

Day Three Session One

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A Few Practical Suggestions from an Admirer

H.E. George Pell, Archbishop of Melbourne

Before I say a few words on the topic of the Italians here in Australia, I want - perhaps a little self indulgently - to establish my credentials in this situation and mention one or two incidents in my coming to know and love Italy and the Italians.

I grew up in Ballarat, a provincial centre about 100 km north west of here. There were a few Italian Australians in our school with us but their families had long been in Australia. We had some idea that their background was different from ours but to use the terminology of those days, they were very well assimilated.

I was then asked to go to study in Rome from 1963-67 by my bishop who had himself studied there in the early 20s. It was in Rome that I was introduced not just to the patrimony of Italy and Rome, but also - working pastorally, if somewhat briefly in a variety of settings, the Regina Coeli jail in the city of Rome, parishes in Rome and up in the Abruzzi Hills - to the Italian people.

One incident I remember from that time of training; we were at a villa somewhere in central Italy, not far from Sasafarato, and fairly near Roccastrada. I was a student at the missionary college of Propaganda Fide where 60 nationalities were represented. We had been out walking and when I came back, the students came to me with a message that there was a local Italian who had been imprisoned by the Australians in North Africa and he wanted to meet me, and I was genuinely a little bit apprehensive. I was not quite sure whether I would be rebuked, or what, but it was not that at all. When he saw me, he raced out from his family, kissed me on both cheeks, and then we discussed, very happily, his encounters in North Africa. It taught me something.

Since returning to Australia in the early 1970s, I have always worked, at least part time, with the Italians. My first appointment was to Swan Hill and I found the Italians were prodigious workers, very strongly committed to the family, and great people. It was a bit of a battle then with some of the young Italian Australians to get them to acknowledge and be proud of their background. This is 30 years ago. I think the introduction of the study of the Italian language and culture into our schools, while it might not have taught many people much Italian, has given increased self respect to those of that background and increased tolerance amongst those of us with a different background.

I remember saying to one young fellow (an Italian-Australian) about nine or ten years old, "are you going to the Italian festa on the weekend? No Father, he said, I'm no wog". We laughed about it at the time, and we laugh now, but it was just a little bit sad and something to be battled against.

In Ballarat I always said the Italian Mass for the small community of mainly Northern Italians. When my vocabulary was inadequate for a particular sentiment or idea, someone would always very cheerfully shout out the correct Italian word from the congregation to help me along, and this still happens from time to time in Melbourne.

We are used to locating the arrival of the Italians in Australia in the 1950s with the mass immigration programme that followed the Second World War. In the peak years of this programme, 1951-61, 170,000 Italians came to Australia, most of them as unassisted migrants.¹

But these were not the first. Italians have been coming to Australia in significant numbers since the gold rushes of the 1850s. Early this century they formed a significant part of the population in southwest Western Australia (e.g. Kalgoorlie) and north Queensland - the concentration of migrants in the major cities only began with the postwar migration of the 1950s. The 1933 Census identified Italians as the largest non-British immigrant group, and this has been the case ever since.²

The numbers of the Italian-born in Australia reached their peak at almost 290,000 in 1971. As at 1996, they numbered a little under 240,000. Most arrived as young adults in the 1950s and 1960s so that today they are concentrated in the 50-69 age bracket. Those born in Australia with one or both parents born in Italy considerably outnumber this older cohort. The 1996 census put their number at 334,000, concentrated in the 15-34 age bracket.³

The aging of the Italian-born Australians raises important issues for the community. The needs of this group are being recognised in the building in recent years of beautiful new nursing homes and hostels for older Italians. But one area which has not been addressed sufficiently is the growing need for social workers, welfare workers and pastoral workers who are trained - culturally, linguistically and socially - for the specific work of assisting aged and sick Italian Australians in these new facilities and in private homes.

The statistics suggest that Italian Australians are under-represented in the health and community services area compared to the population as a whole, although between 1991 and 1996 the number of women involved in this area began to grow significantly.⁴ More needs to be done, and one way the community might ensure that it has a sufficient

number of professional carers for the older generation would be to provide scholarships and other incentives to encourage younger Italian Australians to undertake training in this area. I think this is something that needs to be tackled seriously, and sooner rather than later.

Italians have always been great family people, and it has been one of the many blessings they brought to this country. A relatively high level of marrying within the community plays a crucial role in maintaining Italian family culture in Australia. In 1991, only about 6 percent of those born in Italy had an Australian born spouse, and some of them may have been of Italian stock. The children of the Italian born continued this trend, with 50 percent marrying within the community. The relatively high numbers of those in the younger generation speaking Italian at home - a little over 40 percent in 1996 - obviously reinforces a strong cultural and community identification.⁵

But while the commitment to marriage and family remains strong, the nature of Italian families is changing radically. Up until the mid 1980s, Italian Australians had more children and a higher fertility rate than the Australian population as a whole. That situation has now been completely reversed. Today, Italian Australians have fewer children compared to the general population, and a lower fertility rate.⁶ As with Australian women generally, it seems that a high proportion of young women of Italian origin - perhaps as high as 28 percent - will have no children at all.⁷

These trends mirror the situation in Italy itself. Italy's fertility rate of 1.2 births per woman is one of the lowest in the world, only slightly higher than the rates of Spain and Bulgaria. In 1993, the rate in Bologna was 0.9. A fertility rate of 2.1 is required simply to hold the population steady. At the current national fertility rate, the population of Italy will fall from 57 million today to 10 million in 2100.⁸

If the trends in Italy continue the Italian family will be completely redefined. As couples have only one or two children - or none at all - the family itself will be drastically narrowed and lengthened in its shape. Within two generations more than three in every five Italian children will have neither brothers and sisters nor aunts, uncles or cousins.⁹ The genealogical tree "will be all stem and no branch", while the increase in life expectancy "will make the tree taller." As the number of children and grandchildren fall, the number of great grand-children will rise. The four-generation family will become commonplace.¹⁰

Now, it has to be said that nothing is certain when it comes to statistical projections because none of us can foresee future events and the impact they might have on society and individual behaviour. But if

current trends continue we are facing a spectacular collapse of the family. This applies to all western countries, but unfortunately Italy is at the forefront of this development. Australia cannot afford the sort of collapse in population and family life that has been projected for Italy, and the Italian Australian community cannot afford it either.

To change this situation we have to look to the young. Australian society today is a very different place to that which greeted the parents of the younger generation when they arrived in the 1950s. In many important ways, it is a better place: ethnic divisions and prejudice are weaker; attitudes are more tolerant; opportunities for education are greater than ever before; and the chances of getting on in the world are still plentiful for most of us.

But some changes have made our job harder. The influence of family, community and religion is considerably weaker. The power of the media and advertising is enormous and the demand to conform to a life-style based on consumption and material acquisition is greater and more generalized than ever before. Unemployment, family breakdown and the lure of drugs represent the unforgiving reality beneath the images of success which inundate young people. For while it is true that there are incredible rewards for the few who make it, there is also increasing hardship and poverty for the many more who do not.

Younger Italian Australians are no more immune to these influences than other young Australians. It remains true, however, that a strong family and a bit of religion - perhaps with the odd prayer at home and an occasional appearance at Mass - are real helps to the young in sorting out the conflicting messages they are presented with. But both entail hard work and hard decisions. If we are to avoid the collapse of the family in the Italian Australian community and in Australia, we have to persuade the young it is an effort worth making.

A priority for Italian Australians must be to work consciously and effectively to strengthen the Italian tradition of family here. And this has to be done in a way that does not simply bring comfort to old people like myself. It has to be put to the young Italians Australians in a way they can understand and accept. They are the ones who have to take up the challenge.

Encouraging younger Italian Australians to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the traditions of their community will be an important part of this, although only one part. There is a lot of work to be done in collecting, recording and interpreting the long history of the Italians in Australia, much of it still unknown. This would not only fill a gap in Australia's history but strengthen Italian identity and pride. It

would also provide a powerful stimulus to Italians to preserve and rediscover precious values which Australia needs and needs strengthened: the values of faith and morality, of family life, the love of children, the joy of living, the love of art and music, and the spirit of initiative and resilience.

Knowing their own tradition better will also help in maintaining an attitude of welcome, respect and compassion for new groups of migrants. The peace and harmony of our multicultural land very much depends on enlisting the older migrant communities to support the newer arrivals. Catholics in this country have always been in a minority, and in my own work I have always encouraged Irish Australians to give Italian Australians space to live and make their own contribution, both within the church and in society at large. It is important that the Italians in their turn continue to recognise the rights of other migrant groups within an essential Australian identity, and the importance of giving them room to move.

Notes

¹ Graeme Davison, John Hirst & Stuart MacIntyre (eds.) *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*. Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1999. 354.

² Ibid.

³ Peter McDonald, *Community Profiles 1996 Census: Italy Born*. Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs - Statistics Section, Canberra: 1999. 1

⁴ Ibid. 23-25.

⁵ Ibid. 2-3.

⁶ Ibid. 2.

⁷ The 28 percent figure refers to Australian women as a whole and is taken from *The Australian Bureau of Statistics document Births 1998*, as reported in *The Age*, 17 November 1999.

⁸ Peter G. Peterson *Gray Dawn*. Times Books, New York: 1999. 48.

⁹ Nicholas Eberstadt "Research: Too Few People?" *Prospect*, December 1997. 55.

¹⁰ Peterson 57.

Paradoxes and Predictions:
Italians and Catholicism in Multicultural Australia
Professor Desmond Cahill

When historians look back over the century that has passed, they will be impressed by the enduring stability of religion and its institutions. All the predictions by such varied individuals as Nietzsche, H.G. Wells, Lenin, Bertrand Russell and Arthur C. Clarke that religion would die have proved wrong. The anti-religious ideologies of Nazism and Communism have been thrown into the dustbin of history. Even popular Italian religion has survived till this point in time though its future is problematic. For religion and culture are irretrievably interconnected. While the number of people without religion increases, social scientists, perhaps to their surprise, are finding that religion has positive personal and social benefits though there are some dark spots. If it is to survive and develop over the long term, a cultural system needs to have a spiritual and moral base. Religion also offers an antidote to cultural homogenization in an age of globalization where time and space have become compressed; it builds a sense of belonging and can help in constructing a multifaceted identity in a global world where the sense of 'home' has become more problematic. It provides an additional binding element to the links that bind together diasporic or transnational communities.

This morning, I would like to reflect on the interface between Italians and Australian Catholicism. Given that those of Italian heritage now comprise almost one fifth of the Australian Church if one includes the third and subsequent generations not included in the official census figures (see Table One), it is surely time for the several authentic Italian Catholic voices to be fully heard, and allowed to resonate within multicultural Australia.

Italian Catholicism in Colonial Australia

Non Siamo Arrivati Ieri (We Did Not Arrive Yesterday) is the title of a book published in 1985 by a Scalabrinian priest, also a hobby historian, the late Fr. Tito Cecilia, documenting the history of Italians in Australia up until the Second World War. They are buried in the cemeteries of Eganstown and Franklinford near Daylesford and in many other places across this vast and ancient continent. The interface took place in the context of "the obsessive antagonism between Anglo-Scots Protestant

ascendency and Irish convict Catholicism” which O’Farrell concluded had been “tragically corrosive” (O’Farrell 1977: 4) though it was the Irish who prevented Australia from becoming the little Britain of the South (O’Farrell 1987). Several years later in 1989, Pino Bosi published his *Mandati da Dio* documenting the work of Italian bishops, priests and nuns in Australia.

In looking at the colonial past, several reflections are in order:

1. In the work of these Italian religious in the capital cities and also in towns and rural outposts not only for the small pre-War Italian communities but also for the adolescent Australian Church gripped by “a Catholicism of poverty and peasantry, violent, crude and ignorant, with a priesthood largely sharing its passion and prejudices” (O’Farrell 1977: 9), their contribution exceeded their relatively small numbers after they began arriving during the 1840s. In his last chapter, Cecilia (1985) tells of the efforts of Italian missionaries in Australia and the Pacific Islands. Some Italian Benedictines worked with their Spanish confreres in the establishing of the New Norcia Monastery.

Table One: AUSTRALIA’S MULTICULTURAL PROFILE (in percentages)

<i>Top 20 Birthplaces</i>		<i>Top 20 Languages</i>		<i>Top 20 Religious Groups</i>	
Australia	73.9	1. English	82.0	1. Roman Catholic	27.0
United Kingdom	6.0	2. Italian	2.1	2. No religion**	25.2
New Zealand	1.6	3. Chinese*	1.9	3. Anglican	22.2
Italy	1.3	4. Greek	1.5	4. Uniting Church***	7.5
Viet Nam	0.8	5. Arabic	1.0	5. Presbyterian	3.7
Greece	0.7	6. Vietnamese	0.8	6. Orthodox****	2.6
China	0.6	7. German	0.6	7. Baptist	1.7
Germany	0.6	8. Spanish	0.5	8. Lutheran	1.4
Philippines	0.5	9. Macedonian	0.4	9. Islam	1.1
Netherlands	0.5	10. Tagalog	0.4	10. Buddhism	1.1
India	0.4	11. Croatian	0.4	11. Christian	1.0
Malaysia	0.4	12. Polish	0.4	12. Jehovah’s Witness	0.5
Lebanon	0.4	13. Turkish	0.3	13. Judaism	0.5
Hong Kong	0.4	14. Maltese	0.3	14. Pentecostal	0.4
Poland	0.4	15. Dutch	0.2	15. Salvation Army	0.4
South Africa	0.3	16. French	0.2	16. Church of Christ	0.4
Ireland	0.3	17. Serbian	0.2	17. Hinduism	0.4
Malta	0.3	18. Hindi	0.2	18. Assembly of God	0.4
USA	0.3	19. Russian	0.2	19. Seventh Day Adventist	0.3
Croatia	0.3	20. Korean	0.2	20. Latter Day Saints	0.2
Others	10.0	Others	5.9	Others	2.2
TOTAL	100.0	TOTAL	100.0	TOTAL	100.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996 August census

* Chinese includes Cantonese as the largest Chinese speaking group together with Mandarin plus small numbers of Hokkien, Hakka and Teochew speakers

** No religion = those who said they had no religion or nothing was stated on the census form. Their numbers have risen very considerably in the last decade.

*** The Uniting Church is the result of a union of the former Methodist and Congregationalist Churches and some Presbyterians in 1975

**** Orthodox includes the Greek Orthodox as the largest, together with, in order of size, the Macedonian, Serbian, Russian, Coptic, Ukrainian and Romanian Churches .

Italian priests played a critical role in the history of Catholicism in Queensland so much so that one, Giovanni Cani, became the first Bishop of Rockhampton in 1882. Another, the Capuchin Eleazaro Torreggiani, had become the second bishop of Armidale several years previously in 1879. Another, Fr. Timeleone Raimondi, became the bishop of Hong Kong. Then there is the work of individual priests such as the saintly Fr. Angelo Ambrosoli, who worked for many years as the chaplain to St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney and Fr. Giuseppe Canali, the hospital chaplain at Brisbane Hospital for 43 years and together they helped lay the foundations for hospital chaplaincy in Australia, the contribution of Fr. Davadi in Stanthorpe establishing the fruit industry and the contribution of Canon Martelli in establishing Fremantle (Cecilia 1985; Bosi 1985; Pascoe 1987).

2. Pino Bosi in his *Mandati da Dio* records how some Italian priests were so unable to cope with the stress, the isolation and the autocratic rule of some Irish bishops that they quickly departed Australian shores, never to return. Among the first departees was a group of Italian Passionist priests assigned to work among the Aborigines of Stradbroke Island. It is a story of great hardship and ecclesiastical farce, and its leader, Fr. Raimondo Vaccari, ended up for a time working as a gardener in Lima, Peru, after losing his identity papers in a shipwreck. Many of these Italian priests had serious altercations with their Australian bishops, and their presence was opposed by the Irish priests working in Australia, especially if the Italian priest was appointed to any position of authority. When Cani was appointed firstly as the administrator of the diocese of Brisbane and then as bishop of Rockhampton, the Brisbane priests reacted immediately and strongly. The parish priest of Ipswich was moved to write, "It is very clear to a true Catholic that all the bishops and all the non-Irish priests are rapidly destroying the faith of the Irish people in this country" (quoted in O'Farrell 1977). There subsequently appeared a little book in Melbourne titled *The Mystery Unveiled. Being an Exposure of the Agencies at Work for the World-Wide Defamation of the Catholic Irish Australian Clergy*, alleging that a 'nefarious plot' was being hatched between the bishops and the Roman authorities at the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

3. The third point is not so obvious. During the colonial period Australia was used as a launching pad for the work of Italian and other missionaries in the Asia-Pacific region. The most famous of these - and seemingly unknown to the Australian Catholic community even if the link is a little tenuous - was Giovanni Mazzuconi, martyred for the faith

on an island off the Papua New Guinea coast and beatified in 1984. He worked for a brief time for the Italians in Sydney while recuperating from an illness before returning to be immediately martyred in 1855. More than 100 years later Australia was the launching pad into Asia in 1982, particularly into the Philippines and Taiwan, by the Scalabrini fathers in what is arguably Australian Catholicism's most creative venture into the Asian arena with their pastoral work amongst the Asian, mainly Filipino, migrant workers. Among many initiatives, their ground-breaking research centre in Manila has highlighted the evil character of people trafficking in their work with UNESCO and the ILO. Also important and continuing a long tradition has been their work among international seafarers in Manila now that their profile is switching increasingly from European to Asiatic.

Italians and Catholicism in the Post-War Period

In the post-War period, more than any other immigrant group, it is the Italian Catholics who have made Roman Catholicism the largest religious group in Australia. And they have remained remarkably loyal. Of the total number of Italian-born in Australia, over 95 per cent are Catholic, a figure marginally ahead of the Maltese and considerably better than other comparable groups such as the Filipinos, the Irish and the Chileans (See Table 2). They are unlike the Latin American groups ten per cent of whom within two years of their arrival had changed their religion (Cahill 1986). While the picture is not fully clear, it seems that regular Mass attendance by Italo-Australians is now comparable to the general Catholic population at about 18 - 19 per cent. Church attendance has steeply declined since the late 1960s for many reasons, including the pastorally disastrous decision against birth control in 1968 when Pope Paul VI rejected the majority recommendation of his own Commission.

Contentious Issues

At the institutional level, the major contentious issue was the Australian episcopacy's refusal to establish national churches as had been done in the United States. In this decision, by relying on migrant chaplains who in turn relied on the good graces of parish priests, Australian bishops were highly assimilationist (Lewins 1978) - as such they directly went against the Vatican directive for migrants to preserve their cultural and linguistic patrimony. However, in contrast to the situation in the nineteenth century, Australian bishops generally facilitated the arrival of the Italian religious orders in the post-WWII period.

Table Two: PERCENTAGE of OVERSEAS-BORN GROUPS WHO ARE CATHOLIC - Top 20 Groups (1996 census)

Italy	95.4	Rep. Of Ireland	77.6
Malta	95.2	Chile	72.2
Croatia	93.5	Uruguay	72.1
Portugal	91.9	Lithuania	70.4
Slovenia	90.3	Argentina	70.2
Mauritius	85.0	El Salvador	66.4
Philippines	84.4	Austrian	63.7
Spain	83.3	Hungary	61.6
Poland	79.7	France	59.3
Columbia	78.2	Czech Republic	58.3

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996 August Census

At local parish level especially when two-thirds of Australian Catholics attended Mass and when Catholic schools received no government funding, the two contentious issues were the seeming cavalier attitude of Italian Catholics to Sunday Mass though their participation at Christmas and Easter was generally assured and, secondly, their reluctance to financially support the building of churches and schools by contributing money on a regular, if not weekly, basis, particularly through the so-called sacrificial giving envelopes as these became widespread in parishes during the 1960s and 1970s. There was a different tradition though some priests suggest that, when it was clearly explained, the Italians did respond generously, and also contributed in other ways. Australian parish priests were intensely annoyed when they celebrated nuptial weddings attended by relatively small numbers followed by a huge wedding reception attended by hundreds.

They were classic cases of cross-cultural miscommunication. As now, there was a lack of imaginative pastoral strategies to explain Australian parish practice - the argument that the Italians could not accept a new system flew in the face of the many changes they were making in their own lives as they adapted to Australian society. The Italians also did not understand the deep pain that Irish Australian Catholics had felt as a despised minority in the anti-Popish climate of the 19th century and which scarred the Irish Catholic heart until the early 1970s. They did not appreciate how deeply the Irish had sacrificed themselves to build their churches and schools. In turn, nor did the Irish appreciate the pain of non-English-speaking immigrants struggling in a new country when the huge numbers of immigrant Catholics began arriving in the 1950s. Their own migration had occurred two generations previously, particularly from the 1850s to the 1870s.

Only about half the Italian parents sent their children to the overcrowded Catholic schools of the 1950s and 1960s. The others sent

their offspring to the less stressed government schools though there was always the issue that many simply could not afford the fees - an issue that is re-emerging again as a significant issue. Hence, they were not so negatively affected in terms of educational performance as were the even more loyal Maltese immigrants though it did mean that the Greeks, the other comparable immigrant group, academically outperformed the Italians (Cahill, 1996, 1999). Notwithstanding this, the Italian community now that its sons and daughters populate most areas of professional life have much to thank Catholic schools for despite "the fights and the shit". Yet it is also apparent that many middle-class Italians, dissatisfied with Catholic schools, are switching their children to elite independent schools.

Over the past thirty years, while a small number have been lured away from the embrace of Mother Church to become Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses, Italians have, as already noted, remained remarkably loyal to the Church even though most were not well-formed in their faith. Their faith is more family-based and culturally-grounded, less Jansenistic in orientation, less preoccupied with sexual sin and less intellectual in nature. Hence, they have been less affected by the fierce ecclesiastical debates of the past thirty-five years such as clerical celibacy, the ordination of women and dissent and pluralism in the Church. They have always been more matter-of-fact about the sexual peccadilloes of the clergy, much more so than Anglo-Australian 'salt-of-the-earth' Catholics many of whom have in recent years quietly stopped attending Sunday Mass not so much because of the sexual crimes of the church as the increasing grip on the Church of the right-wing Vatican restorationists who are stifling healthy debate and inhibiting creativity in the Church. In Australia, there are no consultative mechanisms; many educated Catholics read the English Tablet to find out what is going on in the Church; there is no national pastoral council; there are no state pastoral councils. If there had been, the Italian voice would surely have been heard.

Yet it must be noted that, in a story yet to be fully told, the Australian Catholic Church has played a major role in facilitating the adaptation and integration of immigrants into Australian society. The Church also helped bring about some kind of unity among Italians who came to the same Italian Mass even if for their leisure they usually retreated into their families and their village and regional clubs.

In the interface between Australian Catholicism and the Italo-Australian community, it was not an exchange for which the Irish-inspired Church was well-prepared because it had made no attempt to maintain the Irish language or Irish history in its schools (Cahill 1988a, 1988b). In its hostile engagement with the Protestant ascendancy, the

Irish Catholics were forced to jettison their language and the teaching of their history. But not their faith. This was their fulcrum and pivotal centre. In so doing, they prevented the WASP mainstream from reproducing an English class structure and a Protestant domination. Thus, Australia did not become the little Britain of the South Pacific (O'Farrell 1987) just as, in more recent times, the Vietnamese and Chinese have prevented Australia from becoming the little Europe of the Pacific and Indian Ocean Basins. The post-WWII Italian immigrants, even though they were not particularly welcomed, brought their culture, cuisine, language and religion. The Scalabrinians published three books to help negotiate the interface with the Australian Church, especially with popular Italian religion, particularly Adrian Pittarello's *Soup without Salt* published in 1980. It was all to no avail. There have been no negotiations.

The Ambivalent Figure of Bob Santamaria

It seems to me there have been three paradoxes. The pre-War Italian community with its *contadino* values of hard work and perseverance spawned the figure of Bob Santamaria, a figure of great ambivalence, both in his life and his death. Yet paradoxically, whilst he inspired a generation of Anglo-Australian Catholic men and women to work in the fight against the Communists in the trade unions and in the Australian Labor Party and to fight for State Aid for private schools, he was unable to inspire his Italian compatriots to participate in this struggle even though it was already obvious that Italian men and women were working in exploitative working conditions. In 1953 together with the Capuchins he did try but it was unsuccessful. Perhaps, in his own mind, he never fully resolved the authoritarian attractiveness of Facism even though, much more quickly than Australian public intellectuals of his time, the inherent inhumanity and economic destructiveness of Communist totalitarianism was obvious to him. His speeches even as far back as the late 1930s show he was an assimilationist. He wrote in 1939, "If the Italian problem is to be solved so far as the Catholic Church is concerned, our deliberate aim must be to abolish, in so far as it is possible, every distinction between the normal young Italian immigrant [...] The only solution to the cultural problems presented by Italians in Australia, on which the solution of the religious problem will ultimately depend, is on the basis of assimilation" (quoted in Bosi 1989: 93). Despite his Italian background, he never publicly embraced multiculturalism with its twin dogmas of commitment to Australia and equal opportunity for all. Nor did he criticise it. Probably he saw it as coming from the

extreme left whereas in fact it came from the bureaucratic and academic centre.

The Lack of Vocations

The second paradox is this. The Italian immigrant community was to be greeted by a sustained pastoral strategy that revolved around Italian-speaking Australian priests, Italian parish Masses and Italian sacramental celebrations supplemented by the pastoral labours of priests and nuns from Italy, in particular the Scalabrini and Cappuccini priests, the Pastorelle sisters and several other smaller orders. The strategy required that diocesan priests in Melbourne and Sydney were required to learn Italian though it was partly motivated by the need to send the seminary elite to study in Rome. This is possibly the only example in Australian professionalism that a professional group was required to learn an immigrant language. Yet, despite all the effort, it has paradoxically produced very few vocations to the priesthood and religious life, certainly in comparison with the Maltese and, more recently, the Vietnamese. It is significant that, notwithstanding all their fine work, the Scalabrinians, as the religious order best equipped to serve immigrants, does not have one Australian-born member - this is one reason why Italian priests wonder about the efficacy of Australian Catholic schools.

Representation and Participation

The third paradox concerns representation and participation. The Italian presence has forced the Irish-dominated and Rome-subservient Australian Church to become more multicultural in its thinking even though the bishops took little notice of the recommendations of the 1987 first ever national conference on pastoral care in multicultural Australia sponsored by the Scalabrinians. Yet there is not one bishop from an Italian immigrant background. More surprisingly, given that many second-generation Italo-Australians went into teaching, less than five per cent were principals of parish primary schools in the Melbourne archdiocese in 1999. In a radio interview in April 2000, Paul Keating made the comment, "The (Catholic) Church has many problems, but racism is not one of them". Perhaps not overt racism, but it is undeniable there has been institutional discrimination. While at family level there are many links through intermarriage and many Italian lay people do excellent work in their parishes, Italian Catholics essentially remain outsiders, in the margins, not part of the mainstream.

Voices of the Italian Australian People

In reflecting on their situation, it seems to me there are three major voices together with a small fourth voice which is stridently anti-religion and anti-Catholic, seeing the Catholic Church as a corrupt, self-serving institution with little redeeming value. This voice naturally links into the non-religious or anti-religion milieu of Australian academia. The first voice is the Catholicism of the aging urbanized *paesani*. In their twilight years, they are satisfied and content. They sit in God's waiting room. In the Melbourne archdiocese between 1991 and 1996, the Italian-born population declined by 6.6 per cent. More and more they attend funeral Masses to hear Gounod's *Ave Maria* and the *Panis Angelicus* sung yet again. It has become an issue in many parishes whether to continue the Italian Mass. Like so many other Catholic immigrants, many are dying in hospitals and nursing homes without the pastoral ministrations of a priest. Street processions honoring the Madonna or some local saint have resurfaced in popularity but, except for some small grandchildren, it is not easy to find anyone without grey hair.

Except for commemorative Masses, popular Italian religiosity has often been scorned by the Australian Church. And yet despite its pietistic, at times superstitious, accretions, popular Italian faith reflects the deep spirituality of the Italian soul. It gives meaning to life and death itself, celebrates life's better moments and assists in life's darker moments. It understands that God is more important than money or sex or power; it understands implicitly that spirituality is more important than social work.

The second voice is the Catholicism of the pastoral *progressisti*. Better educated, loyal and thoughtful, it is theologically middle-of-the-road but pastorally innovative. But it has not openly challenged the system. If the Cappuccini responded to *paesani* Catholicism with the establishment of Italian shrines as a de facto form of a national parish, the Scalabrinians have followed a more mainstream approach operating from parishes across metropolitan areas and some country regions. Other progressive initiatives have been the work with youth of the Salesians, the pastoral work in the parishes of the Pastorelle sisters and the publishing activities of the Daughters of St. Paul. Another has been the work of the lay Focolarini. Especially important was the FCI (Federazione Cattolica Italiana) which today struggles. It is interesting that, except for the Salesians, the Italian orders have avoided staffing Catholic schools.

Predictions and Pointers for the Future

And what of the future? It seems to me that the Italian community is now strong enough and mature enough to plateau to another stage of its contribution. And there is a third voice struggling to be heard, a well-educated and professional voice which still understands the core values of popular Italian religiosity. It certainly is not attracted to the restorationist view but also wonders about the left wing agenda which does not understand cultural and religious diversity and, like the right, wishes to impose universal solutions that are inappropriate. It senses that the Catholic tradition has been downgraded in the schools to a religious humanism. It is sensibly feminist, sensibly environmentalist and concerned about human rights. It realizes Italians have been seduced by the Church into a smug assimilationism even though they may owe the Church much. It realizes that the Church is in grave crisis, not least because the average age of the clergy is nearing 60 and also because of the inability of the left and the right to sensibly dialogue with each other; it realizes that the Church's symbols and images no longer have their former impact and power.

And it realizes that the Italian community has not been nearly demanding enough of the Church; it has not demanded high-quality Italian language programs in Catholic schools; it has not demanded programs that move beyond the teaching of the numbers and seasons; it has not demanded that Catholic schools link with schools in Italy through the internet; it has not demanded a specialist Italian secondary college in the major cities as a lighthouse for the development of the Italo-Australian tradition and identity and an expression of the Italian diaspora; it has not demanded that the Italian contribution be included in the various chapters of Australian Catholic history; it has not demanded that religious texts in schools include the Italian and broader multicultural dimension; it has not demanded that the Australian Catholic University have a special orientation to Italy and Italians; it has not demanded that the Italo-Australian identity be celebrated and reinforced and enlarged.

If this identity is to survive, it needs to be content-filled and experience-based; it needs to have a voice; and it also needs to come to terms with globalization; it needs to be given a future. Otherwise my prediction is it will die with barely a whimper. At the end of the current film, *Looking for Alibrandi*, Josie has dealt with the family's troubled past, but the future is uncertain. It has to have content. The question is not, 'what does it mean to be an Italian Catholic Australian in the new

millennium?’ but ‘how does one create, and recreate and imagine a multifaceted identity that is Italian and Catholic and Australian and global, open and inclusive?’ Each generation has to create its own identity. The third- and fourth-generations need to know that being an Italian is more than making *sugo* in the kitchen, growing *pomodori* in “*la iarda*”, more than being obsessive about virginity, more than celebrating family baptisms and commemorative Masses; they need to know about the international work of the Vatican, about the activities of the San Egidio Community; they must be introduced experientially to an Italianness that is contemporary, that is living and that is global. Above all else, they need to know there are many ways of being Italian, a Moroccan Italian, an Italo-Argentinian, an Italian Australian. And being an Italian does not necessarily imply speaking the language though it would be extremely helpful.

Modern transportation and communications technology offer the possibility for transnational community links to occur in creating a real diasporic community like the Jewish and Chinese diasporas. And in passing, I would like to suggest that the Italian community work assertively with the universities in facilitating the movement of Italo-Australian students to study and do field placements in Italy itself, that includes an indepth study of the arts, the languages, the religion, the and business enterprises of contemporary Italy.

Italian Catholics, it seems to me, can help change the Australian Church, perhaps even save it, and also reinforce an Italo-Australian identity. It can help by contributing in the following areas:

The Public Nature of Religion

The first contribution concerns the public nature of religion. Many thinking Italians lament the privatised nature of the religion in Australia and its lack of emotion. Gaetano Parolin (1999) recently has highlighted the public nature of the religious procession and the accompanying festa; it reinforces group identity in a society where the Italians feel dominated, and is collective therapy to escape from their anonymity, a blessing of the streets, the streets of their daily lives just as in the village long ago the Madonna and the local saint blessed the piazza, the streets and the land. It also reflects the desire for a more public manifestation of a people who are more openly expressive of their deeper feelings than most. But it is faltering, and the task is to manage the transition across to a more authentic and contemporary version of Catholic Christianity. Italians can draw upon their traditions in re-imagining the public expression of their faith.

There is another danger in our cybernetic age, the danger that the technological revolution will accelerate the privatization of religion. The computer is of great use but we ought to be distrustful of a modern technological and over-equipped society because most internet information is trash. It is wisdom that counts. Time spent in front of a computer is not fully human. Virtual religion cannot be real unless it is shared and celebrated. If religion retreats into cyberspace, Nietzsche may be proved correct.

Sacred Places, Holy Sites

Through the church and the piazza, through the religious monument and the shrine, popular Italian religion understands very well the notion of a sacred place, a holy site. But this is missing in Australia. Anthony Paganoni and Desmond O'Connor (1999) have recently written, "In every place where Catholicism has been planted, a Catholic culture with its statues, churches, its sacred art and its literature has been born" (p. 95). The tomb of Blessed Mary McKillop in Sydney is clearly a sacred site; the cross placed on top of Mt. Macedon is a beginning. Many more initiatives are needed to make the faith more public, and Italian Catholics could play a leadership role.

Religious Imagery

The message of popular religion is that its religious imagery is now old and tired, no longer able to speak to the young. How might Jesus be presented in the multicultural Australian context? Amaladoss (1999) has related how Indians have searched for appropriate names for Jesus such as guru, great master and teacher, or *avatar*, God descended in human form to save people from oppression or *Ishvara*, the Lord who presides over creation and a great *yogi* or totally self-realized person, "but Christians in India feel that these titles do not really bring out the full significance of Jesus for us or for history" (Amaladoss 1999: 34). Phan (1996) has recently reviewed the attempts by Asian theologians and scholars to consider this matter. Artists and theologians ought work together, and perhaps consideration could be given to imagery such as Jesus as the Refugee Child, Mary, the Refugee Mother and the Holy Family as the Refugee Returnee Family. Another possibility is the hyphenated Jesus-Christ as the marginalized person par excellence. Marginality is characterised by the state of being "in-between" and "in-both", and Jesus-Christ is the marginal person who has overcome marginality. This is represented in the hyphenated Jesus-Christ just as increasingly there are Chinese Australians and Moroccan Italians and Filipino Japanese.

