

## IMAGES OF CANADIAN CITIES IN ITALY: THEN AND NOW

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*Summary:* This article examines the writings of Italian travellers in Canada and discusses how they affected and affect the images of Canadian cities in Italian culture. The article begins by looking at recent writings by one famous Italian author, Pier Vittorio Tondelli, and then moves back to examine his predecessors in the Italian literary production on Canada. In this manner, the article tries to see whether it is possible to sketch a genealogy of Italian descriptions of Canadian cities.

### *Travel narratives*

In the 1980s, cultural historian Paul Fussell suggested that travel narratives might become a field of research—one that might be difficult to map at first, but a field that finally would be rewarding (Fussell, 1980 and 1987).<sup>1</sup> Since then, travel literature has been approached from a number of perspectives—gender, nationalism, imperialism, orientalism, exoticism, and so forth—and the bibliography on the subject has grown at a steady pace.<sup>2</sup> Very often, cultural historians focus on British or American, French or Spanish travellers because their writings fit the latter categories, and the only exception has been the search for a woman's point of view (Tinling, 1993; Siegel, 2004). More recent approaches have proposed analysis of non-European travel writing,<sup>3</sup> suggesting that travel literature may present

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<sup>1</sup>To lighten the apparatus, short bibliographical references will henceforth be given in parentheses in the body of the article. A debt of gratitude is owed to Gabriele Scardellato, Richard Ambrosini, Olga Pugliese, and Konrad Eisenbichler who kindly read an earlier version of this paper and made helpful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup>See the specialised journal *Studies in Travel Writing* (1997-), and: Pratt, 1992; Brothers and Gergits, 1997-1999; Holland, 2000; Schweizer, 2001; Hulme and Young, 2002; Burdett and Duncan, 2002; Speake, 2003; Mancall, 2006.

<sup>3</sup>Khair, 2006. To some extent, however, we could argue that the research has gone too far, leaving us to confront a gigantic “mise en abyme”, in which someone is looking at others that are looking at others ... .

an even wider range of perspectives than expected, and that by studying them we might unearth different views of the “other.” The present study expands the list of the nationalities of travel writers presented above by including Italians; more specifically, Italian travellers of different types who journeyed to Canada and who commented, in particular, on its urban life.

Travel writing is now “a lucrative and enjoyable writer’s market” as Amazon.com says (January 2007) in the ad for one of the over 9,300 books listed in its section on the topic. Not only are we overwhelmed by an incredible number of texts by and about travel writers, but we are also facing an extremely rich production of travel writing on the web. At this point, a scholar is unable to deal with the subject in only 20 pages and a standard academic strategy cannot be pursued; i.e. one cannot synthesize the critical discussion and then analyze a case study. Rather, one can only skip the introduction and concentrate on the case study. In this instance, therefore, I will consider only the writing of Italian travellers to Canada, without a critical introduction, and I will discuss only the influence of their literature on the images of Canadian cities in Italian culture. Because of this limited goal, I will start with recent writings by a famous Italian author and then search backward for his predecessors in previous Italian literary production on Canada. In this way, it might be possible to sketch a genealogy of Italian descriptions of Canadian cities.

*Pier Vittorio Tondelli and Quebec City*

In 1987, Pier Vittorio Tondelli (1955-1991), one of the most important post-modern Italian writers, travelled to Quebec City for a conference on Jack Kerouac (Tondelli, 1990). His contribution to the subsequent conference proceedings is a standard essay on Kerouac’s influence, but even if this is of limited academic importance, Tondelli’s journey to Quebec City was not a failure: during his trip the writer elaborated new ideas for his work. Then, once back in Italy, he produced a couple of short articles on the conference and, two years later, assembled his notes, his articles and his impressions and worked them into his last novel.

In the first short piece Tondelli produced, he underlined the observation that Kerouac’s work described (and is) the consequence of a double migration (from Europe to Quebec, and from Quebec to the United States) and of a double marginalization (Tondelli, 1987). Because of this double migration, Kerouac lost his roots and became a cultural drop-out, so he was out of place and out of touch wherever he lived. Starting from this observation, Tondelli writes mainly about never being at home. Therefore, he is no longer looking only at Kerouac and at the conference.

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Rather, he is concerned with his own presence in Quebec City, a place that is not only foreign to him but also considerably different from anything he had expected before leaving Italy. Tondelli writes that according to any Italian atlas Quebec City is in Canada, but because of his physical presence there he realizes that Quebec City is not a Canadian settlement. To illustrate his point, he tells Italian readers how one barman categorically refused to serve him a Canadian beer, claiming that nobody in Quebec City drinks Canadian beer. This is actually a lie, but it helps Tondelli demonstrate that Quebec City is not a regular (i.e. English-speaking) Canadian city. But what is Quebec City for the Italian writer? The first answer is that Quebec City is a (North) American locale. Before the conference, the writer goes to a jam session at the club Le Grand Dérangement. The session is led by a Californian bluesman, Mark Murphy, who recites a few lines from *On the Road* as a poetic mantra during his performance. Quebec City is not Canada, and Quebec is not a province of the United States, but there is something that links Quebec to the United States and Quebec City to California.

The second short piece is richer—particularly in factual errors. It begins in a coffee bar—Tondelli’s Canadian experience seems to be linked only to public spaces (Tondelli, 1993)—where the writer enjoys his breakfast of coffee, toast, eggs and sausages, which he considers to be very “American”. He then claims that Quebec City is “in America, more precisely on the Atlantic Coast of Canada, in Quebec”. His geography seems to be badly mixed up and a few lines later even his history is wrong, in particular when he explains that the French started the colonization of America in Canada, and were then followed by the British who conquered the continent “three hundred years ago”. Calculating back from the conference date of October 1987, this means that for Tondelli the British Conquest occurred in 1687!

After twisting around any normal conception of Canadian geography and history, Tondelli presents a perfectly safe stereotype for travellers in Canada: nature vs. civilization. According to him, Quebec City is a European locale: he mentions the narrowness of the streets, the old town walls and even a castle (probably a mistaken reference to the Château Frontenac!). Still, it is a European Disneyland (maybe he realized that the Château Frontenac is not a true castle?) in the middle of the American wilderness, but a mild wilderness, a wilderness tamed and beautified, a fairyland. The Kerouac Conference was held from 1 to 4 October, so we have also an appropriate if standard description of maple leaves reddening and falling in autumn.

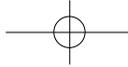
At this point the writer, as if sensing the danger of compiling too many stereotypes, jumps to another subject: the guided tour he took to the places where the Kerouac family lived before leaving for the United States. Once again, Tondelli shows his shaky knowledge of Quebec's geography: he claims that he visited Cap Saint-Ignace, which lies south-east of Quebec City, but he states that he travelled north-east.<sup>4</sup> At the same time he adds that he was on a "Greyhound style" bus while, when travelling from Montreal to Quebec City, he took a Voyageur bus: this is a seemingly irrelevant statement that will acquire greater significance below. The description of the tour is not very appealing: the day is rainy, the river is grey and it is difficult to imagine living in New France because there are no colonial buildings in sight and everything is new.

