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INTRODUCTION / INTRODUZIONE

GIOVANNA SANSALVADORE and FEDERICA BELLUSCI

The API (*Association of Professional Italianists*) conference of 2019, which took place at Palazzo Giaraca' in Siracusa, Sicily, was the first to be held in Italy since the organisation's inception in 1980. We, (UKZN) and (UNISA), decided to hold this bi-annual conference in Italy mainly with a view to broadening the scope of conference attendance. The decreasing numbers of Italian departments in South Africa is making the teaching of Italian increasingly difficult and, in a certain sense, elitist. In view of this, our decision to return this Italian conference to its roots in Italy did not only make sense for the discipline but was also important on an affective and emotional level.

The broad topic of *History and Literature: An Uneasy Kinship* was aimed at being as inclusive and general as possible, allowing for the presence of several disciplines and *foci*. The result was the delivery of many disparate papers – history, arts, language, literature and sociology – as well as topics – crime novels, ancient history, modern dramaturgy, war reportage, labour history – only some of which have made their way into this edition of the journal. The papers in this volume of *ISSA* were all presented at the conference, which spread over three days and included a memorable evening of *Pupi Siciliani*.

In finis, the organisers extend their thanks and appreciation to the two keynote speakers, Stefania Lucamante and Matteo Santipolo, without whose presence, knowledge and expertise the conference would have been a far less exalted and far less rewarding experience.