The Family

According to Johnstone (1994) in her analysis of the religious values of migrant groups and many others, “La Famiglia” is the core Italian value. On all social indicators, Italians in Australia perform better than mainstream Australia in terms of lower rates of divorce, crime and imprisonment rate, drug use etc. . At a time when the family continues to be under pressure, Italians must continue to share this value with others who are in danger of losing it. For the Italian, family is both a public and private entity. One example of cross-cultural miscommunication has been the requirement in some parishes that Italo-Australian children should make their First Communion in a small family group separate from their class group - it was well-intentioned. However, while the emphasis on the “little bride” may have sexist overtones, it expresses the deep Italian feeling to publicly celebrate the child, to publicly celebrate the family and its faith rather than to privatise it. Certainly the Italian family has changed (Italy now has one of the world’s lowest birth-rates), but “la famiglia” remains a core value. It will need to be open, based on genuine partnership between female and male, open to higher rates of intermarriage, and support strategies that allow people to make better relationship decisions.

Gender Equality

Fourthly, while the Italian stereotype speaks of the macho male and the submissive woman - and there has been truth to this - the deepest recesses of the Italian psyche has always understood that men and women are equal. Certainly the Italian woman has known repression. Equally certainly the various European surveys now show that the Italians in Italy accept post-material values, in particular the values of the “Master Narrative of the Enlightenment” with its emphasis on freedom, inclusivity, sexual equality and democracy which underpins globalizing processes (Abramson & Inglehart 1995). I am reminded that in many Italian homes that I have visited there is often the large picture of Mary on the left, Jesus on the right, equally contrasted, female and male, human and divine, but equal, at least in their humanity. It intrigued me the picture was often placed above the matrimonial bed, hovering, as it were, over the activities below. The Italian woman no longer finds fulfilment only in the home. Gender issues will be crunchingly brought home at the looming papal election with its all-male cast when the educated Italian Catholic woman across the world in the Italian diaspora will ask herself, “if I am not part of this show, why should I be part of the whole show?”

In conclusion, it seems to me that both the Australian Church and Italian community are handcuffed to their past but the Church more so. This conference marks a new beginning. Diana Ruzzene-Grollo heads her chapter on religion, “to judge, one must listen to both bells tolling”. The Italian community must demand participation and representation. They can work together in moving from a destructive to a productive diversity, a productive diversity within the Church and the community that incorporates the principles of flexibility, multiplicity, devolution and negotiation (Cope & Kalantzis 1997). What is lacking is imagination, the imagination to imagine new and creative pathways, new solutions, new ways of acting. And courage. Be not afraid. If it is not a sin to go back into the past, it is a sin to stay in the past.

My Italian Education

Desmond O'Grady, Writer and Journalist

I had already booked for Europe where the first stop was to be Naples, when I had my initial experience of Italian. I assigned an essay to the class I was teaching and asked a boy from Foggia to write on the blackboard the declination of the Italian verb 'to be'. 'Io sono, tu sei, lui è'. I can still remember how alien were those words which have since become familiar.

Some months later I reached Naples with a friend and hired, for the first and last time, a car. It took us towards the Amalfi coast. In Australia I had not considered money useful for much other than buying books. Bound for Amalfi, however, I saw beautiful villas in magnificent settings and I understood why people wanted to make money.

Back in Naples I enjoyed the minestrone of life which I described through the reactions of an Australian girl Sandy, in a short story in my collection *Valid for All Countries*: "[...] she could not linger long enough in the tight-knit streets where all life seemed to sizzle like the food in open-air frying pans. Everything was mixed with everything else: people made a perpetual feast of their poverty. Sandy felt she had discovered how life must have been before it was sorted into neat, stagnant compartments. In the previous ports-of-call from Sydney, she had been a curious tourist but here she was looking for something of her own. It was the sudden explosion of perspectives, the earnest of an alternative which exhilarated her."

What Sandy enjoyed about Naples was the opposite of what Enid Lyons, wife of the Prime Minister Joseph Lyons, had admired in 1935 when she had found the city "beautiful, clean and orderly." Sandy wanted something different from what was simply clean and orderly in Australia. There trains had always run on time. Sandy was seeking an alternative to, or at least an enrichment of, the Anglo-Saxendom she knew.

A further phase in my Italian education came when I was thumbing a ride to Rome from near Naples. I quizzed a man seated outside his apartment complex about the German army's wartime behaviour there which, at the end, had been ferocious. I was favorably impressed by his lack of animosity, his tolerant "war-is-war and now it's over" attitude. However when he spoke of his English mother-in-law who was staying

with him, he complained vehemently, which exemplified the Italian absorption in the particular.

Two years later I married a Roman and returned to Australia with new eyes because Italy had been both more antique than white Australia but also more modern. The economic miracle was getting underway.

Five years later, for family reasons, I returned with my wife and son to Rome. I began to look into those who had moved between the two countries and presented my findings in my book *Correggio Jones and the Runaways*.

I realized that the links between Australia and Italy went far back. Sometimes however, they are forgotten or suppressed. For instance Carlo Catani, who among many other things planned St Kilda Road and the Alexandra Gardens, is commemorated in a bust on the St Kilda foreshore which he reclaimed but it does not mention that he was a Tuscan. Sometimes the links are forgotten almost entirely as is the case with the five aboriginal boys who, in the 19th century under ecclesiastical sponsorship, studied in Italy. Four of them lie there in unmarked graves.

It has been a two-way traffic: Nellie Melba had an Italian singing coach while Luciano Pavarotti says he learned much from Joan Sutherland. Italian television serials have emulated Australian soapies. The two-way traffic can become a circuit as is illustrated, appropriately, through Guglielmo Marconi. When on 26 March 1920, the Bolognese Marconi switched on Sydney Town Hall lights from his ship moored off Genoa, he spurred Australian research into radio communications. This influenced the body which became the CSIRO radio astronomy unit. Half a century after Marconi's experiment, this unit aided the development of radio astronomy at Bologna university.

The exchange takes place also on the imaginative level. Count Zaccaria Seriman, in the 18th century, peopled an imaginary southern land where the lawyers are dishonest, the doctors ignorant, and the women false. Australia? No, he had in mind Venice where he lived, but was also using the new geographical discoveries, not as proof that the world was opening up, but, rather, that it was closing, there was no utopia.

Martin Boyd had lived his last 17 years in Italy without forgetting the Melbourne where he had grown up. As he was lying in the hospital bed where he died, he took from the small leather suitcase stamped M.a'B.B. on a bedside chair, a photograph of the family's Yarra Glen property. He had told me that as a boy he had asked his father there: "Why can't we go to Italy where they have those marvelous blue skies?"

Italy has been a dream for many other Australians such as Correggio Jones, a character Victor Daly invented for a poem on Australians so enamoured of Italy that they cannot relate to the reality before them:

Correggio Jones an artist was
 Of pure Australian race
 But native subjects scorned because
 They were too commonplace.

Correggio stayed true to his love / obsession with Italy but failed as an artist:

His body dwells in Gander Flat
 His soul's in Italy.

Unlike Correggio Jones, Martin Boyd did go to Italy and became a considerable writer about both Italy and Australia. He found Italy a treat not only for the eyes but a tonic for the soul as he details in his travel book "Much Else in Italy" which claimed that, although the spiritual world has been destroyed wherever puritans and materialists have ruled the roost, it persisted in Italy. He argued that the pagan gods survived in Italy because redeemed by the Christian God, an interpretation still relevant.

I must backtrack here to my first sojourn in Italy and another aspect of my Italian education, the daily papers.

At that time, each page three of dailies, which were all broadsheets, was devoted to "higher journalism", which could be travel pieces, "think" pieces, cultural commentary, essays or fiction. This gave me a new concept of journalism. I was beginning to write plays, and also short stories and articles for literary magazines, but previously had not thought there was much possibility in newspapers, for the kind of writing which interested me.

On my return to Australia, I tried to enter journalism but was blocked because I had not done an apprenticeship and, if anything, the writing I had published in literary quarterlies was considered a disadvantage. But then I joined the newly established Sydney *Observer* which provided an outlet for this kind of writing, as its founding editor Donald Horne recounts in his book *Into the Open*.

By the time I returned to Italy again, hoping to be able to live by my writing, Italians were hell bent on abolishing their Third Pages as old hat and instead they adopted, particularly in weeklies, a *Time*-style which

quickly became formulaic, and in dailies were intent on separating fact from comment.

But for better or worse, Italy had influenced my idea of journalism. However reporting from Italy has shown me how much Italian life does not get into Australian papers.

If the question is framed as 'how is Italy presented in the Australian press?' I think the answer is inadequately. But this is true of other countries also, and of Australia in the Italian press.

What is striking is the popularity Italy and Italians have acquired in Australia. It seems one has to get outside Italy to see its merits as living there is often exasperating. Perhaps it is because of the release from bureaucratic and other difficulties in their homeland, that Italians do so well when they transfer elsewhere.

The popularity of Italy in Australia is partly because the community of Italian origins is numerous and well established and the human links between the two countries are now substantial. But I feel another factor is that Italy does not present an image as a strong State as does, for instance, France. Strong states are easier to respect than to love but Italy seems just Italians, 60 per cent of the western world's cultural riches, numerous archaeological sites including more ancient Greek remains than in Greece and more Byzantine remains than in Turkey, fashion and food which are both examples of the elemental made elegant.

It has an immediate appeal to the mind and body, to the eye and the heart.

However some Italians are not altogether happy about the riches of its past: at least since the Risorgimento, they see them as an obstacle to contemporary Italians being taken seriously. Moreover the growing consumerist hedonism can confuse a sensual culture with a Catholic base such as that of Italy.

Some Italian Australians worry about their identity and their relationship to Italian culture. But to a degree, Italians in Italy have similar problems. In Italy, the challenge of modernizing without damaging the heritage, has a special weight. Discovering how it is met should be an important part of my continuing Italian education.

Identity and Community: What Is It To Be Australian?

Professor Mary Kalantzis

Can I say firstly how delighted, genuinely delighted and a little surprised I was when I was invited to be part of this conference.

Being a daughter of Greek immigrants I usually get invited to conferences that say Greek Australian rather than Italian Australian, so I was really very, very pleased to be considered worthy to be included in the conversations that have been going on over the last few days here. So thank you very much for inviting me.

I would also like to declare my blood connection to Italy in that the grandmother of my two children is Italian. I think many of us in this life can claim such relationships which make our lives richer and more complex. So that is about all I am going to say about being Italian really, and the rest will be about the broader issue on the program for today which is identity and community.

I do want to congratulate the organisers of the conference. It is an inaugural conference and that it has as its theme the idea of 'searching' I think is important because what we do as humans - and everything that I heard so far this morning confirms this - is about the search that all of us make for sustenance, for recognition, for purpose and for love. It is a feature of being human to search those things out.

Also I think what is interesting about the conference is the way that the three days have been organised and I want to congratulate the conference organisers for the themes chosen. To think about the future rather than contemplate only our heritage and the past is very important. To ask first, what the future is going to be for Italian Australians and for relations of people distinguished by difference in our country.

Secondly, and equally important, if you are thinking about the future you have to think about education, but not in the formal sense of institutions but in the broader sense of the way that we all teach and learn from each other. Thirdly, of course, is the question of identity and community. As an educator I can tell you there are two things that impact on performance, and they are: identity and time spent on a task. They are the two things that make a difference; being clear about your identity and putting energy into that task produces whatever performance goals that you have.

I have interpreted today's theme, "Identity in Community", in the following way. What is it to be an Australian? I put that first because we are living in this country and we are citizens of this country. What is it to be Australian given our diversity? And what is it that we know about each other. And lastly, but for me absolutely critical: what is the relationship between the way we are 'socialised' and the way that we interrelate with other people who are 'socialised' differently?

The first thing I want to say in the context of this interpretation of today's theme is that no one makes a choice about their identity. No one makes a deal with God or any other superior force that one believes in to say: "I want to be born in Greece or Italy or Australia or Ireland or wherever." No one says: "I want to be white or blue or pink or yellow." Nobody says: "I want my mother tongue to be English or Japanese." These are matters of fate, they are not things that we can either be proud of or ashamed of simply because of the fact that they happened to us. They are just things that are there as part of what we have to come to terms with.

What we do choose, however, is how we deal with that inheritance, how we deal with that socialisation involved and how we engage with others to whom fate has brought some other socialisation, and what we do when we come into contact with them. The question of identity is not just about our personal relationship and our personal identity but what you might call 'relationship-identity'; how is it that we relate to other people? And indeed, hyphenated or not, Italian-Australian or Greek-Australian or Irish-Australian or whatever, what is the nature of our relationships is the key question.

The second point I want to make in relation to that more general issue about identity is that in human history, both in time and place, we have had very different ways of relating to our various identities. I won't go through all the different responses but you will know that at different times and in different places, "extermination" has been one way we have dealt with others. That seemed to be the thing we had to do: to get rid of the other. At other times we thought what we needed to do was to exclude others from the realm of what was ours. At other times still we thought assimilation perhaps was the way you moved forward, at other times integration; and in Australia and elsewhere today we have some form of pluralism which we call multiculturalism. So, in terms of good and evil, human beings are capable of anything, they can respond in all sorts of ways to others, to humanity. That is the nature of our species: to be creative in our actions and our societies.

Now I want to take a little journey that you are all familiar with, and

consider how Australia has reacted to its complicated history of relating to its human diversity. The indigenous peoples were here they say from the beginning of time. From the beginning, when humans were put on the planet. The indigenous peoples themselves were marked by great differences as communities and these differences remained over many, many years. They retained their distinctive family groupings and developed complex ways of interrelating for the exchange of goods, for partners and for sharing or using of resources.

One might say that they had a kind of pluralism, an early pluralism, one that we have not quite understood or have not quite done enough work to recognise how it operated. In fact we tend to homogenise the indigenous experience as if it were about one people. And yet we know the data suggests that indigenous people did deal with differences of language and custom and behaviour in very complicated ways. So it can be said that in our own history in this continent, there has been for a long time an experience of pluralism.

It is ever contained in that word 'Australia', in the continent that we came to give that Spanish name to. It was in the first convict settlement too, and if you think about that - how did people deal with their diversity then? You would have to say there was a strict separation between the gaolers and the gaolled. Even though they spoke the same language and they might have come from the same background, we know there was some difference there; you could almost say that there was an 'apartheid system' in the way in which the community related in that very early phase of populating our country with Europeans.

This period was then followed as we all know by a time that we might call 'free settlement'. Others might call it something else but we can say for the moment that it was a free settlement and that it was a period in which there was a very *laissez faire* attitude to people's differences. At that time, anyone could come here, anyone who wanted to work or anyone we could bring here to work. We were willing and happy to bring them here and they had to engage and survive together whether they were Irish or Cornish or Greek or Italian or Indian or Chinese or Pacific Islander. You could almost say that we had what we now call 'globalisation', in the *laissez faire* attitude that prevailed that free movement of people, the free movement of goods and the attempt to create an economy here based on the labour of people from all over the world.

But in 1901, when we decided to become a nation and to federate, to become a nation in a modern sense, or a relatively modern sense because this idea has only existed for about 400 years or so. In order to do that,

we closed, narrowed, the idea of what it was to belong to the community that might be called Australian; and as you all know we described ourselves as “White” and “British”. That was the way in which we declared ourselves in 1901. At the same time, in terms of the community, we also said that we were going to be a fair and egalitarian society.

You might want to call that moment - in terms of the way that we related to difference - our moment of “ethno-nationalism” where you determine a particular language, a particular cultural orientation that all must aspire to and you ensure that those who remain in the community whether they are Irish or anything else, are encouraged to assimilate as much as possible within the ‘ethno-nationalist’ ideal of what it is to be Australian.

If I move the story closer to the 50 or so years after the Second World War, we see that we recognised that we needed more people in this country, that we were nervous about our place in the sun and how we might survive here and that we introduced the mass immigration program under which we went from 7 million people - that is all we were in 1945 - to 18 million people today: a dramatic change. No country in the world has made that kind of change in its population base except Israel. No other country has taken people from so many sources. It was a tremendous experiment and one which brings us here together today.

But once that experiment had started we had to re-think the identity of the community as a whole. The identity of 1901 which was bright, white and British and in which everyone had to assimilate into did not seem to fit the people that were becoming part of the Australian nation in 1948; the year in which we got something that we now cherish called Australian citizenship. We did not actually have Australian citizenship before 1948. In fact, as many of you also know, we did not have Australian passports till 1949 and this came as a consequence of Greeks, Italians, Lebanese and others coming into this country who were not white and British but who were to be Australian. Consequently, we had to reconsider what it was to be Australian. The diverse people we invited to be part of the ‘good’ country meant we had to rethink who ‘we’ were.

Our immigration policy at that time was aiming at 1 per cent growth through immigration and 1 per cent through natural birth. Unfortunately we have never achieved either of those targets. In fact, we are not good at having babies and we are not really good at attracting - or we were not so good at attracting - the kind of immigrants that we wanted at the time. So we had to go further afield in looking for

immigrants and in particular we went to Asia. But in order to do that we had to go back to 1901, to look at the way we described ourselves as a white nation, to look at the legislation that supported Federation like the White Australia Policy and to decide that it was no longer relevant for our nation.

Indeed, in the 1960s we started dismantling the White Australia Policy and we allowed people who are of Turkish background, of Vietnamese background, and so on, to become Australians. Thus, by mid 1960s we had to look over our shoulder and notice that the indigenous people had also been excluded from what it was to be Australian in 1901 and needed to re-enter our understanding of what it was to participate in our society. And of course the referendum of 1967 did that; it allowed us to count indigenous people as part of the population.

During that period what we see essentially is Australia's outward looking movement. Its evolution in the way in which people understood community was still based around the notion of assimilation, a radical assimilation. I like to point this out to because in 1901, right at the beginning of nation hood, we did not think anybody else could be like 'us'. 'They', the non British, could not be like us, and we wanted a good society. In fact, I would like to remind you of what our first Prime Minister, Edward Barton, said in 1901- and I apologise if it embarrasses some people or shocks them, but he did not mean to be a bad person when he said this, he was just repeating the sentiments of the time:

“The doctrine of the equality of man was never intended to apply to the equality of the Englishman and the Chinaman. There is a deep set difference and we see no prospect and no promise of it ever being effaced. Nothing in this world can put these two races upon an equality. Nothing we can do by cultivation, by refinement or by anything else will make some races equal to others.”

This was a speech delivered in Parliament in 1901. When he made that speech, what Barton wanted for our country was a society of equality but at that time it was imagined that equality could only be achieved if we were the same. You had to be the same to be equal and in order to ensure the good life for those who were to be Australians, assimilation seemed to be important, or excluding people who could not be the same.

But after the war and after our mass immigration, we did away with the White Australia Policy, and the 1967 referendum allowed indigenous people to be recognised as being part of our country. It was not a long time ago that we made these dramatic changes, when we allowed those

people called Aliens and Natives to be like 'us'. Once you do that the concept of who "us" is becomes something else itself. It broadens out.

And of course in the last 60 years - and all of you have been part of this as I have been - we have been struggling and working hard on the better side of our natures, on our sense of 'a fair go' to create an inclusive society. This has been enabled by everything from the Women's Movement to the Gay Rights Movement to Reconciliation, to Multiculturalism - all these things that some people now call politically correct, irrelevant, divisive things. But they were not that, that was not what their spirit was about, their purpose. These forces were about introducing the social conditions that allowed for the situation where you did not have to be the same to be equal, where equality was not determined according to sameness. It is what I have called, others have also called, moving forward to a 'civil pluralism' or what I and my colleague Professor Cahill has called 'productive diversity'.

So, we have actually made a tremendous change but we must recognise, and I want to emphasise this, that it has been a recent thing. It has been a change in our own lifetimes; and we are all aware, without my elaborating on it, of the kind of fragility that still exists around those things even though for many of us in our ordinary life pluralism seems to have become part of the way we understand how we do things. This is why identity and community are really critical issues and I am so pleased you have brought them into this forum.

Nevertheless, let me add, that you cannot talk in this country about identity and community without coming to terms with what reconciliation might mean in our country and with what multiculturalism might mean, even though they are both words which people find complicated. For example. Driving here this morning in my car, listening to ABC talkback, I heard a caller ring in to say that what is happening this weekend with the reconciliation walk is something that a lot of people find offensive, that multiculturalism is something that is destroying the fabric of our society. And of course the caller pointed to Fiji saying, "Look, if you let these indigenous people go too far, look what they do." But I think the crisis in Fiji exists because the principles of civic pluralism and the principles of productive diversity are not ones that the Fijian community has yet been able to weave into the fabric of the way it operates.

I would like to say also that the time has come when those of us who were invited here as immigrants, or those of us who are not part of whatever it is imagined is the dominant group to no longer feel we have to keep proving our worth. We do not have to keep saying our food is

tasty, our dances are passionate, our art is fabulous, that we do make a contribution. We should feel we can just be. That we can be messy and disruptive and lazy or whatever and still be regarded as a citizen of the community. I think what we continually do when we come to events like this is try to prove our value, the value of our particular group.

You hardly ever go to a conference where somebody of English background gets up and tells you why the English language is important, why English food is fabulous, why English values are the most important. They do not have to do that; it is kind of just out there. But we come together each time as if we have to convince somebody that these things - our language, food, values - are aspects of creativity, of humanity, and have to be proven to be that all the time.

So I think we still have a long, long journey ahead of us and a big task in front of us to work actively to ensure that if we do actually believe that our heritage is something that is a feature of our creativity and not simply to be continually assessed as a good or bad thing (although some actions can be put in that sense but certainly not whole cultures), then we need to ensure, among other things (which I shall mention), that we have an inclusive constitution. Recently we missed the opportunity to do this but it is not off the agenda; we missed it and we have to reflect on the why of it? Why were we too scared to put up a preamble that was inclusive? Why were we too scared to point out that still in our constitution, at this moment, there is an article that says that if you are of particular race and are excluded from voting at a State level, you can be excluded from being counted at a Federal level? Why did we think that the constitution that was formulated in 1901, is sufficient for the kind of nation that we are today? (We also have to remember that Franca Arena started the ARM, a good Italian woman. Not Malcolm Turnbull.)

Other things that we also have to strive for if we believe that our heritage is intrinsically worthy and relevant, and does not have to keep proving itself, is to ensure we have public institutions and laws that create and uphold the conditions that allow for inclusivity. We have to ensure that our education system prepares all children and all adults (because education is a lifelong process now), to deal with local and global diversity and, we have to ensure that our sporting, our artistic, our religious and our cultural life includes the diversity of our history and people.

I put it to you that we have a duty and a responsibility as individuals to ensure that we are comfortably part of a community that has multiple identities and that we have the skills to negotiate our differences

without necessarily having to become like each other. That is not to say that when I put this case that I do not accept that English is the lingua franca of this country but, I do think we do need to recognise that all the other languages that are here, indigenous and introduced, are not only good for us as individuals in cultural terms, but are also good for us in terms of our economy, locally and globally.

I also want to echo some of the points made earlier by others here that our heritages are not only part of our individual community here but increasingly part of international diasporas, whether it is the English language diaspora or the Italian language diaspora or the Greek language diaspora, and now, the indigenous diaspora that is forming. These are important, powerful diasporas that not only give individuals pleasure but are the basis of forming economic and political networks and other kinds of networks that are going to become more and more significant as time goes on.

None of these things that I am saying to you are platitudes; they might sound that way because we only have 15 minutes in which to put these issues to you. But I want to stress that what we have achieved in the last fifty years, where we have come to in Australia in terms of dealing with indigenous people, and the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous, between immigrant and settler, did not happen by chance. It did not happen just because we live together and somehow we kind of evolved naturally. We made active choices at political and structural institutioned levels. We actually intervened in a very particular way and set up systems and dialogues that were very important.

I want to say to you now - even though this generation, my generation, your generation is quite comfortable and we can remove ourselves from the pain of being new immigrants, or the pain of being poor - our country has strayed from the robust path that we were on in negotiating our diversity. I do not have time to elaborate on everything but just very briefly let us consider the three year status of refugees that we have agreed to (and Mrs Hanson said, five years was suitable but our government said three years). Consequently, those who have properly attained the status of refugees, are only permitted to stay three years in our country. Consider also, the internment of asylum seekers and the way that they are being dealt with, the negativity over immigration policy, the discriminatory visa system, the two-year exclusion of new immigrants from social services, the embarrassment over the apology to the stolen generation, the land rights legislation (which human rights bodies have called racist) and, the regional perception that we have returned to a White Australia

mentality in which we imagine ourselves as the arbiter in the region. These are all things that affect us today and will affect our children tomorrow.

Our public leadership, I put to you, has either gone quiet on these matters or is opposed to the spirit of a robust, publicly inclusive society. We know that tomorrow is a test of that spirit in Sydney with the Corroboree and the march across the Bridge. And I put to you that all Australians should be participating in those events, all Australians. And particularly those of us from immigrant background should be taking a leading role - we cannot sit here and just say we want the Italian heritage to be recognised in Australia. We would be hypocrites if we did not also sit with our brothers and sisters to ensure that those people of indigenous background - in their own home, in their own land - can speak with dignity of their own culture and their own heritage. I think we have to be part of that.

So, to conclude, I want to refer to the idea of identity; and, to speak anecdotally. Last night I was driving home listening to Rachael Kohn - on 'The Spirit of Things', program. She was interviewing an Iman I think from Brooklyn, or somewhere in America, and they were talking about the influence of Malcolm X and the nation of Islam. At one point, Rachael said to him: "But you are black and you're in Australia, here to talk to Australian Muslims - what could it be that you share with them?" His reply, without any hesitation, was: "But I'm an American and the Islamic people in Australia are immigrants." I thought what a beautiful answer. She was referring to him as black and implying somehow that he was different in his country because of his blackness but he felt he was an American and these people in Australia that he came to talk to were immigrants. They were a marginal people and he was going to tell them how to negotiate the mainstream. I thought it was a perfect example of the complexity of 'identity' and the multi-layered nature of 'identity'.

I want to say to you that we do not need to be scared or fearful of complexity or that we need to be scared of the multi-layered nature of 'identity'. Identity has at least four categories: there is personal identity, which is something that is important to you which comes from your socialisation and your active preferences (some of that though you cannot help, right, it is there). Then there are the group identities which are the communities you belong to and the communities that you are forced to move in and out of (and that requires a whole set of other skills).

Thirdly there is our national identity which remains complex in this country, I hope, is evolving. (I hope it has not locked onto what is now being

called 'the battler' as the new ethnic type. I hope we are still open to negotiating it in the inclusive way that we should.) But, increasingly, also we have a global identity. We do not only just link in to one particular part of the world. Not only do we have the diasporas of the interests and languages that we belong to, but increasingly, they are also a feature of 'identity'.

You cannot talk about identity without slipping backwards and forwards between all sorts of influences, without having them overlapping and considering everything that involves. We need the skills, the training, the sensibilities to deal with that and that's what we have to focus on as Australians.

We need events like this; events like this are really important when we come together with the purpose of just reflecting, of listening to each other, for the purpose also of disagreeing. It is just wonderful. I am so busy but one of the rewards of my kind of work is being at an event like this, for a couple of hours, because I was able to listen to two papers and I am able to perhaps share a little with you of my own ideas.

I think it is very important that we do not return to a narrow ethnic nationalism as existed in 1901 - and there is some danger that it might occur, particularly if we think sport and war are the two things that bind us (which seem to be the icons that are being repropounded). We need a strong multiculturalism, we need not to be scared of that term just because a minority of our population has labelled it as being divisive and forcibly accused it of squandering our resources.

It is the only term we have at the moment for marking that pathway that we have come from and that we are on. But we do need to stretch the concept for it ought to be inclusive of all people; indigenous people, the British, Irish, Italians, everyone. It does have to be worked on to become much more inclusive and it needs to be backed by our leaders, by the education system, and by our law. If we can, and do return to that pathway, it will strengthen our economy, our defence, our foreign policy, our education system and cement our social cohesion. It is absolutely critical for the kind of democracy that we have that civic pluralism be the point of departure.

So, I want to finish on that note and thank you for allowing me to be part of this event today.

Prejudice Sub Judice.

Professor, Cav. Uff. Giovanni Carsaniga

During eight years in Melbourne as Vaccari Professor of Italian and Director of the Institute for Immigration and Ethnic Studies at La Trobe, and since, I have said and written enough for my ideas to be reasonably well known: but, in case you do not know me, here is in a nutshell what I think of racism. I am absolutely for multiculturalism and against racism in any form. I do not condone social discrimination based on unjustified bias. Let me stress *social* and *unjustified*, because some discrimination is justifiable: it stands to reason, for instance, that deaf people would not be productively employed as sound engineers; or that paraplegics cannot give their best as steeplejacks. Racism is unjustified prejudice against people based on their assumed racial difference from us. The assumption is mistaken because there is no such thing as 'racial difference'. All human beings can interbreed. It is inconsistent to use surface genetic traits, like skin colour or eye shape, as markers of 'race', but not red-hair, blue-eyes or height. Racism has definite roots and causes. Ignoring or suppressing them is no use at all. Unless we understand them we will never get rid of racism. We cannot defeat it by restricting our outlook only to ideas deemed to be politically correct; on the contrary, we must open up our outlook to include the possibility that our 'incorrect' reactions may be altogether normal, that our generalisations may indeed be applicable to particular cases, that our fears may be used constructively.

Fear of what is different is a valuable element of survival, allowing animals to adapt and escape predation. It has also sharpened the human instinct over the millennia. It is a perfectly normal, even healthy instinct, and I doubt whether it can be removed. But it must be tempered by a realistic appraisal of the situation: after all gazelles do not flee from sated lions. People with distinctive somatic differences like skin colour or eye shape are much easier to identify as objects of dislike, but the real trigger is social and economic stress, not their appearance. Let us imagine the following scenario. We are cosily settled in our socially homogeneous neighbourhood from which we cannot afford to move because we are considered dispensable by those who run the economy. Not unnaturally we wish things to stay as they are, and we find the influx of any aliens alarming because we do not know how they may

threaten us. In this situation we would easily mistrust newcomers who look more or less like us, let alone those who do not. To dislike dark-skinned or slit-eyed people is in itself no more or less legitimate or irrational than to dislike red-haired or short people. We are not obliged to like any persons or groups. We must nevertheless treat people fairly even when we think we have reasons not to like them. If we do not like red-haired people in general, that is OK provided we give ourselves the chance to like, perhaps even love, particular redheads once we get to know them. What we must learn to do is simple: instead of pretending to repress our hostility by saying: "I have nothing against these aliens, but...", we must acknowledge it and say: "I do not like these aliens, but...".

Discrimination is easier to justify on cultural than on genetic grounds. That is how many people deny they are racist: "We dislike some people", they say, "because they are culturally, not physically, different. After all they cannot help it if they are black or slit-eyed: but they can strive to integrate, be assimilated, make themselves inconspicuous, blend with the background, instead of speaking an incomprehensible language, practising a heathen religion, cooking smelly food, wearing different clothes, making loud music". Such generalisations about the alleged characteristics of certain groups are known as cultural stereotypes. They are no worse in themselves than any other generalisations we use all the time: we do not mind them when they are positive. Australians object to being described as beer-swilling rednecks affected by cultural cringe, but like the equally generic image of fair dinkum blokes devoted to sport and unswervingly loyal to their mates.

Cultural stereotypes abound in fairy tales, in drama such as the *Commedia dell'arte* where they are embodied in the classical masks, in western films, in TV serials. Where they apply to groups of people, they often exist for very good historical reasons. Let me mention a few. In the Middle Ages, for instance, Christians considered lending money against interest a capital sin, but nobody minded if Jews did it since they were going to hell anyway: that helped many Jews to become prominent bankers and financiers. Literacy was historically higher in Protestant communities where Bible-reading was a duty than in Catholic countries where it was not. Racism is necessarily part and parcel of colonialism: that is why colonially successful cultures like the English tend to be racist, and vice-versa. Aliens do indeed speak languages we do not understand. Sexism is still a serious problem in patriarchal societies: go and ask women in Afghanistan or Sudan.

Cultural stereotyping is a form of prejudice, but prejudice, that is, an opinion held in advance of confirmatory evidence, is difficult to remove because it lies at the basis of the whole of human knowledge. The whole of science depends on probable assumptions based on characteristics which appear to be shared by members of a set or category. No scientific theory is possible unless one makes assumptions before they can be experimentally or rationally tested, in other words unless one 'prejudges the issue'; but no assumptions are probable unless and until they are confirmed by evidence; and even then they are valid only so long as they are not disproved. One of the fundamental principles of scientific inquiry, established at least since the eighteenth century, is that we cannot generalise from even repeated observations of particular phenomena: we can only generalise on the basis of a tested theory, and only until that theory is replaced by a better one.

Prejudice is a weak basis for social discrimination because more often than not it is disproved by evidence, or based on a wrong interpretation of it. One must be most careful how one establishes and interprets the data. Let us take as an example the alleged propensity to gang violence of certain migrant groups. It is a well known fact that the countries where these migrants come from suffered from civil war and other forms of violent conflict over a period of decades. Generations of young people were victims of violence, were trained to use violence (by 'Western' military advisers, when it suited 'Western' governments), and in the prevailing situation of lawlessness had often to resort to violence and gang loyalty as the only means of staying alive. It would be surprising if a lack of sensitivity to violence was not a part of the make-up of some of them. It would be stupid to ignore that members of particular groups are prone to this kind of problem: but identifying them is not enough. The management of the problem cannot be left to the affected groups but depends upon the willingness of the community as a whole (and that includes the affected groups) to help in a specific culture-oriented and socially sensitive way. That means accepting that a small minority of identifiable misfits are given to illegal pursuits, precisely in order to reject the assumption that the deplorable traits of this minority are part of the culture or behaviour of all members of their group. Some usually self-appointed spokespersons claim that blaming some members amounts to casting a slur on all the group's members. By doing so they give credence to the very obnoxious mechanism of guilt by association they ought to repudiate. They should, on the contrary, proclaim what statistics and research prove ad nauseam, that crime is low among migrants, and, as elsewhere, has mostly economic causes

(see, for instance the recent *Kebabs, Kids, Cops And Crime* by Scott Poynting and Jock Collins): the clearest demonstration of this fact is given by identifying the very few members of migrant groups who are not law-abiding citizens.

Granted that preconceived hypotheses and assumptions have a role, how do we counteract unthinking prejudice and fight racism? We cannot expect our political system to do it for us. It is easy for the mainstream parties to deplore right-wingers in the New Territory, Queensland or Western Australia without bothering to understand that the targets favoured by rednecks (multiculturalism, alien migrants, the Aborigines, the gun-laws reformers, the greenies, the intellectuals) are the scapegoats for real societal ills (unemployment, poverty, defective public health services, precarious land management, crime, the drug trade and its repression, inequitable taxation, and so on). The racists' fears are no less palpable because they are misplaced; and to dismiss them without actually doing something about their root causes is facile and irresponsible. Yet governments in living memory have been consistently unable to allay those fears: indeed they have often manipulated them for factional ends, and added to them by participating in hot and cold wars, starting senseless arms races, condoning the waste of natural and human resources, promoting economic rationalism. Those who accuse others of prejudice seem to forget that prejudice has been for so long, and still is, the staples of political propaganda. In order to keep themselves in power in spite of their multiple failures, politicians of all persuasions have always pandered to their voters' fears (of the Yellow Peril, the Red Menace, Wall Street, the Bomb, the vagaries of the economy, Popery, Protestantism, Muslim Fundamentalism, the Jewish Conspiracy etc.).

