PREFACE

The current issue of *Quaderni d'italianistica* grows out of the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for Italian Studies held on 27-29 May 2006 at York University in Toronto.

For that conference, Gabriele Scardellato organized four very successful panels on the topic of Italian-Canadian literature, art, and history that included eighteen excellent presenters. One of these four sessions was sponsored by the Mariano A. Elia Chair in Italian Canadian Studies (York University) and saw the participation of artists actively involved in Italian-Canadian cultural production: film director Jerry Ciccoritti, film makers Alessandra Piccione and Sergio Navaretta; writer Antonio D'Alfonso (who, as owner and editor of Guernica Editions is also a very important publisher of Italian-Canadian literature), photographer and videographer Sara Angelucci; and sculptor Carlo Cesta.

To accompany these four sessions on Italians in Canada, Olga Pugliese, President of our Canadian Society for Italian Studies, organized a plenary presentation by Matteo Sanfilippo (Università della Tuscia, Viterbo) on the changing view of Canadian cities expressed by Italian travellers to Canada in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The plenary was sponsored by the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura (Toronto). Olga Pugliese also organized a panel discussion on the current state of Italian Studies in Canadian universities and high schools. And then, together with the Canadian Jewish Studies Association and the Canadian Association of Hispanists, she also co-organized three interdisciplinary sessions on the topic of diaspora and transnational migration.

And there was more! At the meetings of the CSIS there were also several individual presentations in other sessions that touched upon the Italian-Canadian experience, such as Abdollah Zahiri's investigation of Iranian-Canadian and Italian-Canadian diasporas in fiction or Gabriella Colussi Arthur and Enza Antenos-Conforti's joint presentation on beginners' level textbooks for Italian in the North American market (to mention just two of the papers given in non-Italian-Canadian sessions). To put it briefly, the offerings on Italian-Canadian topics at these meetings of the Society were truly abundant.

This was not the first time the Italian-Canadian experience had been a topic for discussion at the CSIS, but it was the first time it figured so prominently on the program. The cumulative energy of the sessions and the panels, the exceptional quality of the presentations, and the enthusiasm

they elicited led the participants to envision a volume of “proceedings” from that event. As editor of *Quaderni d’italianistica*, the official journal of the CSIS, I was very sanguine about the idea because I could see how the journal could serve to spread, at a truly international level, the fascinating quality of the Italian-Canadian experience and the excellent scholarship it is attracting.

From the plethora of excellent presentations available, Gabriele Scardellato, one of the most eminent current historians of the Italian-Canadian experience, has selected seven articles that represent the variety and interdisciplinarity of current scholarship on Italians in Canada. The volume opens with his own historical overview of the Italian settlement in Canada with a special focus on the city of Toronto, home today to half a million people of Italian descent. Matteo Sanfilippo follows with a view from the other side: an examination of how Italian voyagers and tourists viewed or remembered Canada in their travel diaries. Angelo Principe brings us back to harsh reality and provides us with a revealing insight into a scandal that rocked the Italian community of Montreal in 1932-33. At this point the volume turns to examine the cultural production of Italians in Canada, with Olga Pugliese writing about the Friulian *mosaicisti* who beautified so many sites in Toronto in the mid-twentieth century; Konrad Eisenbichler’s analysis of poet, novelist, and radio personality Gianni Angelo Grohovaz’s remembrance of his native city (in a way, the reverse of Sanfilippo’s article); Anne Marie Miraglia follows with a literary analysis of how, in the literary works of eminent Italian-Canadian writers such as Nino Ricci and Bianca Zagolin, objects serve to capture and preserve memories of the old country; and then, to bring this collection to a close, Anthony Cristiano, a scholar, writer, and movie maker, presents us with his thoughts on his own cinematographic production.

I am grateful to all presenters at the 2006 meetings of the Canadian Society for Italian Studies for having helped to generate the excitement and enthusiasm that eventually led to this fascinating collection of articles, to the authors themselves for their excellent contributions, and to Gabriele Scardellato for having served as guest editor for these articles.

Konrad Eisenbichler
Editor