Tondelli's last novel is much better than his articles on Quebec City: it is a sad and moving story about Leo, who is forced to accept the death of Thomas, his friend and lover.<sup>5</sup> The working-through of the fictional bereavement carried Leo on a bus ("Greyhound style", Tondelli specifies this time) that goes from Montreal to Quebec City. Leo is registered to attend the conference on Kerouac we already know about and he has travelled by plane from Milan to Montreal. In the bus, the fictional "I" looks out at the Olympic village, the great boulevards, the bridges on the St Lawrence, and finally the "great North-American sky." Leo is very tired after his eight-hour flight from Italy and he knows that to reach Quebec City he will be on the road for another four hours. The bus is silent and dark; but from time to time he sees city-lights blazing along the road. In this half darkness the tired traveller is lazily observing his fellow passengers when he remembers a trip from Greece to Italy. Maybe, he thinks, this Canadian journey will give a new sense to his days: it might link the future to the past.

A few days later, Leo goes to Le Grand Dérangement. Now Tondelli retells his story about the jazz club and the Californian bluesman intoning the last page of Kerouac's *On the Road*: "So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, ...". But Tondelli's reminiscence here is more articulated and the first-person narrator compares his own "dérangement" with Kerouac's. Leo thinks that people attending the conference are Kerouac's truest friends because they want to thank him for how he has affected them, for having given them a

<sup>4</sup>See Francis Catalano's footnote at p. 20 of his translation of *Oltre il fiume*, 1995.

<sup>5</sup>Tondelli, 1989, pp. 205-216.




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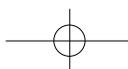
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taste for poetry. Walking alone after the conference, Leo understands that he is “dérangé” like Kerouac because his writing has insulated him from normal people. He realizes also that his own writing, like Kerouac’s, is precisely what will give him the chance to be read by everybody. Then he goes to the pub Saint-Alexandre on rue Saint-Jean. He drinks beer (Quebec beer), understands that life goes on and feels a hint of desire for a young man, something that he had not experienced since his partner’s illness. In the last page of the novel Leo is in a small turbo-prop airplane flying to Montreal. His stay in Quebec City has ended and in a few hours he will be in Milan where, he now knows, he will start to live again.

Leo’s (and Tondelli’s) epiphany in Quebec City is very interesting but, before dealing with it, let us consult the quotation from the final sentences of *On the Road*. As Tondelli had done in his previous short article about the conference, Leo also abbreviated the quotation that, in its entirety, runs:

So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the immensity of it, and in Iowa I know by now the children must be crying in the land where they let children cry, and tonight the stars’ll be out, and don’t you know that God is Pooh Bear? the evening star must be drooping and shedding her sparkler dims on the prairie, which is just before the coming of complete night that blesses the earth, darkens all rivers, cups the peaks and folds the final shore in, and nobody, nobody knows what’s going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rags of growing old, I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty. (Kerouac, *On the Road*)

At this moment in the text, Sal Paradise, Kerouac’s first-person narrator is back in New Jersey and is remembering his long travels from New York to Denver and to San Francisco. He is also thinking of Dean Moriarty (that is, the writer’s friend Neil Cassady). Moriarty/Cassady went to Mexico with Paradise/Kerouac, but he left when the narrator/writer became ill. This truncated quotation, therefore, leaves us with a feeling of ambiguity. Leo could be hinting that, like Sal, he should no longer depend on his friend; or he could only be stressing that he has been abandoned by Thomas as Sal was abandoned by Dean; or could he be saying only that he could now think of Thomas without any anguish? Actually Sal is sitting “on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey”, and he is looking West (Iowa and the West Coast), while Leo is drinking beer in Quebec City and looking East (Milan). Regardless, both



first-person narrators are sitting on the East Coast, at least according to Tondelli's geographical notion of Quebec as being the Atlantic coast of Canada, but their respective East Coasts are different. The New Jersey east coast is a step on the way to California or Mexico, while the Quebec east coast is a *trait-d'union* between North America and Europe. In the two novels, Greyhound buses crisscross North America, losing themselves in the wilderness, but whether they are going West or East they are always travelling back to Europe. The Greyhound-style (but it was a Voyager, that is, a Canadian and not an American) bus that takes Leo from Montreal to Quebec City passes through many small towns, but on the road the darkness is defeated by "city lights", while in the night imagined by Kerouac "the stars'll be out".

According to Tondelli, therefore, Quebec is an urban country, linked to Europe, even if it is not Europe. In fact, there is a discussion about beer that could help us understand this connection: Quebec "grosses bières" are different from the refined European ones, but Quebec City people drink European beers. Quebec is an urban society that longs for Europe, while America is a rural country that looks West. Clearly, Tondelli's interpretation of America is a very stereotypical one and his idea of Kerouac's Americans is a modern version of Turner's Frontier Thesis. But what about his interpretation of Canada? In fact, he does not write about Canada, he says only that Quebec is not (English) Canada, but he never provides a definition of English Canada. Among his writings there is a short piece on Leonard Cohen, in which he does not even mention that the singer is an English-speaking poet from Montreal (Tondelli, 1988). Does this mean that for Tondelli English Canada is a kind of minor America? I do not know, and maybe he never wondered about the essence of English Canada: it may be that it simply did not exist for him.

Since the 1980s Italian writers and poets seem to have had a lot to do with their colleagues from Quebec. As noted, Tondelli was invited to participate in the Kerouac conference. Valerio Magrelli, the Feltrinelli-prize winning Italian poet, has been translated by Montreal poet and critic Francis Catalano and has travelled to Quebec. He even wrote a poem about his trip, and in particular about the city of Sherbrooke and its industrial paper production.<sup>6</sup> A group of younger Italian poets have been in Montreal recently, where they helped to prepare a dossier on contemporary Italian poetry (Catalano, 2005). Quebec's cities and culture, therefore, are known to Italian

<sup>6</sup>Magrelli, 2000 and 2005 ("De notre envoyé spécial à Trois-Rivières, Québec, capitale mondiale de la cellulose", p. 27).

writers, while in Italian guidebooks and in the travel section of many Italian newspapers one can find items about Quebec City and Montreal. But are (English) Canadian cities unknown to Italian travellers? At this point it is necessary to compile a dossier starting with the first Italian visitors.

*Early Italian travellers (from the eighteenth century to 1920)*

a) *Risorgimento, exiles and priests: a political look at Canadian cities*

The few Italians who visited New France were missionaries, soldiers, or seamen who have not left any descriptions of colonial settlements.<sup>7</sup> The first Italian descriptions of Canadian cities are in books about North America that appeared after the American Revolution. Luigi Castiglioni (1785-1787) and Paolo Andreani (1790) travelled to New York and Washington and also visited New Orleans, Halifax and Montreal in order to understand what had happened in North America.<sup>8</sup> While their comments are not very profound, they set the guidelines for subsequent reportage about Canada. According to Andreani, Halifax is quite beautiful, and many of its houses are very elegant, but the small town is economically weak and too dependent on Boston;<sup>9</sup> Luigi Castiglioni describes Montreal as an important town with interesting buildings (in particular the Sulpitian church), but he added that after the Conquest the town walls are falling down and the city seems very melancholic.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the Italian reader was given the impression that English Canada was too dependent on the United States and that French Canada was in ruin because of the British victory in the Seven Years' War.