Democracy, as we commonly understand it, is possibly the least harmful form of government, but it has serious structural faults. It does not guarantee the selection and election of the best candidates. There is not one single country in the world, including ours, untainted by the evil of political corruption, which is caused more by the system than by the moral failings of any individual. It could hardly be otherwise when electoral campaigns cost millions of dollars, necessarily raised by becoming indebted to the wealthy and powerful who will later exact their political price. That inevitably prevents our elected representatives from acting in the interest of the poor and powerless who are the majority. In theory democracies are based on a polarity of government and opposition, with distinct aims and approaches. In practice there is no real opposition. The so-called 'two sides of politics' are effectively

only one side when it comes to subordinating everything to the whims of the omnipotent goddess Economy, making the national interest play second fiddle to globalisation, taking great care not to antagonise capital. The political leaders of old led by proclaiming their ideas and principles; those of today depend on opinion polls for their policies and pay advertising consultants to inject some superficial differences in their electoral programmes which they keep carefully under wraps until the last moment. All they seem to care about is how best to elbow each other out of the political middle ground on the assumption that their electors are not interested in real issues and ethical principles, and do not wish any radical proposals to disturb their inertia or complacency. Communism and Socialism, which once channelled the anger of the undertrodden, have practically vanished: thus the lunatic fringes of politics take on the role of pseudo-oppositions from which they derive some sort of legitimacy.

What politicians cannot give us, culture and education can. Let us not forget that not so long ago the cultures we settlers come from embraced ideas most of us (alas not all!) have now discarded as evil. Here are a few: women are inherently inferior, some women are witches and ought to be burned at the stake, people who worship differently from us are heretics who also ought to be burned at the stake, the plague is spread by scoundrels who go around smearing door posts with a poisonous ointment, disease or infirmity come as a punishment for sins, slavery is natural and ordained by God, the poor deserve to be poor because they are lazy, animals and plants and other natural resources are there for human beings to exploit as they please: and so on. Culture, a word which has farming connotations, implies both concentration and variety, continuity and change, deep roots and deciduous leaves, long-lived seeds and perishable fruit. It also implies the gradual elimination of weaknesses and bad traits from crops. I am against culture maintenance because the only way to maintain culture is to let it grow and develop, expose it to other influences, test it against various challenges, select what is good and worth keeping, and reject what is bad. The way we got rid of those pernicious traits in our cultural make-up was by coming into contact with cultures and individuals that had already rejected them. In other words, we did it by coming into contact with different and more productive ways of looking at things, by experiencing alienness. Assimilation and integration are poor substitutes for real, open, cultural contact and exchange. Assimilation means that newcomers ought to become similar to us when it might be better for us to become similar to them: it would have been preferable

for our country if the new settlers had shown the natural environment the same reverence and respect shown by its original inhabitants. Integration is a slightly less authoritarian concept: it allows newcomers to be slightly different provided they fit in. Neither touches upon the question of who actually are the newcomers. This country, for instance, has been inhabited for upwards of forty thousand years, but the ruling class of this country is made up of the descendants of people who have been here for just about two hundred or less.

We cannot defeat racism by pretending that other groups and people are not different from us, because they are. We should not encourage those idiotic forms of mealy-mouthed political correctness which merely re-name the objects of our fear or dislike with some more or less ingenious euphemisms: the new names soon become tainted with the same discreditable connotation as the terms they replace and have to be changed again. The progress of the slaves in America from coons and niggers, through Negroes, coloureds and blacks, to Afro-Americans or African Americans, has not been matched by a corresponding progress in equity and social justice. No one becomes less disabled for being called 'differently able'. Equity and justice are achieved not through uniformity but through selectivity, affirmative action, compensation, recognising difference or disability where it exists by catering for its special needs. That can best be done by making separate provisions, instead of pretending that everybody should in all cases have access to the same resources and facilities (that people in wheelchairs, for instance, should be able to board trams and buses instead of being allocated special taxis, which would be more cost-effective). We must realise that, in spite of what is optimistically stated by various declarations of human rights, human beings are not equal. If they were, there would be little difficulty in treating every one of them the same as every one else. And that would be bad, because people come in all shapes, sizes, colours, levels of physical strength and mental ability, degrees of likeability, needs and aspirations. We must own and take charge of our inevitable perception of other people's differences, and make it true and proper. It is this very perception which will finally enable us to boldly transform our fear of what is unlike us into a creative celebration of that diversity which is the basis of multiculturalism, and a natural, indispensable, desirable ingredient of our own cultural progress. Instead of saying: "I have nothing against people who are different from me, but I prefer not to have them living next door", we should say: "I am naturally prejudiced against my neighbours because they are different from me, but precisely for that reason I will test my

prejudices by trying to know them better. If my prejudices are confirmed in my neighbours' case, I will remember that one cannot induce a general principle about their group from even repeated observations. If my prejudices are disproved, I may learn something from my neighbours that will expand my cultural horizons and make me a better person. In any case, whether I like them or not, I will treat them with the fairness and equity which every human being deserves".

Day Three Session Two

Workshop 1 Cultural Identity and Community Life

*Maria Pallotta Chiarolli, Vittorio Perri, Vicky Guglielmo & Luciano
Susanna Iuliano*

Lara Palombo

Workshop 2 Contribution of Religion and Education to the
Development of the Italian Australian Identity

Anna Maria Barbaro

Anthony Cappello

Massimo Vodola

John Hajek

Workshop 3 Italian Australian Arts and Culture

Franco Cavarra

Vince Marotta

Carlo Carli

“You Can’t be Gay, You’re Italian.”

*Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli, Vittorio Perri, Vicky Guglielmo,
Luciano*

Introduction

This paper will explore what are often considered to be sensitive and controversial issues being lived and experienced by many Italian-Australians who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or HIV-positive. It will explore how being Italian, being same-sex attracted, and possibly being HIV-positive require the negotiating and interweaving of regulations and expectations in relation to gender, sexuality and culture. These regulations and expectations are coming from Italian families and communities, the gay community, schools and workplaces, the Catholic Church, the media and the wider Australian society.

“Are There Gay Italians?”

In 1990, a friend of mine congratulated me on the publication of my research into second-generation Italian-Australian women, and then added, “But where am I in your research? Italian women aren’t all heterosexual, you know”.

Despite having gay, lesbian and bisexual friends of diverse cultural backgrounds, I realised I had been supporting and perpetuating a heterosexist mythology about the Italian community and indeed all ethnic communities. I decided I needed to challenge/critique myself and others and explore sexual diversity within our communities. It was also a time when I became appalled by the discrimination and silences used by the Catholic Church regarding people like one of my best friends, a gay teacher who was HIV-positive and teaching in a Catholic school (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1991; 2000).

I decided it was time to do what I could to end the destructive silencing and ignoring of such painful realities. As many gay and lesbian friends said, being heterosexual meant that I might have a better chance of getting listened to by some community gatekeepers, of getting into places and spaces that would refuse the participation of openly non-heterosexual and/or HIV-positive people. So being straight meant I was “privileged” and “powerful” in this society, although being a feminist and a non-traditional Italian woman deleted some of that privilege and

power. Nevertheless, it was time to put that heterosexual privilege and power to good use. And after all, do you have to be Aboriginal to support and stand for Aboriginal rights? Do you have to be Italian or a woman to work for the end of racism and sexism?

As I began my research, I was shocked when I came across the same response from different groups. Some of my lecturers and other Anglo-Australians would ask me "Are there gay Italians?" Italian peers and community leaders would ask me the same thing. Since that time, I have taken multiculturalism into feminist and gay community activism and research, and I have taken multisexuality into multicultural activism and research. I have received much support and some criticism. The latter has often come from people calling themselves Christians or more specifically Catholic and espousing the most un-Christ-like views and behaviours!

It has also been important to me to see an increasing number of gay, lesbian and bisexual people of Italian backgrounds speaking out themselves such as the three inspirational Italian-Australians I am honoured to be writing with in this paper. This says much about their strengths and courage in the face of potential ostracism and pain. It also says that the Italian community in Australia is slowly but surely moving to the acceptance of sexually diverse family and community members.

For the purposes of this paper, I will only focus on Italian family and community issues. My other writings explore issues facing Italian-Australian non-heterosexual people in schools, the workplace and in the wider Australian society (eg: Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1999b; 1995; Sullivan & Jackson, 1999).

Savin-Williams (1998) presents three main developmental tasks of same-sex attracted young people from culturally diverse backgrounds such as Italian that are not necessarily experienced by same-sex attracted young people from Anglo-Australian backgrounds: cultivating both a sexual identity and an ethnic identity; resolving any conflicts that may arise in claiming allegiance to a cultural reference group and to a gay community; and negotiating any stigmas and discrimination encountered because of the interconnections of homophobia, racism and sexism.

Many same-sex attracted young people from culturally diverse backgrounds want to belong to and feel they have a place in their families and ethnic communities. The Italian community and family can nurture a cultural identification, offer a deep sense of ethnic heritage and values, and provide a sense of self within the context of a family that shares a youth's struggles and oppressions such as racism and classism.

Gay, lesbian and bisexual people from Italian background speak about the self-esteem that comes from having an Italian family that loves and supports them and that meshes them into an extended family and cultural heritage (Capone et al, 1999).

Decisions and negotiations in relation to ‘coming out’ are often based on their perception that their families may have already experienced too much hardship and trauma and that the disclosure about their sexuality may only create further problems.

“Matteo:It’s harder for gay men and lesbians from Italian backgrounds to come out. I love my parents and don’t want to hurt them [...] They’ve lived through poverty, war, hunger. They come to a country where they have to start again in everything. They make a thousand sacrifices for the kids they cherish. After all that, I haven’t got it in me to break their hearts”. (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1991: 23; see also 2000).

Many same-sex attracted people are seeking support and strategies on how to interweave their sexual and ethnic identities and community belongings rather than wanting to erase either in order to assimilate to the other.

“Luisa: I love being Italian. Considering they’d probably burn me alive, it must be pretty good for me to still want to be part of it. [she pours out cups of camomile tea]. It’s like this stuff. We grow up on this stuff for stomach-aches and headaches and to get us off to sleep. Being a lesbian doesn’t mean you can forget all that or want to forget all that. But it does mean having to decide which parts of you to show which people.”(Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995: 135).

Two factors appear to be significant in leading to changing attitudes within ethnic families toward homosexuality: the growing visibility and diversity of gay, lesbian and bisexual lives both within Australia and in Italy, particularly with a gradually increasing number of sexually diverse Italians publicly discussing their sexualities (eg: Bull, 2000a; 2000b; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1999a; Capone et al, 1999). This growing visibility seems to be chipping away at the rigid stereotypes preserved in the migrant Italian communities both in Australia and elsewhere:

Melina has ‘come out’ to her family and is very close to them. When her mother asked her, “Are you more comfortable with women than with men?” Melina thought, “if she had the courage to ask such a question, there was no way” she could lie to her. In response, her mother gave her total acceptance, related her own experiences and those of others she knew as a young girl in Italy, and made it her “duty” to inform other members of the extended family. Melina is “loved and

respected” and seen as a “very significant person” by members of her family of all ages. (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1992: 152-153).

The longer the family is in Australia, the more it ceases to be bound by traditional religious and cultural values in relation to gender and sexuality, or it appears to become increasingly similar to urban, educated, middle class understandings of sexual diversity in Italy. Parents who are born in Australia often act as the mediators between the more traditional understandings of migrant grandparents and the more cosmopolitan perspectives of their third generation offspring.

“Steph: My nonni [grandparents] are Italian, but one lot is from Friuli which isn’t really Italy. Nonna said so. And she said they speak their own language, not a dialect. My other nonni are Napolitani and speak a dialect. You and Papa are sort of Italian and sort of Australian...I was in the Mardi Gras one year pretending to be Alan and Malcolm’s daughter. I wore my fairy costume and waved a wand and the gay flag. Lots of people took pictures and I was on the news. At first I was shy because there were so many people and I forgot to wave. Then I started waving [...] My nonni came to Melbourne and then we all went to Sydney and Canberra. We all stayed in the same hotel rooms and saw lots of things.” (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1999a: 3, 60).

Many Italian families and communities appear to adopt a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ strategy. In other words, what is privately known is not publicly stated, as the need for family and community unity after the impact of migration is considered far more important than ‘coming out’ and fragmenting this cohesion. Other families are concerned about Italian community codes regarding “onore e vergogna”, honour and shame.

“Silvana: I moved out of home as soon as I could, although my Mum pretended for years with the rellies [relatives] that I was still living at home, just studying at Uni. all the time. Although they had thrown me out earlier when I came out to them. But I went home again for a while. My parents have now decided they like my partner and are glad I’m in a stable relationship but they don’t accept the fact that it’s a sexual relationship.

“Caterina: If I could just deal with [coming out] to my immediate family, that would be one thing, but then I’d have to deal with all the cousins [and] Mum also has to put up with what the rest of the family say about me.” (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995: 135, 138).

Some Italian families may see homosexuality and bisexuality as a manifestation of adolescent rebellion against a traditional culture, or a secularisation imposed by a decadent, urbanised Anglo culture.

“Matteo: How can two old people who’d need to have the word ‘homosexual’ explained to them ever come to terms with their gay child? They’d think it was something we’d picked up from Australian friends.” (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1991, new edition 2000: 23).

We need to encourage oral history and other community projects that explore sexual diversity in pre-migration Italy as well as part of the migration experiences of Italians coming to Australia.

“In Venice, Maria chatted to gondoliers, gorgeous men whose biceps rippled as smoothly as the water through which they rowed. Like many of the Italian men, they hugged and touched each other with sincere affection that made her feel warm, until she was chilled by these men’s comments that homosexuality didn’t exist in Venice, and if it was found, it would soon be at the bottom of a canal. In Florence, where gay magazines could be found on some newsstands, she heard that the gay sauna was full of young men who had borrowed their mothers’ cars or married men ‘out with the boys’ needing to shed their masks for a few secret hours.

Dora’s often warned that she’s marrying a ‘man who is like a woman’. She and Stefano know men in local villages who are ‘that way’, “ricchione” or “finocchio”, (gay). And they know women during the war whose men are away and they combine their families and live together. Some of these women are actually devastated when their husbands return from the war and they have to live apart. But their special friendships continue quite openly as the men can’t imagine women wanting to have sex with each other rather than with men. The men who are believed to be homosexual usually have to get married because once they’ve had children, the other men in the village will stop hassling them. Homosexual men aren’t able to have children, it’s believed. But every now and again, a story surfaces of clandestine meetings in the fields and bushes around the villages, and then it’s rapidly hushed, or the men will leave the village and go to Naples or overseas.” (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1999a: 197).

In Australia, importance may be placed on men getting married and continuing the family and community in this new land. Notions of collectivism rather than individuality are dominant as members of a family and community rely on each other in negotiating external alien official and unofficial socio-economic structures and realities. Moreover, immigrant communities may be more socially and religiously conservative than the countries they have left as maintaining the traditions and values of their home country at the time of their departure becomes a signifier of the cohesion of their families and community.

It is important to remember that some of the social stigma against gay, lesbian and bisexual people in the Italian community may not be based on notions of sinfulness or sickness but on anxiety about their existence outside the family structure and its support mechanisms. Parents fear they and their children will be left alone and unprovided for in their old age, therefore encouraging their offspring to get married and have children and/or foster intergenerational interdependence. Aging Italian migrants are often concerned with sustaining intergenerationally supportive families. The sad paradox is that the very silences and discriminations against gay, lesbian and bisexual family members, often bolstered by a rigid adherence to Catholic dogma, is what actually drives them away from their parents and extended family, and prevents them from making choices about having children and thus providing grandparents with the joys of grandchildren.

Belonging to an Italian family may mean that traditional constructions of gender are interconnected with sexual behaviour, identity and expression. Men may be seen as the providers and protectors in families, and leaders in the community. Sons are inheritors, expected to provide life-long support to the family, to marry and carry on the family name. The responsibility of the son on the death or absence of the father may be to head the family. Women may also be expected to get married and have children as their performance of heteronormative femininity may be a key marker of the family's success and honour within the community. The glory box being filled in preparation for some eventual and inevitable wedding day becomes a painful visual symbol of the marital expectations on women from Italian background.

"Luisa: When I'm at home with my parents I'm their Italian daughter whose glorybox is waiting for her to do the right thing." (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995: 135).

The Italian family and community's denial of the existence of homosexuality may also be a denial of urban Australian media constructions of this sexuality, or a need to maintain the Italian community's public unity and image in the wider Australian society. The public acknowledgement of one's sexual identity may be the problem, rather than private behaviours that do not become publicly known. I have worked with many same-sex attracted people from Italian background whose families, including their wives and husbands, as well as their parents, know that the person is gay, lesbian or bisexual but prefer the person to live a secret double life replete with all its pain for all involved, and potential sexual health (STD/HIV) concerns, rather

than openly acknowledging and discussing possible negotiations and alternatives. Denial and silence are therefore forms of internal community control and also group cohesion, the construction of a united front, against the real and/or imagined pressures from the wider Australian society.

Living in a new country where there is little that is familiar, ethnic identity and beliefs may be the only strategy available for psychological and emotional comfort. “[...] Tight cultures, intolerant of ‘deviant’ behaviour, attitudes and values, combined with an emphasis on collectivism, produce a conservative culture that is reluctant to change.” (Voukelatos, 1996: 36).

Change is equated with assimilating to the Australian culture’s norms and losing one’s own cultural self, of losing the remnants of the ‘home’ that was left behind in the migration process.

Silence and stereotypes in the wider Australian society in relation to same-sex attracted young people are also problematic. The combination of heterosexism, racism and ethnocentrism results in media distortions and the lack of ethnic role models, writings, visibility and other cultural representations with which a same-sex attracted Italian young person can identify. This is particularly so as most portrayals and most visible gay men and lesbians continue to be from Anglo-Australian or Anglo-American backgrounds. Thus, there are very few available visual models for Italian families and communities with which to become familiar. We need to encourage more gay, lesbian and bisexual people from Italian backgrounds such as the writers in this paper to speak out as strong and inspirational role models. I have seen the powerful and positive impact that Luciano has when he talks to students from Italian and other backgrounds in Catholic and other schools about homophobic harassment. Likewise, Vicky Guglielmo provides an inspirational role model of an independent, courageous and loving lesbian woman to the young same-sex attracted people she works with.

Linked to ethnicity and family expectations is the Catholic religion, both within the Italian community but framed by a homophobic Roman Catholic Church. The breaking of Catholic religious regulations may mean that same-sex attracted people may experience years of guilt, intimidation and excommunication from the family and community if their sexual behaviours are disclosed. Wider Australian religious expectations and taboos perpetuate and reinforce the fundamentalist religious views that may be espoused by Italian religious community gatekeepers. For example, Victorian Archbishop George Pell has publicly made blatant statements about homosexuality as

immoral and a health hazard. His refusal to consider the direct link between religious condemnation or silence and the traumatic experiences and often suicidal reactions of same-sex attracted young people from Catholic families, only reinforces the prejudices of, and discourages Catholic Italian community leaders and devout Catholic Italian parents from accepting and caring for their children. If Catholicism espouses family unity, and love and respect for the dignity of all, then why does it deliberately preach a dogma of intolerance and ignorance that is destroying families and certainly not modelling love and respect for the dignity of all?

Luisa writes about her alienation from the mainstream Catholic Church until she came across the group “Acceptance” and was able to find a space within which to practice the spiritual Catholic faith that she had grown up with and loved (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1992).

According to same-sex attracted people from culturally diverse backgrounds including the Italian background, significant factors in the successful negotiation of their various identities and communities appear to be one or more of the following:

- strong support networks and friendships with other same-sex attracted people of same and/or similar cultural and religious backgrounds such as those incredibly supportive and popular social groups provided by Vic Perri at the Victorian AIDS Council;
- access to and participation in both the gay and ethnic communities while transcending both to live with a code of their own;
- strategic and shifting choices and decisions being made in relation to ‘coming out’ to families and receiving acceptance and support for those choices from gay friends, ethnic friends and school friends;
- media coverage of same-sex attracted individuals and role models from culturally diverse backgrounds, and historical facts about sexual diversity within their own cultures, being made available in both ethnic community and mainstream papers, ethnic and mainstream television, film and music. Our Italian radio, TV and newspaper media can play such a powerful role in airing these issues and providing forums for community debate and growing acceptance. I greatly appreciate the supportive and positive reviews of my books that have been published in *Il Globo*, *Nuovo Paese* and the radio interviews conducted with Italian radio programs.

- schools and other educational systems addressing racism, sexism and homophobia equally and consistently and in interconnected ways via curriculum (such as the provision of texts, lessons, research projects, community involvement); student welfare policies (such as anti-harassment and equal opportunity policies); and behaviour management (such as homophobic behaviour being dealt with alongside other behavioural issues)
- universities and other post-secondary education centres making provisions and policies in relation to health centres, student services and student clubs and organisations, such as ethnic clubs and sexuality clubs, that actively promote and implement anti-racist and anti-homophobic policies, as well as catering for the specific concerns of same-sex attracted young people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- gay community organisations and services, gay venues, papers and other media avenues promoting and implementing policies and practices that cater for same-sex attracted young people from culturally diverse backgrounds

Each person deserves the right to live their sexuality in emotionally and physically healthy ways. They should be supported and guided to undertake personal and public negotiations and actions at various points in their lives and with various communities in order to minimise the amount of emotional and physical trauma and maximise the desired satisfaction and level of participation within various communities and organisations.

“Silvana: Despite some clashes, I have great control over my life and enjoy my feeling of multiplicity and floating between groups.” (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995: 135).

“I’m Italian and YES I’m Gay” - Vittorio Perri

I am proud of my Italian heritage. Who would not be? I love it. There is the food, the fashion, the cars and the music. It is cool to be Italian. But of course, as we all know, there is more to Italian culture or any culture for that matter than material things. I am especially proud of the fact that as Italians we have such a strong bond between members of family. That sense of closeness and looking out for one another when we need it. The way we feel towards each other, ensuring there is wellbeing in our families. Even if some are misguided, the good intentions are always there. And it is not just about feeling we have a duty or a responsibility but as Nino Randazzo of *Il Globo* said on the last day of the conference: “To be an Italian you don’t need a passport, you

need a heart". What a great description! Or is it? Sadly, as I heard this, I tried to be 100% proud, but I could only feel that it was not true for every one.

As a gay man, I like to think that the Italian community of which I love being a part, is all-embracing and inclusive. "Italians love everyone". Sadly, this does not include everyone. Unfortunately, there are many in the Italian Community that believe gay men and lesbian women do not exist in the Italian community. It is sad because according to the Italian community I do not exist. This hurts me deeply. I try in every way to be a good and decent person. I am in a stable and long term relationship, ten years in fact. I am sure it will go on forever. My family is very proud of the achievements in my life. I have a house and a secure job. Growing up, however, was very difficult. The responsibility and the pressure to live as my family expected me to live made me feel terrible. "Of course you are going to get married and have kids", my parents would always say. I felt really bad about it. Why? Because I loved my family so much I did not want to disappoint them. All my life I have just wished that I could be totally honest with them and that they would accept me for who I was. I just wanted them to love and support me as a gay man. That is all. I do not want to be a bank robber. I do not want to be a murderer. I am Vittorio! I shall always be Vittorio. I am no different just because I am gay. As Professor Giovanni Carsaniga said, "Why be afraid of difference? Why do we all have to be the same? Why not celebrate our differences instead?" And as Professor Mary Kalantzis said, "We all have wonderful qualities and we should all be encouraged to contribute to the community". And can I say, without sounding too arrogant, I think I have wonderful qualities as well, and I wish to contribute to the community. Not just as an Italian-Australian, but as a Gay Italian-Australian.

I would love to be proud of an Italian community that accepts and respects members of different sexualities. Imagine! The Italian community in Australia can be leaders in the Australian community when it comes to celebrating diversity. Are we not always saying how the Australian community should accept us? Are we not always telling them to celebrate diversity? Then it is high time we really mean it. We can lead by example. Imagine every other culturally specific group and even the Anglo community in Australia saying "Wow look at the wonderful Italian community. Look how they respect and care for each other. Look at how they have such strong family bonding. Look at how they include everyone even those with different sexualities. We should follow their lead and do it in our community as well."

As Italian-Australian Gay men and Lesbian women, and as sons and daughters, we do not need hatred. We do not need the community stubbornly saying that we do not exist. We do exist. And believe me there are plenty of us out there. Look at your family. Is there anyone in your immediate and extended family that you think may be gay or lesbian? What they need is love and support. Their self-esteem and confidence depend on it. Allow them to feel proud of who they are. Believe me, I can guarantee you they will love you more for it. If you just want what is good for them and want them to be happy, then accept them totally. What I wish more than anything in this world is that Italian-Australians proudly show the rest of Australia that we truly do have a heart.

“La Figura” and ‘Coming Out’ - Vicky Guglielmo

Coming out as a lesbian in an Italian family is a unique experience. Though worthwhile, the very act of coming out in an Italian family shatters and rips apart, at its core, the values and beliefs, passed down from generation to generation, parent to child, cousin to cousin, commare to commare - *che figura!* *Figura* is an interesting concept, but one we all know very well. When I looked up in the Italian dictionary what *Figura* meant, it states “to appear to be” and “for show only”. *Figura* was definitely one of the golden rules in my family; it defined the way my family was to present itself to the outside world and set out the expectations and regulations, whether spoken or not, about the way I was to dress, behave and live my life as a good Italian woman.

Figura played an important role in my coming out, because until I was 23 years of age I appeared to be doing the right thing as a second generation Italian woman. I passed VCE, got into Uni and finished my degree, got a job and still lived at home with my parents. I had a few deviations, like playing the drums and playing in bands, but it was all accepted as part of my adolescent phase! I knew from early in my life that no matter what I would do as teenager, my destiny was planned and I would eventually get married, own a house and have children.

What no one else knew, apart from my sisters and a small number of friends, was that I had been living a dual life since I was nineteen; one based on appearances and for show to the outside world, the other, my true self. All for the sake of *figura* and a fear of what it would do to my parents.

Until I hit my 20s, it was easy to uphold appearances, to be the good daughter, granddaughter and niece I was supposed to be. I think in my twenties I started to rebel against the concept of *figura*. I stopped

worrying about what other people were going to say or think about me or my family. I started to let some of the real me come through and as a result I copped a lot of flack. At this stage in my life, I had no intention of coming out to my family, I knew that was a long way off, but I was tired of trying to be a “good Italian woman”. The simple thing of cutting my long curly hair at the age of twenty-three sent ripples through my family. Their reactions: “Why did you cut your hair – you had such beautiful hair?” “Well, you still have a pretty face”. Turning up to a cousin’s wedding in an outfit that included trousers, shirt, vest and tie prompted my aunty to grab me in the crotch and say at the top of her voice “ Oh I was just checking whether you had a penis” – this all in the foyer at the beginning of the wedding, standing next to my mother and sisters. At another wedding, my uncle felt it was okay for him to say, as I was holding my newborn cousin, “Well, you better cherish the moment because we all know you won’t ever be able to have one.”

All of this before I had even come out! Why? I realise now that it was all about my undisclosed sexuality and at the same time nothing to do with it at all. The very fact that I was a single, non-traditional and self-assured woman made them think they had the right to treat me with disrespect, regardless of my sexuality. When I spoke to my mother about the way I was treated, her reaction was always the same. “Just forget about it, they don’t mean what they’re saying. Just leave it alone.” Most of the time I did as I was told because I respected my parents and I knew that they would be the ones who would have to deal with the consequences. I have no doubt that if I was a more conforming young woman who wore the right clothes, make-up and shoes, had a boyfriend or husband, that no-one would have dared to degrade, embarrass and insult me so publicly and in a such a righteous manner.

It took me until the age of 26 to come out to my parents. That was two years ago. By then I had already devastated them by moving out of home three years earlier. Explaining to them why I needed to be independent was hard enough and I knew coming out to them was going to be even harder. But I knew it was something I had to do. It had been too long a time, seven years of hiding who I really was, not sharing myself with them emotionally, not telling them anything about my life and carrying a sense of guilt and shame about lying to them. By the time I was ready to come out to them I realised that the impact of being in the closet was far more detrimental to our relationship than the fear of causing them shame. So I took a deep breath and picked up the phone.

My parents handled my coming out better than I had imagined. Yes, they struggled to understand, struggled to accept, but the struggle was

a positive one. Their strong family values meant they never once rejected me or my partner. However, their first response was a knee-jerk reaction to figura. “Who else knows?” followed by a statement, “Don’t you tell anybody else”. I understood why they reacted this way. I knew that to come out as a lesbian woman was to risk my family’s respect in the extended family and community and my parents knew that too. But deep inside it disappointed me. Here I was, in a stable, loving relationship, with a well-educated, employed, drug-free, emotionally mature person, who, by the way, happened to be a woman, and I couldn’t celebrate the joy of finding my soul mate with anyone in my family. And not only that, my parents were disappointed and possibly devastated. Even though the very act of coming out was a relief for me, their reaction to it and my desire to nurture a new relationship with my parents, made me halt my coming out to anyone else in the family. Today, I wish I had been more brave.

In February this year, I got married. It was a small garden wedding, with about sixty-eight guests. It was small because I was instructed by my parents not to invite anyone from my family. My sisters, Michelle and Nicole, and their partners, attended and they stood by my side and gave a reading during the ceremony. My wife, on the other hand, had all of her family present and they shared in the joy and excitement of the happiest day of our lives. My mother came, even though she had cried every day from the day we invited her. She came, camera in hand, for about half an hour, with a mysterious and contradictory cocktail of emotions. My father, on the other hand, chose to ignore the day all together.

Since we have been married, it has been a really difficult time for my parents. The public declaration of our love was all a bit too much for them. I realise that my parents were fine about my first coming out because it was only a coming out within the family. Nobody else needed to know and they were happy with that. I was not, and neither was my wife. My mother’s reaction was “I love both of you, but not the situation.” What situation! I never thought that I could be described as a situation. Did she not realise that my sexuality was about me, a part so deep and intrinsic to my being, that it could not be separated from who I am. I have no doubt that my parents love us. They continue to be supportive and inclusive. However, as partners we do not receive the same treatment or recognition for who we are as a couple, as my sisters and their boyfriends.

It is a ridiculous concept that according to my parents, the extended family do not know that I am a lesbian and that I have a partner. Yet, my

partner and I always attend all family functions together, from birthdays through to funerals, communions through to weddings. We live together in the house that we both own, with our two dogs. We share a car and comfortable familiarity. My grandmother, who has not been told that we are a couple, calls my wife my companion. My extended family greets her with a warm enthusiasm that makes me feel like there is hope. Figura plays a destructive role here because my gut feeling is that they would have loved to have been a part of our wedding and they would love to acknowledge us as a couple. In many ways they do, but it is unspoken and with respect to my parents' feelings. It is sad that my parents' fear of what other people might say or how they may react has meant that they have struggled alone. The community needs to take some responsibility for this.

As my destiny would have it, I did get married, buy a house, and as for having kids, it is a real possibility. Besides the fact that I am a lesbian, and my partner is a woman, I have achieved everything that my parents could have wished for me. But because I am a lesbian, my family has struggled with the stress, the anguish, the shame, the lies and the truths of it all. My struggle, as well as theirs, has been a lonely and unsupported path, silent and often hidden behind closed doors. It is time for the community to talk about and embrace difference, to celebrate diversity and encourage and support individuals within the community that may not fit the mould. For a community to develop and survive, we all have a responsibility to accept that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are not unlike ourselves.

"My Italian Family Makes Me Proud"- Luciano

As I walk through my parents' garden, relatives laughing and shouting, kids running and screaming, I smile. It is a bit hard to imagine that we are, in fact, fifteen thousand kilometres away from home, Italy. I smile as one of my many Aunt Marias pours some olive oil on her bread, takes a huge tasty bite, and talks cheerfully with my partner whilst showing him the 'proper' way to eat pasta. He winks at me. The table is filled with food and rings with laughter- my Italian family makes me proud.

It was not an easy thing coming to terms with my sexuality surrounded by such tradition and culture. One did not wish to disappoint family, and I even had dreams of getting married and having kids of my own. The feeling of shame and disappointment is, nonetheless, incurable until acceptance and tolerance towards young people of the future is learnt.

I had horrid dreams of my parents' reactions. I began to pack my bag silently, convinced that no longer could I be under their care- if not for their intolerance, but for my own embarrassment. I did not think I could face a world where my family viewed me differently: as an outsider and not part of our thriving community. But there was little to be done. I also could not live the "Si, mamma, I've got a girlfriend," lie. And so it was that I came out to my parents at age fifteen, knowing, but not knowing the full consequences of what lay ahead, of what would be. Mustering up the courage, I confronted my mother first. There were tears and many questions at first. It was hard to understand why, said mamma. Things were difficult for a while but the days turned into weeks, turned into months.

My parents began to grow within themselves and come to accept the fact that their son was gay: little could be done. We now laugh at my dad's initial idea of sending me to Italy so I could "find a good girl." My relations with them began to improve because I felt I had nothing else to hide.

The rest of my family began to find out. My little Italian school-hating soccer-loving brother was completely understanding about it and accepted it without question. My aunts and uncles began to find out and it became an unspoken but accepted 'consensus'. Nobody asked questions: it just was.

I now live with my partner. I had never thought, a few years ago, that I would be living with a person I truly loved, and that that person would be invited to family get-togethers and parties. My grandfather, a very traditional sixty-five year old Catholic man, always laughingly teases him about his love of pasta, whilst my aunts whisper to me how good-looking he is and how they wished he were theirs. Bad luck, Aunt Rose, Aunt Maria and Aunty Michelina. Hands off!

Despite all this, I must say that it is not always like this for young gay people coming out to ethnic families. Stories of parents burning their children's clothes, and of Italian parents not allowing their children to set foot in their houses again, are never old stories because they are happening as we speak. It is hard for a young person to tell their Italian family that they are gay, for fear of being rejected by them and being told that "il dio onnipotente" will never accept them as they are. Who will these young people turn to?

In a modern age such as ours, we need to take steps to improve this for people who may not be as lucky in their experience as I was. Attention and focus needs to be particularly paid to the Italian community. It would be a shame for a beautiful family, thriving with

culture and tradition, to expel a young member from it because they may not meet the adult expectations of their family before them. As a member of a large and fantastic Italian family I could imagine the heartache that such a young person would experience for being outcasts from a family and a culture with whom they have grown up, and whom they trust and love more than anything in the world.

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We would like to thank the many people who attended our presentation at the Conference. We greatly appreciated your overwhelming support and encouragement. We would also like to thank Michael Crowhurst and some Italian mothers from P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) who were also there sharing our joys and sadnesses. And to other audience-members and readers of this paper, we hope it encourages you to keep making our Italian community and our Italian families real places of unity and love. Maria would like to thank the many same-sex attracted friends and colleagues who have inspired and humbled her with their strengths and insights.

