with a hernia” style peculiar of so many other beach-goers pushes the imagery too far; “When you learn to tie knots while wearing winter gloves, you know how to do it” stock phrase has an “epic” connotation that overrides the ironic tone he wanted to describe the tough-to-learn life skill (he is writing about scouts) that should ennoble all of its practitioners.

Perhaps the limit of this memoir is what makes it strong and unique. Maybe it is the felicitous image of the lemon ice young Richard needed so much on hot summer nights, that he cannot rid himself of its taste even today, that shapes his writing (“I’d give a month’s income for one of the lemon ices of my memory, pits and all”). He remains too close to the funny reminiscence and, while he is obviously happy to do so, by remaining so faithful to his goal to remember the happy days, he yields to sterile nostalgia and fails to bring readers into his voyage other than the people who lived their youth in those same years.

Gambino is clearly a writer with a style, as we see in the brand of humour that surfaces throughout the text. In *Red Hook* he moves freely in his recollection, tracing and describing events that, in his words, contributed to shape him as a man and as a writer. When Gambino asks how those events contributed to shape him as a man and as a writer, he writes that we should figure it out by ourselves, falling again (it is the last page of his short memoir) in a cliché that makes his otherwise brilliant booklet taste like an exercise that always takes the easy way out of a situation that could warrant a longer reflection. But after all Gambino did what he liked, and even if his solutions avoid laborious answers, he succeeds in giving his readers a very enjoyable read.

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Diego L. Bastianutti. *Per un pugno di terra / For a Fistful of Soil*. Magenta (Milano): Associazione Culturale ‘Zeisciu’ Centro Studi, 2006. Pp. 239. ISBN 88-87405-18-2. \$30, 17.

An established scholar of Italian and Spanish literature, formerly of Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, Diego Bastianutti’s passion for literature has taken on a more actively engaged dimension over the last ten to fifteen years with his emergence as a talented poet who writes with equal confidence in English and Italian. His previously published volumes of poetry, *Il punto caduto* (1993) and *La barca in secco* (1995) were critical successes and boded well for this new direction. Equally impressive was his translation, *A Major Selection of the Poetry of Giuseppe Ungaretti* (1997), which garnered him the John Glassco Translation Prize of 1998, awarded by the Literary Translators’ Association of Canada. A member of the Canadian federation of poets, he remains a regular contributor to the local poetry scene in Vancouver where, for example, he reads his work at The World Poetry Reading Series at the Vancouver Public Library, and, more recently, was invited to the Istituto Italiano di Cultura’s twentieth anniversary celebration of the Association of Italian Canadian Writers. *Per un pugno di terra / For a Fistful of Soil*

is a happy marriage of both his talents as poet and translator since this edition boasts poems in Italian with facing-page English renderings by the author himself. For example:

Qui / là

Qui
dove si gloria la monotonia
di cose nuove
già vecchie nate
non voglio stare

Lasciatemi andar là
dove ogni gesto e parola
profumo e sapore
è dolce reminiscenza
(124)

Here / There

Here
where the monotony
of new things born
already old is glorified
I don't want to stay

Let me go there
where every manner word
scent and taste
is sweet reminiscence.
(125)

For the reader with competence in Italian and English, the poems collected here merit reading in both languages.

The experiences and observations of Diego Bastianutti, who immigrated from Fiume to Toronto (via the USA), then to Cefalù, and finally returned to Vancouver, are rich, varied, and conveyed intensely in his poetry. The feelings of disorientation, bitterness, despair, longing, and frustration, as well as those of joy, love, serenity, success, may certainly be considered from the viewpoint of the immigration experience, as the poet himself has readily admitted, since they allow for a distinct perception and, perhaps, a heightened sensitivity to one's surroundings. The importance placed on the settings may first be noticed in such titles as *Un solo verso* (Sicilia, 1997-2003), *Segesta*, *Saline di Trapani*, *Mozia*, *Cefalù*, as well as *Dialoghi di cuoio* (a Paolo Brugnone, Cefalù, 2003), *Promemoria* (rientro dall'esilio, 1997), and *Meticcio* (Fiume, Toronto, Cefalù, Vancouver). These and others are places for meditation, reflection and, finally, expression of the intimate and personal journey that has become vaster, more essentially meaningful.

Already from the book's presentation, the reader is aware of expanding hori-

zons since the single author has composed poems in two languages, divided into four sections: I. *Terramara* (22-77); II. *Non più solo* (80-131); III. *Il complesso di Anteo* (134-203); IV. *Senza più confini* (206-239). Although some readers of Bastianutti's poetry may recognize one or two poems from his previous work, here they are re-presented and contextualized within a broader perspective.

The poems in *Terramara* often express bitterness, even "[d]isperazione panico paura" (*Passero*, 36) and a straining to be heard and comprehended. In the opening poem, *Il dono*, the image of the serpent ("Il serpente si avvinghia / attorno al mio melo / e mi offre / la parola" [22]) urgently conveys this. Its reappearance in *Allo specchio* ("E serpente in calore / mi allingua insistente / mi lima l'anima" [44]) brings with it various expressions of despair, longing, and frustration only to conclude with *Vorrei cantarlo's* final, "[...] e ascolto contro i vetri / il mio canto muto" (76). As the title *Non più solo* implies, this section contains reflections on love and hope for the future. In *Di là dal vetro*, he declares, "Trattengo il fiato / per non appanare / la mia gioia" (82) and further, in *In te mi affaccio*, he states "In te mi affaccio a me / e t'amo" (128). In *Il complesso di Anteo*, Bastianutti has returned to Italy, to Sicily, where the very soil strengthens and enriches him. The land, the sea, the sky, the fishermen and the cobblers that are depicted in his poems—all exude vitality and nourish him in his return to Italy. His search for "un verso di gratitudine / per aver atteso paziente / che arrivassi io / a capirmi / e a sciogliere / le catene" (138) ultimately concludes with the vision of "[...] sfuggenti ali / rosso gialle / di ginestre e fichidindia / sporti a picco / sulla rupe" (*Pace*, 202) before leaving Sicily. In *Senza più confini* Bastianutti has returned to Canada, to Vancouver, more reflective of his journeys and their implications. In *Il tempo non scandito* he wishes "ad assaporare il futuro / mediato da un passato / non ancora sciupato / dal presente" (212) and concludes with the peace of mind that his choice to leave behind that "pugno di terra" was the correct one since he does not need to obsess over any one particular place: "Con la pace in tasca / la luna e il sole mi sorridono per ogni dove / e ormai faccio parte del futuro / per quel che io sono: / un meticcio" (225).

Diego Bastianutti's proud declaration of his status as a "meticcio" who partakes more completely in the present through a thoughtful reappraisal of the past and who now looks to the future is truly hopeful and inspiring. While the poems contained in this handsome volume, complete with an insightful introduction by Sergio Maria Gilardino (8-12), do treat issues relating to identity and belonging – staples of Italian Canadian (or, more broadly, "ethnic") literature, their appeal is not limited to the confines of that literary category. In varied and beautiful verse in Italian and English, Diego Bastianutti distinguishes himself as an honest, sensitive, and perceptive poet who speaks to essential human needs and desires.

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