Cards,” 15.

92 Chapman, “Basic Knead,” 32.

93 Chapman, “Basic Knead,” 32.

expressed unfair expectations about Italian Canadians. She is seemingly unaware of the reality that the production of homemade foods has become increasingly rare not only for Italian Canadians but also for Italians in Italy. It is also unreasonable to think that young Italian Canadians can continue the culture of their parents. As Perin has queried: "Why should successive generations feel guilty for not conforming to their ancestors' culture?"⁹⁴

The importance of wine to young Italian Canadians is evidenced in Louise Mussio's piece sarcastically titled "Stop the Presses." Mussio had been employed by a major educational publisher on a CD-ROM text package dealing with the history of immigration in Canada. She was asked to prepare a written text for an essay on the French in Canada while one of her colleagues was asked to write on Italians. In the latter text the publishing company decided to omit the personal story of an Italian woman's experience as an immigrant in Canada because, in her monologue, she reflected on the centrality of wine in Italian life and culture. An incensed Mussio asked: "Why is it okay, in writing of the Italian experience in Canada, to discuss Italian cuisine, the 'tarantella' dance, and haute couture, but not the centrality of wine in the everyday life and experience of the Italian immigrant?"⁹⁵

As noted here, cultural values represented an extremely important part of the content of *Eyetalian* magazine. In their articles dealing with aspects of Italian culture including "la Befana," "il malocchio," card games, dreams, and wine, *Eyetalian* writers demonstrated the importance of these customs in the lives of Italian-Canadian youth. Whether consciously or not, the magazine's writers assumed that these topics would resonate for their readers because they are exposed to them at home and in the broader Italian-Canadian community. For this reason the magazine suggested the importance of Italian foods and culinary practices for the identity of second- and third-generation Italian Canadians. In a similar vein, *Eyetalian* presented crucial moments in the history of Italian Canadians perhaps in an attempt to nourish a sense of communal belonging. *Eyetalian's* writers informed and instructed their readers about things which are Italian Canadian and simultaneously portrayed the richness underlying an Italian-Canadian experience.

Concluding Remarks

During its relatively brief existence *Eyetalian* magazine demonstrated the importance of identity for young Italian Canadians through articles which criticized, reproduced and contested identity issues. *Eyetalian* writers

⁹⁴ Perin interview.

⁹⁵ Mussio, "Stop the Presses," 18.

depicted the dichotomous nature of identity for young Italian Canadians and difficulties encountered in dealing with gendered expectations were also emphasized. Women writers, for example, addressed the restrictions placed upon young women by hegemonic patriarchal attitudes. The writings in the magazine also reclaimed and attempted to preserve customary cultural values and practices while confronting popular beliefs about religion, gender, politics and cultural practices amongst Italian Canadians. The magazine challenged the cultural elite and their disinclination to represent and support young Italian Canadians. Finally, by providing a variety of historical narratives drawn from the experiences of Italians in Canada *Eyetalian* also attempted to foster, perhaps inadvertently, an imagined Italian-Canadian community.

The analysis of *Eyetalian* enables us to look at the Italian-Canadian community from a very critical perspective and, in turn, to pose some important questions. *Eyetalian*, like other ethnic publications which succeeded it, had a short life, primarily (but not exclusively) because of the lack of support, financial or otherwise, from the cultural elite. In this case, as in others, an effort to present an ethnic community from a critical perspective resulted in the ostracism or, at best, the marginalization of the "offending" critics.⁹⁶ This leaves us to ponder Robert Harney's question: "Do Italian Canadians get uncomfortable when talking about the other, meaner history and/or aspects of their culture?"⁹⁷ Furthermore, is the only Italian-Canadian narrative worth recounting one that is steeped in glory and respectability? Should we only focus on romanticized accounts of Italian Canadianness and ignore or brush aside any voices that do not concur? Does the ethnic elite only support those representations of Italian-Canadian identity which associate it with art, music, theatre, sport, and standard Italian; that is, with aspects of Italian high culture? There are grave fault lines within this as within many other ethnic groups which urgently need to be analyzed through scholarly investigations.

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