“Donne e buoi dei paesi tuoi” *

Italian Proxy Marriages in Post-War Canada and Australia

Susanna Iuliano

In November 1961, Lidia Zaffiro, a twenty one year old woman from a small town in the Veneto region of North-Eastern Italy, married a man living half a world away in Canada. The wedding ceremony was conducted in Italy with Lidia's own father acting as a 'proxy' or stand in for the groom Francesco Santin, a man almost twenty years Lidia's senior who, ten years previously, had emigrated from the same village. One month after the proxy marriage, dressed in her white bridal suit and high heeled shoes, Lidia boarded a plane in Rome and flew to Calgary, Alberta where Francesco was waiting to collect his young bride. Although Lidia had been warned about the harshness of the Canadian winter, she was not prepared for the sight of endless, ever deepening snow drifts as the newlyweds drove hundreds of kilometres through dense forest to their new home in a remote mining camp near Invermere, north-eastern British Columbia. Like many other immigrant women embarking on new lives far from their friends and families, Lidia was both thrilled and nervous about emigrating to Canada. Yet her apprehensions were compounded by the fact that she had entered into marriage with a man who was a virtual stranger to her. Lidia recalled: "I was excited at having made such a trip on my own and having come to a husband - finally I had a man! But I don't think I was in love with him then... I became in love with him after [...]"¹

Lidia Zaffiro's experience of marriage and immigration to a foreign land to be with a husband she scarcely knew was by no means unique. In the nineteen fifties and sixties, marriages by proxy commonly took place between Italian nationals (usually women) and Italian immigrants in both Canada and Australia. Such marriages were performed when the physical absence of either the bride or groom made it necessary for a stand in or 'proxy' to register consent to the marriage on behalf of the missing party. This particular form of marriage ceremony had been a part of Canonical tradition since the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. Proxy marriages were later incorporated into the civil marriage codes of many European, Latin American and South American nations.² Although this form of marriage had been outlawed in Italy following

Unification, the 1929 Concordat between the Papacy and the Fascist State restored the Catholic Church's power to grant couples the right to marry by proxy in Italy. This right was adopted in the revised Italian Civil Code of 1942. While proxy marriages were recognized primarily as a way to enable members of the armed forces to marry outside the country during war-time, non-military personnel could also choose to marry in this fashion if they convinced a priest that 'serious reasons' impeded a couple's physical presence at the marriage ceremony.³ There were no legal provisions which allowed proxy marriages to be solemnized in Australia or Canada, however marriages contracted by proxy between Italian citizens and Australian or Canadian residents were accepted as legitimate by Government authorities in both countries.

Unfortunately, little has been written about the phenomenon of Italian proxy marriages in Australia or Canada, partly because of the stigma attached to these weddings by some immigrants who regarded their marriages as an embarrassing secret to be hidden from friends, families and neighbours at all costs.⁴ The sense of shame associated with marriage by proxy was to a certain extent fostered by the sensationalist publicity given to these unions throughout the nineteen fifties and sixties in Italian language newspapers in Australia and Canada. Stories of proxy marriages gone wrong made good copy, just as they proved to be excellent material for operatic melodrama thirty years later. In 1991, the Western Australian Opera Company premiered *Bride of Fortune*, an original production that told the story of an Italian immigrant couple married by proxy in post-war Australia. In the opera, Grazia, a Calabrian peasant woman marries Vito, an Italo-Australian immigrant living in a dingy inner city Melbourne flat. On her arrival in Australia, Grazia discovers that she has been duped by her proxy husband who is an older, crippled, abusive alcoholic struggling to support a daughter from a previous marriage in Italy. The tragedy escalates after the death of Vito's daughter sends him over the edge. Vito blames the long suffering Grazia for the death and holds her hostage in a siege which ends in a sensational police shoot-out. In the melodramatic finale, the curtain falls on the ill-fated Grazia who slips her wedding ring on Vito's finger in a symbolic gesture of reconciliation as she cradles her dying husband in her arms.⁵

I want to move away from the notion that proxy marriages were a form of immigrant tragedy as presented in *Bride of Fortune*. Rather, my aim is to examine the phenomenon of Italian proxy marriages in the context of broader issues relating to Italo-Australian and Italo-Canadian

migration after World War Two. The occurrence of proxy marriages between Italian women and Italian immigrant men can be used as a window to examine some of the similarities and differences in the immigration experience of Italians in post-war Australia and Canada. Italian women entered into proxy marriages with immigrant men in both Commonwealth nations in part because of the limited opportunities available to single women in post-war Italy and the social taboo against the mobility of single females. Instead of being cast as victims, I argue that Italian women chose marriage by proxy as a way to expand the limited opportunities available to them in close-knit, patriarchal societies which did not sanction the emigration of lone females. For their part, Italian immigrant men in Australia and Canada chose to marry Italian proxy brides rather than native Australian or Canadian women because of similar ethnic specific gender stereotypes which depicted Italian women as more suitable wives because of their alleged chasteness and dedication to family life. While the reasons why Italian men and women entered into proxy marriages in both countries are much the same, the reactions of the Australian and Canadian government to marriages by proxy varied, largely because of the difference in sex-ratios of Italo-Canadian and Italo-Australian men and women in the post-war period.

Frequency and timing of Italian proxy marriages in post-war Australia and Canada.

The logical starting point for a discussion of Italian proxy marriages is to ascertain the number of Italian nationals and Italian immigrants who wed by proxy in Australia and Canada. Despite the considerable amount of documentation involved in the process of contracting a proxy marriage, following the ‘paper trail’ to specify the exact number of Italian proxy marriages which took place in Australia and Canada has been difficult. As proxy weddings were performed in Italy, much of the paperwork, if indeed it still exists, is sitting in local parish archives in small towns dotted all over the Italian peninsula. As my research was conducted exclusively in Australia and Canada, I have had to rely on other sources to quantify the phenomenon of Italian proxy marriages in both countries. The Italian ethnic press has been one important source of information. Italian language newspapers in cities as far afield as Sydney, Perth, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver all contained references to proxy marriages, particularly in the early nineteen fifties. Advertisements for proxy brides, informative articles on how to contract proxy marriages and photographs of smiling proxy couples appeared

alongside stern lectures on the hazards of proxy marriage and letters from jilted proxy spouses in newspapers such as Montreal's *Il Cittadino Canadese*, and Sydney's *La Fiamma*. There is also mention made of Italian proxy marriages in notes of the Australian and Canadian immigration officials during the early post-war period. However, the most valuable source of information on the numbers of Italian proxy weddings which took place in Australia and Canada after World War Two is the Catholic Church.

Unfortunately, the Catholic Church in both Canada and Australia has generally been reluctant to allow researchers access to its proxy marriage records. However, I have been able to obtain access to figures on Italian proxy marriages for the Archdiocese of Perth, Western Australia, and Montreal, Quebec. In Western Australia from 1938 to 1971, there were a total of nine hundred and twenty three instances of proxy marriages between Italian nationals and Italian immigrants resident in the state.⁶ As each record represents two people, approximately eighteen hundred Italians were involved in proxy marriages in Western Australia, mostly during the nineteen fifties (particularly in the years from 1951 to 1955 when over half of the total number of proxy marriages listed were contracted.)⁷ Eighteen hundred Italian born proxy spouses represents around eight percent of the total number of incoming Italian immigrants who settled permanently in the state during the post-war period.⁸ If the Western Australia statistics are in any way indicative of the larger Australia-wide picture, then as many as twenty four thousand Italo-Australians who settled permanently in Australia after World War Two were married by proxy.⁹ With a more limited pool of available or accessible Italian brides due to the relatively small size of the Italian born population in Western Australia and the state's greater isolation from other centres of Italian settlement, proxy marriage may have been a more viable and attractive option for Italian bachelors in Western Australia. However, the attention accorded to the subject of proxy marriages in east-coast Italo-Australian newspapers such as *La Fiamma* and *Il Globo* in the 1950s and 1960s suggests that proxy marriages were also important for Italians in other parts of Australia, not just Western Australia.

From a Canadian perspective, quantifying proxy marriages also proved difficult. In the archival records of Archdiocese of Toronto, the city which boasted the largest Italian settlement in post-war Canada, there are frequent references to proxy marriages during the 1950s in correspondence between local parish priests and officials of the Archdiocesen. Strangely, despite the ample qualitative evidence

suggesting that Italian proxy marriages were fairly common throughout the 1950s in Toronto, (common enough to warrant being called a ‘problem’¹⁰), there was no clear indication of the numbers of people who contracted marriages by proxy in Toronto. Fortunately, quantification of the phenomenon of Italian proxy marriages is possible for the city of Montreal, home to the largest ‘Little Italy’ in Canada in the period before 1945 and the second largest Italo-Canadian colony during the post-war period. Records of the Archdiocese of Montreal confirm that approximately two thousand proxy marriages involving four thousand immigrants took place in Montreal between the years 1952 and 1982.¹¹ While no figures are available detailing the number of Italian proxy marriages in other provinces across Canada, frequent references to proxy weddings in Italian language newspapers in British Columbia suggest that proxy marriages involving Italian immigrants were not exclusive to the central provinces of Quebec and Ontario.

Information about the frequency and timing of Italian proxy marriages from both the Western Australia and Montreal Archdiocese suggests that the heyday of proxy weddings involving Italians in both countries occurred during the early 1950s.

It is no coincidence that the popularity of Italian proxy marriages in Australia and Canada was at its peak when the sex-ratio imbalance between male and female Italian immigrants was especially pronounced in the early post-war period. Initially, migration chains from Italy to Canada and Australia were composed of higher proportions of men, particularly amongst single migrants. In 1951, for every one hundred Italian-born women, there were one hundred and seventy three Italian born men resident in Canada.¹² The gender ratios between Italian men and women was even more skewed in Australia. In 1954, for every one hundred Italian born women, there were two hundred and three Italian born men living settled in Australia.¹³ Alarmed by the sex-ratio imbalance amongst Italians, immigration officials in both Commonwealth countries prioritised the migration of Italian women, particularly single women, in their entry quotas in the mid to late 1950s. By 1961, the proportion of Italian men to women in Canada and Australia was somewhat more even with one hundred and twenty five Italian men per one hundred Italian women in Canada, and one hundred and forty three Italian men per one hundred Italian women resident in Australia.¹⁴ As the pool of available Italian brides grew larger in Australia and Canada, the incidence of proxy marriages amongst Italian immigrants tapered off.

Reasons for choosing to marry by proxy

The shortage of Italian women in Australia and Canada in the early post-war period does not in itself explain why Italian immigrants, most commonly men, chose to enter into proxy marriages with Italian brides. Proxy marriages did not arise solely because of Italian immigrant men's limited opportunities to meet and marry Italian women in Australia and Canada. Rather, weddings by proxy were an expression of Italian men's preference for Italian women, or more specifically women from their own home town or province. "Campanilismo", the sense of loyalty and attachment to place experienced by all those within earshot of the church bell tower or "campanile", was an important factor in the making of proxy marriages.¹⁴ Figures for Western Australia indicate that the majority of proxy spouses (56%) married people from the same home town. A smaller yet substantial proportion (26%) of proxy brides and grooms chose partners from another town within their home province. The degree of home town and provincial endogamy for proxy partners was much higher than the equivalent in-marriage rate for Italian born people married in Western Australia between 1945 and 1965. A study of almost five thousand marriages involving Italian born spouses in the state during this time period, revealed that only eighteen percent of Italians married partners who hailed from the same home town and an equal number chose marriage partners who came from the same province.¹⁵ The lower rates of parochial and provincial endogamy for Italian immigrants in Western Australia reflects the fact that people thousands of miles away from their homes will be less likely to find a partner from the same place of origin. However, even in relation to Italian statistics for home-town endogamy, the numbers of proxy spouses in Western Australia who chose partners from the same town or province of origin are still remarkably high. In *Fate and Honor, Family and Village*, Rudolph Bell found that local endogamy rates for a sample of towns in Sicily, Emilia Romagna, Campania and Calabria for the years 1946 to 1973 ranged from twenty nine percent to fifty one percent.¹⁶ Compared to these figures, the rate of home-town endogamy for Italian proxy spouses in Western Australia is even more impressive.

The factors underlying the prevalence of home-town and provincial in-marriage for proxy spouses are not hard to fathom. Parochial endogamy is directly linked to the manner in which proxy marriages were contracted. Some proxy marriages were set up through friends or priests who would act as intermediaries pairing lonely immigrant men in Australia with single women in Italy. In other instances, proxy

spouses were already well known to each other, having been engaged prior to the immigration of one of the partners, usually the male. However, according to the proxy brides I interviewed in Australia and Canada, most proxy marriages were arranged by members of the bride's or groom's immediate family who were usually resident in Italy. Mindful of the old Italian adage, "donne e buoi dei paesi tuoi" (choose women and oxen from your home town), the parents, siblings, uncles and aunts of Italian immigrants in Australia who helped forge proxy marriages usually looked no further than their own towns for suitable brides or grooms. The advantage of choosing a proxy partner from the same town was that the groom or bride's family reputation could be known and used to help establish a level of trust with regard to the legitimacy of the marriage offer and the character of the respective spouse. As long as the families were known to one another, then proxy spouses were not complete strangers.

By involving the family in partner selection, proxy spouses were behaving like many other men and women in the Italian marriage market in the nineteen fifties and sixties. The importance of family in vetting potential marriage candidates and mediating in the courtship and engagement rituals in the prelude to marriage has been recognized by many historians of the family in Italy and of Italian migration.¹⁷ In the *Sting of Change: Sicilians in Sicily and Australia*, Constance Cronin argued that both the nuclear and extended family in post-war Sicily played a huge role in the marriage making procedure by gathering information on the intended spouse and his/her family then using this information to judge the suitability of the match.^{xviii} The family also took part in the marriage ritual by chaperoning the couple during the engagement period to ensure the sexual purity of the bride until her marriage. Marriages by proxy were a way to continue the traditional Italian pattern of family participation in the marriage making process in the face of great challenges resulting from the geographic dislocation of the intended bride or groom from his/her family in Italy after emigration. Parents or relatives could hand pick a 'suitable' proxy partner for their far-away immigrant son (or daughter), have direct involvement in arranging and witnessing the wedding, and even engage in the nuptial ceremony itself by physically representing the bride or groom in the exchange of vows. Proxy marriages also helped safeguard family honour by ensuring that the sexuality of young Italian immigrant women was contained within the marriage framework. If Italian women emigrated as fiancées, their families ran the risk of being shamed by the independence and possible sexual freedom of their daughters or sisters,

particularly if the marriage was not carried through to plan on arrival in Australia. Furthermore, if there were no family members available to chaperone the betrothed couple in Australia, there was the fear that pre-marital sex would occur between the partners. In contrast, proxy marriages were usually a 'done deal'. If a proxy union was not consummated, then theoretically it could be annulled. However, dissolving a proxy marriage was far more complicated than simply breaking off an engagement. Therefore, marriage by proxy ensured that family honour, invested in the sexuality of its female members, could be guarded more effectively.

Aside from showing the strength of *campanilismo* amongst Italian migrants and the adaptation of traditional family participation in the marriage making procedure, the phenomenon of Italian proxy marriages also brings to light the kinds of options available to single women in Italy in the early post-war period. When I interviewed proxy brides in Australia and Canada, the desire to emigrate was the strongest, most commonly stated reason for marrying by proxy. Emigration for a single female from many parts of Italy in the nineteen fifties and sixties, particularly in rural areas, was virtually impossible unless the woman had a husband, fiancé, father or some other family member who could look after her well-being once she stepped off the boat in Australia or Canada. This feature of Italian immigration was recognized as a problem by Australian immigration officials who complained, "there has always been a reluctance on the part of Italian authorities to allow single girls to travel to Australia in their own right [...] this is probably due to the general attitude of Italians towards the welfare of their women folk".¹⁹ Proxy marriages made leaving Italy possible for women who otherwise had no other family or relatives in Australia to facilitate their emigration.

There is a possibility that the stress most proxy brides I interviewed placed on emigration as a motivating factor in their marriages was simply an easier, less personal way to explain their decision to marry by proxy. Only more interviews with proxy brides will resolve this question. More research also needs to be done on the socio-economic backgrounds of these women in order to determine whether factors such as dowry, or rather the lack of a dowry, influenced their decision to marry by proxy. For example, Lidia Zaffiro, a proxy bride from a small town near Verona in the region of Veneto, explained that by entering into a proxy marriage, her parents were able to forego providing a dowry for her and indeed even received payment from her proxy husband as 'compensation' for the loss of their daughter's earning

power. Lidia also described how her work experiences outside of her small home town influenced her decision to marry by proxy. Because she had worked as a seasonal rice planter in the Vercelli region of Piedmont from the age of thirteen, her occupational mobility had cast a shadow over her sexual purity and consequently her value on the local marriage market had diminished. Therefore in order to marry, Lidia looked further afield to find a husband, an Italo-Canadian immigrant twenty years her senior whom she married by proxy in 1961.²⁰

Italian immigrant men married by proxy in part because of the shortage of single, eligible Italian women in the host society. However, gender specific ethnic stereotypes also helped foster proxy marriages by discouraging unions between Italian men and Canadian and Australian women. Put simply, Italian immigrant men in Australia and Canada generally considered non-Italian women as sexually promiscuous, independent women who would make unfaithful wives and poor mothers. Giovanni, a bachelor who emigrated from Lombardy to Western Australia in the early 1950s explained that the only type of Australian woman who interacted with Italian men in the early post-war period was not the 'respectable' marrying kind. In Giovanni's words, "if an Australian girl went with an Italian boy - you knew she had nothing more to lose".²¹ Prejudice against Italian men also encouraged proxy weddings between Italians. The stereotype of the 'latin lothario' was very much alive in the minds of Australian women during the 1950s. "Our Australian girls do not readily accept their [Italian men's] friendship" explained the Western Australian State Secretary of the Women's Service Guild in a letter to Harold Holt, then Minister for Immigration in 1954.²² The Women's Service Guild, a national organization of mostly middle class women who were active in the Good Neighbour Movement and the National Citizenship Conventions were most concerned about the "grave moral problems" resulting from the immigration of large numbers of single Italian men to Australia and petitioned Harold Holt to increase the flow of single Italian women in order to encourage the more permanent settlement of Italians. Not all Australian women were reluctant to associate with Italian men, but if an Australian woman dared to date an Italian, this was often taken as a sign of her lack of 'feminine virtue'. As one Anglo-Australian woman explained, "in the fifties I had an Italian boyfriend. It was terrible... the Aussie guys I knew, who had never noticed me before, started making sexual passes at me and yelling sexual abuse at me when we walked down the street".²³

The image of Italian men as dangerous sexual predators was also very much alive and well in Canada. In a special feature which appeared in the Montreal Italian publication *Il Cittadino Canadese* (The Canadian Citizen) in 1964 and ran for several weeks, Italian men in Montreal were asked for their opinions on Canadian women and vice-versa. Many Canadian women interviewed in the newspaper's survey expressed a positive albeit stereotypical view of the Italian man as happy, impulsive and sensual. When it came to marriage though, most women expressed their reluctance to enter into serious relationships with Italian men on the grounds that, "there is too much difference in upbringing"²⁴ Some Canadian women were less tactful and more vehement in their disdain for Italian men. Miss Crepeau of Montreal complained, "Italian men are renowned as first class Don Juans, but the Italian men here in Canada make me laugh! They may be different in Italy - but here, their vulgarity, their rudeness and inappropriate requests disgust me!"²⁵ As for Italian men's feelings towards Canadian women, their one recurring criticism of Canadian women centred around the issue of sexuality. Editorial assistant P. Vitulli argued, "my main belief about Canadian women is this: for the most part, they are 'easy women'. I speak of that 'easiness' which usually makes an Italian think badly of a woman. I have found that Canadian women have little sense of shame, they sin as much as possible, then they go beating their chests with guilt to church - what Hypocrisy!"²⁶ By contrast, Italian women were regarded as more virtuous and chaste. In the words of Antonio Loprieno of Montreal, "with Italian women there is still the possibility of finding her 'intact' on the wedding night. I would never marry a woman from here (Canada), because I know too well that before the honeymoon she has already made love in a hotel."²⁷

Official reaction to proxy marriages in Australia and Canada

While there are many similarities in the timing, frequency and reasons why Italians entered into proxy marriages in post-war Australia and Canada, the government responses to such marriages differed in each national context. Although Australian immigration officials did not actively facilitate proxy marriages between Italians, they prioritised proxy brides alongside wives, fiancées and dependent children in the personal nomination scheme from at least as early as 1954.²⁸ Although Australian authorities were aware of and at times concerned about Italian proxy marriages, Italians who married in this fashion were not mentioned frequently in official government documents. It appears that Australian immigration authorities treated proxy spouses much as they

would other Italian wives or husbands nominated for immigration by an Australian sponsor. The fact that officials did not single out proxy brides (or grooms) for special comment is in itself an important point. The significance of according proxy spouses and other married immigrants equal treatment becomes more apparent if the attitudes of Australian government are compared to those of North American authorities.

Canadian immigration officials in the post-war period were far more cautious and concerned about Italian proxy marriages in the post-war period. Canadian authorities feared that proxy marriages were part of an immigration entry racket and they sought to impose obstacles (such as testing a couple's familiarity with each other) in order to help prevent this form of marriage between Italians and Italo-Canadians. The suspicion that Italians used proxy marriage for the sole purposes of immigration was confirmed in at least one court case in Quebec. In the case of *Lanzetta v. Falco* heard in 1961, the plaintiff, Dame Lanzetta, successfully petitioned to have her proxy marriage to a Neapolitan man annulled on the grounds that the marriage was not contracted in 'good faith' and that the groom "had entered into the marriage with the one aim of immigrating to Canada [...] he did not want to know the plaintiff, nor live with her as man and wife, as his only idea was to set foot on American soil."²⁹ The abuse of proxy marriage exemplified in the Falco-Lanzetta case, was precisely the kind of exploitation the Canadian Government were afraid that this form of marriage would foster. The fear of a 'proxy bride racket' plagued immigration officers from the early 1950s. Such suspicions were expressed openly by J.M. Knowles, the Officer-in-Charge of the Canadian Embassy Visa Office in Rome in a letter to the Director of Immigration in Ottawa in 1953. Knowles argued, proxy marriage with a complete stranger is foreign to Canadian custom [...] proxy wives are nothing but glorified fiancées and it is felt that they should be treated as such. There is nothing actually to prevent a proxy wife from refusing to live with her "husband" and obtaining a form of annulment after her arrival in Canada; there is every possibility, of course, of this developing into a racket, if it has not already done so, as I believe extremely likely.³⁰

In order to curtail any potential immigration scam, proxy wives were not processed as 'wives' by Canadian immigration authorities but as fiancées. What this meant in effect was that proxy spouses were security screened and treated "with no extra favourable consideration than would be granted to a mere fiancé(e) under the same circumstances."³¹

More importantly, immigration officers were advised to conduct stringent interviews with prospective immigrants who were proxy brides or grooms in order to ascertain whether the marriage was between persons who knew each other prior to making a visa application. Canadian immigration officials also obliged the prospective proxy bride or groom to sign a statement which declared that their sole purpose in proceeding to Canada was to unite with their spouse. The contract specified that the failure to cohabit with their proxy partner immediately upon entry would entail possible deportation. If all this alone was not disincentive enough to discourage proxy marriages, immigration officers in Canada were also instructed to warn people who came forward with nominations for the immigration of proxy spouses that they were better off bringing the intended bride/groom forward as a fiancé(e).³²

Judged comparatively, it appears that the Australian government was much more accommodating with respect to the immigration of proxy wives and husbands from Italy than its Canadian counterpart. The difference in the processing and treatment of proxy spouses may be related to the difference in the gender balance amongst Italo-Canadian and Italo-Australian immigrants. Given that the ratio of Italo-Canadian men to women was more even compared to Italo-Australian immigrants, Canadian immigration authorities were not prepared to go to the same lengths as the Australian government in according proxy spouses identical treatment to regular spouses. Canada's more hard line attitude towards proxy marriages may also be explained in part by its proximity to the United States. Canadian immigration officials feared that proxy marriages were being exploited for immigration purposes not just to Canada, but also to the United States. The Department of Citizenship and Immigration in Ottawa kept record of the American legislation on proxy marriages noting that although proxy unions were legally valid in many states, American consular officials did not recognize them for visa purposes, "the reason being that it is much too easy to arrange a marriage of convenience for the purpose of getting a person into the U.S.A."³³ Although there is no record of any direct correspondence between American and Canadian immigration officials over the matter, Canadian bureaucrats were especially cautious about proceeding with visa processing for proxy spouses if there was any evidence that the bride or groom had close relatives living in the United States.³⁴

Conclusion

Until a more comprehensive approximation of the numbers of Italian proxy marriages conducted in Australia and Canada is available, it is difficult to assess whether the Canadian government's more hard-line approach to proxy weddings translated into fewer Italo-Canadian proxy marriages compared to Australia. I have shown that proxy marriages between Italian immigrants and Italian nationals did take place in Canada and Australia after World War Two. Furthermore, these marriages happened frequently enough to arouse the attention of government, ecclesiastic and legal authorities, as well as ethnic organizations, most notably the Italian language press. Although the personal motives for entering into these unions were many, the basic social and demographic factors which facilitated proxy marriages were common to both Australia and Canada. These factors included a pronounced gender imbalance amongst Italo-Canadian and Italo-Australian immigrant communities, the preference of Italian immigrant men for Italian brides as opposed to native women because of certain ethnic specific gender stereotypes, the limited opportunity for single women in Italy to emigrate as lone females, the desire to continue the tradition of family involvement in the marriage making process despite the problem of geographic distance occasioned by emigration and finally, the strength of campanilismo amongst Italian migrants in Australia and Canada. Marriages by proxy served to bolster parochial loyalties in Italian immigrant communities by enabling couples from the same home towns in Italy to be united in Canada or Australia, thus reinforcing campanilismo in the new host society.

**(Choose Women and Oxen from your Home Town)*

Notes

¹ Interview with Lidia Zaffiro, November 8, 1998. (Note: All names have been altered to protect the privacy of interview subjects).

² Diaz, G., (1961) *Matrimonio per Poder*. Buenos Aires: Abeledo-Perrot. p 20.

³ Beltramo, Mario., et. al., (1969) *The Italian Civil Code*. New York: Oceana. p 36.

⁴Although there are no studies of Italo-Canadian proxy weddings, the following three studies provide some insight into the subject of proxy marriages amongst other ethnic groups in Canada : Isabelle Kaprielian Churchill (1993) "Armenian Refugee Women: The Picture Brides, 1920 -1930" *Journal of American Ethnic History*, spring, pp3-29. Midge

Ayukawa (1995) "Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Japanese Picture Brides in the early 20th Century British Columbia" *BC Studies*, spring/summer, pp103-118. Tomoko Makabe, (1995) *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. On the subject of Italian proxy spouses in Australia, see Susi Bella -Wardrop's (1996) *By Proxy: A Study of Italian Proxy Brides in Australia*, Victoria: Italian Historical Society.

⁵ Dell'oso A. and Whitehead, G., (1991) *Bride of Fortune*. Sydney: Pellinor. Opera Australia Libretto, n. 16.

⁶ Archives of the Archdiocese of Western Australia. Proxy Marriages. Years: 1938 -1971, n=923 records.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 547 of the total 923 proxy marriages recorded in the archives took place in the years from 1951-55.

⁸ Australian Census Records, 1947, 1954, 1961. This estimation was derived by calculating that 1800 Western Australian proxy spouses out of a rough total of 22 000 Italian immigrants to Western Australia represents approximately 8%.

⁹ This crude estimate was derived by calculating eight percent of the three hundred thousand or so Italians who settled permanently in post-war Australia.

¹⁰ Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto, Mgscc Correspondence. 35.01. Reverend J Heyes, pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel parish to Monsignor Fulton, Chancery Office. June 25, 1957. In his letter to the chancery office regarding the case of a parishioner who had approached him for assistance in arranging a proxy marriage, Reverend Heyes was most cautious in dealing with the case arguing that the Church had to "avoid an abuse that has crept up in the past."

¹¹ Archeveche de Montreal, Proxy marriage statistics 1952-1982, n=1952. Note: I was denied direct access to these documents and a search for proxy records was conducted by the Archivist of the Archdiocese on my behalf. There is a possibility that some of these proxy records involved Portuguese immigrants, not just Italians. As I was not allowed to examine the records personally, I could not determine the exact number of proxy spouses who were Italian, not Portuguese. However, given the vast majority (84%) took place during the 1950s in Montreal, it can be reasonably surmised that most of these unions involved Italians as there were relatively few Portuguese immigrants in Canada until later in the 1960s and 1970s.

¹² *Census of Canada, 1951. Volume II: Cross Classification of Characteristics*. Total number of Italian born persons in Canada: 57 789 (36 778 Men and 21 011 Women)

¹³ *Census of Australia, 1954*. Total number of Italian born persons in Australia: 119 897 (80 279 men and 39 618 women)

¹⁴ *Census of Canada, 1961*. Total number of Italian born persons in Canada: 258 071 (143 013 men and 115 058 women). *Census of Australia, 1961*. Total number of Italian born persons in Australia: 228 296 (134 624 men and 93 672 women)

¹⁵ Susanna Iuliano, (2000). *Gender and the Construction of Italian Ethnic Identity in Post-War Australia and Canada*, (Doctoral Thesis; forthcoming).

¹⁶ Rudolph Bell, (1979). *Fate and Honor, Family and Village*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁷ See for example Kerzer and Saller, eds., (1991), *The Family in Italy: From Antiquity to the Present*. New Haven: Yale University Press or Rudolph Bell, (1979) *Fate and Honor, Family and Village*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁸ Constance Cronin, (1970). *The Sting of Change: Sicilians in Sicily and Australia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁹ *Australian Archives, (1958)*. Series A446/465 File 70/78623. "Admission of Single Women from Italy, part 2, 1958-1963". Letter from T.H.E. Heyes, Secretary, Department of Immigration, to Minister. June 11, 1958.

²⁰ Zaffiro, op cit.,

²¹ Interview with Giovanni Pirola, (1997). Fremantle, Western Australia.

²² Women's Service Guild (1954). Women's Service Guild Papers. Battye Library, Perth. Correspondence Women's Service Guild and Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration. 14 September, 1954.

²³ Martin, J. (1986). "Non-English speaking migrant women in Australia". In Grieve, N, and

Burns, A. (Eds.) *Australian women new feminist perspectives*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press. p. 236.

²⁴ *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 11 Sept 1964.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Il Cittadino Canadese*, 25 Sept 1964.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Australian Archives (1954)*. Series A445/1. File 248/4/1. Notes on Italian and Maltese Migration 1954-55. "Internal Report Department of Immigration", 8 April 1954.

²⁹ Dame Lanzetta V. Falco et Procureur General de la Province de Quebec. *Rapports Judiciaires* (1962) pp 593-6.

³⁰ *National Archives of Canada, RG76, Vol. 874*, File 559-29 part 1, "Marriage by Proxy: General File 1928-63" JM Knowles to Immigration Officer in Charge Toronto, August 31st 1953.

³¹ *Ibid.*,

³² *National Archives of Canada, RG76, Vol. 874*, File 559-29 part 1, "Marriage by Proxy: General File 1928-63" AW Boulter to Chief Operations Division. Marriage by Proxy.. May 16 1955.

³³ *National Archives of Canada, RG76, Vol. 874*, File 559-29 part 1, "Marriage by Proxy: General File 1928-63" Sept 25 1951 AW Boulter Dept of C'ship and Immigration to IR Stirling - intradepartmental correspondence. p 2.

³⁴ *National Archives of Canada, RG76, Vol. 874*, File 559-29 part 1, "Marriage by Proxy: General File 1928-63" JM Knowles to Director of Immigration Ottawa, August 31 1953.

The Fasci Femminili in Australia: Re-Imagining the Past Creating the Future

Lara Palombo

Italo-Australian women's histories in Australia have been erased from the public domain. On the few occasions when they are included, they are seen as very few and are positioned within an historical, domestic, religious and, to a limited extent a work setting defined as non-political and therefore not worth narrating. In this paper, I will question established normative historical narratives through the examination of untold counter-histories on Italo-Australian women. I examine the role of women in the Fascio Femminile in Sydney from the mid-1930s to the beginning of War World 2 (WW2) and especially their attempts to create and affirm a fascist culture in the Italian community. I will examine the role of the Fascio Femminile as being affected and connected to events in the Fasci Femminili in Italy and to the international and local branches on the National Fascist Party (PNF). For ethical reasons, the names of women used in this article are pseudonyms except in cases where they are directly quoted from published texts.

Since the mid-twenties, the Fascist Regime in Italy had attempted to oversee the development of Italian fascist groups overseas. The Secretariat General in Rome appointed politically active Italian Vice-Consuls in the city of Perth, Sydney, Brisbane and Townsville to oversee the formation of branches of the National Fascist Party (PNF) and to recruit Italians living in Australia. The Fascio of Sydney was established in 1927 and was called the Luigi Platania, after a Fascist martyr and was one of the ten Fasci in Australia, the other nine were as follows:

Fascio "Gino Lisa"	Melbourne
Fascio "Giuseppe Degol"	Brisbane
Fascio "Paolo Solariol"	Cairns
Fascio "Edmondo Mazzuoli"	Babinda
Fascio "Nicola Nisco"	Innisfail
Fascio "Armando Bergossi"	Adelaide
Fascio "Domenico Picca"	Port Pirie
Fascio "Riccardo Cittarelli"	Perth
Fascio "Giuseppe Carli"	Fremantle ¹

In April 1926, in accordance with the structures of the Fasci in Italy, the Secretariat-General of Fasci Abroad called for the formation of women's branches of the National Fascist Party (PNF) in Australia and stated that the:

- “greatest impetus possible must be given to the Women's Fascio as the women in certain spheres could do extremely useful and profitable work, and it is necessary to make use of such work to the greatest possible extent.”²

It is important to state that it is still unclear how these directives came to operate in Australia or what and how connecting historical formations came to affect the development of the Fasci Femminile overseas. I argue that to present their establishment as it was solely initiated by the General Secretary of the Fasci Abroad is to re-affirm hegemonic narratives which have constructed Italo-Australian women as historical figures and passive in relation to cultural initiation. I ask if this formation was linked to transnational discourses associated with members of the Women's Fascio in Italy? Or was this connected to local formations associated with Italo-Australian women's organisations? Or was this simply a project of the Italo-Australian male fascist leadership? As I will demonstrate the formation of the Women's Fascio was connected to all of these historical formations and the General Secretary of the Fasci Abroad may have approved but not necessarily initiated its establishment.

From the very outset, there was a strong link between the Fasci Femminili and the PNF of both Italy and Australia. The Fasci Femminili were under the folio of the local Secretary of the PNF but its activities were also directed by the Italian PNF through the Secretariat-General of the Fasci Abroad in Rome. The Secretary of the local PNF nominated the directress or leader of the women's Fascio, but this had to be approved by Rome which ran security checks on the political and legal status of the women and their families. Members of the Fasci Femminili were recruited by members of the group and by the local PNF but again their membership was subject to approval from the Fasci Abroad in Rome. Thus reiterating the links between the local and transnational branches of the PNF and the Fasci Femminili in Australia.