The Era of the French Revolution temporarily put an end to Italian travels to North America. Italian travellers would next cross the ocean after 1820. In 1822-1823, Giacomo Costantino Beltrami, a political exile, searched for the source of the Mississippi and described the Native, Métis, and British villages in the West, while Alfredo Dupouy, a merchant from Leghorn, travelled to the West to study the Canadian fur trade.<sup>11</sup> Both

<sup>7</sup>Del Negro, 1979, 1983 and 1985; Sanfilippo and Pizzorusso, 2004, chapt. III.

<sup>8</sup>Pace, 1983; Dicorato, 2000; Marino and Trio, 2006.

<sup>9</sup>Andreani, 1994, pp. 47-50.

<sup>10</sup>Castiglioni, 2000, pp. 117-136.

<sup>11</sup>Beltrami, 1965, pp. 47-48, 139-159. The first version of this memoir was in French: Beltrami, 1824. Now the reprint of the first English edition is available: Beltrami (1828), 2005. Dupouy's manuscript is edited in T.M. [Terenzio Mamiani], 1827; cf. Pizzorusso, 1995.

travellers were interested mainly in Native societies, and they did not visit the Eastern cities: thus, they saw the Canadian Prairies as part of the American Frontier. After them, however, other travellers toured North America and visited the two Canadas and the United States. For them, Canada meant Lower Canada and very often Lower Canada meant only Montreal. Therefore, they thought that only French-speaking colonists were Canadians. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they appreciated French Canada. For example, in October 1825, Carlo Vidua came to Montreal following a suggestion made to him by the Sulpitian Superior in New York. He undertook his North American tour to escape the bleakness of the Restoration in Europe. Vidua is surprised to realize that the colony is still living as if in the reign of Louis XIV, that feudal laws are not abolished, and that the *ancien régime* Catholic clergy is dominant.<sup>12</sup>

In 1837, Federico Confalonieri was exiled to New York. As soon as he arrived he travelled to New Orleans and from there he proceeded to Buffalo and Niagara Falls and then to Upper and Lower Canada, stopping in Toronto and Montreal. There is no difference in his descriptions between American and Canadian settlements: they are too modern and too un-European.<sup>13</sup> Another exile, Francesco Arese, arrived in New York in 1836 and in the following two years travelled around both the United States and Canada (Arese, 1837 and 2001). He visited Toronto and Kingston, which he did not appreciate because they were bad copies of cities in the United States, but he liked Montreal's downtown. Nonetheless, he judged Lower Canada poor and sad, because of the British occupation, and he did not like the Catholic clergy and its influence on French Canadians. He was still in Montreal in 1837 and was puzzled by the British attitude: he did not understand why Great Britain wanted to control such an unimportant colony. Finally, he went to Quebec City, which he admired for the view but disliked because it was dirty and dark (in fact, he complained about the shortage of street-lights).

In 1841 Carlo Antonio Gallenga, a third exile, decided to teach Italian and French literature in King's College in Windsor, Nova Scotia, but he could not stand the weather. Moreover, he was disappointed by both the city and the college: "Windsor was something between a town and a village"; "The College was merely a divinity school."<sup>14</sup> He could not teach because of the lack of books and students ("Nothing to do— that was

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<sup>12</sup>Vidua, 1834, pp. 105-151.

<sup>13</sup>Gallavresi, 1913, pp. 710-716, 723-730, 844-849.

<sup>14</sup>Gallenga, 1884, II, pp. 109-135. Cf. Cerutti, 1973.

death to me”) and he was left to travel with Judge Thomas Haliburton, the creator of Sam Slick, the “yankee clockmaker”. He enjoyed these rides just as he enjoyed his summer vacation in Halifax, but he shuddered at the prospect of returning to Windsor and asked for permission to leave.

This second generation of Italian travellers in Canada, then, were political exiles and did not like clerical meddling in political life. In the 1850s, a new and different group of Italians came to Canada representing the Holy See. In 1853, Gaetano Bedini, internonce to Brazil, went to the United States, where he was bitterly challenged by Italian and German exiles and was forced to flee to Canada.<sup>15</sup> He wrote a portrait of this country for *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the Jesuit journal, in which he describes Quebec City, Montreal, Saint-Hyacinthe, and Bytown (Bedini, 1853). The article stresses the co-existence of different national and immigrant groups, in particular in Montreal. It also exalts the rapid development of Canadian industrial centres, like Bytown. In the decades after Bedini, and following his lead, Holy See diplomats enquired about the relationship between immigrant groups and local societies and analyzed Canadian economic trends: consequently, even in the following century, they always paid considerable attention to Montreal.<sup>16</sup> In 1875, the Holy See sent Monsignor Cesare Roncetti to the United States, asking him to enquire also on the differences between Quebec City and Montreal in view of the establishment of a new Catholic university. While touring the United States, Roncetti crossed from Buffalo to Niagara Falls, and then visited Toronto, Kingston, Montreal, Quebec and Halifax.<sup>17</sup> His report shows that he did not like Ontario and Nova Scotia, nor did he appreciate Quebec City.<sup>18</sup> All his attention was for Montreal which he defined as the economic core of Canada. At the same time, he warned his superiors about the risks posed by the city’s growth, which might lead to an Americanization of Canada; that is, rapid economic growth and the immigrants’ integration in the melting pot could, according to him, erase barriers between religious groups and therefore lead to the loss of the Catholic faith.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, in this first period Italian travellers were not mere tourists. They went to North America, visiting Canada along with the

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<sup>15</sup>Sanfilippo, 2003, chapter II.

<sup>16</sup>For a more detailed analysis: Perin, 1990; Sanfilippo, 2002.

<sup>17</sup>Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 1875, ff. 102-109v.

<sup>18</sup>Archivio di Propaganda Fide, 1875, ff. 619-620.

<sup>19</sup>Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 1875, ff. 102-109v; Archivio di Propaganda Fide, 1876, ff. 90-94v.

United States, for a variety of purposes: (a) to understand the consequences of the American Revolution and to map the new political cartography of the continent (Castiglioni, Andreani); (b) because they were exiled (Beltrami, Confalonieri, Arese) or they were disgusted by the European Restoration (Vidua), and had to spend their time and, sometimes, earn their living (Gallenga) outside Europe; (c) for business reasons (Dupuoy). In this third group, we could include also Roman priests coming to Canada as Vatican diplomats. All these travellers were mainly interested in political and economic matters, but they started from different and sometimes surprising perspectives. The politically motivated travellers were fascinated by the United States: they found the new nation uncouth and rough (they often wrote about a modernization that resulted in a loosening of any links to European culture), but they approved its economic vigour and its democracy. Consequently, they considered English Canada a poor copy of the United States and they did not like the fact that Great Britain was controlling the local colonies. Moreover, they despised French Canada, which they described as “a priest-ridden country” because it did not fight for its own freedom.

