

Diego Bastianutti, *Finding my shadow: A Journey of Self-Discovery* & Rosanna Turcinovich Giuricin *In the Maelstrom of History. A Conversation with Miriam*, Club Giuliano Dalmato di Toronto, 2022, Arpa D'Or Series Edited by Konrad Eisenbichler

Review by Dan APĂTEANU

Recently, I had the pleasure to review two titles from Arpa D'Or Series, published by Club Giuliano Dalmato di Toronto, 2022, Series Edited by Konrad Eisenbichler. The first title, "Finding my shadow: A Journey of Self-Discovery" by Diego Bastianutti, is a captivating memoir that takes readers on a personal journey of experiences of the author living in different countries, including Canada, Italy and the United States. Through his vivid descriptions and personal reflections, the author offers insights into the challenges faced by immigrants in adapting to new cultures, the complexities of cultural identity and the search for a sense of belonging.

The first chapter is a brief account of the author's experiences living in Kingston, Ontario and traveling to Venice, Italy. The author describes feeling emotionally, culturally, and socially disconnected during his time in Kingston, but being inspired by the visits to Venice. He mentions developing a computer program and researching the history of Venezia Giulia and Dalmatia to learn more about his own roots. The author also touches on the dramatic exodus of 350,000 emigrants to post-war Italy and shows his interest in telling the human story of emigration. The author's account is engaging and provides insight into his personal experiences and interests. The brief mention of the Sicilian welcome and hospitality is a nice touch, adding a human element to the story. Overall, the text leaves the reader with a sense of the author's curiosity and drive to explore new ideas and experiences.

The second chapter is a personal reflection on the author's experience of living in Cefalu, Sicily, and the challenges that immigrants face in terms of identity and belonging. The author's vivid descriptions of Cefalu create a picturesque setting for his reflections. He captures the beauty of the sea and the town, and conveys a sense of longing to hold on to his memories of this place. However, the author's

experience also brings to light the challenges that immigrants face in adapting to a new country and culture.

The concept of "Civiltà Cattolica" is an interesting observation made by the author, which highlights the influence of religion on the civic culture of Sicily. The author's account of his own feelings of sadness at leaving Sicily is relatable and poignant. His description of the "phantom limb" syndrome that many immigrants experience underscores the depth of the trauma caused by uprooting oneself from one's homeland and culture.

The author's reflection on the identity crisis faced by Italian writers in Canada is thought-provoking. His question of when immigrants cease to be immigrants and when he feels more at home in his adopted country is a pertinent one. This raises larger questions about the nature of identity and belonging in a globalized world.

Overall, the author's personal reflections offer valuable insights into the challenges faced by immigrants in adapting to a new country and culture, and the complex issues of identity and belonging that arise as a result.

The final chapter starts by posing questions about cultural identity and how it evolves over time. The author shares his experience of receiving the "Premio Sezione Giuliani del Mondo" award and being invited to Trieste for the ceremony. The author's poetry is described as the work of a traveller and a nomad, which suggests that he has crossed multiple cultural borders.

In 2013, the author received an invitation to participate in the "Always Fiumano" World Congress. Trieste is described as a unique bridgehead projecting itself into European culture and the cultures of the Northeast. The author and his companions also decided to visit the capitals of the old Republic of Venice, which had once been his "mother."

The author also mentions his weekend visits to the Downtown Eastside (DTES) community, where he was moved by the suffering and misery he witnessed. This experience inspired him to write a collection of poems titled "The Lotus Eaters," which was published in 2019. The chapter ends with the author reflecting on his realization that people who have known exile, discrimination, and prejudice in new host countries can serve as a bridge between affluent societies and marginalized people.

Overall, this chapter explores the theme of cultural identity and the experience of crossing multiple borders. The author shares his personal experiences and reflections, offering insight into the complexity of cultural identity and the

potential for those who have experienced marginalization to act as bridges between different cultures.

In the second book, "In the Maelstrom of History. A Conversation with Miriam," Rosanna Turcinovich Giuricin tells the powerful and moving story of Miriam, a Holocaust survivor, and her experiences growing up in Trieste, Italy during the 1930s. Through a series of conversations with Miriam, the author provides a glimpse into the life of a young Jewish girl, who, like many others, witness the rise of Mussolini's fascist regime and was forced to endure the horrors of concentration camps.

The first chapter of the book introduces Miriam and her background, including her birth in Czechoslovakia and her upbringing in Trieste. The author highlights the influx of refugees from Italian lands ceded to Yugoslavia after 1947 and how this shaped Miriam's experiences in Trieste. Miriam's survival of the concentration camps and her tireless efforts to ensure that the atrocities of the Holocaust are never forgotten are also discussed in this chapter.

In the second chapter, Miriam's childhood in Trieste is explored; memories of her childhood, including her parents' ownership of two guesthouses, one in Trieste and the other in Grado, and summers spent at the beach, resurface when she returns to Trieste years later. The rise of fascism and Mussolini's arrival in Trieste are also discussed, along with the discrimination and persecution that Jews faced during this time.

Chapter three delves into the journey of a letter addressed to Chaim Grunglass, asking for help to emigrate to America. The letter is intercepted by a postal worker, who hides it from the authorities. Also, Miriam and her family would see their hopes of going to America disappearing, as one day, plainclothes police agents arrive and took them to the train station, signaling the beginning of their journey to the concentration camps.

Chapter four describes the family's return to Tyachiv, their place of origin in Czechoslovakia, where they faced the anti-Semitic measures imposed by the First Slovak Republic. In chapter five, the family is escorted to the overcrowded ghetto and later taken on a terrible journey by train to Auschwitz, where they faced extreme conditions. The chapter ends with their eventual freedom when American soldiers arrived.

Chapter six brings us memories from Wietzendorf, where Italian prisoners arrived in the dead of winter. There, faith is shown as a support and reason to live.

The seventh chapter describes the Miriam's arrival in Prague after the war, where she found it hard to believe she was free. The search for her family was in vain, and Miriam departs for Canada in 1948 to start anew. The final chapter deals with the aftermath of the Holocaust and the difficulties of rebuilding one's life.

Overall, "In the Maelstrom of History" is a moving and powerful book that captures the horrors of the Holocaust and the resilience of the human spirit. The book is a testament to the human will to survive and the importance of never forgetting the atrocities committed during the Holocaust.