The Fasci Femminili nevertheless, was governed by a Statute of the Fasci Abroad and by a Statute of its own that formally linked it with the Fascio in Italy and Australia. This declared that:

Statute of the Female Fascio

- Art.1- In every Fascio there should be a female Fascio. The female Fascio accepts the programme and discipline of the Italian Fasci Abroad.
- Art.2- The essential duties of the Fascist ladies are to assist the relief works of the fascio.
- Art.3- All Ladies who by birth or nationality are Italian, of excellent morals and conduct, and have already completed their eighteenth year may become members of the Female Fascio.
- Art.4- The female fascio is directly dependent on the Secretary of the Fascio, who will be assisted by a Directress selected by him.
- Art.5- The female Fascists who render themselves unworthy to belong to the Fascio through lack of discipline, or moral reasons will, according to the seriousness of their offence undergo “deploration” or “suspension” or withdrawal of the tessera or expulsion. The procedure to be followed for disciplinary punishment is that fixed by articles 10 and 11 of Statute of the Fasci Abroad.
- Art.6- The provisions contained in Art.8 of the statute of the Fasci Abroad will apply with regard to tessere and badges.

The Directress of the Female Fascio as of right will take part in all meetings of the Directorate of the Fascio in which questions dealing with the Female Fascio are dealt with.³

These regulations represented the office of the Italian Fasci Abroad and the local PNF as being closely connected to the activities of the women’s branches through their appointment of the leadership and through direct intervention in their programmes. In this sense, these rules represent women as acting on an already established fascist agenda. They are followers rather than the creators of fascist credo. It is difficult to state how women responded to these constructions, however, my observations will argue that these women created Fascist culture and did not merely follow it.

In 1927, the Fasci Femminili were established in Sydney under the leadership of Caterina Stassi and of Mrs Fornari in Melbourne. In 1928 In South Australia, we see the emergence of the Adelaide women’s branch lead by Vincenza Amerio and in 1929 the Port Pirie branch directed by Francesca Caputo. In 1934 in Fremantle Mrs Funazzi also operated as the Directress of the Fascio, and a Perth Fascio under the direction of Mrs Sertorio and Mrs Anna Mevio. Country sections were

established at Wiluna and Gwalia under the direction of Mrs Nina Gregorini and Mrs Aurelia Bonomi.⁴ ⁵Overall, the purposes of the Fasci Femminile were to:

- 1-create popular support for the Fascist Regime abroad
- 2-raise funds and resources for the Regime and fascist aims
- 3-protect the interests of Italians Abroad
- 4-encourage the maintenance of the 'Italianità' of the immigrants and their children
- 5-keep Italians united
- 6-combat anti-fascist ideas

The extent and how each purpose was fulfilled varied from branch to branch, in this paper I will discuss the activities of the Sydney's Fascio Femminile

Members of the Women's Fascio were also operating in various ladies' committees of local regional clubs and cultural and charitable organisations. At this stage of my research it is difficult to ascertain the aims of these various women's groups, nevertheless, some of them were operating in line with the demands of the Secretariat General in Rome. For example, in 1933, on the eve of Italian occupation of Ethiopia, or as it was called at the time Abyssinia, the Secretariat General in Rome had clearly stated:

"[...]It is indispensable that all the resources of the community be devoted to Fascist works of assistance, or cultural or propaganda works in the midst of the community itself."⁶

It is with this statement in mind that one could read the decision of the Ladies' Committee of the Cavour Club in Melbourne to organise fund-raising activities for the Red Cross to support the Regime in Abyssinia.⁷ This support occurred in a period when the Australian Government had prohibited any organisation, other than the Italian Red Cross to fundraise for the Abyssinian War and international opinion was turning against Mussolini. It could be argued that the Ladies' Committee of the Cavour Club offered a face of 'respectability' and legality to a wide range of Italians and Australians who wanted to support Italy's colonial aspirations or perhaps just wanted to provide funds for soldiers and their families but who would not have associated directly with the Women's Fascio itself. As such, the involvement of members of the women's fascio in community organisations at times provided avenues to rally support for the Fascist Regime.

The Sydney branch

In the ‘Summary Report on Italian Fascist Activities and Propaganda in Australia of 1936’ published by Cresciani in 1986, it was noted that the Fascio Femminile in Sydney:

“[...] is actively and closely associated with the headquarter’s body Luigi Platania. Their activity is along [sic] the social events and raising money thereby and maintaining contact with Italian women and our own people on friendly and business terms with the Italians and attracted to social gatherings either for business reasons or personal pleasure. It is run by Signora Stassi assisted by the following Committee: Signore: M.Gariglio, L.Bianchi, C.Divola, R.Sciacci, A.Fiaschi, N.Shadafora, M.Merlino, L.Marocco, G.Yonna, Signorina E.Rossi”⁸

This shared a similar structure to the Fasci Femminili in Italy. It was largely run by middle and upper class, married and Catholic heterosexual women who conducted ‘social’ work. In Italy, according to Willson, members of the Fasci Femminili: “generally constituted a more educated section of the overall population and were more aware of Fascist ideologies than others.”⁹

In Sydney, the Fascio Femminile were mostly run by Catholic women, owners of small businesses, professionals and landowners who were also married to professional, business and merchant men. For example, Maria Cesare was the wife of a doctor and prominent official in the party¹⁰; Giuseppina Verdi owned and worked in a small business (fruit shop) and became a member of the Fascio against her husband’s approval¹¹; Marta Di Rosa was a trained Italian teacher whose husband was well linked to the PNF¹²; Lina Cipolla became a land owner and was married to a businessman.¹³ The “class connection” was especially noted by the Australian authority who argued that the Fascio Femminile of Sydney were run by women, who were the wives of prominent Italians of the professional and merchant classes.¹⁴

The Fasci Femminili in Sydney and in Italy carried out both ‘social and benevolent’ work for disadvantaged women and their families. Existing historical archival narratives re-affirm that members of the group conducted social and benevolent work. For example, the leader of the Sydney group testified during the war the ‘social’ nature of her duties:

“As I was lone handed for many years carrying out the benevolent work, I had asked a few ladies to assist me to visit hospitals, prisons, asylums, and families in distress.¹⁵ For many years I have been interested

in benevolent and Social Work amongst Australians and the Italian Communities. I have given valuable assistance to Hospitals and Prisons Authorities, I have translated for the doctors, superintendent, sisters and patients. I have organised functions to raise money in order to assist the destitute in Australia and Italian cases [...] I have alleviated unfortunate and distressing cases only when they seek my assistance, which is hard to refuse as some of the humble Italians are so helpless, when in trouble they have appealed to me for food, clothing and money to provide medicine for their sick children [...] I am a true conscientious Christian woman.”¹⁶

In December 1939 the Sydney women’s branch also set up a ‘Maternity and Infant Welfare section’; which although it never fully developed because of the war, indicates that the group was committed to expand its so-called ‘social’ programme.¹⁷ In Italy, national fascist organisations such as ONMI (National Organisation for Maternity and Child Welfare) were run by middle and upper class members of the *Fasci Femminili* to modernize maternity practices and to prevent infant mortality by improving the health of pregnant and nursing mothers.¹⁸

While this might be seen as the social-philanthropic activities typical of middle class women of the thirties, the social programmes run by the *Fasci Femminili* re-affirmed the fascist ethos amongst classes of women who depended on their social and benevolent work. In Italy, organisations such as ONMI, offered support to ‘lower classes’ of women on the condition that these respected Fascist doctrines and policies. Chiara Saraceno’s lengthy research on ONMI, suggests that:

“Women and children without adequate resources were entitled to assistance. This circumstance was ascertained not to form some sort of certificate (for instance the certificate of poverty), but was decided at the discretion of the lady visitors...In practice many working and working class mothers and women of the lowest middle class, as well as single mothers [...] [were] exposed [...] to arbitrary assessment by women, who with no specific qualifications apart from being selected by the provincial committees on the basis of their own morality, support for fascism and their ‘predisposition for mother-and-children’, were entitled to go into their house and judge their needs and their favorable attitudes to ONMI’s role. The lady visitors themselves,...were chosen not only among *fascio* members, but among upper and middle class women *fascio* members. This meant that women in the poorest strata wishing to benefit from ONMI services, or who came under its control, were subject to twofold scrutiny by other women [...] on a class and a party basis.”¹⁹

This form of class and political control was also visible in some of the so-called 'benevolent work' conducted by members of the Fascio Femminile in Sydney. In 1939, the Secretariat-General of the Fasci Abroad had clarified that:

"It was necessary for the woman to feel and understand Fascism not only as a political conception and an animating power that brings the fatherland towards its higher destiny, but also as an ethical concession of life to which it is necessary to conform in the family and out, the proper manner to feel, to think, to act."²⁰

Women were asked to ensure that Fascist 'ethos' cultivated in the realms of the heterosexual family unit as part of the fascist process of 'moralisation'. This demanded the return of women to fulfill traditional roles and became reinforced through religious Catholic discourses on social morality, the family, femininity and reproduction. In Italy, these discourses, as Caldwell has stated "negated the existence of female sexuality, reduced notions of femininity to constant reproduction and enhanced the sacredness of the family".²¹ In Australia, a member of the Fascio explained that in her benevolent work "she prevented many unhappy marriages going to the Divorce Court and that she had 'tactfully' enlightened them to perfect understanding".²² However, when 'her' tactfulness had not worked, she refused to provide support to the needy: "[...] there was a lady [...] she is an Australian born, but she was married to an Italian; she came to me and wanted my assistance, she wanted benevolent parcels [...]; when I investigated I found she was leading an immoral life and living with another Italian, I told her she could not be assisted and I tried to advise her to return to her husband, because there was a child."²³

Thus, the Fascio Femminile in Australia, as part of an international fascist agenda for women, conducted social and benevolent work which re-asserted fascist morals and ethos, amongst economically disadvantaged women.

The current representation of members of the Fasci Femminili as 'social workers' conducting benevolent work denies the processes of contestation associated with the development of these functions. In Italy since the 1920s the Fasci Femminile, underwent major turmoil as it was argued that their role as political activists had to be replaced by a 'social' agenda, that was seen as more appropriate for women.²⁴ Chiara Saraceno has argued that:

"The fascist activist woman, the female squadrista of the early days, never constituted a role model for the regime. Indeed she could be regarded as a troublesome, embarrassing presence, to be kept under

control precisely because of the message of deviance from a feminine normality of homemaking, obedience, fertility and seclusion.”²⁵

De Grazia’s text especially, tells the history of fascist women who in the early twenties were pushed out of the party’s leadership because of their antagonism to the new ‘conservative anti-feminist agenda’. Maria De Grazia explains that some of the more determined and experienced pro-fascist women were marginalised from the party. For example, Maria Rizzoli, who had subsidized *Rassegna Femminile Italiana*, was forced to resign as chief inspectress and within a few years her publication was defunded and replaced by the *Giornale Della Donna*. After 1925, organised women would never again be regarded as serious interlocutors of fascist politics.²⁶

Narratives from existing archival material on Italo-Australian women involved in the Fasci Femminili and existing texts, represent these members as being removed from any ‘internal’ struggle on the roles of women during this early period. This ‘silence’ is connected to the historical processes of investigation by military bodies during War World two and by fascist women who tried to escape internment by limiting information on their involvement in the branches of the PNF. Also, the authoritarian and masculinist structures of the PNF have erased these counter-histories from their records. What I mean is that official documents and national records related to the Fasci in Australia have rendered invisible any histories that dissented from notions of ‘national fascist unity’. It is therefore fundamental to question current historical narratives that that re-affirm hegemonic interests by precluding notions of women’s counter-histories.²⁷

In Sydney, the Fascio Femminile took up projects that re-affirmed their commitment to the Italian Fascist State through a wide range of ‘social’, ‘cultural’ and ‘educative’ programmes. The celebration and support for Fascist national Italian tradition, through the appreciation of the Italian language and restricted notions of culture and tradition, re-affirmed women’s role in the fascist ‘nationalization’ aimed at creating a “sense of belonging to a race and to a nation.”²⁸ These nationalistic activities attempted to reach a broader audience, from both well established and less established social classes of Italo-Australians.²⁹ In Sydney, the Fascio Femminile collected “gold” and “wedding rings” for the Fatherland; it organised celebrations to commemorate the “March on Rome”; the invasion of Ethiopia and other celebrations of significance to the Fascist Regime. In 1936, as part of the commemoration of the victory of the Italian Armies in Africa, the Fascio Femminile with the rest of the PNF raised 7,000 pounds to purchase land

and erect a building to be known as the “Casa D’Italia” (Home of Italy).³⁰ In 1938 and 1939, the Fascio Femminile also ran cultural and historical programmes on Italian authors, historical and religious heroes and heroines respected by Italian Fascists, such as Giosue’ Carducci. The following is an example of a cultural programme run by the Sydney’s women’s Fascio:

Circular of Activities

Italians’ Fascios Abroad- Fascio Luigi Platania, Sydney, September, 28, 1939

Tuesday 17th October, 8 p.m. ‘Country Goddess, Holy Mother’ lecture on Giosue’ Carducci of the series of the cultural lectures of the National Society...

I also call the comrades attention to the date 28th October anniversary of the year of the Fascist [...] organised under the direction of the Women’s Fascio [...] the proceeds of the function besides going to the funds of the subsidiary activities of this Fascio will also go to help Italian and Australian Red Cross [...]

Italians’ Fascios Abroad- Fascio Luigi Platania, Sydney , December, 2, 1939

Saturday 16-7.30 Masked Ball of the Children Organised by Mesdames Lucia Campese, Elisa Rainelli, Annita Minucci, Carla Bianchi, and Vittoria De Angeli

Italians’ Fascio Abroad-Fascio Luigi Platania. Sydney , December, 27, 1939

Saturday 13 January 8 p.m. Grand Dance Evening by Comrades (female) Lina Cipolla, Elisa Rainelli, Lucia Campese, Maria Cesare, Anna Liberale,

Tuesday 16 January 8 p.m. First Conference of the Cycle “Heroism of the Italian Women throughout History” given by Comrade Elisa Rainelli.

Fascist Greetings, Secretary of the Fascio
I.Fanelli. ³¹

The nature of these activities created the acceptance of an Italian fascist culture that prior to the thirties was ‘unknown’ to many Italo-Australian immigrants. The continuous, varied and nationalist activities rendered Italian Fascism a social norm in the Italo-Australian community. Furthermore, women from the Fascio operated as educators of the new generations to enhance their knowledge of Italian culture and language. Documents, retrieved from the Western Australian Investigation Branch report that in 1938 and 1939 the Secretariat-General

of the Fasci Abroad had forwarded a circular to the Vice-Consuls that: stressed the necessity to cultivate the national feeling and the teaching of the Italian language to boys and girls, as this was the principal and absolute link that tied the “sons abroad with the fatherland.”³²

Members of the Women’s Fascio in Sydney ran an Italian school on Saturday afternoons, at St Mary’s School Hall, in Cathedral St. In 1938 there were 59 pupils most of whom are described by Australian Intelligence as being “from economically disadvantaged backgrounds”.³³ These children were encouraged to learn the Italian language and the aim was “to arouse in the hearts of the children ...an increased love for Fascist Italy”.³⁴ In 1936, the opening of the school was advertised in the Italian press as “Scuola del Fascio” (School of the Fascio)³⁵; this represented a symbolic act or an attempt to re-affirm support for fascism in the Italian community in a period of Italian colonial expansion. The school was devoted to Italian reading, writing, singing, collective physical exercises, and children were often publicly rewarded for their achievements.³⁶

This Fascio Femminile was also involved in the work of the Gioventù Italiana Del Littorio all’Estero, (GILE and Italian Youth Movement of the Littorio Abroad). It is unclear if the Italian school was part of this programme, what is more clear however, is that most children of the G.I.L.E in Sydney were recruited from this school and that by 1938 its total membership (of boys and girls) reached 104.³⁷ In 1939, Giuseppina Verdi, a long-standing member of the Fascio Femminile (since 1933) became the Inspectress of the movement. Giuseppina was to work with different groups of girls:

- A) Young Fascists (female) 17-21 years of age
- B) Young Italians (girls) 13-17 years of age
- C) Daughters of the Wolf up to 8 years.³⁸

Structurally, the GILE was devoted to train and prepare girls and boys to become good fascist devoted to the fascist state. Amongst various activities, Italo-Australian girls attended various excursions and were taught “rhythmical” exercises which would be performed at various fascist functions and parades dedicated to the regime.³⁹ In the states of Western Australia and South Australia, the GILE also organised trips to Italy in order to expose children to the Fascist life of Italy. It is unclear however, if the Sydney branch was involved in this programme.

In the late 1930s and at the eve of War World two, Italian Fascism attempted to nationalise and unify Italian people through discourses of race. The fascist regime’s need to increase its military power through healthier and bigger armies, its desire to create an Italian colony in

Ethiopia and lastly, the beginning of the persecution of the Jews placed stronger focus on the preservation of the pure 'Italian race'.⁴⁰ In Italy, this agenda was partly reinforced through a demographic national campaign which promoted a high level of reproduction. The fascist regime used restrictive legislation and women's organisations (such as the Fascio Femminile and ONMI) to encourage the reproduction of the 'Italian race'.⁴¹ In Sydney, the effects of racialised discourses on the Fascio Femminile resulted in the call to concentrate women's efforts on Italians.⁴² Since the late 1938, under the new leadership of the Consul Mammalella and the Secretary of the Fascio Fanelli, the Fascio Femminile was directed to expand the fascist ethos of their activities and to collaborate mainly with the wives and mothers of the Italian comrades. Doctor Fanelli, wrote to the Consul General in 1939:

"The Female Fascio must be developed still more [...] There should be members of it, in the first place the wives and mothers of the comrades, members of the fascio, as we need collaboration to heal moral and material unhappiness however diffused and little known. I intend that this most humane work of assistance in perfect and orthodox fascist style should be better developed in extent and depth. It is the best propaganda that can be accomplished among our fellow countrymen and the genuine interpretation of the Duce."⁴³

So, whilst in previous years the work of Fascio Femminile and at times its membership had been open to women from various ethnicities, now they were directed to restrict those that they targeted.

But not all women agreed with the demands of the leadership. The Directress began to have stronger reservations about the directions taken by the leadership. In 1939, during what was probably the last Littorio Ball organised by the Women's Fascio, the Consul General and the Directress disagreed over the "ethnicity" of the debutantes at the ball: "He wanted all Italian girls or girls of Italian descent [...] I thought it was wise to have Australians as well. He refused [to receive them]."⁴⁴

It is important to state that the leader of the Fascio Femminile as well as a few other members, were born in Australia (from Italian parents) and were well connected with members of the Anglo-Australian and British community. For example, the Inspectresses' daughter was married to a British major and had many Australian born friends who testified in her defense during Court appearances during the War.⁴⁵ Many of the dances organised by the Fascio Femminile were well attended and supported by other ethnic groups and, attempts to limit their involvement meant the effective reduction of popular support and overall cuts in funds raised for the party. Thus, the leader of the

Women's branch indicated her concern over the 'racialised' discourses of this period and the effects that this would have had on the work conducted by her branch. It is interesting to note, that despite this disagreement the Directress was later nominated by the Consul to become the National Directress of all Fasci Femminili in Australia.⁴⁶

In Australia, the 'public' activities of the Fasci Femminili stopped during the War. At least five of the women enrolled in the Women's Fascio were interned at the Tatura Camp in Victoria. These were accused of running subversive activities that would have prejudiced the successful defence of Australia against the enemy.⁴⁷ Their internment was supported by the Military Forces and the NSW Investigation Branch, who explained that:

Active membership of the Fascio Luigi Platania is considered to be sufficient reason to justify internment [...] in this regard it is pointed out that the wholesale internment of Italian women will not be obtained, because of the 260 known members of the fascio in this Command, only 34 are females. Of these females it is proposed to submit for internment only those who are considered to be dangerous from a National Security point of view- those whose husbands were active members of the fascio, and those who had close association with the political activities of that organisation."⁴⁸

Ministerial authorities, however, whose approval was necessary before the internment of any women, declared that enemy women would be interned only when it was considered 'essential'. In May, 1941, whilst considering the internment of a member of the Fascio Femminile in Sydney, it was reported that:

"the Government is concerned over the internment of women because these could prejudice the position of Australian women in enemy territory or any negotiations concerning them which External Affairs might conceivably carrying on through the Foreign Office."⁴⁹

The final Ministerial position was that membership to the Fascio in itself was not an appropriate reason to intern women and it requested of the Military authorities that strong evidence be shown to exist of the subversive or dangerous activities that women themselves could carry out.⁵⁰

But how did interned fascist women negotiate relations of power during War World Two? In their appeals against their internment, (it seems to me that) some women came to occupy temporary positions of 'authority' which challenged the authoritarian military discourses that were attempting to prove the political and subversive nature of their work in the Fascio. These women argued that women's activities in the

fascio were ‘social’ and therefore ‘not subversive or political’. For example, a member of the Fascio Femminile who was interned, during her appeal stated to the Advisory Board: “My interest has been humanitarian and social and if I had thought there was any propaganda attached to the Fascio Femminile I would not have remained in it.”⁵¹

In the Copy of the Deputy Crown Solicitor’s Memorandum of June 1941, the summary of the cross-examination of another member of the Fascio Femminile who was appealing against her internment also stated that:

“She insisted that she was loyal to the British Empire, and she stated that she had never engaged in any subversive activities, or attempted directly or indirectly to spread Fascist propaganda. She stated that she had not known of the political character of the bodies to which she belonged and she denied that she had known the significance of the black shirt uniform, which she admitted having worn.”⁵²

Ironically, through the usage of Fascist discourses on the social role of women’s organisations, some of these women accessed positions of ‘authority’ which broke down the binary logic used by the military authorities that represented them as either political or non-political, subversive or not subversive. But despite being positioned in resistance to this binary logic none of these women were released after their first appeal to the Advisory Boards. These found it incomprehensible that anyone who was a member of a political organisation could describe their activities as “social” activities.

In summary, the Fascio Femminile of Sydney was affected by transnational and local gendered, class-based and racialised discourses of Italian Fascism. These women, were not simply symbolic bearers of an Italian fascist identity which transmitted fascist values. Their activities attempted to create and normalize an Italian Fascist culture in the Italian community and overall in Sydney, amongst both disadvantaged and more affluent classes of Italians and other ethnicities, women and their families. These women, however also opposed some of the strategies adopted by the PNF. During the war, their internment was affected by national and international security issues such as ‘the position of Australian women in Italy’. As a defense for their involvement in the Fasci Femminili, these used the fascist ethos on women’s work in the party to dispute whether their activities were ‘political’.

Notes

¹ *Australian Archives (NSW): Military Intelligence- Eastern Command, C320, SFA 15, “Report on Fascism in Italy and Australia, 1939-1941”.*

² *Australian Archives (Vic): Military Intelligence- Northern Command*, MP508/1, 255/702/1346, Activities of Women in Italian Community, 1941, p.1

³ *National Archives (NSW)*: op.cit., "Report on Fascism", p.14. Translated by the Military Intelligence.

The withdrawal of the Tessera here means 'the withdrawal of the membership card to the Fascio'.

⁴ See Cresciani, Gianfranco. *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Italians in Australia: 1922-1945*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1980; Mezzini, Tonia Maria. *Migration, Identity and Community Building: Fourteen Molfettese Women Speak*, Honours Thesis, History and Politics Depts., Adelaide University, November, 1992;

Australian Archives (VIC): op.cit., "Activities of Women in the Italian Community", p.2.

Australian Archives (SA): "Investigation Branch of South Australia", AP501/2 439243, Fascio Femministe di Adelaide, 1926-1945".

⁵ It is important to note that there were also women's branches operating at Babinda (in Western Australia). It is known that various attempts had been made to establish Italian schools at Babinda and by rule no schools could be established without the support of a Women's Fascio. Yet, in the existing literature, various references are made to the possibility of establishing a Women's Section of the Fascio at Ingham and Brisbane (I am still researching their existence)

⁶ *National Archives (Vic): Military Intelligence- Northern Command*, MP508/1, 255/702/13461, Internment of Women- Fascio, pp.2-3

⁷ see Martinuzzi O'Brien, Ilma. *Australia's Italians*, Italian Historical Society, Melbourne, 1989 pp.83-85

⁸ Cresciani, Gianfranco. *Emigranti o Compari*, Knockmore Enterprises, Sydney, 1988. p.185

⁹ Willson, Perry 'Women in Fascist Italy' in Bessel, Richard (ed), *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, Cambridge Univ. Press, New York. pp.83/4

¹⁰ *National Archives (ACT): MPI Section-Police Headquarters*, Sydney, A367/1, C69276, Dossier 5383, 1940.

¹¹ *National Archives (ACT): Victorian Advisory Committee Report*, A367/1, C69238, 1942.

¹² *National Archives (ACT): Advisory Committee*, A 367/1 C69264, Objection no.63 of July 1942.

¹³ *National Archives (Vic): Report of the Advisory Committee*, MP 508/1, 255/742/321, Objection no.53 of 1941.

¹⁴ see Cresciani, op.cit., p.185;

¹⁵ *National Archives (Vic): Objection Against Internment*, MP 508/1, 255/742/183, "Letter to Minister for the Army, 1940", p.5

¹⁶ *National Archives (Vic): Objection Against Internment*, MP 508/1, 255/742/183, "Letter to Ministers for the Navy and Attorney General, 1941", p.3-4

¹⁷ *National Archives (NSW)*: op.cit., "Report on Fascism in Italy and Australia", p.25

¹⁸ De Grazia, Victoria. *How fascism Ruled Italy 1922-1945*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1992, p.59

¹⁹ Saraceno, Chiara. "Redefining Maternity and Paternity: Gender, Pronatalism and Social Policies in Fascist Italy", in Bock Gisela and Thane Pat, *Maternity and Gender policies*, Routledge, 1991, pp.206-207

²⁰ *National Archives (Vic)*: op.cit., "Activities of Women in Italian Community", p.1

²¹ See Caldwell, op.cit., p. 52

²² *National Archives (Vic)*: op.cit., "Letter to Minister for the Army", p.6

²³ *National Archives (Act): Advisory Committee no.1*, A367/1, C18000/445, "Objection no.53 of 1941", p.7

²⁴ see Saraceno, op.cit.; De Grazia, op.cit.; Pickering-Iazzi, Robin (ed) *Mothers of Invention*, University of Minnesota Press, London, 1995; Messina, Nunzia. *Le Donne Del Fascismo*, Elleme, Rome, 1987; Willson, R. Perry 'Women in Fascist Italy' in Bessel Richard (ed) *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, Press Syndicate of Cambridge, New York, 1996.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Saraceno, p.200

²⁶ op.cit., De Grazia. pp.39/40

- ²⁷ See Kumar, Priya 'Testimonies of Loss and Memory' in *Interventions*, v.1 no.2, 1999.pp.201-215
- ²⁸ see Spackman, Barbara 'Fascist Women and the rhetoric of Virility' in *Mothers of Invention*, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1995.
- ²⁹ Although it is known that some German immigrants, British and other European immigrants attended their functions, it is unknown if Fascist doctrines were directed at them.
- ³⁰ *National Archives (Vic)*: op.cit., "Letter to the minister of the Army, 1940", p.4
- ³¹ *National Archives (NSW)*: Security Service NSW, ST2476/20 Item15, "Italian Fascio Abroad", 1939.
- ³² *National Archives (Vic)*: op.cit., "Activities of Women in Italian Community", p.1
- ³³ *National Archives (NSW)*: Security Service NSW, ST2476/20 Item 5, "Italian General File, 1938-1939", p.10
- ³⁴ op.cit., Cresciani, p.193
- ³⁵ *National Archives (NSW)*: op.cit., "Italian General File", p.10
- ³⁶ At this stage, I am still researching what texts the children in Sydney read and especially how the curriculum was developed.
- ³⁷ *National Archives (NSW)*: op.cit., "Italian General File", p.10
- ³⁸ *National Archives (Vic)*: op.cit., "Activities of Women in Italian Community".
- ³⁹ see *National Archives (SA)*: *Investigation Files*, D1919/0, SS 378, *Bollettino Della Gioventù Italiana del Littorio all'Estero*, 1938.
- ⁴⁰ see Whittam, John. *Fascist Italy*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995.pp.87 and 97; Re, Lucia 'Fascist Theories of Woman and the Construction of Gender', in Pickering-Iazzi Robin (ed). *Mothers of Invention*, University of Minnesota Press, London, 1995. pp. 76-99.
- ⁴¹ see Passerini, Luisa. *Fascism in Popular Memory*, Cambridge University Press, 1987; op.cit., Saraceno.
- ⁴² It is important to note that the establishment of the Fascio Femminile could be associated with the call to *reproduce* soldiers on the eve of War World 2, at this stage however there is no clear evidence of this.
- ⁴³ *Australian Archives (NSW)*: op.cit., "Report on Fascism in Italy and Australia", p.1
- ⁴⁴ *Australian Archives (Vic)*: Advisory Board, MP 508/1, 255/742/183, "Objection no.31, 1940 p.71".
- ⁴⁵ see Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ *Australian National Archives (NSW)*: op.cit., "Italian General File", p.9
- ⁴⁷ see Cresciani, "The bogey of the Italian Fifth Column' in Richard Bosworth and Romano Ugolini (eds) *War Internment and Mass Migration*, Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, Roma, 1992. p.16
- ⁴⁸ *Australian National Archives (Vic)*: Australian Military Forces- Eastern Command, MP508/1, 255/740/184, "Memorandum", 1941.
- ⁴⁹ *Australian National Archives (Vic)*: Dept. of the Army- Secretary, MP508/1, 255/740/184, Minute Paper, 1941
- ⁵⁰ *Australian National Archives (Vic)*: Ibid.
- ⁵¹ *National Archives (Vic)*: op.cit., "Objection no.53"
- ⁵² *National Archives (ACT)*: *Report of the Advisory Committee*, A367/1, C69264, Memorandum, 1941.

What's Religion Got To Do With It? The Emergent Italian Australian Identity

Anna Maria Barbaro

Introduction

A dual heritage often leads people to search for the place they can truly call 'home'. Anglo Australians have had to come to terms with their dual heritage over two centuries of English migration to Australia. The concept of a distinctly Australian identity has been the subject of much thought and conversation in Australia. The process was formalised in the early 1890s when a fervour of literary energy was channelled into exploring our national identity, resulting in the construction of an Australian bush ethos. The ongoing conversation has most recently culminated into the national debate on whether Australia should sever its symbolic ties to England and become a Republic. Judith Wright's intelligent view that we must accept and know our past in order to understand something important about ourselves is relevant to developing a national, cultural and personal identity. In relation to the development of an Italian Australian identity, it is only when people have accepted and reviewed their past that they can find an authentic place for themselves in Australia. As Wright puts it, it is a quest to find 'our real spiritual home'¹

This paper commences by exploring how today's second generation Italians acquired their Italian identity and then how they were introduced to the Australian culture. It then deals with how Italian Australians have responded to the challenge of possessing a dual heritage. Primarily, however, the paper attempts to gauge what contribution Religion and Education have made to the development of the Italian Australian identity.

The formation of an Italian Identity - the early phase.

Given that identity is a product of one's experiences, Australian born children of Italian immigrants formed an Italian identity within their family home well before they encountered the Australian culture, or became aware of the main culture outside their home. These young children initially developed their Italian identity with the adoption of Italian as their first language. In many Italian homes in Australia, the

Italian dialect of the particular *paese*, (small Italian town) is generally regarded as an intimate form of currency mainly reserved for family members or *paesani* (friends from the *paese*). Even in families today where the second or third generation speaks only a few Italian words, the language remains inextricably tied to cultural identity. Language *per se* helps define who we are and from an early age the first language of second generation Italian Australians defined them within the Italian cultural context.

For second generation Italian Australians, the Italian identity also emerged from other elements originating in the family home. Children learnt the lessons of history in the many Italian stories recounted to them by their parents. There were no references to Anglo Irish themes, or to the history, literature, religion and art of Britain and Australia. Instead, Italian Australian children learnt about Christopher Columbus, Guiseppe Verdi, Michelangelo, *la Madonna* and the full compliment of Italian saints. War stories made no mention of the ANZAC legend, but told instead of the poverty, devastation and suffering in the *paese*. The children's first experience or sense of community occurred within the context of an extended family; the numerous church celebrations which marked important rites of passage for family and *paesani*; the communal gatherings at Italian clubs and associations; and religious *Festas*, (Feast days of Italian saints). Newspapers in the home were not in English but Italian. *La Fiamma* or *Il Globo* were authoritative texts. Italian newspapers and radio broadcasts brought Europe closer to the family home and helped interpret the local news. Social and political issues affecting Italian migrants in Australia were made intelligible by such media.

Generally, the first five pre-school years at home had defined the Australian born immigrants' children within an Italian cultural context. Their first experience of music and food was Italian, their first card games were Italian and their first nursery rhymes and simple prayers were in Italian. They had developed an Italian identity akin to that of their parents well before they fully encountered the Australian culture and the challenge it would present to them.

Encountering the Australian identity - the school years.

Later in their formative years, second generation Italians went to school and quickly learnt English. They learnt to relate to Australian children and learnt how to play their games whether by being included or excluded from them. During this period they discovered, through both formal study and the informal lessons learnt in the playground, that the Australian heritage was not the same as their own.

In the main, these children became bilingual much sooner than their parents. This brought to the household an important asset, the ability to better communicate with Australians. It also meant that the immigrant's young children were often called upon to act in the responsible role of interpreter. Perhaps the first experience of this was in translating the school report. By necessity, Italian Australian children participated, from an early age, in their family's day to day transactions with Australian institutions. They found themselves in an adult arena conversing with Bank managers, office clerks, doctors and local authorities on significant matters affecting their family. Italian parents were often conspicuously absent from school functions such as parent and teacher meetings. Their limited language skills and lack of confidence in speaking English made it difficult for them to engage in any meaningful interaction with their children's teachers. In some families, the eldest child would be required to act as an interpreter in such meetings with their sibling's teachers.

The second generation grew up and developed a dual way of living in the world - at home they identified with one cultural heritage and outside they were called upon to adopt another. It was not long before they realised that their cultural identity was developing in a way that was different from that of their parents. Some felt comfortable with the idea of a dual heritage while others were deeply challenged by it.

Balancing the two identities - the challenge of dual heritage

Second and third generation Italian Australians have the opportunity of seeing and knowing the world from the perspective of two different cultures. Some, however, feel the need to align themselves more closely with one culture than the other. I encountered this phenomenon when, until recently, I worked for a number of years as a teacher in a boys' secondary college in Brisbane. There was always a group of Italian boys who felt compelled to stand out, quite deliberately, from the sea of grey uniforms in the schoolyard. They demonstrably rejected their dual heritage and recognised only the Italian identity as their true and singular identity. They identified less with the school's motto, "Vincit Veritas" (Truth Conquers), and more with the slogan 'Viva Italia'. Somewhere between Year 8 and Year 9 they began to emphasise their Italian looks by gelling their chestnut hair to near black and styling their side burns. Each was a soccer king in his own right. Even on sports days, when a student's affiliation with his school colours visibly takes on tribal proportions, these boys still managed to robustly display their Italian identity. The Italian colours of red, green and white were splashed somewhere in the war paint. These boys had discovered that

by banding together, as their immigrant families had once done, they could overcome any sense of alienation or experience of rejection.

On the other hand, there were those who aligned themselves more closely to the Australian culture and rejected elements of their Italian identity. They were the ones who threw out the salami or pickled eggplant sandwiches in favour of tuckshop chips so as to be like everyone else. They avoided activities and behaviours that might label them 'ethnic', such as joining the soccer team. They deliberately made friends with those whose names everyone could pronounce.