Even the Roman diplomats did not appreciate Quebec, which seemed to them too *ancien régime*, while they were surprised by immigrant Catholics; that is, Irish Catholics in Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto. Among the immigrants they discovered Catholic fighters who could help the church conquer North America, and this at a time when Europe was becoming too troublesome for the Holy See. Therefore, Italian priests coming to North America were not so repelled by Canadian (and American) modernity. Maybe, they thought, this was the price to pay for finding a friendlier environment (Sanfilippo, 1995).

b) *World tours, journalism, emigration, and business (1860-1920)*

Priestly visitors from Italy were not numerous in the second half of the nineteenth century but the number of lay Italians who travelled to Canada increased. In 1861 a geologist, Giovanni Capellini, undertook a scientific expedition across Canada and the United States. After landing in Halifax, where he visited the local museum, he went to Boston and Cambridge and ten days later he was in Quebec City. From there he travelled to Montreal and Niagara before going south again to the United States. He was interested in geological research and wrote mainly about geological sites around Quebec City and Montreal, but he was also impressed by the Victoria Bridge (Capellini, 1864). In his 1910 autobiography he recalled the scientific meetings he had in Montreal (Capellini, 1910). Like the Vatican




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diplomats, Capellini was struck by the modernity of the city and this was, in fact, the leitmotiv of Italian writings on Canada, in which Montreal is invariably described as the commercial capital of the Dominion; moreover, every Italian traveller was deeply impressed by the growing presence of Italian immigrants in that city. At the same time, every Italian traveller saw the Italian “colony” of Montreal as a way to penetrate the Canadian market (Serio, 1989a and 1989b).

From 1861 and the birth of the Kingdom of Italy, trade and immigration led Italians to follow developments in Montreal and other Canadian cities. In 1864, the journalist Cristoforo Negri suggested that Italian traders visit the harbour towns of New Brunswick and underlined the importance of Italian immigrant communities in British Columbia.<sup>20</sup> In 1872, A. Gianelli, Italian consul in Montreal, praised the quality of the city’s harbour and its thriving trade (Gianelli, 1872). In 1877, diplomat Luigi Petich declared that Canadian cities could become the main destination of Italian migrants, even if Italians disliked the “feudal” laws and the Catholic clergy of Quebec.<sup>21</sup>

This trend was reinforced by the new fashion for world tours. In 1868 a famous journalist, Enrico Besana, visited North America after India, China, and Japan. He travelled from San Francisco to Chicago and then crossed the border to visit Niagara Falls, Ottawa, and Quebec City. His writing is mainly concerned with Canada’s enormous size and he seems to consider cities as mere stopovers, but he also stresses the importance of immigration and the development of new towns like Ottawa (the former Bytown).<sup>22</sup> In 1871, Leonetto Cipriani, formerly consul of the Kingdom of Sardinia in San Francisco, made a long detour on his way to California. He sailed from London to Quebec, visiting Montreal and Toronto before continuing to the American West Coast. He writes dismissively of the poor architectural taste dominant in Montreal and Toronto and has praise only for Quebec City. He deals in some detail with immigration in Canadian cities, worrying not only about Italian migrants, but also about the Irish. At the same time, he analyzes the clashes between French and English Canadians and comments on the current of bitter hatred which divides them.<sup>23</sup>

In the spring of 1876, Enea Cavalieri, another famous journalist, chose

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<sup>20</sup>Negri, 1864, pp. 109-112 and 389-399.

<sup>21</sup>Petich, 1877 (on Canada, pp. 134-138).

<sup>22</sup>Besana’s reportages were printed in the newspaper *La Perseveranza*, 1869, and in many issues of the *Giornale popolare di viaggi*, 1870-1871. Cf. Surdich, 1995.

<sup>23</sup>Cipriani, 1931, II, pp. 187-194.



Canada as his first stop on a world tour. Three years later, he recalled this experience in what was then the most important Italian journal, *Nuova Antologia*, and in 1880 he collected and published his articles in a volume (Cavalieri, 1878 and 1880). In his writing, he appreciates the British government because he felt it was trying to close the gap between “races” and religions in Canada. At the same time, he states that the Canadian government was unable to stop the rise of religious fanaticism and the confrontation aroused by the school question. Like other Italians, Cavalieri is fascinated by Canada’s natural landscapes: Montmorency and Niagara Falls, the rugged coast of Newfoundland and Gaspé, the environs of Quebec City, the Saguenay, the Thousand Islands, and Lake Ontario. In contrast, he is disgusted by Canadian cities: Quebec City he finds dirty and miserable, Fredericton poor, and Toronto seems not to have any cultural life. He declared that the only true metropolis was Montreal, in whose hands lay the future of the country, because only the immigration from Europe could balance emigration to the United States and provide Canada with enough manpower.

Italian immigration is often at the centre of Italian sketches of Canadian settlements, but it is not the only topic. In 1876, Pietro Dogliotti studied the Canadian and American railway system. He not only praised stations and railroads; he was also favourably impressed by new construction in and around Montreal, in particular by the Victoria Bridge. Toronto and Quebec City he found very beautiful, but he was an admirer especially of the railway bridge in Niagara (Dogliotti, 1877). Francesco Varvaro Pojero set out for a tour of the United States and decided to include a short visit to Canada: he went to Kingston, Toronto, Montreal, and Quebec City, but he did not write about the first three cities. The fourth, he states, is “picturesque.”<sup>24</sup> In 1882, Alessandro Dalla Valle di Pomaro, based at the Italian Embassy in Washington, visited Ontario and Quebec, and confirmed Dogliotti’s and Varvaro Pojero’s opinion, but with more detail.<sup>25</sup> According to him, Toronto is pleasant and wealthy; Kingston is worthy of a stay, because of the Thousand Islands; the Victoria Bridge is a wonder, and the European part of Montreal is well built; Quebec City is picturesque, even if the streets are narrow and dark. Finally, in 1900, Attilio Pratesi came from Japan to Vancouver, which he defines as a “new town” without other qualification.<sup>26</sup> From Vancouver he went to the Rockies

<sup>24</sup>Varvaro Pojero, 1878, pp. 239-268.

<sup>25</sup>Dalla Valle di Pomaro, 1994, pp. 129-137.

<sup>26</sup>Pratesi, 1900, pp. 486-494.

which he liked very much and he then crossed the Prairies on his way to Toronto, which he judged quite favourably.