For young people it is quite difficult to face the enormous challenges of adolescence, not least of which is the pressure to conform. These challenges are clearly compounded in a young person with a dual heritage.

The contribution of religion to the development of an Italian Australian identity.

When Italian immigrants arrived in Australia they were expected to conform to the practices followed by the Irish Catholic Church. Young priests mostly from Ireland were appointed to parishes in which the tradition of Irish faith was upheld. The gap between Irish Catholicism and the Italian experience of religion soon became evident.

In 1915, John Heavey, the Bishop of Cairns, abandoned all hope of achieving an integrated Catholic community of Italians and Australians. His administration envisaged that the Italians could be converted into following the religious practices and observances of the Irish Australian Catholic community. Heavey's inability to understand the Italian religious mentality is well summed up in the following statement:

"Italians attend church for baptisms, confirmation, marriages and burials. They promise to worship regularly, and then they fail to do so [...] they seem neither to want nor to admire Italian priests".²

He concluded that Italians acted "as if they have no faith"³. A general perception emerged that the Italian approach to religion was lacking and that elements which were foreign, incomprehensible, or pagan-like were somehow heretical. The Italians practised their religion and displayed their faith differently from the Irish Catholics. Their attitude towards church worship, the clergy and religious observance was not well understood by Irish Australian Catholics. Regular observance of the Mass, regarded by Irish Australians as essential to Catholic worship, was somewhat ignored by the Italians. Their experience of a wealthy and established Church in Italy carried the expectation that the Church existed to support the community and not the community to support the

Church. In Australia, a young developing Church depended almost entirely on the support of the parish members.

The reason for the disparity between the religious attitudes of Australian Catholics and the Italians relates to a number of historical and social factors. The Italian approach that the experience of God is more compelling than the authority of the clergy can be linked to the history of the Church in Italy. Unlike the Church in Ireland which was closely affiliated with the peasant workers, the Church in Italy has always been associated with the wealthy classes.

During the reunification of Italy in the 1860s and 1870s, disaffected Italian nationalists resented the Papacy's opposition to the unification of Italy. At this significant time in Italy's history, the Church was not regarded as the people's Church. Anti-clericalism resulted and many Italians grew critical of the external authority of the church. The Italian Church's long association with wealthy patron families tended to alienate the peasant worker or *contadino*. For many Italians, a wealthy Church meant that it did not require their financial contributions. Furthermore, the Church was often perceived as being closely associated with and therefore often indistinguishable from the aristocratic and oppressive structures in Italian society.

Anti-clerical attitudes which were passed down to each new generation of *contadini* ensured that for the Italian, particularly the rural Italian, his/her true faith did not depend on Church doctrine or authority. It was understood generally, that their anima (soul) would not be saved through Church worship alone, but by their love for God and family, their good lives, their prayers to the Saints and their observance of Christ's sacraments. Small wonder then that the Italian immigrants in an Irish Australian Church did not, for example, fully share in the Catholic belief that the priest was the sole mediator who brought the real presence of Christ to the community in the form of Eucharist. The real presence of Christ was experienced in many other ways, in other dimensions of their faith and in the meaningful quarters of their lives. The Australian church for many years operated on the policy of conversion rather than inclusion. In North Queensland in 1915 and in the post war years it apparently failed to meet the pastoral and spiritual needs of the Italian Catholic community.

This situation was repeated in the 1950s with the arrival of a new wave of Italian immigrants. Maurice O'Connor, a parish priest in North Queensland at that time, recalls the shock he felt when he discovered that 90% of Italians in Mareeba, who also made up two-thirds of the parish, were not regular Sunday Church goers and they ate meat on

Fridays.⁴ In the main, Australian priests could not speak Italian and yet they were faced with the challenge of ministering to a growing population of Italian cane growers and farmers. O'Connor soon developed an affinity with the Italian parishioners and learnt to speak Italian. In time he learnt to appreciate and accept the diversity in religious attitudes between the various members of his parish. Not all clergy, however, nor Australian Catholic parishioners, were as well skilled or understanding.

The immigrants' isolation was heightened when they found themselves in an Irish enclave of Catholicism, far from their town ("il paese"), the town square ("la piazza") and the town church ("la Chiesa"). These were the three focal areas which, since medieval times, connected 'their' people and provided them with meaning from birth to death. Without such familiar places of meaning in the new country, the family became the all-important focal area in which they received a sense of well being.

Religion and faith was formed in the family home and taught through parables and simple prayers. The immigrants' children were sent to Catholic Schools. The function of these schools was to reinforce and preserve the faith and moral framework learnt at home. For many Italian families, Catholic schooling could at least provide a vehicle for reinforcing the Italian religious heritage.

Despite the perception reinforced by church representatives such as Heavey in North Queensland that Italians gave little regard to their faith, religion was certainly important to them. They had their own distinctive religious rituals, moral framework, sacred stories, symbols, and myths, which could not easily translate or be absorbed into the Irish Catholic tradition. They were often superstitious and had a natural curiosity about the supernatural. Religious symbols in their home provided places of adoration. Homes were adorned with the mounted images of la Madonna with child, the Sacred Heart, and various saints. Homes became shrines equal to Australian church buildings, but more accessible and personal. In summary, the Italian immigrants' special 'brand' of religion helped make sense of their new condition when other links with their cultural and religious past were diminishing.

Italian communal religious activities such as those enjoyed in the paese began to emerge in Australian towns in the form of the Festa. The Festa, a community celebration which commemorates a particular saint or event in the liturgical calendar such as Easter, is often a rich mixture of ritual and tradition. Included in the processions and symbols used in the Festa are a variety of medieval, Etruscan or pre-Christian pagan

elements relating to securing the harvest. At first, many Irish Australian Catholics and clergy perceived these elaborate feasts, which often concluded with fireworks displays, as having little to do with faith or Catholic adoration. Today, however, it is generally acknowledged that such celebrations play an important role in preserving and developing the Italian religious heritage of Italian Australians.

Ironically, the Australian Church's inability to make the immigrants conform to Irish Catholic practices and behaviours inadvertently ensured the survival of a distinctly Italian religious heritage. This heritage which would be passed onto the second generation, formed an important component of their Italian Australian identity.

The contribution of education to the development of the Italian Australian identity

The natural curiosity about who we are, where we have come from and where we are going, is a recurring preoccupation of Religion and Education.

During the period between the late 1960s and 1980, a significant number of second generation Italian Australians were of school age. In the schools they attended, education policies and curriculums were beginning to address the issue of racism in Australian society. The study of anti-racist literature and film helped young people appreciate the differences between cultures and learn to name racist behaviours. To a large extent, education empowered the children of Italian immigrants to take pride in their cultural heritage rather than to shrink from it. Later developments in education policies throughout Australia, particularly in the 1990s, emphasised the importance of language and cultural diversity for the development of an Australian national identity.⁵ Students were becoming aware that in many Australian homes, English was either not the main language or it shared its dominant place with another language.

In the 1970s the concept of multicultural learning for all students (Schools Commission) and not just those attending migrant education, encouraged teachers to draw on the cultural, historical, and religious knowledge of students from various cultural and social backgrounds. This praxis before theory approach begins with the students' own experience of a topic and relies less on the teacher as the sole repository of all knowledge. Students began to share their stories. Many became empowered by telling it. The opportunity to critically reflect upon their bicultural world and dual heritage was also challenging.

Current educational policies continue to promote the idea that each student's cultural background or experience is valuable to the education of others.⁶ This inclusive education can only benefit the development of an Italian Australian identity. It does so by leading young Australians of Italian background to view their Italian heritage as neither alien, inferior or superior to their Australian heritage.

Conclusion

Religion and education have made a contribution to the development of the Italian Australian identity. They are the great purveyors of culture, providing useful frameworks to help us reflect on who we are and what we can become. The Italian immigrants' experience of religion was passed onto the second generation as an important facet of their Italian heritage. Similarly, education has encouraged Italian Australians to accept and know their past. This may point to a coming of age where the Italian Australian identity embraces both cultures as inherently valuable, while bringing young people who might otherwise lack a sense of place, closer to finding their 'spiritual home' or authentic place in this country.

Notes

¹ Thornhill, J. *Making Australia - Exploring our National Conversation*, Newtown, NSW (Millennium Books) 1992, p.23.

² Endicott, M. *The Augustinians in Far North Queensland 1883 - 1941* Brookvale, NSW (Augustinian Historical Commission) 1988, p.196.

³ Endicott, M. 1988, p.195.

⁴ O'Connor, M. *Never A Dull Moment*, Brookvale, NSW (Augustinian Press) 1997, p.59

⁵ See Education Queensland, *Policy for Cultural and Language Diversity in Education*, Brisbane, QLD (Department of Education) 1998.

⁶ See also Brisbane Catholic Education, *Guidelines for Religious Education in Catholic Secondary Schools*, Brisbane, QLD (Brisbane Catholic Education) 1997.

Italian Australian Catholics; Pivotal in Making the Church more Australian

Anthony Cappello

The Italian contribution to Australia has been significantly overlooked. Where it has its focus has been on the Italian lack of Mass participation i.e. Italians only go to Mass at Easter and Christmas, known as “The Italian Problem”. However, as I will argue in my presentation, as early as 1919 Italians were a part of the Church, particularly in Melbourne, and were contributing to its life. This contribution in 1945 led to a change of direction for the Catholic Church in Australia in which the Italian community played its part.

An Irish-Australian Catholic Church.

The Australian Catholic was an Irish Catholic, Irish and working class. One can get an insight into the Irishness of the Australian Church by a recollection of Peter Dalseno in his autobiography *Sugar, Tears and Eyeties*, where he writes about Peter:

“He was Italian by birth, Australian by domicile, and Irish in spirit. He learnt much of Irish folklore, came to revere the Shamrock, admired John MacCormack the tenor, idolised St. Patrick for his exploits with the serpents of Ireland, and loved listening to the Irish brogue. His only pet resentment was the sisters’ assertion that the Irish were stronger Catholics than the Italians [...]”¹

The Irish were a minority in Australia, a minority within a sectarian environment. In 1916 Prime Minister W. M. Hughes exploited sectarian division when he insisted on compulsory calling up of young men for service in foreign lands. The Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, who opposed conscription became aggravated as a result of the call and rallied Catholics in opposing conscription. Mannix had come from Ireland only four years previously. Mannix’s opposition led to the swing of Catholic opinion in Victoria from a supporter to an opponent of Hughes’s conscription plans. The conscription debates resurrected sectarian fears of the loyalty of the Irish Catholics.

Accordingly for the Irish in Australia, Catholicism was embedded in its identity and in this identification a strict Church attendance to daily

Mass was paramount. This strict approach to church attendance created a point of convergence with the Italian Australian Catholic approach which was more relaxed and as a consequence this lack of Italian participation became known as the Italian problem.²

The Italian Community of Australia in 1919 numbered approx 8000 and by the end of 1933 this had increased to over 26,000.³ Italians were mostly employed in small businesses such as fishing, agriculture, fruit and vegetables. In Melbourne the Italians were mainly scattered across Carlton, Richmond and Brunswick. While in rural Victoria the Italians mostly settled in Werribee and Wonthaggi. In Werribee the Italians, mainly Sicilians, were market gardeners, while in Wonthaggi the Italians were generally miners, although many had never worked in a mine.

Strangely enough, a chaplain was imported and appointed to Melbourne in October 1920. Father Vincenzo de Francesco, a young Neapolitan Jesuit priest, youthful in his apostolate, and quite a jovial character. We know from some existing memories that he was also a bit of a stirrer. For instance, Angelina Santosprito writing to him in Naples later in 1960, mentions the infamous moral theologian Father Felix Cappello (no relation of mine) to which de Francesco replied: "I would rather the Saints in heaven".⁴ Another example were the sparring conversations with the famous Jesuit Fr William (Bill) Hackett, founder of the Catholic Library who was involved in much of the intellectual formation of lay Catholics in the 1930s. Hackett would say to de Francesco: "Shut up you gargoyle". And de Francesco would reply: "I had rather be a gargoyle than a common spout"⁵. A third example comes from de Francesco himself recalling the event when he was asked to speak at his first function. The night ended with laughter after de Francesco shared his experiences of learning the English language. De Francesco recalled that one remark from the evening was that their priest was wise and a good speaker.⁶ De Francesco, in addition, identified his progress in learning the English language as fast as a tortoise.⁷

Upon approaching the Italians, de Francesco found a community quite annoyed that a priest had been sent to remind them of their duties that they had forgotten.⁸ Nevertheless, de Francesco, somewhat prepared for the non-enthusiasm made great strides towards making his presence felt within the Italian community. This de Francesco achieved by mixing in Italian circles, engaging in private conversations and in doing this removed some of the doubts about his mission to Australia.

After achieving acceptance, de Francesco was a much wanted priest, especially to perform weddings and baptisms. Yet, de Francesco noted

that despite the number of weddings and baptisms, (according to Father Tito Cecilia, in his book *We didn't Arrive Yesterday*, the records of St Ignatius show 160 marriages and 320 baptisms during 1919-1934⁹), Italians did not participate in Mass and confession regularly. This lack of participation de Francesco noted was a tough subject¹⁰ as was the subject of mixed marriages.

Mixed marriages were a major pastoral problem for the Catholic authorities in Australia. The problem revolved predominantly around an identity crisis, or as some have identified, a ghetto mentality. Catholics in the Australian context were a minority within a Protestant country with a Protestant Constitution. Furthermore, in the context of Irish home rule and with a deeply loyal Irish Archbishop, Daniel Mannix, Catholics did not mix with Protestants. On the other hand, anti-Catholic sectarianism was prevalent in Protestant circles, a phenomenon these days that seems to have been overlooked. There is a very familiar story in *My Brother Jack* by George Johnson. In his semi-biography Johnson recalls the reaction of his father when Jack brought to their Protestant home a Catholic girl who was quite ill: “You’ve only got to look at that face of hers [...] as Irish as Paddy’s pig [...] and that bloody cross thing she wears on a chain round her neck [...] Go on answer me, you! She’s a mick, isn’t she?”¹¹ I use that story from *My Brother Jack*, because I read the story at school, but moreover, Jack’s grandson happens to be one of my close friends, who is himself a devout Catholic.

In such a climate mixed marriages diminished one’s Catholicity and the fear was that the Irish Catholics in Australia would be swallowed up by the larger protestant population. To counter for such a situation, the bishops imposed strict conditions known as the *Ne Tenere*. Here the wedding was performed behind the altar and the non-catholic party had to promise that the children would be baptised Catholics. For the Italians, the whole phenomenon of mixed marriages was a new experience as Protestants were rare in Italy. And for the Italian chaplain, with some Italians in Australia inevitably marrying non-Catholics, this was also a new pastoral experience.

On the Italians’ lack of Mass participation, de Francesco noted that it was complicated. One of the main reasons he argued was that the Italians in Melbourne were “ignorant of their responsibilities”.¹² While some, who had come to Australia at a young age, were employed by employers who never went to Mass thus breaking the habit of attending church. Another reason was the pagan environment which was rife in Protestant cities¹³ while another reason de Francesco believed was the long hours that the Italians worked.

The de Francesco period 1920-1934, saw many distinguished accomplishments. The main accomplishment being the centralisation of the Italian Catholic Community around the parish of St. Ignatius, Richmond, and the nationalisation of the devotion to a single patron saint, Our Lady of Pompeii. Other accomplishments within the de Francesco era was the setting up of the Aeolian Mutual Society and the Salesians settling in Sunbury made possible thanks to a casual suggestion put to them by Father de Francesco.¹⁴ And lastly, de Francesco was able to create an amicable working relationship with the Italian Consular Officials who freely promoted fascism to the Italian Catholic Community of Melbourne. For this amicable relationship de Francesco was awarded the Knighthood of the Italian Crown¹⁵.

1934-1938-Lay Years

The community remained without a chaplain until 1938 but during 1934 to 1938 some Italian Australians were to emerge in the wider Australian Catholic Church. This is most evident in the commencement of the Campion Society of Melbourne. The Campion society, a lay movement fostering Catholic intellectual thought, can be interpreted as a move away from the Irish predominance. In that movement we find the names of B.A. Santamaria, Val Adami, John Bongiorno, Bernard Vosti and John Merlo. The first name in that list deserves a further mention, B.A. Santamaria, perhaps one of the most prominent Italian Australian Catholics to emerge from this period, who was to grow in stature in the Australian political scene. When Mr Santamaria died in February 1998, the following declarations were made (two of many): Jeff Kennett, former premier of Victoria: "Mr Santamaria's intellectual capacity broadened the scope of debate on a range of social issues across many decades and added to the great diversity of Australian society". Former ALP Minister Clyde Cameron, who opposed Santamaria for the most of his political life; "There is no doubt in my mind that history will recognise him as the greatest Australian political mind of the 20th century."¹⁶ Santamaria, deserves a paper on his own.

Another emerging factor during 1934 to 1938 was fascism in Australia. The migration of fascism to Australia was made possible by the work and promotion of the Italian Consular Officials. For the Italian community who involved themselves in fascist activities organised by the Italian Consular officials, this favouritism towards Mussolini's ideology was out of a sense of their "italianità". There is no doubt that fascism thrived on "italianità". But, Father Thomas Augustine Johnston

during the war defined “italianità” as “Italian feeling and Italian sentiments, [which] does not mean anything political.”¹⁷ Margaret Bevege, in her book, about the internments *Behind Barbed Wire*, also argues that: membership of the Fascist Party did not appear to involve the political commitment shown by the Nazis.¹⁸ Further, in the same paragraph she writes about the fascios (fascist groups) in Australia, it had a strong social ethos. To add my own reflections on the issue, Italians were economic migrants, not political migrants and they were committed to Australia rather than to the fascist regime in Italy. The recollections of Claudio Alcorso, an Italian Jewish refugee, attests to the commitment of Italian migrants to their new homeland Australia: “Apart from a handful of declared fascists... Italians had migrated to Australia to improve their status in life and had no intention of returning to Italy [...]”.¹⁹ Finally, perhaps Maria Mantello in her study of the Werribee community during the Second World War, I believe, should have the last word, that is that the Italian community in Australia was apolitical.²⁰

1940-1945- Father Ugo Modotti

The beginning of Father Modotti’s ministry in Melbourne, saw the reversal of much of Father de Francesco’s ministry. This began by a strong emphasis on assimilating the Italian community into the existing prevalent Catholic culture of that time, which was predominately Irish. Perhaps a reason for this approach was to counter fascism which fed on Italian patriotism and “italianità”. Therefore, while the community was centralised, thanks to de Francesco, under the parish of St. Ignatius, Richmond, Modotti decentralised the community by encouraging Italians to attend Mass in their own parishes. In compensation, Mannix allocated, for the time being, Italian speaking Australian priests in those parishes.²¹ The Italian language was also targeted by organising English night classes with Valentino Adami as one of the teachers.²² But most importantly, any Italian consular activity was to encounter a counter-catholic activity. Modotti here clearly followed the Italian model of Catholic Action. This opposition from Modotti led to complaints from the Italian consular officials to the Ministry in Rome.²³ Perhaps it is also worth noting, that while de Francesco nationalised the devotion of Saints, by installing a patron saint of the Italian community of Melbourne, Our Lady of Pompeii, Modotti, on the other hand, instituted the devotion of regional saints, rather than only of a national saint. In effect, in 1939, for the first time, the Aeolian Community of Melbourne officially celebrated the feast of St. Bartholomew.²⁴

Modotti also began and edited a religious journal called *L'Angelo Della Famiglia* which was concerned - and this was continually stressed - with religious matters only. In fact, the major evil according to *L'Angelo della Famiglia* were mixed marriages and its wicked effect on the Italian community. Modotti's programme suffered a setback with the commencement of the Second World War.

Internments

On a typical Melbourne autumn day in May 1940, Archbishop Daniel Mannix, the Chaplain-General of the Australian Armed Forces celebrated the Airmen's Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Here 400 Catholic airmen from the RAAF attended. Helping with the celebration of the Mass was Father Ugo Modotti, who apart from co-celebrating with the Archbishop had also directed the Italian community in providing breakfast for the airmen, which was served after Mass at the Melbourne Town Hall.²⁵ Only a month later, after Italy declared war on the allies, members of the Italian community became enemy aliens.

Father Ugo Modotti was surprised when on the 11th June 1940 two policemen with an arrest warrant bearing his name turned up at his doorstep at Manresa, Hawthorn. Modotti refused to be arrested and brought the matter to the attention of Archbishop Mannix. Mannix phoned the Minister for the Army, Brigadier Street, which prevented the internment. Modotti was, however, placed on parole.²⁶ Archbishop Mannix, not completely satisfied, took the issue further and sent his Vicar General, Patrick Lyons to see the Minister where Lyons protested in the name of the Archbishop. At this point Brigadier Street advised Lyons that no action would take place against Father Modotti.²⁷

Although he was arrested but escaped internment, Father Modotti did not simply retreat into a non-active role. Rather because of the internments Modotti encouraged Archbishop Mannix to start a relief committee for the Italian internees and their families, called The Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief. Immediately just before Christmas 1940, Father Modotti wrote to the camp authorities asking for the requirements of the internees so that the Archbishop's committee for Italian Relief could supply that need.²⁸ The Archbishop's committee continued its work well after the end of the Second World War particularly in sponsoring and supporting post-war Italian immigrants.

A passing mention on the MIL, Movimento Italia Libera. Author, Gianfranco Cresciani argues that after the war, Italians reluctantly got

involved in politics, as if to argue, that they became apolitical only after the war. Cresciani, makes the point to illustrate why the anti-fascists, Movimento Italia Libera, (MIL), in Australia, who were politically unopposed after 1940 failed to make inroads into the Italian community.²⁹ The answer may be simple, that is, the Italian community did not just become apolitical after the war, they always were. However, it should be added that the *religious* opposition from Archbishop Mannix and Father Modotti also contributed to their minimal influence in the Italian community. Although I would like to go into the details of the religious opposition of the Catholic Church in Melbourne and some of the erroneous claims made by the MILs and their supporters, I encourage people to read my thesis³⁰ or better still wait until it is published some time in the near future.

The Return of Modotti

Modotti returned to Italy in December 1945 (although Modotti had only left for a short visit). Modotti was, in fact, leaving to bring in more Italian Jesuits to work on Mannix's and Modotti's ministry plan with the Italian community. The proposal, called "Opera Religiosa Italiana" was first announced in 1940, placed on hold during the war, and resurrected in 1944. Meanwhile, the Apostolic Delegate to Australia, Giovanni Panico, following Roman protocol, was implementing a policy in which appointing Australian bishops meant excluding the Irish bishops in Australia.³¹ For example, since his arrival in 1936, Panico's influence had secured Adelaide and Sydney and, in the belief that Mannix's advanced age was to his advantage (Mannix was almost 80) Panico also secured Simonds as coadjutor of Melbourne with the right of succession. In doing this Panico was replacing Irish bishops with Australian-born Roman-minded bishops. Such a policy created tension with Archbishop Mannix.

Towards the end of the war, both Mannix and Modotti saw the importance of controlling the apostolate of the Italian community and in 1944, at an informal bishops' conference they announced their *Opera Religiosa Italiana* to the Bishops. In that announcement the ministry of the whole Italian community of Australia would be administered by Father Modotti and his Italian priest which he would bring in from Italy³². To this all the bishops agreed, except for Panico who the following week made his own private arrangements for the care of the Italian community. In his counter plan, the Capuchins were to look after Sydney and Melbourne and the Salesians to look after Adelaide.³³

So in 1945, both Mannix, Modotti and Panico were battling to control the forthcoming Italian immigrants and the post-war Italian community. Panico, however, won the day by an incidental press release from Arthur Calwell.

In December 1945, Archbishop Norman Gilroy was appointed the Cardinal of Australia. The appointment of Gilroy from Sydney was a key appointment thanks to Panico, and a clear endorsement of the Roman direction of the Catholic Church. In reacting to the appointment Arthur Calwell, minister for immigration and friend of Archbishop Daniel Mannix submitted a press release in which he stated:

“The news that Archbishop Gilroy has been created a Cardinal will be received with very mixed feelings by Australian Catholics. While there will be congratulations for the new Cardinal, widespread consternation and bitter resentment will be felt that the honour which rightly belongs to the Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Mannix, should have gone elsewhere, and to quite a comparatively junior member of the Australian hierarchy. Unfortunately, over the years, the Vatican has had to depend on a representative whose limited ability and equally limited knowledge of Australia and Australians has ill-fitted him to influence the destinies of the Australian church. If the Catholic Church in this country has come of age to the extent that she can now claim an Australian-born Cardinal, the time is surely ripe when she should have an Australian-born Apostolic Delegate. For reasons which appear to me to be valid, I hope that Archbishop Panico’s influence in Australian church politics, and in Australian affairs generally, will cease with his early return to Rome.”³⁴

When Modotti was in Italy, Pope Pius XII, summoned him and accused Modotti of inspiring Calwell’s comment and as a consequence Modotti was not allowed to return to Australia³⁵. Previously, the Jesuits in Australia had agreed that if Modotti failed to return to Australia, then the “Opera Religiosa Italiana” would be abandoned by the order.³⁶ Calwell, while in Rome, however, stressed that anything he could do to send Modotti back to Australia would be done.³⁷ Modotti, however, never returned to our shores.

Panico’s Roman policy which had depended on the control of the Italian community won over. It is as if the Italian community was the pivot around which the Australian Catholic Church changed from being the Irish Catholic Church in exile in Australia to “becoming” the Australian Church.

The action of Panico has in my opinion prevented a more objective assessment of the contribution of the Italian community in Australia. The Italian, more in Melbourne than elsewhere, has been linked to Panico and Roman interference. After the Second Vatican Council the direction for many in the church has been to move to a more Australian Church. In this call for an Australian Church the link is made between Anglo-Celtic spirituality with the spirituality of the land, hence-aboriginal spirituality. My opposition to this is not by what is included but by what is excluded. What is excluded are the Italian, Maltese, Vietnamese, Dutch, Croatian and other ethnic groupings of Australia which have their loyalty to Rome. In the Australian Church's call for inclusiveness, they have excluded the vast majority of what makes up the Australian church- which is those of a Non English Speaking Background. Perhaps an example of this is David Tacey from Latrobe University, an icon to those fostering an Australian Church, who, in his latest book, speaks of a new Australian spirituality. However, this book confines itself strictly to anglo-celtic and aboriginal spirituality.

Nonetheless, as a minority group during 1919 to 1945, the Italian community of Melbourne adequately involved itself in the life of the church. Today, with a large proportion of first, second and third generation of an Italian background, the contribution is significant, in fact we are in the heart of the church, loyal to Rome and committed to an Australian church that is inclusive of all the ethnic groupings that shape our wonderful Australian church.

Notes

¹ Peter Dalseno *Sugar Tears and Eyeties* (Brisbane 1994) 136.

² C.A. Price. *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Melbourne, 1963) 70.

³ Helen Ware. *A Profile of the Italian Community in Australia* (Melbourne, 1981) 13.

⁴ Angelina Santospirito to Father Modotti November 17, 1960. Santospirito Papers, Melbourne.

⁵ Profile of Father de Francesco, Jesuit Archives, Hawthorn.

⁶ De Francesco to R.P. Provinciale, July 2, 1923. (All de Francesco's correspondence is taken from: *Lettere Edificanti dei Padri della Compagnia di Gesu 1924-1930* (Naples 1931).

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Tito Cecilia, *We didn't Arrive Yesterday* (Red Cliffs, 1987) 220.

¹⁰ De Francesco to R.P. Provinciale August 15, 1926.

¹¹ George Johnson, *My Brother Jack* (Glasgow, 1964) 141.

¹² De Francesco to R.P. Provinciale July 2, 1923.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *The First Twenty-Five Years* (Oakleigh, 1967) 12.

¹⁵ *The Advocate*, March 30, 1933. 14.

- ¹⁶ *The Age*, February 28, 1998, News Extra, 7.
- ¹⁷ Alien Tribunal of Salvatore Pante, May 13, 1941 Australian Archives, Vic series V/16878/S.
- ¹⁸ Margaret Bevege *Behind Barbed Wire: Internment in Australia during World War II* (Brisbane, 1993) 60.
- ¹⁹ Claudio Alcorso *The Wind You Say* (Pymble, 1993) 18.
- ²⁰ Maria Mantello - Werribee at War - *Melbourne Historical Journal*. Vol.14 1982. 106.
- ²¹ *L'Angelo della Famiglia*, April 1, 1939, 7.
- ²² *L'Angelo della Famiglia*, July 1, 1939, 8.
- ²³ Modotti Statement, April 13, 1943 Jesuit Archives, Hawthorn.
- ²⁴ *L'Angelo della Famiglia*, August 1, 1939, 8.
- ²⁵ *The Argus*, May 20, 1940.
- ²⁶ Modotti Statement, April 13, 1943 Jesuit Archives, Hawthorn. For an entertaining account of Modotti's arrest read Anthony Cappello "An Object of Espionage" *The Overland*. Number 150. Autumn 1998. 98-99.
- ²⁷ Archbishop Mannix to Hon. F.M. Forde March 26, 1942. Australian Archives ACT series A367/1, item C62490.
- ²⁸ Fr Modotti to the Leaders of the Italian Camps at Tatura, December 5, 1940 Jesuit Archives, Hawthorn.
- ²⁹ Gianfranco Cresciani *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Italians in Australia 1922-1945*. (Canberra, 1980) 210 ff.
- ³⁰ Anthony Cappello, "Italian Australians, the Church, War and Fascism in Melbourne 1919-1945" MA thesis Victoria University 1999. (Supervisor- Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien).
- ³¹ The following works acknowledge the Roman Policy of Panico: Richard Hall. "Should you ever go across the sea from Ireland" *Eureka Street*, March 1995, 24-28; K.J. Walsh. *Yesterday's Seminary: A History of St Patrick's Manly*, (Sydney, 1998) 226-229. A.A. Calwell. *Be Just and Fear Not*. (Hawthorn, 1972) 4, 128ff. Colm Kiernan. *Calwell: A personal and political biography*. (Melbourne, 1978) 190-193. Patrick Ford. *The Socialist Trend in the Catholic Church in Australia and New Zealand*. (Melbourne, 1988) 170-171. Max Vodola. *Simonds, A rewarding Life*. (Melbourne, 1997) 32ff. Michael Gilchrist. *Daniel Mannix Priest and Patriot*. (Melbourne 1982) 160-161. B.A. Santamaria. *Daniel Mannix, a biography*. (Melbourne, 1984) 182.
- ³² Giovanni Panico to Matthew Beovich October 14, 1944. Brisbane Diocesan Archives.
- ³³ *ibid*. "Celebrating 50 Years of Capuchin Presence in Australia" *Sandal Prints* Vol.32 September 1995, 1.
- ³⁴ Arthur Calwell, *Be Just and Fear Not* (Hawthorn, 1972) 128-129.
- ³⁵ Fr de Boynes to A.A. Calwell October 22, 1946. Calwell Papers, Canberra.
- ³⁶ John Meagher SJ to Rev. Dugre January 22, 1945 Australian Archives ACT A367/1, item C62490.
- ³⁷ Arthur Calwell to Angelina Santospirito June 12, 1947. Letter provided to the author by Maria J Triaca.

Contribution of Religion and Education to the Development of the Italian Australian Identity

Max Vodola

The place of Religion in the life of the Italian Australian

The story of Italian post-war migration is one of the great success stories of our nation and an integral thread in the seam of Catholic life in this country. For newly arrived Italians to this strange and distant land, the Church was for them a socially stabilising and integrating force, a cultural anchor and an important symbol in the vast sea of newness. The role of religion in our migrant story often has little currency in sociological theories yet its benefits are seen again and again in the history of newly arrived migrants from Latin America, South East Asia and increasingly from parts of Africa.

Italians brought colour, flair and a great sense of festivity into a largely dour Irish Australian culture of religious tribalism and social marginalisation. There were significant levels of misunderstanding, cultural intolerance and the fear of something different. An anonymous poet, writing in last Monday's edition of *Il Globo* under the banner of the Italian Australian Institute stated:

Even God was cold and indifferent here.

We prayed and petitioned but He did not hear.

The cultural tensions of the past are sometimes evident in the present. Italians have often said to me: 'Why does this priest give us such a hard time about not going to church on Sunday. We spend the whole week going to church! Rosaries, funerals, anniversary Masses, baptisms, First Communion, Confirmation and the occasional wedding'. Italians brought with them a healthy dose of anti-clericalism, something quite confronting to the feudalism of Irish parish priests. They have taught the Australian church not to worry too much about rules and regulations and to enjoy celebrating the sacrament of life in all its fullness. And, unlike the American story of competing national churches, Italians in Australia were happy to become part of local parish life, watching their children going through the Catholic education system, many the first beneficiaries of State aid to Catholic schools. This second generation then continued into tertiary education to assume their rightful place in the ranks of the professions and in Australian public life.

The other side of the ledger is not as positive. Despite the enormous number of Italians in the Australian church, and the pastoral care they have received over the last forty years, there have been too few vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. If it were not for the zeal of the Scalabrinians, Capuchins, Pastorelle Sisters and numerous Maltese missionary and diocesan priests, there would be very little to even call an Italian apostolate in this country. First generation Italians could see the educational and professional opportunities for their children in Australia. In Italy, the religious vocation was seen as providing an education and a step up the social ladder. In Australia, the church has provided educational opportunities at arms' distance from a religious vocation. Consequently, a religious vocation, even today, is not encouraged and generally frowned upon. In this regard, Italians have been found wanting and the Australian Church has suffered because of it.

As the first generation continues to age and die in increasing numbers, one of the most pressing challenges facing Italian Australians is the provision of adequate physical and pastoral care. This issue demands increased levels of cooperation between government, church and welfare agencies. The danger is to succumb to the temptation of seeing first generation Italians as so 'Australianised' that their rightful needs in the latter years of life might sometimes be ignored.

Let me conclude on a personal note. Two years ago I had the good fortune of visiting Italy for the first time as a second generation Italian and a newly ordained priest. I went to the village of my mother in the Abruzzi region and was welcomed as a celebrity. The parish priest boasted that it had been exactly 100 years since a son of the village had been ordained a priest. I had to remind him that I was born in East Brunswick! The experience was like coming home, as the stories, people and places of my family history came together like a giant pin placed within the hinges of my life. My sense of who I am and where I come from had an impact on me far greater than I had ever imagined.

This is not a unique story to many of my generation. I echo the sentiments of Sir James Gobbo in his opening address. Anything that the Italian Australian Institute does must of necessity involve and be directed at young people, not to make them better Italians but to make them better Australians. Faith and culture are two sides of the one coin. Present and future generations of Italian Australians are the custodians of a wonderfully rich and incredibly diverse cultural asset. The Church must again be open to the power of God's Spirit and be that place where Italian Australians feel at home and feel they belong.

Whither Italian? Italian in Australia's Universities. Why It Is Important and How to Save It.

John Hajek

This paper has three fundamental purposes. First, it is to encourage those involved in the preservation and promotion of Italian language and culture to turn more of their attention towards Australia's universities. Whilst there has been recent positive movement in this direction by Italian authorities and concerned individuals, much more remains to be done, and could be done with major positive spin-offs for Italian language and culture, Italy and the Italian community in Australia. In the second, it is an attempt to explain the nuts and bolts of the Australian university system today. Finally, it looks at the state of Italian in our universities from 1950 to 2000, and makes suggestions as to what could be done to improve its position.

Over the last twenty years, the Italian community (with Australian and Italian government funding) have fought long and hard for the expansion of Italian within the primary and secondary sectors. The results are outstanding in terms of sheer numbers of students being taught (cf. Di Biase *et al* 1994). Much less consideration, however, has been given to the long-term outcomes of this program. The hope that students taught Italian in primary school would continue with Italian at secondary and tertiary levels has not materialized. Indeed observers (eg Di Biase *et al.* 1994 and Carsaniga 1995) have pointed to the catastrophic drop in numbers as students progress into secondary schools. By Year 12, only 1% are still doing Italian across the nation, with an even smaller number of post-matriculants continuing at university level. It is a disappointing fact that most Italian programs at Australian universities now rely on students entering Beginners stream for the largest portion of their first year student intake.

If universities are to play a greater role in the promotion of Italian and Italian interests, then it is imperative that we should all understand the importance, nature and the many problems of the university sector. There is no doubt that pro-Italian forces should have a better idea of how Italian might be promoted at university-level - as a cost-effective and targeted means of benefiting the Italian community and Italy in the longer term. But to achieve this goal it is imperative to realize that the

Australian university today is very different from what it was twenty, ten, and even five years ago. Change is profound, ongoing and shows no sign of abating. The result is of course that in this environment of seemingly permanent economic rationalization, most languages other than English, including Italian, are now under more pressure than they have ever been in the university sector.

Whilst I do not wish to argue the case of how much emphasis we should be giving to Italian in primary and secondary schools, the suggestion that more should be done at university level does not mean that less should be done elsewhere. More resources are needed everywhere. But it is worth reminding ourselves that it is in everybody's interest to have as many university-trained graduates in Italian as possible – since it is these (and only these) who can then become qualified primary, secondary and tertiary teachers. There is already a desperate shortage of qualified Italian teachers in many parts of Australia – a fact that only weakens the ability of Italian to survive in affected schools.

Australian Tertiary Sector & the Bigger Picture: Why Targeting Universities is Important

In today's globalising, commercialising, consumerist world, it is fashionable to measure success and status in market terms. Accordingly, a basic ingredient of success is, of course, product placement. Put very crudely, universities are highly desirable market-places: they provide an excellent platform for the social and economic promotion of whatever it is you are trying to sell, providing instant status, cultural cachet and access – in a very cost-effective and targeted manner. From a marketing perspective, Italians here and in Italy should count themselves lucky for the opportunity given them by the teaching of Italian to Australia's university students, the nation's future leaders. There are indeed many other large ethnic groups in this country who have never had their languages taught in Australia's universities (or only in the most meagre way), nor enjoyed the economic and social benefits and cultural status that derives from it.

There is no doubt that Australian universities play a fundamental role in shaping Australian society, its culture, politics and economy. Academics, for instance, were central in the development of what many consider to be one of Australia's greatest achievements, ie multiculturalism. And if ever it was said that university-educated men and women control decision-making processes in this country, the observation is even truer today: the highest levels of government and

business are dominated by university graduates in ever increasing numbers. One needs only look at today's 30-member federal ministry in Canberra for confirmation: 27 ministers have tertiary qualifications. The remaining three represent rural seats, 2 are farmers & members of the National Party, and the age of two of these is much higher than the ministry average.¹

Official government policy at both state and federal level continues to be one of post-secondary expansion, in recognition of the need to expand tertiary training as fundamental to the modernization and economic development of the country. Government policies in favour of sector deregulation and increased private funding of the tertiary sector have of course also encouraged the expansion of direct links between business and universities. The global results of all of these initiatives are already quite clear – we have record-levels of university participation amongst youth today, whilst government and private tertiary funding are now respectively amongst the lowest and highest in the western world today.² The relationship of influence between universities, government and business is further reinforced by the increasingly evident mobility of academics and decision makers to move within the nexus of government, academia and business. It is no accident that the Hon Prof. John Dawkins (Labour) and Hon. Minister Dr David Kemp (Liberal), recent and current federal ministers with responsibility for higher education are themselves academics by profession.

It follows then from the scenario described, however, that if a group or collective wishes to influence long term decision making in Australia (and elsewhere for that matter), they should be working hard to influence students in the university sector, since there is no doubt that these are more than likely the leaders and policy setters of the future. Full credit must be given to the Italian government's foresight in this area. It has a longstanding policy of helping university-level Italian programs directly by providing Italian language 'lectorships' around the world. And the Italian government has in recent years has certainly renewed effort in this area by increasing the number of *lettorati* assigned to Australian universities. In 1999 we also witnessed the important initiative taken by the Fondazione Cassamarca in funding eleven lectureships in Australia – seven of which went directly to Italian studies programs. All of these activities are of course most welcome and gratefully acknowledged, but should be seen as only a new but certainly not final phase in greater collaboration between Italian studies programs at universities and the Italian community.

Understanding the Australian University of Today

One reason Australian universities might have been somewhat overlooked in the promotion of Italian is the difficulty outside observers have in understanding the internal workings of the university sector. This is hardly surprising: Australian universities have undergone such radical change in the last 10-20 years that they are barely recognizable even to those who have past experience of them, whether as students or staff. It also needs to be made clear that Australian and Italian universities and their staff function in very different ways. Many of the privileges extended to Italian academics are no longer known to their Australian counterparts.

My suggestion is that a full and up to date understanding of the Australian university today is needed for the Italian community to take full advantage of the social, cultural and economic leverage the university sector can provide.

In very blunt terms, the Australian tertiary sector has already been extensively worked over by economic rationalism forced upon it by Labour and Coalition governments since the 1980s. Substantial productivity gains have been made, ie many more students, larger classes, fewer staff at lower than expected cost, with much more research activity, as well as increased teaching and administration. Salary increases are no longer a government responsibility and are now paid for by internal savings (job losses) and increased private funding. As a result, so-called loss-making and/or non-strategic teaching and research areas are reduced, if not eliminated completely, to save on money. It is hardly surprising that LOTEs (Languages Other Than English), generally small, expensive to teach, with a tradition of relatively low research output, have borne the brunt of this change: language departments everywhere in Australia have been restructured, merged and reduced in number with many forced to close completely. Whilst exact figures are not available, many languages once on offer in Australia's universities are no longer taught. For those languages that have survived, such as Italian, there has been significant downsizing: I would estimate a reduction, across the nation since 1990, of perhaps 40% to 50% in the number of academics working in Italian studies departments and programs – through staff attrition and permanent closure.

Whilst much anger and angst has been expressed by academics in Australia at this cost-cutting and economic squeezing, it should be noted that economists around the world hold up the Australian

experience of tertiary reform as a model to follow – and indeed similar changes are now being introduced in other countries.

As part of the federal government's shake-up of universities, there are now indicators and targets at every level – for faculties, departments, programs and individuals to meet. Government funding of universities is no longer a straightforward matter. Instead we have a complex formula which retains a substantial component for an agreed number of undergraduate places (universities are financially penalised for not meeting targets), but with an ever increasing financial emphasis on research performance. Research performance is determined by numbers of enrolled postgraduates, the number of successful MA and PhD completions within specified time periods, number of research publications as well as success in obtaining competitive research funds from external sources. Universities are also actively encouraged to increase funding from fees and the business sector.

At the micro level, departments and programs receive funding on the basis of student numbers, and research productivity. It is very important to realise that students do not have the same value in dollar terms: funds are allocated according to so-called EFTSU (equivalent full-time student unit). First-year students are worth a fraction of one unit (generally 5-8 first-year students according to university), with the financial value of a student increasing progressively in successive years. The financially most valuable students are postgraduate students who have not gone beyond their completion deadline. Herein lies the rub for Italian and other LOTEs: enrolments are substantially higher in first year language courses, dropping off dramatically with each passing year. Typically, there is a 90-100% attrition rate from first- to fourth year (Bettoni 1992: 63, Table 9). Postgraduate numbers in Italian studies in most Australian universities are also pitifully low when compared to huge postgraduate enrolments in history, fine arts, and politics for instance. Although many universities partially subsidize language programs by increasing the notional monetary/EFTSU value of LOTE students, the contact-intensive nature of first and second year language courses means that, in the absence of substantial EFTSU funding, language academics have substantially higher teaching loads. Whereas colleagues in fine arts or history departments might have 4-7 hours per week, academics in language departments more typically have a weekly teaching load of 10-15 hours. The disadvantage for Italian programs in this discrepancy is obvious. Bettoni (1992) herself noted that many Italianists, if given the opportunity, would choose to

work in departments other than in an Italian Studies program or department.

The Changing Academic in a Language Program Today

Until the early 1980s, the average Australian academic with an appointment in languages was typically thought to have one major task, teaching. Indeed many colleagues were appointed specifically as teaching only staff. There was relatively little administration (bureaucratic interest from above was slight then), and research was the domain of those few who were interested in it. By 1990 bureaucratic pressures from above and the rhetoric of the 'Clever Country' had expanded the work-list to include substantial administration, as well as serious expectations of research productivity.

Now in 2000, the winds of change have truly blown. Today the model LOTE academic has major responsibility in at least five very different areas, and is expected to perform to a high standard in each:

- (1) teaching
- (2) administration
- (3) research
- (4) outreach & promotion
- (5) multimedia and information technology

Research productivity is critical, but what the government considers to be research publication is much less generous than we might think. Since annual budgets are now partly research-based, departments must obtain external grants, and raise postgraduate numbers as well as research output to increase funding. But only 5 narrowly defined categories are acceptable to the government: (1) research monograph; (2) peer reviewed journal article; (3) peer reviewed conference chapter; (4) edited book and (5) chapter in edited book. The first is given a weighting of 5 points, the rest only one point by the government. Translations, scholarly editions of texts, poetry, textbooks, so-called unrefereed conference proceedings, etc.... are excluded.

Outreach and promotion activities relate not only to one's discipline, but also to one's department, faculty and university. Minimally, these entail school visits, 2-3 open days for students per annum, events for alumni, as well as media related activity. The rise of computer technology is the most complex of all: the pressure is on to use, design and create multimedia resources for students. The early hope that this

new generation of technology would lower costs and reduce workloads has proven to be a false one. In fact, the effect is clearly the reverse for it replaces no pre-existing activity, only adding to them.

Despite deregulation, academic salaries are still dependent on a now out of date formulation used by the government until the mid 1990s for salary calculation: it was accepted even then the average academic worked a 50 hour work week, divided equally between teaching (33.3%), administration (33.3%) and research (33.3%). A teaching hour (lecture, seminar or tutorial) was, and still is, calculated to be equivalent to 3 hours work (preparation, delivery and marking). At the time, therefore a six-hour teaching load was considered equivalent therefore to a real total of eighteen hours work.

Today the situation is much worse, as confirmed by a range of surveys (see Coaldrake and Stedman (1999) for details). Sector reform means that there are no specific limits on teaching, research or administrative loads. Indeed all of these have of course increased substantially in the last ten years - without including the recently added activities of outreach/promotion and multimedia activity. There is general agreement - even on the part of the Federal government - that across the university sector workload is now for many the greatest workplace issue in Australia's universities.

If five areas of work activity were not enough, unlucky academics, typically in smaller disciplines such as languages (including Italian) often have to add a sixth and seventh:

(6) long overdue completion of a PhD dissertation

(7) defending one's small patch from reduction and possible closure.

There is no doubt that the proportion of LOTE academics with PhD qualification is lower than the national average for university academics. This observation is especially true for Italianists. The negative consequences are all too obvious: staff busy trying to complete their doctorate are unable to publish according to government funding criteria. Hence funding is reduced, rendering more precarious the financial viability of one's language area. Relatively small enrolments, staffing, low research productivity and limited funds all conspire to form a vicious circle: it is easy then to see why LOTEs have been targeted for reduction and elimination at many Australian universities. When this happens, energies that were once divided across (1-6) become concentrated exclusively in (7) – with minimal effort left for everything else.

Italian Studies Programs in Australian Universities 1950-2000:

The period extending from 1950 to the late 1980s was the boom period for Italian in Australia's tertiary sector (see Andreoni & Rando 1973, Bettoni 1992, Comin 1987, Di Biase et al 1994): from a single accredited program in 1950, the number peaked at 31 across the sector (36 if still to be amalgamated colleges of the time are also included) in 1988. The federal government's restructuring since then of all tertiary institutions into universities led to forced amalgamations and to an apparent decline to 26 by 1990. The number has continued to drop since then: 25 in 1992, down to the current number of 20 in 2000.

Year	Universities	Colleges of Advanced Education
1950	1	
1964	3	
1972	4	
1974	7	18
1981	11	12
1988	31	5
1990	26	
1992	25	
1995	20	
2000	20	

Table 1: Numbers of Australian tertiary institutions offering accredited Italian programs (1950-2000). Sources include Di Biase et al 1994) and Bettoni (1992)

But the 1990s is not a period simply of contraction: Italian was introduced into at least four universities during this time (University of Notre Dame in Perth, University of Technology Sydney, Sunshine College University as well as Northern Territory University in Darwin where it did not survive). And it appears now that the number of Italian programs has stabilized around the country. There may be a further reduction in the future – hardly surprising since some operations are still very small – but this should not be viewed as necessarily a bad thing, as discussion below makes clear.

The best predictor of an Italian program's ability to survive the 1990s appears to have been the relative size of its student body in 1990 measured in so-called EFTSU as previously described. Not surprisingly, small EFTSU numbers mean lack of financial viability. The following table provides a summary of Italian programs in 1990/1992 and again in 2000 across the states and territories. Also indicated are those programs with small student loads (ie less than 30 so-called EFTSUs) in 1990. All but one of the closed programs fell below that mark.

	Universities Offering Italian In 1990 & 1992	Italian Still Available in 2000	EFTSU less than 30 in 1990
Interstate	Australian Catholic University	Yes	
ACT	Australian National University	Yes	Yes
NSW	University of Sydney University of New England University of Wollongong University of Western Sydney Macquarie University	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Northern Territory	Northern Territory University	No (nb: set up post-1990)	Yes
Queensland	Griffith University James Cook University of Northern Queensland Queensland University of Technology	Yes No No	Yes Yes Yes
South Australia	Flinders University of South Australia University of South Australia University of Adelaide	Yes Yes Yes (via Flinders)	–
Tasmania	University of Tasmania	No	Yes
Victoria	University of Melbourne Monash University La Trobe University Deakin University Swinburne University of Technology Victoria University of Technology Royal Melbourne University of Technology	Yes Yes Yes No Yes No No	Yes Yes
Western Australia	University of Western Australia Murdoch University Edith Cowan University	Yes No Yes	Yes
Total	25	17 (+ 3 since 1992)	

Table 2: Universities offering Italian in 1990 and 1992 and 2000, with additional information on small student loads. Based largely on Di Biase et al (1994).

We need also take a more global perspective and make comparisons with, dare I say it, our major competitors. Table 3 shows quite clearly that in 1990 per institution, Italian programs had on average quite small numbers around the country: French and Japanese were twice the size per university on average. German, with a low national average, was, like Italian, also hit hard in the early 1990s by cutbacks.

	Total EFTSU	Average per institution
Italian	885	34
German	764	40
French	1295	62
Japanese	2185	78

Table 3: total student load measured in EFTSU across Australia for each language in 1990 (Bettoni 1992)

This ‘spread it wide, spread it thin’ approach to Italian that seemed to characterize Australian universities in the 1980s helped cause Italian to fare less well in the 1990s than Japanese and French and to suffer bigger cuts. It is a plain fact that bigger departments, regardless of discipline – with more students, more staff, more hands on deck and more clout – will always be better positioned to resist pressure from above to achieve financial savings by closing down disciplines. The conclusion to be drawn from all of this is of course that size really does matter – at universities as in life.

Italian in the New Millennium: A Positive Spin?

But is it all gloom and doom for Italian? Despite all the downsizing and the all new pressures on academics around the country, it is not the case that Italian has been especially picked on. The whole Humanities area of tertiary sector has been truly squeezed with the result that some universities no longer have Arts faculties.

One could easily make the case that Italian has been extremely fortunate: Italian is doing much better than most of the other 39 languages that were taught in Australian universities in 1990. Many have simply disappeared in the intervening period, others are now literally on their last legs and won’t see the year 2000 out, and some such as Greek and Russian – once taught around the country – are still in the throes of substantial decline. It makes no difference that the former is a very large community language, and that the latter is an international language with few native speakers in Australia: both are suffering equally.

Indeed Italians and Italy are truly privileged by the access they have to Australian universities – for it is an excellent marketing opportunity afforded to very few other communities and countries. Many language communities in Australia, often quite large, can only look in envy at the great advantage Italians have in providing opportunities for their children and all Australians to learn their language and culture.

Italy and Italians are also very privileged by the fact that a least four universities in the 1990s saw fit – despite all the cutbacks and pressures

across the sector – to introduce Italian, when others were closing it. Three of these programs still operate.

Italy and Italians have also benefited by the tremendous effort some (though not all) universities have made to encourage the learning of LOTE by their students.ⁱⁱⁱ The University of Melbourne is a case in point, and a model cited by Australian academics as one to emulate in this area: as a result of substantial efforts (internally motivated driven I should add) all LOTE indicators, but in particular total student enrolments, research success, & postgraduate numbers show substantial positive increases. All of this has been achieved in a relatively short period of 5-6 years. Not all languages have done as well as others of course, but Italian is one of the success stories. The Italian Studies program at the University of Melbourne is now the largest in Victoria and the second largest of its kind in the country.

Overall of course one could not say that across the nation Italian was flourishing in our universities in the way that French, Japanese and Chinese seem to be in many places – but there is real hope for Italian.

What the Italian Community and Italy can do to help Italian at Universities:

I have already mentioned the renewed interest of the Italian government and the assistance of the Fondazione Cassamarca in helping Italian in Australian universities. It is true that the Italian government is extremely generous in its assistance to language programs at all levels of education. All assistance, public or private, is of course greatly appreciated and it is hoped will continue and expand in the future for more certainly could be done at university level.

Whilst there are many suggestions I could make about initiatives in favour of Italian at university, I will only make a small number here that focus directly on our youth:

(1) Reversing the pattern of decline in secondary schools

With so much effort made to teach Italian to our primary and secondary students, we need to understand why so many children at secondary school choose, with each passing year, not to continue with Italian. The drop across the 12 years of primary and secondary school, as already mentioned, is nothing less than cataclysmic (99% attrition from primary to Year 12) – and is not mirrored by French and Japanese for instance. Even restricting our attention to the period of secondary education, a loss of 93% over only 5 years is still disastrous – as the following table makes clear.

In the last row of Table 4 there is an even more disturbing fact: whereas in the first year of secondary school 58.5% of children learning a LOTE are doing Italian, by the final year only 5.7% of all LOTE learners are still with us. The other 94.3% are doing French, German, Japanese, Chinese, and a raft of other languages in a system, the Catholic one, which has always had a large Italo-Australian student base and has been very helpful to Italian. Figure 1 provides a clear graphic representation of the patterns of loss in the secondary system.

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Total
No. of students of Italian	8,021	7,501	4,719	2,496	740	568	24,045
Diff. in numbers between years	-	-520	-2,782	-2,223	-1,756	-172	
% of students continuing from preceding year	-	93.5%	62.9%	52.9%	29.6%	76.8%	
% of students who began in Year 7	-	93.5%	58.9%	31.1%	9.23%	7.09%	
Italian as % of language students at that year level	58.5%	55.3%	35.2%	18.4%	5.9%	5.7%	31.3%

Table 4: Students of Italian in Catholic Secondary Schools in Victoria in 1990
 Source: Catholic Schools of Victoria, Teaching of LOTE 1990.

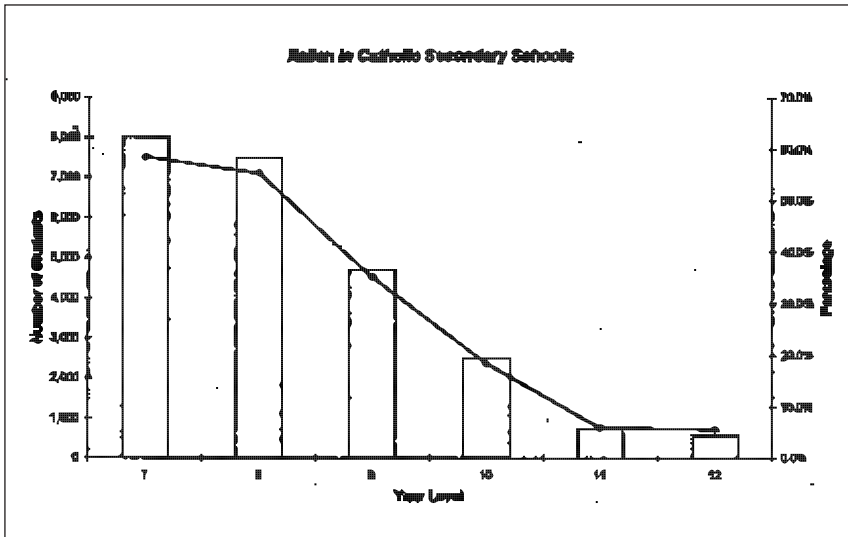


Fig.1 Italian Enrolments in Catholic Secondary Schools in Victoria (1990). Bars represent total number of enrolments per year. The line represents proportion of LOTE students in the system learning Italian in each year.

(2) Targeting the Independent School System

We have for some time relied on the provision of Italian to those sectors of primary and secondary education where Italo-Australian children figure strongly, ie government and Catholic schools. But we have long known that the size of an ethnic community in Australia does not correlate in the slightest with language study at universities (cf Bettoni 1992 for figures confirming this). If that were the case, Departments of Greek, Italian, Polish, Dutch, Vietnamese, Macedonian, etc., would be enormous and taught in every university in the country. The real predictors of whether students choose a particular language to study at university are the language's perceived level of cultural status and the degree to which a language is taught by independent (non-government/non-Catholic) schools, a factor which only serves to reinforce this status. The great fortune French (and also German) has had in being taught in these schools for more than a century is remarkable: once entrenched, they have proven themselves almost impossible to dislodge – to the great benefit of French and German interests in this country, including their respective language departments in Australian universities.

A very simple maxim about these schools applies – given their obvious social status, what students in these schools do, others follow. Their cultural and social influence on universities, other schools and society in general is very strong. It is important to remember that private schools had already begun the big push to Asian languages in the 1970s (long before anyone else had noticed). Wesley College in Melbourne, for instance, already by 1975 had the largest Indonesian program in the nation, alongside French (Latin and German were pushed out by the early 1970s). Only much later did State and Catholic schools, with some frantic pushing and encouragement on the part of governments, come running to Asian languages.

I am not the first to make these social observations about language study in Australia. Indeed Italian authorities and the Italo-Australian community are already very aware of the positive benefits for Italian and Italy access to the independent school sector can provide and have begun to take steps to encourage the introduction of Italian in these schools. The sector is expanding and the proportion of all students attending continues to increase - in line with government policy at all levels (state and federal) that wants to take advantage of the much lower tax dollar cost per head of providing education to our youth.

The battle for the introduction and expansion of Italian in this sector is a long and hard one but must be fought. The benefits of learning Italian flow not only to the children who attend these schools, but to all Australians, and in particular Italo-Australian children – whose self-esteem and appreciation of their own heritage and culture can only rise if it can be shown to them that Australia's social elite (concentrated in its independent schools and universities) is as appreciative of Italian as it is of French, Chinese and Japanese for instance.

The language pendulum in independent schools already shows signs of swinging back – at least a little – to Europe – after an intensive flirtation with Asia. There is already a discernible return to the two traditionally favoured European languages, French and German, resulting in a knock-on effect of increased enrolments at university level. The first-year post-VCE French intake at the University of Melbourne has expanded so much in recent years that it is larger in size than the combined 1st year post-VCE Italian intake at the five universities in Melbourne offering Italian. We have to ensure that Italian takes its share of this same pro-European momentum.

(3) Short-term Travel Scholarships for University Students

The final suggestion applies more directly to students at universities. I have for some years now suggested that, in addition to the provision of *lettorati* to help with teaching, the single most effective way of motivating students to do Italian and then continue with it through undergraduate and then postgraduate studies is the provision of travel scholarships to Italy. Universities in the 1990s saw the very positive impact travel to a home country had on language learners and began to offer such awards. Market research I conducted in the mid-1990s at the University of Melbourne showed that the desire to travel was the single most important reason why students undertook the Beginners' Italian course (& French for that matter). Not only do such travel schemes (from one to three months and in tune with academic calendars) increase demand for Italian (and other languages) but they also help to keep students in our language programs. Of course available scholarships are too few and come nowhere near to meeting demand.

The National Italian-American Foundation (NIAF) in the USA is acutely aware of the long-term benefits of travel to Italy by American youth and considers the provision of travel scholarships to university students a major priority. In this respect the NIAF serves as an important model for the new Italian Australian Institute.

Conclusion

In my view everyone benefits from a greater focus on Italian in Australia's universities. With respect to academic Italianists, I think we would all share the following hopes:

First that one day there will be across the nation's universities as many students enrolled in Italian as there are in French. But student numbers are only part of the positive equation. I also agree with others at this conference who have called for the greater concentration of Italian in larger departments with more staff to reduce workloads and to ensure that high quality teaching and research in Italian studies can be achieved. Amidst all the difficulties confronting languages in the university sector, I have already pointed to positive signs in at least a few places, such as my own university. At the University of Melbourne: the number of students studying Italian has continued to expand over the long term – a very positive outcome. But French, like Japanese and Chinese, has also done exceptionally well, and the increase in French enrolments over the longer term has tended (at Melbourne and nationally) to more than match the increase in Italian. To borrow a term dear to economic rationalists, for Italian to be truly competitive both locally and nationally as a university language, the help and interest of the Italian community and authorities become ever more important.

Finally, my second hope is that today's Italo-Australian youth draw benefit – in terms not just of social progress and economic success but also in terms of self-esteem – from the value and appreciation Australia's university-educated assign to Italian language and culture. I have already mentioned it but it is worth repeating: there is nothing so self-affirming and good for self-worth, nothing more likely to generate interest in your own heritage and language than the high levels of interest, appreciation and status which others who are not like you give to these things.

Notes

¹ It is hardly surprising, given social patterns in Australia that ministers are graduates almost exclusively of the oldest and most prestigious, so-called 'sandstone', universities (Universities of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Western Australia, & Queensland).

² According to 'Australia gets poor marks in funding for education', *The Age* 17.5.2000, Australia is ranked 23rd out of 28 in terms of government funding for education. It is ranked, however, 6th in terms of private funding. Between 1990 and 1996 Australia ranked first in terms of greatest increase in private funding in primary and secondary schooling (46%) and in private university funding (90%).

³ It is unfortunate that some of these language friendly universities have focussed their activities solely in favour of Asian languages.

The Future of Italian Australian Culture:
Passions, Prospects and Predictions in the Midst of Change
Franco Cavarra

Firstly, I would like to reassure all of you that clerics do not have any particular skill in reading crystal balls, although many people regard that as an important part of our job, that is, to predict the future. The reason that I just used all of these alliterative words is to try somehow to capture people's attention, humorously, but also, and more importantly, to make some kind of judgment as to where I believe we are heading. Overall, I believe the news is good. I think it is looking good and it will get better.

Now my talk is not going to be remotely scientific. It is going to be very largely autobiographical, and the reason for that will, little by little, make itself obvious to you. I would like to open with a saying of my own: "We have inherited a magnificent palazzo and yet most of us choose to live in the garage." I often use it when I am preaching, for all sorts of reasons, I find it comes in very handy. It has to do with living life to the full, which is a lot of what the message of the Gospel is. What I mean by it is that we have inherited this magnificent thing called an Italian inheritance if you like, but most of the time, I believe, for all sorts of reasons, which lots of the speakers have gone into, we are really only scraping the surface, we are not really owning it completely, or as much, or as confidently, as we could.

I would like to start with my own personal experience of assimilation. I came to this country in 1954 at the age of six. Now, the '50s was the period of the great migration movement from Europe to Australia. The ships that every week pulled in at Port Melbourne were absolutely chock-a-block with migrants during the years when this place called Australia was a place where you would make a new start. So in 1954, as we got off those boats and were met by our relatives or family or friends, and we were invited to make a new start, assimilation was very much the prevailing philosophy. On the surface of it, of course, you would not see it as a bad thing; it was to make people who are strangers, feel at home. And how better to do it, than to make people feel that you have something in common with them.

I have to say the experience, my experience of assimilation, was a very unpleasant, unfortunate, and unhappy one. Not that this revealed itself immediately. Little by little, I felt, even at the tender age of six, that there was very little left of who I was that had any value at all, because subtly, day by day, one was constantly being told: "We don't do this here, this is what we do." Now, messages that you got day by day, eventually instilled into very young minds the idea that there was something terribly wrong or inferior or third rate about who you were, because if all the ways that you did things and the ways you thought and the ways you had been used to were somehow not acceptable, clearly there must have been something wrong with them, and clearly the right way was the way that your hosts were promoting: a new standard of life.

Needless to say, all those years ago, there was a terrible chasm that had been created between who we felt we were as migrants and who we felt we had to be, we ought to be. There was very little affirmation of what we were bringing to this country. The implication was: "You have come here with nothing, we are giving you everything, be grateful and become like us." We were called 'New Australians'. The object was to leave that label as quickly as possible and the object of the game was to go from being a new Australian to an old Australian; and the transition was meant to be made through a process of, if you like, assimilation.

The first thing, of course, was to change your name So Francesco - my own - became Frank. Or if you were called Giuseppe, you became Joe, or Sebastiano, Sam. And it was funny that I was always surrounded by people who were called Joe or Sam, and I thought: "Isn't that unusual, how people have not got much imagination when it comes to naming their children." I think the idea was that, by and large, Australians would call anyone Joe and Sam who happened to be foreign.

Assimilation, I have to say, had some good points. The good points, I suppose, have to do with giving you some skills with which to negotiate the daily difficulties of life. I found I learned to speak English very quickly; in fact, I imagine that after about six months, I was already holding my own. But I still remember that experience very clearly: of being in a room, in a classroom, my first day of school, and not being able to understand one word.

Now, I do not know if any of you have had that experience, but it is a most terrifying thing, it is frightening. It is so overwhelmingly lonely and fearful because all of the time you are hearing sounds and noises and you are trying desperately to read people's faces with a view to

working out: “Are they for me, or are they against me? Are they friendly or are they foes?” And, of course, the slightest change in the social temperature you interpret as being some kind of attack. And, of course, being recently arrived, I felt, most of the time, that I was one of the ones who were seen as easy prey for getting into trouble with the teacher, because not being able to explain my predicament I would then cop it, and, you know, cop it instead of other people.

So I have to say, my experience of assimilation, by and large, was not a happy one. On the one hand, it forced you to quickly pick up some tricks, in order to hold your own; but I did grow up with a feeling that what I came from, what belonged to me, my parents, the culture I came from, was something to be forgotten and discarded as quickly as possible.

Therefore, as I was growing up as a teenager, the last thing I would have wanted was to have learnt Italian, the last thing I would have wanted was for people to know that I was Italian. I would certainly never have been seen dead at an Italian festa or an Italian function of some kind, or at anything ethnic. For me and a for a whole generation, I believe, ethnic equalled inferior, unsophisticated, peasant, and third rate, and certainly extremely uncool.

So how did I get out of all of this? I have to say that my redemption was going to university. It was really only at university, when I started studying Italian properly under the expert guidance of lecturers and professors and people such as Colin McCormick at Melbourne, who were able to awaken in me a real love and an appreciation of what it meant to be Italian, that I realised Italian was not something to be ashamed of but to be proud of. Now for me this was a very long process. It took many, many, many years of discovery and rediscovery and finally I arrived at the point where I was able to go back from being Frank to being Franco. That might just seem like a mere change of name but in my case, it represented actually a change of identity; it meant that from when I became Franco again I could actually be an Australian of Italian origin. I could hold on to the name that I was given at baptism and feel comfortable with it, and not have to apologise for it.

Now, I would like relate all of this to the arts, and I suppose, straight away, all of you will be thinking: “Why is this priest addressing us today about the arts, it’s nothing to do with religion?” The thing is that my religious career, if you can call it that, my vocation, is very recent. In fact, I have only been a priest for the past 18 months. I was ordained in 1998. Prior to that, of course, as was pointed out before, I was working; I was

an arts practitioner. Presumably that is what I am wanting to share with you this afternoon. But one does actually inform the other as you will hear in a few minutes.

When I decided that I wanted to make a career in the arts (which was always more than just a career, indeed a vocation for me), I decided early on that I was going to be the best possible. That it was not going to be some kind of fringe participation. It had to be the mainstream that I entered and it had to be the best possible level of the mainstream and the most professional level possible at that time. I decided I would break into show business. So I aimed high and I have to say, I achieved high. Now, I do not know if there is any correlation between aiming high and getting there (that is something which is quite beyond me), although I do know that there are lots of people who are very talented, who aim high all the time, but do not quite get where they would like to. Still, I found in my case that I set out to achieve certain things and I achieved them. I wanted to become an international director and I did. I wanted to direct opera and I did. I worked with Giancarlo Menotti at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, I worked with him at the Spoleto Festivals. I wanted to work in film and television and I did.

All of these things came to me because I was being inspired, I think, by my love and appreciation of a director by the name of Luchino Visconti, about whom I have read a lot and written a lot; and I still find him an enormous source of inspiration. This particular director, who was quintessentially Italian, was able to straddle all of these various forms of expression in a most magisterial way. He directed wonderful productions of opera with Maria Callas. He directed marvellous productions of Italian composers: people like Verdi and Bellini and Rossini, who were usually regarded by the experts as 19th century, a bit inferior. I mean, they are not really Puccini and Wagner. He gave them a new dignity.

I wanted to do the same thing for us here in Australia. So what I set out to do was to somehow stop attacking Italo-Australian artistic work and rather than throw stones, I thought I wanted to be part of the solution. Hence, at a certain point in my career in the early '80s, I became involved in the Italian Arts Festival here in Melbourne. Up until that time, I had had nothing at all to do with anything remotely called ethnic for the reasons that I have already outlined. I have to say that this for me, was like one of those Pauline conversions; I did a complete 360 degree turn. I went from one who scoffed and mocked and made fun of and simply looked down my nose at and patronised, to the situation where I began to see that here there was real work to be done. Here, one could

find an arena, an area of work, where one could achieve something worthwhile.

And so I spent a lot of time about 10 to 15 years - building up this particular arts festival with the idea being that we were going to promote and present to the Australian public an image of contemporary Italy. In other words, no more of those peasants in funny outfits who dance in the streets and clap their hands and do all those things that peasants are supposed to do. Now there is nothing wrong with a peasant culture. I would be the last one to attack it. But what I wanted to make some kind of judgment upon was the fact that I saw the host culture typecasting us in this way all the time.