In the twentieth century the number of Italian travellers to Canada doubled. Vatican delegates followed Bedini's line describing the development of Catholic clusters in big cities, in particular in Montreal and Halifax, and exalting the love for the pope among the Canadian faithful.<sup>27</sup> Italian priests were looking mainly for Italian immigrants, therefore they sketched not only Montreal and Toronto, but also Winnipeg, Vancouver and other urban centres of the West, as well as the mining towns on the East Coast.<sup>28</sup> This massive production began with the essays written by Pietro Pisani and other clerical travellers before the First World War.<sup>29</sup>

In the early years of the century, lay travellers addressed the same question. Sometimes, they considered only Italian immigration, as in the memoir by Carlo De Stefani for the Accademia dei Georgofili in Florence (De Stefani, 1914). More often, they linked immigration flows and commercial trends, stating that a stronger Italian presence in Canada could help Italian trade.<sup>30</sup> The *Bollettino dell'emigrazione*, issued by the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, also published reports on Canada by Italian diplomats in this country or in the United States.<sup>31</sup> Because of the growing Italian migration, Italian newspapers sent reporters to Canada: in 1901, for example, the *Corriere della Sera* published a series on Canada (from Montreal to the West) and Italian immigrants (E.F.B., 1901). Often, reports by diplomats and journalists were unclear and factually wrong: their writers were in Canada for a short time and they did not understand local conditions. Therefore, today's readers should not be surprised by confused reporting like that by Giulia Bernocco-Fava Parvis, the Italian delegate to the International Women's Conference of Toronto of 1909 (Bernocco-Fava Parvis, 1910). After a short stay she wrote three articles for the journal *La Donna* in which she mixed stereotypes about Canadian

<sup>27</sup>See the letters by Monsignor Sante Tampieri and Cardinal Vincenzo Vannutelli in occasion of the Eucharistic Conference of Montreal (1910): Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 1911. See also a series of reportages for the *Osservatore Romano* after the First World War: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 1920, fols. 58-78; Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Nunziatura del Canada.

<sup>28</sup>See Sanfilippo, 2003, chapt. VIII; Pizzorusso and Sanfilippo, 2005, part III.

<sup>29</sup>Pisani, 1909; Restaldi, 1910; Grivetti, 1911; Bonardelli, 1912; Rinaudo 1914.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Solimbergo, 1901, Rebecca, 1901; and Serio, 1989a.

<sup>31</sup>Rossi, 1903; Viola, 1910a e 1910b; Attolico, 1913; Ehrfreund, 1914; and the reports by Girolamo Moroni, 1914-1915.

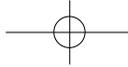
landscapes (the wonder of Niagara Falls), exaltation about the Italian discovery of Canada (Giovanni Caboto), and finally criticism of Toronto's "puritanism" (where everything was closed on Sundays) and Quebec's conservative Catholicism. Her impressions of cities present only the notion that Quebec City is like a medieval European town and Montreal is pleasant because of its many beautiful churches (Protestant and Catholic). When she deals with Italian immigration she does not include data; instead, she praises the Italian community in Toronto for its ability to preserve its own language.

At this point, we could conclude that Italian travellers of that period were mainly interested in Canadian cities because they hosted Italian immigrants and that what they really wanted to know about these immigrants was whether they were still speaking Italian. This was the main concern at the time about Italian emigration and we could also add that the only analysis of Italian communities by an insider was printed decades after the death of its writer.<sup>32</sup> However, we should deal a little more with these travellers because their writings show us a more complex panorama. They tended to focus on Italian emigrants, but many of them (Capellini and Dogliotti) have a scientific background and are fascinated by the modernity of Canada. They describe bridges and railways and they appreciate Canadian universities and the level of scientific discussion in them. Others went to Canada while engaged in a world tour (Besana and Cavalieri) and, writing for the press, they compare that country to the United States. This comparison is still unfavourable to Canadian cities even though these are no longer seen to be as poor as they had been in the first half of the nineteenth century. Finally, the success of these travel narratives together with the curiosity about Italian emigrants forced the Italian press to look for more information on Canada: journalists were sent there (the enquiry by the *Corriere della Sera*), while people crossing the ocean for other reasons (mainly to attend conferences) were asked to write about their travels (Giulia Bernocco-Fava Parvis). Often these writers are not very good or they do not have enough time to understand Canada, so they rely on previous travellers and travel writers, in many cases repeating the same errors or the same banalities.

By this point, however, Italian readers had to acknowledge the existence of a Canadian specificity. In this perspective, it is also important that rich tourists visiting the United States (Varvaro Pojero) or diplomats work-

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<sup>32</sup>Luigi Fedeli describes the community of North Vancouver in his autobiographical sketch, 2001.



ing in Washington (Dalla Valle di Pomaro) decided to tour Canada and to record their experiences. And it is also important that priests trying to help Italian immigrants in large American cities travelled to Toronto, Montreal, and Winnipeg. For Italians, Canada is no longer a mere bad copy of the United States but a reality to be taken into account for itself.

*Fascist travellers*

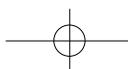
The questionable attention to Canada and to Italian communities in Canada was shared by diplomats after Mussolini came to power in 1922. Under the Fascist regime, Italian consuls reported on political attitudes of Italian immigrants in cities both big and small (Bruti Liberati, 1984; Principe, 2003). During the Fascist period, Italian consuls in Canada asked also for Italian speakers to publicize Italian successes and some of these speakers left a description of their tour. Luigi Villari, for example, wrote about Italian immigrants, Canadian politics and the growth of Canadian universities.<sup>33</sup> Other Fascist visitors were less impressed by Canadian urban institutions. Italo Balbo was fascinated by Canadian forests, mountains and rivers, while we find only a positive comment on the harbour and the Fascist youth of Montreal, and nothing about urban realities, even though he had the opportunity to visit several Canadian cities.<sup>34</sup> The idea of Canada as a rural society was shared at this time by geographers and by journalists, but the former's writings were less original (Michieli, 1935; Errera, 1934), while the latter wrote interesting books. In the summer of 1924, Arnaldo Cipolla travelled through the United States and Canada,<sup>35</sup> portraying the country as uninhabited because of its vastness and the winter's cold, but lauding the beauty of Quebec and British Columbia, and even that of their urban settlements. He disliked Quebec City but found Montreal "pleasant", and he appreciated Ottawa, even if his description conjured a somewhat sleepy city. Moreover, he repeated the standard Italian criticism about the reactionary Catholic clergy in Quebec and stigmatized the clerical regime as something worse than the Spanish Inquisition!

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<sup>33</sup>Bruti Liberati, 1984, pp. 76-78 and 99; Villari, 1934 and 1935.

<sup>34</sup>Balbo, 1934, pp. 211-235. On his transatlantic flight, see Della Campana, 1934. It is now possible to buy the DVD with newsreels of his travel (Tiberi, 2004, 80'), or to see Quilici, 1984 on the web site of the Istituto Luce (<http://ricerca.archivioluce.com/>).

<sup>35</sup>Cipolla, 1928. On this book and on Gian Giacomo Napolitano, see Kuitunen, 1989.



In August 1924, mathematician Giuseppe Muzi visited Toronto for an International conference and wrote a long report for *Nuova Antologia* (Muzi, 1925). He admires the urban development of Toronto and compares its American (downtown skyscrapers) and British (the “cottages”, i.e. the private houses, along the streets) traits. Moreover, he recalls the demographic and cultural importance of its Italian community. Muzi did not stay only in Toronto: he saw Niagara Falls (where he was fascinated by hydro-electric plants so he visited also the Queenston power station) and later travelled by train on a trans-Canada tour that led him to Cobalt and Sudbury, because of the mines, and to Timmins, where he visited the Italian workers. After four days in Northern Ontario, he arrived in Manitoba and visited Winnipeg, where he went to admire the Grain Exchange. From there on the pattern was: travel by train and stop in a town. In this manner he visited Saskatoon (because of the university) and Regina in Saskatchewan; Edmonton, Calgary, Jasper and Banff in Alberta before crossing the Rockies; and then Vancouver and Victoria in British Columbia. At the beginning of September, he was back in Montreal, but only for a few hours before he embarked on a ship to Europe. On the way back, he saw Quebec City, “the old poetic capital of French Canada”. In just a few weeks Muzi saw more than other travellers and he also revealed a very good disposition toward Canada. He praised natural landscapes (Labrador, the St Lawrence, the Great Lakes, the Rockies, the West Coast), but he was also interested in mines, power plants, trains, and bridges, and he did not despise Canadian cities.

In 1931, Amy Bernardy ended her cycle of works on Italian emigration with a book dealing with Italians in the Americas (Tirabassi, 2005). In a few pages about Canada she declared that this beautiful country could accept more immigrants and describes the wealthy West and the towns that host Italian communities: Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver.<sup>36</sup> Later, Bernardy wrote a small booklet about Canada, but only to praise its Catholic tradition (Bernardy, 1939).

Gian Gaspare Napolitano visited Canada between November 1931 and May 1932 on a train journey from Toronto to Vancouver. In his book he devoted considerable attention to Italian immigrants and Canadian landscapes (Niagara Falls, the Rocky Mountains), but he also described cities: Halifax, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, and Vancouver (Napolitano, 1936). Napolitano seems to have had a wider perception of Canadian conditions. In Winnipeg he studied the colonization of the West and described

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<sup>36</sup>Bernardy, 1931, pp. 144-147.

IMAGES OF CANADIAN CITIES IN ITALY: THEN AND NOW

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the Grain Exchange. In Vancouver he observed the harbour, but he also sought information on bootlegging. In Halifax he is deceived by the sleepy bureaucracy at customs, but is startled by the economy of the Maritimes which, according to him, should have been connected to Maine and not to Canada. He was also poorly impressed by Quebec: true French Canadians, he opined, resided in small villages while larger urban centres are Americanized. He finds that Ontario has the same problem and Toronto, like Montreal, does not interest him because it is only a typical American town. Calgary, on the other hand, he finds appealing.

During this period, Catholic priests continued to pay attention to Italian immigrants just as they had done before the Great War. In 1931, for example, Father Manlio Ciuffoletti wrote a long letter about the Italian parish of Winnipeg and gave details on other Italian communities in Canada.<sup>37</sup> Italian Roman Catholic clergy in Canada tried also to consider this country as a whole and not only as a stopover for Italian emigration. In January 1935, archbishop Andrea Cassulo, apostolic delegate in Ottawa since 1927, started his apostolic visitation of the country in the dioceses of Ontario. He ended in July visiting the diocese of Edmonton; in the meantime, he sent the Vatican an enormous number of reports.<sup>38</sup> Not only did he not forget to mention and to analyze the presence of any kind of immigrants (Italian, Polish, Ukrainian, German, Hungarian, Irish, American, French and Belgian from the East Coast to the Rockies; East European, Chinese and Japanese in British Columbia), but he focused also on the clash between French- and English-speaking Catholics. He was not keen on ethno-nationalism, but he was convinced that parishioners protested when something was really wrong and that Catholics needed to be helped by priests from their own group. Moreover, his desire to protect Catholic immigrants was a consequence of his political perspective. His deepest fear lay in what he saw as the rise of “Communism” in Canada. He wondered how British Columbia could resist against the arrival of so many Communists from Eastern Europe and he pondered the role of Catholics fighting Communist propaganda. At the same time, he was aware of the many nuances of left-wing political movements and he was able to explain to the Vatican the difference between the Communists and the newborn Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. He also wrote about the strength of Communism among immigrants in Montreal and at the same

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<sup>37</sup>See his letter, dated Winnipeg January 28, 1931, in Francesconi, 1975, pp. 283-285.

<sup>38</sup>Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Sacra Congr. Concistoriale.

time he complained that Quebec clergy was only interested in French Canadian nationalism (and he stressed the dangerous influence of the Action Française on the social understanding of Quebec priests).

Fascist travellers were not different from previous travellers in their desire to explain Canada to their fellow citizens and to their government, but we should not forget that every trip was authorized by fascist bureaucrats. Fascist journalists tried to avoid any kind of triviality in grasping the essence of Canada. Sometimes they could not avoid stereotypes and continued also to focus on Italian emigrants (Bernardi, Cipolla, and Napolitano), but they also paid attention to the colonization of the West, to maritime trade in Vancouver, to the modernization of Montreal.

Italian priests analyzed the situation of every group of immigrants and tried to detect if there was a Communist danger because of immigration. At the same time, they were struck by the conservatism and the nationalism of Quebec clergy. In this regard, it is interesting to compare Cassulo's reports with those by L. Petrucci, Italian General Consul in Ottawa, and Paolo De Simone, Italian Consul in Montreal. Petrucci wrote a lengthy report on Adrien Arcand and his *Parti National Social Chrétien*, which he defined as very dangerous and sponsored by Hitler. De Simone explained that Lionel Groulx was the true leader, at least on a cultural level, of the "pro-fascist" movement of Paul Bouchard, the founder of the daily *La Nation*.<sup>39</sup> Both stressed the Nazi-fascist influence on Quebec right-wing Catholicism.

Italian priests, diplomats and journalists were surprised by the conservatism of Quebec clergy and Catholics, while they were no longer too unfavourably impressed by the "Americanization" of Canada. In 1934-1935, Villari wrote about the geography and the economic background of Canadian provinces, stressing the decrease of the British influence and the rise of the American one (Villari, 1934 and 1936). This he found to be a positive evolution because Canada was finally leaving behind its previous somewhat backward position. In fact, Fascists were vehemently anti-British, while they thought that Fascist Italy and Roosevelt's United States shared the same ideal of modernity in architecture as in economics.<sup>40</sup>

#### *After the Second World War*

When Napolitano returned to Canada in the 1950s he visited Niagara Falls

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<sup>39</sup>Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Rome), 1934 and 1936.

<sup>40</sup>Sanfilippo and Pizzorusso, 2004, chapt. IV.

which he found melancholic.<sup>41</sup> In the meantime the taste of Italian travellers evolved along similar lines and with increased curiosity for anything new. Already in the 1920s and 1930s, Italian travellers were attracted mainly by technological and architectural innovation in Canadian towns and harbours.<sup>42</sup> After the Second World War Italian travellers were also struck by Canadian consumerism.