In other words they said: "We're happy for you to entertain us but we want to cast you as the clowns, we'd like you to do that trick where you go up the greasy pole and you break the thing up the top, and whatever. We'd like you to do all those wonderful things with colourful costumes so that we can take pictures of you and then we put them on the front page of the Herald Sun. In other words, we want to put you where we believe you belong." I resisted that strongly and completely. The point I was trying to make over the years that I was directing the festival was that there is an image, there is an Italy which is extremely contemporary; it is dynamic, it is alive, relevant, dangerous, it is, to use that awful expression that people use today, at the cutting edge. (We did not use that expression then, it had not been invented.) It was not easy, because the powers that be, the people who gave us money to put on festivals, wanted the ethnic stereotypes. They said: "This is what we want." And we would have to say: "Yes, but it's not who we are. Let us present ourselves in the way that we want to present ourselves."

Finally, while I was there for about 10 years, I think, year in year out, the object was always to come up with a program that comprised all that was interesting and unusual and contemporary in the sphere of Italian cinema, Italian theatre, Italian visual arts exhibitions, Italian dance, Italian music and talks and bringing out people from Italy: bringing out writers, bringing out directors. We brought Lina Wertmuller out here at one stage; she was very much the flavour of the month in America. And I thought it would be good for Australians to see this woman who actually is making movies in Italy, in a world which is extremely male dominated; and this woman has real style. I mean, she has a wonderfully unique voice, and the way she presents herself as a director is brazen. And we did it and we brought her out and, of course, all sorts of things flowed from it.

Festivals are good for creating a high profile and so Melbourne's Spoleto came as a result of that. The Melbourne Spoleto Festival, which has now become the Melbourne Festival, was an extension of those festival experiences that we all had. But there is no separate Italian Australian culture that like a lycra, body-hugging wet suit we put on or discard at will. Yet there is a particular and most definite flavour that is Italian here. There is a taste, there is a colour, there is a passion, that we bring to the way we look at the world and the way we do things.

The Italian language, for instance, is a language of overstatement. One of the joys that I had in those years when I was working in the theatre was to discover the theatre of Nino Randazzo. He is a larger than life character as you probably know. I found his theatre was very much larger than life, it was exaggerated, it was vulgar, it was rough, it was unsophisticated, but by God, it was entertaining. I shall never forget those early audiences and the clapping and the cheering and the crying and the tears and the jumping up and down. Why? Because people were seeing themselves on stage. They were their neighbours, they were their children, they were their 'comares' and 'compares', they were their "Nonna", and they were all up there on stage themselves. And that is the most wonderfully therapeutic experience you can imagine.

Now while the Australian cultural identity is multicultural, whether we accept it or not - and it is in a state of constant evolution or development- the question remains to what extent do we wish to be protagonists and shapers of it, rather than mindless consumers of it.

And what of the future? We derive nourishment and inspiration from our roots. Why? Because of our inter-connectedness, our past, because it is there for us to embrace and make use of. However, an Italian ghetto is not what we are looking for. In more subtle ways, the aim should be to Italianise Australian life and Australian style; and precisely through our writers, our actors, our directors. A wonderful example I have just come across recently - even though I have now put show business behind me - is Rosalba Clemente who did a marvellous production called *Emma Celebrazione*. She is now the first Italian woman artistic director of a State Theatre Company in Australia. Now that is remarkable. It is a male world for a start. Then it is a male Anglo-Saxon world. Put simply, Rosalba Clemente has broken through. She is the daughter of Neapolitan migrants. Wonderful. Clearly, the inheritance of Pulcinella and Eduardo de Filippo flows through her veins and she recently did a production of Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit* in Adelaide.

Now that is what we are about. It means that we are enriching our culture; our background makes us who we are, but we are not limited by

it, we are enriched by it, we are made alive by it. So let us put behind the tokenism of having a gelato and a caffellatte in Lygon Street, please. Let us get on with what we can do.

And the last thing I really want to emphasise is the recommendation to set up resource centres in Melbourne and Australia-wide, where we can see the best of Italian CD ROMS to do with the Italian theatre, the best of Italian films, Italian literature and translations. And we have wonderful translators now too. We are expertly equipped and competent in this country to do English translations of Italian contemporary works, so let us have those things readily available. Let us share them, let us use them, and let us enthusiastically invite all of us to move out of that garage and into the palazzo.

The Hybrid Subject & the Italian Australian Identity

Vince Marotta

Introduction

In order to address and ground the theoretical and conceptual concerns raised in this paper the first section will provide a brief personal account of my migrant experience. These types of personal experiences are not necessarily unique because they have been well documented in the literature on first and second generation Italians. This will be followed by a brief theoretical discussion on how identity is constructed intersubjectively. Later sections will critically analyse the metaphor of hybridity and its association with the dissolution of boundaries. I argue that the appeal and use of hybridity in research on ethnicity overlooks the ambivalence of boundaries. Using current research on young Italian-Australians, I demonstrate how we can use this conceptual framework to provide a more complex reading of the migrant experience.

There have been several incidents in my life where I have become acutely aware of my ethnicity, but I only want to elaborate on two such experiences. The first incident was when I commenced secondary education. In a public school, with a pre-dominantly Anglo-Celtic student body, those who looked and sounded different were quickly categorised as 'wogs' or 'dagos'. Recently, with the popularity of plays such as *Wogs out of Work* and the film *Wog Boy* these derogatory terms have lost some of their pejorative connotations. These cultural events, however, both play with, and perpetuate, the mainstream representation of what it means to be 'ethnic'. A second, more contemporary experience is my participation in the Italian Australian Institute's conference called 'In Search of the Italian-Australian into the New Millennium'. In my everyday life, with its mundane concerns, my 'Italianness' is not at the forefront of my daily deliberations. Of course this does not mean that others do not perceive me as 'ethnic', rather my ethnic identity is not something which is continuously reflected in the mirror every morning. My Italianness became manifest as I interacted with other participants at the conference who were seriously contemplating the constitution or representation of an Italian-Australian identity.

Self and Other

Although the above two incidents stress the ways in which an ethnic identity can be constructed, there is a distinct difference between the two experiences. In the former case, an asymmetrical relationship between self and other exists because the Anglo-Celtic self constructs the ethnic other through a derogatory language that marginalises, oppresses and excludes. In the latter case, the relationship between the self (Vince Marotta) and other (the participants of the conference) is based on specific historical, cultural and social similarities. Consequently, both the migrant and host group contributes to the construction of these similarities. The host group represents Italians as a homogenous 'ethnic' group, while the migrant group distinguishes itself through the construction of a collective consciousness. In other words, difference is a process that is partly imposed by the host group and hence a consequence of inter-group contact, but it is also a consequence of intra-group interaction. The 'we' that is constructed, whether by the host group or the migrant group, is in part a process of self-differentiation which requires an Other from which the 'we' can distinguish itself. In the words of Fay, "there can be no self without the differences provided by others" (Fay 1996: 46). Torrance (1977) has observed that there exists a relationship between estrangement and solidarity. Those who may have nothing in common apart from their shared difference find a basis of solidarity in their rejection from the primary or native group. He describes this process as negative solidarity, while the positive solidarity of the native group is based on a sameness that is contrasted to the outsider (Torrance 1977: 128). As a consequence, an 'us-and-them' mentality develops and this serves the purpose of maintaining and establishing the identity of the host and migrant group. This conceptualisation of the relationship between estrangement and solidarity has its roots in the interactionist approach in sociology. In particular, the idea that the self is not biologically determined but that instead we have to learn our selfhood, our identity, through the responses of others.

This relational view of identity is manifested at both the individual and collective level and is either confirmed or altered by our interactions with others. For example, the sociological literature on community contends that in order to develop and maintain a sense of community, physical and symbolic boundaries are erected in order for the native community to differentiate itself from others. Cohen, in his influential sociological text on community, insists that 'community assertiveness' is

not stimulated by the need to express the inherent character of a community, “but, rather, from a felt need to discriminate it from some other entity” (Cohen 1985: 110).

Estrangement and solidarity are dialectically interwoven. It is through the construction of a symbolic community that strangers are identified and labelled. Edelman, in his study of the use and construction of political enemies, concludes that in constructing one’s enemies people are “manifestly defining themselves and their place in history” and concludes that to “define those who one hurts as evil is to define oneself as virtuous” (Edelman 1988: 76). This interpretation of strangeness is reinforced by Norbert Elias’ 1950s study of a suburban community in England (Elias and Scotson 1994). Elias found that the social organisation of this community was based on the “established members” and the “outsiders”. The exclusion and stigmatisation of the outsiders allowed the established group to maintain their identity and assert their superiority (Elias and Scotson 1994: xviii). In light of this discussion, the formulation of an Italian-Australian identity should be conceptualised as a dialectical and contradictory process in which cultural and symbolic boundaries, and the relational view of identity, play a significant role in establishing the parameters of an Italian-Australian subjectivity.

The Hybrid Subject and Boundary Construction

However, with the current popularity and usage of such ideas and metaphors as the hybrid, the bicultural and multicultural ethnic subject, the theorising and contemplating the existence of cultural and symbolic boundaries has become increasingly problematic. Before I elaborate on this point the notion of hybridity needs to be examined.

The hybrid metaphor has a biological origin that, unlike its highly abstract use in cultural studies and sociology, has a specific meaning. Stross has located the biological definition in the Latin word *hybrida* which refers to “the offspring of a (female) domestic sow and a (male) wild boar” and, more recently, hybridity has referred to the offspring of mating different animals or plants (Stross 1999: 254). The biological dimension of hybridity has been broadened to include the category of the cultural hybrid. In the words of Stross,

“The cultural hybrid [...] is a person who represents the blending of traits from diverse cultures or traditions, or even more broadly it can be a culture, or element of culture, derived from unlike sources; that is something heterogeneous in origin or composition” (Stross 1999: 254).

According to Stross, in the social sciences the word hybrid originally had some pejorative connotations because it was associated with descriptive terms such as half-breed, half-caste, mutt and mongrel. Although this may have been the case in the 18th and 19th centuries, as I will demonstrate later, by the early 20th century hybridity and the bicultural self was seen in a more positive light. Stross proposes that the “biological concept of vigor can be applied to the cultural realm of hybridity” (Stross 1999: 254-255). Stross makes explicit what other social scientists have only implied: for example, that there may be a close relationship between the biological and cultural approach to hybridity. Nevertheless, many scholars have been reluctant to make this connection because of their fear of being categorised as sociobiologists and thus asocial. As a consequence, many sociologists and social scientists have resisted a semantic assessment of hybridity. This is, in some respects, justified when we consider that Stross uncritically accepts that there is a natural affinity between the biological world and the social world.

The metaphor of hybridisation, as I have suggested, implies the coming together of different elements to produce some new identity. In the words of Dorst, the “form such mixing takes, the degree to which features of the preexisting components are preserved or sublimated, whether the new form reflects increased vitality or enervation, the nature of cultural boundaries and of their transgression – such are the issues the hybrid metaphor throws into relief” (Dorst 1999: 269). The ways in which categories such as hybridity are being appropriated by Australian scholars implies that the existence of cultural boundaries is problematic and is immersed in power relations. Bottomley, for example, states that “ethnic identifications are more likely to be used to maintain hegemony and oppression” (Bottomley 1992: 61). As a reaction to these essentialist views of ethnicity, some scholars have argued that ‘hybrid thinking’ allows us to question the “hegemonic definitions of belonging which still privilege identification, recognition and exclusion of the other” (Rosello 1995: 6). These new hybrid identities, and the critical thinking that they apparently foster, have the ability to transcend the totalising boundaries that are imposed by both the hegemonic host culture and the migrant group. For others, the “power of hybrid forms can be measured by the threat that their transgressions evoke” (Kapchan and Strong 1999: 243). In light of these conceptual concerns, the existence of social and cultural boundaries, in a period that has been depicted as ‘post-modern’, has become increasingly difficult to contemplate and theorise. This is particularly the case in the area of

ethnic studies. Increasingly, scholars within this discipline have tended to view 'culture' as internally fragmented and fluid. This has led to studies that tend to over-emphasise the inhibiting and destructive nature of boundaries. The presence of cultural boundaries, especially those which are imposed by the host society, are said to hide universalistic practices because they impose particular identities at the expense of others. As one prominent social theorist has consistently argued, modernity's will-to-order is said to provide the conditions in which to suppress and oppress those who represent disorder, difference and ambivalence (Bauman 1991). In contrast and in opposition to the modernity's will-to-order, a theoretical position has been articulated that not only questions the existence of hegemonic social and cultural boundaries, but also implies that they are, and should be, less relevant in a 'post-modern' world. The emergence of the postmodern condition has been celebrated because it brings forth a new era in which fluidity, contradictions and complexity undermines the so-called modern processes of progress, order and stagnation.

This deconstructive turn in the social sciences has meant that any "unitary conception of a 'bounded' culture is pejoratively labelled naturalistic and essentialist" (Werbner 1997: 4). Without denying the potential for resistance and creativity that such hybrid identities may foster, and the important insights that such an approach has yielded, there are many questionable assumptions and theoretical and conceptual confusions underlying the constructions of these new ethnic subjectivities. In the subsequent discussion we will address these issues through an examination of the construction and representation of young Italian-Australian identities.

Italian-Australian Identities

The theoretical and conceptual framework surrounding the metaphor of hybridity has increasingly underlined recent research on young Italian-Australians. So ubiquitous has this kind of work been that it is now rare to read papers on ethnicity which do not address and use terms such as hybridity, third space and multiple identities. This trend is also evident in research conducted on other 'ethnic' groups such as Greek-Australian (Bottomley 1991 & 1992), Turkish-Australian (Elley 1993) and Asian-Australian immigrants (Ang 1994; Ang 1996; Matthews 1998). Research on young Italian-Australians has explored how these young people have constructed new selves which has led to the fluidity of cultural boundaries. A further implication of the deconstructive turn in the study of ethnicity is the assumption that once cultural boundaries

are imposed, either from the native Italian group or the host Australian-Celtic group, they enforce universalistic practices that sustain particular identities at the expense of others. The unintended consequence of this type of analysis is that the existence of boundaries is solely perceived to be destructive, oppressive, and exclusionary.

In order to shed some light on these issues the next section examines a recent work by Loretta Baldassar (Baldassar 1999) which is an exemplary account of the hybridisation of the ethnic self. The critical examination of Baldassar's work, however, does not imply that her scholarship is flawed, or that her findings are questionable. On the contrary, in most cases, her conclusions are insightful and challenging. Rather, what is more interesting in this work is how the notion of the hybrid subject informs her conclusions and interpretations regarding the experience of young Italian-Australians.

Baldassar conducted an ethnographic study of Italian weddings and network activities of Italian-Australian youth in Perth. The theoretical framework which underpins her work is drawn from Ang's notion of a "postmodern ethnicity" (Ang 1994), and Bhabha's conception of "third space" (Bhabha 1990). Drawing on this theoretical paradigm, usually associated with a postmodern or postcolonial perspective, Baldassar uncritically accepts that the 'in-between-ness' of second generation individuals highlights "the profound creativity of such hybridity and the potential for creative syncretism" (Baldassar 1999: 3). The hybrid subject is said to destabilise essentialist, fixed identities because it transcends binary oppositions. Other scholars have maintained that a new self has emerged out of the experience of biculturalism. Andrew Sharp argues that being bicultural allows for the development of a broader knowledge and fosters a greater understanding of one's own social reality and the social and cultural world of the other (Sharp 1995: 121). In addition, some observers argue that dual or multiple ethnicity, which combines the migrant and the host group, undermines the 'binary oppositions' or the either/or identity that is the basis of the 'Western' conception of personhood. According to Thomas and Nikora, this hybrid identity is seen by "some Westerners as dishonest and threatening" (Thomas and Nikora 1996: 38). The new hybrid Italian-Australian identity underlying Baldassar's research defies cultural boundaries and moves with ease between the so-called 'Italian' and 'Australian' culture. However, the actual nature of these cultures is never clearly articulated. Firstly, some researchers who explicitly or implicitly use the notion of a bicultural experience or self assume that an Italian or Australian identity is homogenous. To postulate the existence

of an Italian identity may imply that there is an authentic Italian culture that can be located in the customs and traditions of the Italian people. This ignores the process by which this culture acquires authenticity and the internal differences within these identities that are based on regional, religious, class, gender, and sexual differences. These conceptual problems highlight the underlying contestability of an Italian subjectivity, a subjectivity that is neither monolithic nor unified. If there is no such thing as an essentialist Italian and Australian culture, then can we meaningfully speak of a hybrid identity? The hybridisation process assumes that what is being merged are two distinct entities; if these entities do not exist or are contentious in the first place, then the explanatory force of terms such as hybridity and third space is weakened. Those who construct a bicultural self imply that cultural boundaries have become porous, while simultaneously holding a position which assumes that Italian and Australian cultures are fixed and bounded. For example, Baldassar's hybrid or bicultural subject sits uncomfortably with her claim that boundary maintenance is a principal factor in ethnic group continuity (Baldassar 1999: 5). If an ethnic hybrid subject exists – which implies that boundaries are porous and therefore easily transcended – to what extent can one say that ethnic boundary maintenance is also occurring? Studies that draw on notions of hybridity and third space, to conceptualise an ethnic identity, tend to be theoretically and conceptually confusing. This confusion stems from their inability to acknowledge the ambivalence of boundaries.

Simmel and the Ambivalence of Boundaries

This ambivalence is clearly captured by the German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel. He has argued that the human condition should be understood in terms of its propensity to transcend and erect boundaries. Social and cultural boundaries, according to Simmel, define who we are, but they do not necessarily limit us. This idea allows Simmel to paradoxically conclude that “we are bounded in every direction and we are bounded in no direction” (Simmel 1971: 355). Boundaries are ambivalent because they are constructive and destructive, liberating and oppressive; they provide the conditions to construct an identity because they establish difference between self and other, and they can also provide the grounds to suppress and exclude the identity of the other. An ethnic identity is not ascribed; it is only constructed and gains meaning through our interaction with others. Italians, Greeks, Lebanese, Vietnamese etc. are not inherently ‘ethnic’; on the contrary, their ethnicity is imposed on them by the host society. In a

classic study on ethnic groups and boundaries which recent research either ignores or, like Baldassar, inappropriately embraces, Barth argues that the continuity of ethnic groups does not depend on cultural maintenance, but on the maintenance of a boundary. It is the “dichotomization between members and outsiders [which] allows us to specify the nature of continuity, and investigate the changing cultural form and content” of an ethnic group (Barth 1969: 14). In other words, cultural practices and customs are not in themselves necessary to construct ethnicity; rather, an ethnic identity is the outcome of the interaction between self and other. As was suggested earlier, this process is evident both at the inter-group and intra-group level.

The overemphasis on the destructive and oppressive nature of boundaries has been the result of researchers uncritically drawing on ‘post-structuralist’ and ‘post-colonialist’ epistemological frameworks to conceptualise hybrid identities. Rather than suggest that this theoretical approach is inadequate, I want to complement it with a more complex approach to conceptualising the function of boundaries. The category or metaphor of hybridity does not make boundaries less applicable, it merely redefines them. For example, those boundaries which the monocultural Italian and Australian self are said to uphold can be and are, in most cases, perceived as exclusionary and oppressive; however, those which the in-between ethnic subject implicitly maintains can be understood as both constructive and exclusionary.

How can we interpret the Italian-Australian experience in terms of the ambivalence of boundaries? I want to draw on various studies that are not explicitly concerned with this theoretical issue, but can nevertheless shed some light on how we can utilise the idea of the ambivalence of boundaries to re-interpret the experience of young Italian-Australians.

Paula Foote (1992) has conducted research on Italian-Australian youth gangs in Adelaide. These young people have drifted away from the values and norms of the their parents’ culture and have created for themselves an identity which is said to blur the ‘Italian’ and ‘Australian’ culture. However, as I have illustrated, if these are contested categories, what is being blurred is always part of a filtering process where certain groups choose some cultural practices as representative of a cultural identity. These hybrid spaces can be interpreted as sites that question the boundaries which the host and migrant cultures erect and thus allow for resistance and creativity to occur. The experience and existence of hybrid identities, however, do not in themselves produce positive outcomes. The effect of the hybrid experience may depend not only on

the ways in which the hybrid personality adjusts to the bicultural experience, but it can be influenced by the social, economic and political context in which that experience takes place.

Past studies have maintained that the bicultural experience is fraught with psychological turmoil. Studies by the Chicago sociologists Robert E. Park on the “marginal man” (Park 1928), Stonequist’s research on the marginal character of the Jews (Stonequist 1942), Bernard’s assessment of the relationship between biculturality and social schizophrenia (Bernard 1942) and Reuter’s (1917 & 1927) discussion of the mulattos have all highlighted the ambivalence of occupying a cultural hybrid space. Reuter, for example, argues that while mulattos are superior in character they are also not well adjusted. Moreover, Park, Stonequist and Bernard assert that the marginal personality – those individuals who have cultural and emotional ties to two or more societies – experience an enlightened, more objective perspective but this coexists with a sense of homelessness and estrangement. These studies, however, in their representation of the hybrid subject do exhibit racist overtones (Reuter) and/or adopt an essentialist view of culture (Park and Stonequist). A more recent study has argued that under favourable conditions the bicultural and multicultural experience may result in personal strengths such as cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural effectiveness, greater flexibility and less ethnocentric attitudes. On the other hand, when the social conditions are not so favourable the hybrid experience may result in emotional distress, psychological vulnerability and “cultural homelessness” (Vivero and Jenkins 1999).

In addition, these hybrid cultural spaces might equally become sites of closure and cultural homogenisation (Mitchell 1997). In the case of the Italian-Australian youth in Adelaide there is clear demarcation between the hybrid group and the host group. One Italian-Australian participant, commenting on the interaction between Australians and so-called ‘wogs’ at his school, states that “there’s really no mixed groups at school” (Foote 1992: 28). This separation is amplified in terms of spatial segregation where “this side of town you’ve got Italian street gangs” while the so-called Australians congregate on the other side of the city (Foote 1992: 29). It is evident that these hybrid ethnic subjects are transgressing the cultural boundaries of their parent’s culture, but they are simultaneously maintaining other cultural boundaries between themselves and so-called Australian street gangs. A study conducted in the United States on Italian-American youth gangs reinforces how the hybridisation process both denies and maintains boundaries. Tricarico (1991) locates a Guido Italian-American youth subculture who define

themselves as young Italians who listen to a lot of disco, have a particular hairstyle and clothing and are fashion conscious. For Tricarico, Guidos elaborate a new non-traditional ethnicity (Tricarico 1991: 42) and a hybrid, bicultural identity (Tricarico 1991: 49) that reconciles an ethnic Italian ancestry with popular American culture. This hybridisation process also entails establishing difference between self (Guido) and the other (African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans). As Tricarico explains, although the Guido subculture has appropriated Black and Hispanic youth styles, they still construct cultural and symbolic boundaries. For example, Guidos exclude other racial and cultural groups from their social clubs and distinguish their music from the African-American rap music by asserting that they “rap the Italian way” (Tricarico 1991: 51).

Moreover, while some of these young second-generation Italians subjectively identify themselves as Italians, it is acknowledged by the older members of the Italian-Australian youth gangs, that “half of these guys don’t even know where their parents are from” (Foote 1992: 30). The older members also complain that some of these so-called Italians do not speak the Italian language and know very little about the Italian culture and its history. Tricarico also highlights the internal tension between “a real Guido” and “wannabe Guidos” (Tricarico 1991: 51). These responses by the older members of the Italian-Australian youth gang and the internal division within the Guido subculture signifies the ways in which these young Italians have apparently drifted from some authentic Italian identity, but it also highlights the contested nature of this identity. Cultural and symbolic boundaries are not only important in understanding inter-group interaction, but they are important in comprehending intra-group processes.

The studies conducted by Foote and Tricarico indirectly demonstrate the contingent nature of cultural boundaries but they simultaneously illustrate how other cultural, symbolic and spatial boundaries are being constructed and maintained. This interpretation has been substantiated by research on cross-cultural encounters. Kosmitzki (1996), in her study of 203 German and American monocultural subjects and 88 bicultural subjects has found that bicultural individuals tended to reaffirm their original cultural identity. She concludes that biculturals “used their native cultural group as a reference for their self-perceptions to a greater extent than did individuals who do not experience daily intergroup contact” (Kosmitzki 1996: 246). There is a tension here that is rarely acknowledged by those scholars who draw on hybridity in their research on ethnicity. The bicultural subject is paradoxically subverting

the cultural boundaries of the host and migrant culture in order to construct an in-between identity, but this hybrid subject needs those very same boundaries to maintain an in-between cultural identity. In other words, the so-called non-oppressive and non-dominating dimension of a hybrid identity tends to collapse boundaries which allows it to include rather than exclude the other. But, according to Sakamoto (1996), hybridity still needs “another Other to stop the slippage of identity”. Sakamoto explains that “identity cannot be totally indeterminate and open if it consists as part of the symbolic order, whose whole purpose is to fix some meaning over the chaos of the real” (Sakamoto 1996: 123). The relational theory of identity, as I have pointed out, suggests that all identities are relational and thus require something outside the Other. Sakamoto claims that if a hybrid identity does create another Other – and therefore maintains and constructs boundaries – “it may reproduce the same relation of domination between itself [Italian-Australian and Guido youth gangs] and this new Other [Australian youth gangs or Black and Hispanic groups]”. A hybrid identity, concludes Sakamoto, may not automatically lead to a politics free of domination nor, in the context of this paper, free from boundary maintaining processes.

This paradoxical feature of the bicultural subject is substantiated by the work of Ellie Vasta who concentrates on second generation Italian-Australians and on migrant women. She has insightfully questioned the dominant perceptions of ethnicity within the Australian policy of multiculturalism and has investigated the ways in which second generation Italian-Australians straddle and operate within two cultures. Vasta has criticised the dominant essentialist view that treats an ethnic minority culture as homogeneous. Consequently, Vasta is critical of the representation of ethnic cultures as “a way of life which includes fixed, coherent traditions and belief systems and feelings of attachment to those with similar characteristics” (Vasta 1993: 217).

What is interesting in this analysis is that Vasta, while attacking an essentialist view of ethnic cultures, unintentionally reinforces the essentialist position in her description of how the second generation negotiate the host and migrant cultures. Young Italian-Australians, according to Vasta, maintain and foster an Italianness by perpetuating an “Italian language” and “culture” – a term she at other times perceives as problematic. Being Italian also entails embracing notions like a “family-orientated culture” and “community”, rather than the individualism of Australian capitalist culture (Vasta 1994b: 421). Terms such as “family-orientated culture” and “community” imply

homogeneity and sameness. Therefore, in contrast to Vasta's anti-essentialist stance, these terms are suggestive of a bounded, fixed notion of identity, an identity that excludes and thus constructs rather than dissolves boundaries. Vasta's paradoxical position stems from holding a theoretical position that critiques the essentialist paradigm and its boundary maintaining processes, while simultaneously advocating categories which imply the existence of specific cultural boundaries. Vasta maintains that bicultural Italian-Australian individuals initially reject 'their parents' language and culture, but as adults, they are highly involved with their Italian heritage and operate comfortably with a bicultural ethnic identity" (Vasta 1994a: 24). These hybrid ethnic subjects have become "cultural brokers" who "maintain and foster Italian language and culture" where "the Italian family and community remains" a central focus. These hybrid subjects are apparently reaffirming an identity that echoes an essentialist position and, rather than denying boundaries, they reinforce them.

In Vasta's defence, one can concur with Yarbrow-Bejarano, who argues that the evocation of essentialism, by some scholars, may be in the service of a constructionist project (Yarbrow-Bejarano 1994). The production of a border, mestiza or hybrid consciousness "provides a voice and substance to subjects rendered mute and invisible by hegemonic practices and discourses" (Yarbrow-Bejarano 1994: 13). Essentialism, therefore, may not be the evil that social scientists first envisaged. It is not the means (essentialism) but the end (oppression and exploitation) that has to be questioned. What needs to be interrogated is what motivates the deployment of essentialism because essentialism can be both progressive and reactionary. Vasta's use of essentialism is ambiguous because it is never clear whether she perceives it as oppressive or constructive. Vasta assumes that binary oppositions produce essentialist, static and unitary forms, for example, an "ethnic culture". However, Vasta depends on those very binary oppositions such as the "family orientated culture" of Italians versus the individualistic nature of the Australian culture to conceptualise the hybrid subject.

Conclusion:

The celebration of hybridity in recent research on ethnicity needs to be qualified so that its positive aspects, and its boundary denying potential, coexists with a more critical dimension that has been elaborated in this paper. The hybrid ethnic subject can experience anxieties and fears and can be as exclusionary as the monocultural self.

In other words, although hybrid identities intermingle cultural styles and values, and produce innovative and creative identities, this does not necessarily lead to the demise of ethnic solidarities and their boundary maintaining practices nor to the disappearance of ethnocentrism and racism. As was demonstrated with the Italian-Australian youth gangs and the Guido subculture, cultural and symbolic boundaries become significant in establishing differences between self and other. In many respects, the free flowing hybrid subject is suggestive of an actor who voluntarily moves from one culture to another. However, as Anthias has convincingly argued, this freedom does not explore “how agency is exercised within a system of social constraints linked to the position of actors within specific social contexts” (Anthias 1999: 131). Hybrid identities cannot be understood solely in terms of their transgressive and progressive power because, as this paper has demonstrated, one needs to supplement the so-called postmodern approach to conceptualising ethnic identities by focusing on the ambivalent nature of boundaries.

Public Life, Politics and Italian Australians

Carlo Carli

At this Conference numerous ideas are being discussed for future activity for the Italian-Australian community.

One idea is to give the Italian-Australian community some clout by creating a lobby group - perhaps something similar to the Washington-based National Italian American Foundation (NIAF). I am sceptical of the need for or desirability of such a lobby in Australia. The role of lobby groups is stronger in the USA: there politicians are more distant from the community, dollar contributions to campaign funds play a significant part, and there is a tradition of lobby groups directly funding individual candidates. In Australia it is easier to contact political leaders by simply using the phone.

To want a lobby group also suggests that Italian-Australians represent a single interest group. They do not. This is not to deny that there are issues common to the whole community - such as the needs of the aging population or the teaching of Italian. There is certainly scope to build community coalitions around some issues. However, we must recognise that in the Italian-Australian community there is a great diversity of opinion on many issues.

I also wonder why we should wish to merely lobby - that is to have a distant and indirect influence on public policy - when the opportunity is there to be directly involved in creating public policy. Italian-Australians who want to influence public policy can - and should - join a political party or political organisation and get their hands dirty.

Though I am sceptical of the value of lobbying, I do believe the Italian-Australian community could be better organised in its approach to Australian political life.

One valuable contribution would be to nurture and encourage those Italian-Australians who do become involved in political organisations. They could be helped to build networks with both the local Italian community and with Italy. This approach would influence and help to develop future community leaders.

Currently, the work of maintaining links between the two countries is done - and is rather jealously guarded - by members of the community who have migrated from Italy. Most of these people maintain links not with Australian but with Italian political parties. This is understandable

- their command of Italian and their understanding of the complexity of Italian politics and the Italian public service is very strong. However, they generally have little input into the Australian political world.

It is vital to the Italian community and beneficial to the wider community to have cultural, economic and political links with Italy, so we should be paying attention to how these are to be maintained. To ensure we retain relevant links with Italy into the future, we will need to foster a new generation of political players who are more involved in the Australian political reality, but who can also maintain links with Italy.

I have noticed a growing belief that the Italian community is under-represented in politics and public administration. Whether or not this is true, it is clear that the Italian-Australian community has no mechanism to encourage and train Italian-Australians to enter public life either as administrators or politicians. The number of Italian-Australians in the Australian population means that some will become either senior public servants or will be elected to public office. However, they will not necessarily have the interests or the skills to represent the Italian community or nurture links between Australia and Italy.

The Italian-Australian community should be actively encouraging Italian-Australians who are involved in political activity to build an understanding of Italian political life and the Italian form of public administration. The complexity of Italian politics and society makes this a difficult task, made more so by the need for an adequate grasp of the Italian language.

If Italian-Australians are given opportunities as they develop their political skills to build networks and understanding of the Italian political reality it will be a formative element in their future development and career.

Each political party in Australia has its own distinctive culture and traditions. These are what form both public policy and politicians. I myself was fortunate that when I became politically active in Brunswick and Coburg I found a strong tradition of political involvement by Italian immigrants, and I was encouraged to improve my Italian and work with the local Italian community. I may still have entered politics without their encouragement, but my understanding, knowledge and networks with the Italian-speaking world would have been much weaker.

Since entering Parliament, I have met a number of Italian-Australian politicians from around Australia. Some have established good links with the Italian community and built good networks in Italy over time. They see it as a natural flow-on from their Italian heritage. However not all politicians of Italian background have these skills or interests, and

some have shown little interest in applying their Italianess in their political activity.

To make an analogy, being Italian-Australian may help someone become a good Italian teacher, but it does not follow that every Italian-Australian teacher will have the skills to teach Italian. They have to be bilingual, trained and want to do it. In the same way, an Italian background may help Italian-Australian politicians or senior bureaucrats to work with Italy or with the Italian community, but it does not follow that they will necessarily have the skills, training or interest to do so.

It is important that the Italian-Australian community encourages and provides learning experiences for young people interested in public affairs. In the same way as we provide opportunities for Italian teachers to spend time in Italy to improve their language skills, we should provide similar opportunities for those individuals working in areas of public policy.

There are already examples in Australia of political exchange programs for young people involved in politics in which participants are nominated by the various political parties. The Federal Government funds the Australian Political Exchange Council (APEC), for example, which organises exchange programs with various countries, such as the USA, Canada and Japan. APEC is administered by a small secretariat and is managed with the active participation of senior party figures. I had the great fortune of being selected to visit Japan for APEC. I had a very valuable experience there and made some excellent contacts. I have a stronger understanding of the political and social structure in Japan, and I continue to meet with Japanese delegations that visit Victoria and maintain some contacts by email.

I hear people saying the Italian community should have a stronger voice in public affairs in Australia. I suggest that one way to achieve this would be to nurture people who have the potential to listen to the Italian community, and to effectively represent it and make its voice heard. I believe the size of the local Italian community and the current level of contact between Italy and Australia would justify a more focused exchange program administered by the community with representation from the local political parties. I would like to see a political exchange scheme established between Italy and Australia.

In my recent visit to Italy, I found that there is considerable interest from regional and local Government organisations, Chambers of Commerce and Trade Unions to help organise and support such initiatives. In fact I was told that similar schemes already exist with

other countries, particularly from long established Italian communities in South America. What is needed is for a key community organisation to help organise, administer and fund these exchanges.

The relationships that form between the beneficiaries of an exchange scheme are as important as the external ones fostered by the scheme. Participation in such a scheme would bring together Italian-Australians with political interests and skills. It could also lead to further training and mentoring opportunities using skilled and influential members of the community. Women have successfully used similar support networks and organisations to build their presence in politics and the senior public service.

My personal experience was that the Italian-Australian community in Brunswick and Coburg was a major support and had a formative role in my political development, but outside my electorate the Italian community offered little support until after I was elected.

I hope this will change. I would wish to provide concrete support to Italian-Australians who seek to enter public life in the future. I would be pleased to think I could do that in co-operation with other Italian-Australians - such as those who have participated in this conference.