After the war, the first travel narratives were written by diplomats who were studying the new Canadian reality in order to secure new commercial agreements (Ghilardi, 1989). At the same time other Italian bureaucrats came to Canada. These included someone like Francesco Piva who, during a two-month visit in 1951 stayed in Quebec City, Montreal and Ottawa, where he visited schools and libraries.<sup>43</sup> In his report, he mentioned the Catholic shade of Quebec's schools and the efficiency of universities and social services in English Canada, but he seems more attracted by the people he met on the street or in stores. He was fascinated by Quebec City's drugstores (at the time, there was nothing like them in Italy) and by the commercial "essence" of Montreal, where stores are open until 9:00 p.m. on Friday. He is critical of the linguistic skills and the taste in dressing of French Canadians, but he appreciated their comunitarism. He underscored also that British influence does not have any grip on the French Canadian world, which is dominated by Catholic religious orders. Finally, he deals also with Italian immigrants and states that, according to his colleagues in Ottawa, Italians are not the best new Canadians because they are too uneducated. Moreover, in only ten years they tend to forget their mother tongue and cease to be Italian while not merging perfectly into Canadian society.

Piva's criticism of Italian immigrants is a standard issue in the writings of Italian travellers. It is already present in Anna Moroni Parken's autobiography from the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>44</sup> and we find traces of it in the autobiographical literature until the 1980s.<sup>45</sup> This literature will

<sup>41</sup>Napolitano, 1975, pp. 227-233.

<sup>42</sup>Harbours: Ferrante, 1989. Railways: Mazzoni, 1927. Mount Royal Hotel: Piccinato, 1924-1925. Ontario Parliament Building: Morozzo Della Rocca, 1928-1929.

<sup>43</sup>Piva, 1954, pp. 3-100.

<sup>44</sup>Moroni Parken, 1907. For the fictional side of this autobiography, cf. Principe, 1990.

<sup>45</sup>Albani [Randaccio], Sirio, 1958; Mac Ran [Randaccio], 1979; Torres Gentile, 1982; La Riccia, 1984; Raponi, 1988; Carli, 1996. For an introduction to this literature, see Rosoli, 1992.

not be analyzed here because its authors focus their attention on families and workplaces while they do not mention urban settings, which they refer to generically as “American”. Thus Giuseppe Pisani recounts his “American” experience, but only once mentions that he was working in Montreal (Pisani, 1989). We should also stress that references to “bad” Italian immigrants are more common in books written by people who did not stay long in Canada. The novelist Giose Rimaneli, who lived in Montreal in the 1950s before deciding to settle in New York, describes the city as large and dazzling, but he stresses Canadian racism and the conservatism, even with a Fascist streak, of the Italian-Canadian community (Rimaneli, 1958). In particular, he is explicit in his hatred for Italian Montrealers who, in his view, generally were all Fascists, and he states that the others were like children incapable of finding their way home.

Clerical writers were not as nasty when dealing with their parishioners in Canada. A few parish priests stayed in Canada among the immigrants for many years, others returned to visit their former faithful. In the 1960s, for example, Giacomo Squilla, a priest from Sora (Latium), went to Canada three times and wrote a book on his “paesani” in Ontario. Actually, Squilla paid attention only to Italians who had immigrated into the triangle Toronto-Niagara-Kingston (Squilla, 1969). This “parochial” (in more ways than one) perspective is common to other priests, in particular to the above-mentioned missionaries among immigrants in Montreal and Toronto,<sup>46</sup> and is also shared by Italian diplomats (Germano, 1977).

Paolo Canali, Italian consul in Montreal from 1958 to 1966 reveals, however, a different approach to the question. According to him, Italian emigration is in its terminal stage, therefore Montreal is not an Italian ghetto but the entrance door to Canada. He likes Montreal very much and describes it as a beautiful and international metropolis, even though for his tastes the American style of modern architecture is transforming many neighbourhoods into anonymous and unpleasant suburbs. Canali’s book is partly reportage and partly journal and we can appreciate how he discovers, step by step, differences between Canada and Europe. Canali described not only the province of Quebec, but also English Canada. In his pages Quebec is a mix of British values, Latin culture, and American daily life, while its progressive liberation from the grip of the Catholic clergy has freed its inner energy and its inner qualities. English Canada means Ontario to Canali, but he had to admit, quite unwillingly, that he did not like this province. Toronto is too stern compared with lively Montreal,

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<sup>46</sup>Vangelisti, 1958; Sacchetti, 1984; Framarin, 1986.

while Ottawa is dull and still unfinished. According to the Italian consul, Ontario is an industrial province with a few naturalistic (Niagara Falls) or cultural (Stratford) sanctuaries, while the truly interesting parts of English Canada are the Rockies and British Columbia. The latter province is sketched by him as a new country mid-way between the United Kingdom and the United States.

Canali is mixing old Italian appreciation for Canadian (tamed) wilderness—i.e., for the mountains, rivers and falls—with twentieth-century interest for Canadian architecture. This blend is increasingly successful in the 1960s and 1970s. The Montreal World Exposition attracted Italian architects,<sup>47</sup> while Italian tourists travelled the St. Lawrence and visited Niagara Falls, the Great Lakes and the Rockies. In this period, Italian television broadcast a long documentary on Canada, and Italian newsreels screened flashes about this country. The documentary's screenplay was written by the famous author and wit Ennio Flaiano, who fell in love with Canada.<sup>48</sup> When he published an adapted version of his screenplay, he stated that he loved Canadian vastness and that he saw the country as a land ocean where tiny islets are peopled by a very small, but also very diverse population (Flaiano, 1980). And the multiple origin of this composite population is exactly the second reason why Flaiano was so enamoured with Canada. He wanted to know about the natives, but also about the immigrants and he wrote a chapter on Italians in Toronto and Montreal.

Since the late 1960s, Canada has been considered a good place for Italian travellers: a multicultural society open to foreigners and a country with fine winter landscapes, pleasant cities, and good cultural institutions. Because of the growing number of Italian tourists, Italian publishers have produced a number of guides on Canada, while the press regularly presents reports about it.<sup>49</sup> Actually, the focus of both the guides and the press is mainly on natural beauty, while among the urban centers only Montreal (and occasionally Toronto and Vancouver) are considered worth a longer stay. Not surprisingly then, the beauty of a city is also linked to northern

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<sup>47</sup>See the journal *L'architettura. Cronache e storia*.

<sup>48</sup>The documentary was restored by Nicoletta Serio, cf. Serio, 1993. Flaiano's love for Canada is remembered in Flaiano, 1976, p. 141.

<sup>49</sup>Winter sports: Pennati, 1994a and 1994b. Nice towns: Mascardi, 1994 (on Toronto). Nice towns, but great natural landscapes (in particular Niagara Falls and the Rockies): Peretta, 1997. Guides: *Canada. Guida del turista*; *Canada*, 1993; *Canada*, 1997; *Canada. Costa atlantica*; *Canada*, 2002. Cultural institutions: D'Andrea, 1985; Eco, 1983 (on the Robarts Library of Toronto).

realities, like snow at Christmas time (Brega, 1997), an idea also promoted by guides commissioned by the Canadian government.<sup>50</sup> A few novelists joined in this promotion of tourism in Canada: Alessandro Baricco wrote a short piece on winter, hockey and Canada (Baricco, 1994), while Enrico Palandri went in search of Italian immigrants both in Montreal and Toronto (Palandri, 1996).

No other writer presented Canada or Quebec as a setting for an Italian novel, as Tondelli has done, and no one has written any travel book on the country in the 1990s. Therefore, we could say that Tondelli's novel is the culminating point of the Italian literary appreciation of Canada and summarizes the Italian vision of the country. But Tondelli also provides a new twist to the Italian appreciation of Canada. Because this country is now thought to be somewhat different from the United States, the writer searches for a Canadian reality that is far from the American one. As a result he discovers Quebec as the "real" Canada, the essence of an un-American North America: a place that is modern and not European, but where people look toward Europe and not toward the west. This is a conflation of Beltrami and Dupouy's old thesis that the Canadian west is just a section of the American frontier with the idea espoused by many visitors that Toronto is not too far from New York. English-Canadian cities are just a different brand of American (i.e. USA) cities, while only Quebec is really different.

*Conclusion: the third millennium*

The approach to travelling in Canada has not changed in the new millennium. A recent press review featuring Toronto states that it is a modern city where a variety of immigrant groups coexist, but then the author adds that this city has a long story and lists the Conquest of Canada, the American Revolution, the Flight of the Loyalists, the Hurons and the Iroquois, even the Mounted Police (Godetti, 2001). There is, in fact, a growing number of press articles on Canada: on Calgary, on the St. Lawrence Valley, and on movies and film festivals.<sup>51</sup> There is also a growing trend to define Canada as a good experiment, or as a good laboratory,<sup>52</sup> and as a place where it is

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<sup>50</sup> *Guida del viaggiatore*, 2000, but see also the ads by the same department in *Sette/Corriere della Sera*, 25 November 1999.

<sup>51</sup> "Stampede", 2004; Soria, 2001; Quirico, 2004; Matei, 2003; "Canada double-face", 2003.

<sup>52</sup> Gorlier, 1997 and 2003; and reports by Daniela Sanzone from Toronto, since 2002.

possible to eat well, in particular in Montreal (Paolini, 2001).

Because of its journalistic dimension, travel writing on Canada is now short and impressionistic. We should also take into account that traditional travel writing is being replaced by television and the Internet. On Italian television channels it is possible not only to watch documentaries about Canada, but also a number of programs about Italian immigrants in Canadian cities. In the late 1990s those immigrants were invited to meet their relatives in special shows,<sup>53</sup> while in the new millennium we have mini-series about poor emigrants leaving Italy and crossing the ocean to find themselves lost in the Canadian winter (Frazzi, 2001; Ciccoritti, 2004). The new medium does not present the Canadian setting as real, but rather as a sort of winter postcard.

In a way this is not very far from what Quebec was for Tondelli, at least in his novel—a fairyland. And this lack of reality is apparently reinforced by web pages. New literature about travelling can be consulted on a web site like <http://turistipercaso.it/>, which posts autobiographical tales written between 2002 and 2005. They are numerous and we do not have time to go through them all. As an example, there is an account by two young women who describe their stay in Montreal (nice city, and nice guys) and their trips to Quebec City, Toronto and Niagara Falls. Toronto is appreciated, while Niagara is compared to Gardaland (a cheap Italian theme park). Quebec City is considered a nice town, but not a European one. Other travellers prefer to start in Toronto, considering that this city is a must for Italians because of its modernity and its immigrant population, and then to go west or north: a group even went to Yukon. But there are still those who prefer to start in Montreal and then to visit only the Province of Quebec. In this last case, we find again visitors who, coming to Quebec City, like the “old castle” which is, in fact, the Château Frontenac, as the accompanying jpeg reveals!<sup>54</sup>

Italians seem to be convinced that Canadian cities are fascinating only because of their modernity and they are unable to understand the difference between a seventeenth-century building and a late-nineteenth-century one.

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<sup>53</sup>In particular *Carramba, che sorpresa!*, 1996-1998, and *Carramba, che fortuna*, 1998-1999.

<sup>54</sup><http://www.turistipercaso.it/viaggi/itinerari/testo.asp?ID=1362>;  
<http://www.turistipercaso.it/viaggi/itinerari/testo.asp?ID=2274>;  
<http://www.turistipercaso.it/viaggi/itinerari/testo.asp?ID=4926>;  
<http://www.turistipercaso.it/viaggi/itinerari/testo.asp?ID=7843>. Broudeux, 2004 shows that even Canadians believe that Château Frontenac is a real castle.

For them, North America is a gigantic Disneyland, in which Canada figures as a continental natural resort. Tourists, even if educated, do not seem to have a clear grasp of Canadian reality, while people coming to Canada for business (diplomats, priests, journalists) are concerned only with some specific question (mainly immigration, as we have seen, but also trade).

I have analyzed the various versions of Tondelli's trip to Quebec City and I have criticized his lack of geographical and historical knowledge and his vain attempt to read Quebec according to Kerouac's *On the Road*, but I must say that Italian travellers as a group are no better. There are exceptions, but they are not that many. Moreover, the writers listed in this paper are mainly interested in the Canadian landscape. Therefore, they have few intelligent things to say about the country's cities and even when they talk about Italian immigrants they resort to stereotypes and "idées reçues": the poor emigrant of one century ago, the virtuous Canadian multiculturalism of today. Should we conclude that travellers are the dumbest people we might ever know? Or should we stress that travel literature is too often disappointing? Finally, what about the contribution of travellers to the development of a dynamic image of other countries? Our Italian travellers went and have been going to the same places for more than two centuries!

Maybe we have to consider that travel narratives do not form an unchanging literary genre. Any traveller is writing about his trip, but he or she is writing according to different canons: reports, even if for print, by diplomats (lay or clerical) are not the same as articles for the press or as books by journalists. And even in the large sector of travel narratives by journalists or for the press, we should probably distinguish the work of professional travellers (Besana, Cavalieri, Cipolla, Napolitano) from the occasional pieces of those who crossed the ocean and were asked to write a few pages on their experience. Moreover, we should take into account that travel narratives are also based on previous books and articles: travellers go to Canada with a number of expectations because of earlier travellers and often knowing what they want to see because of drawings (in the nineteenth century), and then of photographs, movies, television documentaries or, more recently, pictures on the web. The image of Canadian cities presented by our travellers is thus also the by-product of images they have seen before leaving Italy. Consequently, an analysis of travel narratives must concentrate on what happens before the trip, but this realisation reveals the need for a book about Italian travellers and Canadian cities.

*Università della Tuscia*  
*Viterbo, Italy*

## IMAGES OF CANADIAN CITIES IN ITALY: THEN AND NOW

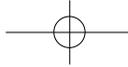
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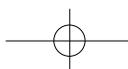
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