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ITALIANS IN AUSTRALIA

History, Memory, Identity

Francesco Ricatti

Palgrave Studies in Migration History

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Italians in Australia

History, Memory, Identity

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Palgrave Studies in Migration History
ISBN 978-3-319-78872-2 ISBN 978-3-319-78873-9 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78873-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018938325

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

to Nino, my little boy,
who loves to read with me
stories of tender monsters
and melancholic dragons

Preface

Every book about the past is always, also, a book about the present. As a historian of migration, and as a citizen of both Italy and Australia, I observe with dismay, and often a deep sense of impotence, more and more displaced people, asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees being imprisoned, rejected, and killed by Western governments. Violation of human rights is the norm, hypocrisy the preferred tool of moderate politicians, and hatred the favourite sentiment of mediocre and ignorant populists. Meanwhile, more and more bigots express openly their racist views on social media, calling 'common sense' their cowardly and vicious animosity against migrants' right to freedom, safety, travel, work, and love.

Historians of migratory phenomena have an important role to play in opposing such an obscene state of affairs. Reminding readers of the historical reality of transnational migration is always necessary but never sufficient. Historians should avoid the illusory comfort of simplistic narratives, even when these narratives offer a more sensible 'moral of the story'. Instead, we should provide more accurate, multilayered, and flexible tools of orientation—a set of moral, political, and epistemological compasses to better help people navigate the transcultural complexity of our societies.

In this context, even such a specific book as a short history of Italian migration to Australia must avoid the temptation of an overarching, deterministic, and falsely objective narrative. As a historian, I recognise the complex, fragmented, and often contradictory nature of historical

phenomena, and therefore historical research. This mindful approach is not the result of a lazy and relativist appropriation of postmodern theories; rather, it aims to provide a deliberate, creative, and challenging contribution to historiography. What historians should privilege, in the age of globalisation, climate change, and racist paranoia, is a transcultural mapping of the complexity of our world and our histories. It might become an increasingly hard task, given we are dealing more and more often with reactionary simplifications shrouded in paranoid thoughts of invasion and apocalypse; but it is a necessary one.

Rather than reducing the multifaceted history of Italian migration to Australia to an overarching theory or narrative, this book thus embraces the affective potentiality of opening new emotional and intellectual spaces of dialogue within and beyond the historical discipline and this specific field of study. The book has the ambitious aim of encouraging the development of a complex history of Italian migration to Australia. It is a history that needs to be gradually mapped out, at its multiple hard cores as much as at its often more fragile but fertile edges; on the surface, as well through its many hidden layers; through linear paths, as well as through its most intricate nodes; and in its most simplistic and rhetorical renderings, as well as in its most creative, ambiguous, and contradictory expressions.

As all historians know—particularly those interested in matters of public and collective memory—narratives about the past are always hotly contested. History is always deeply personal and deeply political. The fragile processes through which a sense of belonging is fostered in individuals, families, and communities often rely on a complex repository of memories and emotions that are structured around platitudes, clichés, and ideological refrains. The common places around which a sense of community is built, often produce common places that silence and repress conflicting experiences and memories. Meanwhile, migration history is still too often forced into the constricting boundaries of local and national histories. As importantly, through stories, anecdotes, and memories, individual migrants and their families try to make precarious sense of their lives and their decisions to migrate, as well as the many fractures and traumas that migration produces, and the many new relationships and opportunities it engenders. This book recognises the contested nature of this history, and aims to provide an opportunity to rethink it in more open, nuanced, and complex terms.

This book acknowledges that Australia is a settler-colonial nation, and that the violent and racist dispossession of First Nations' lands and waters, with its inherent corollary of physical and cultural genocide, is an ongoing structural process with which Italian migrants have often been complicit. I live and work on the unceded land of the Kulin Nations. I wrote most of this book on the lands of the Yaluk-ut Weelam peoples of the Boon Wurrung language group.[1] I pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging. I hope this book can contribute to a decolonial approach to Australian, Italian, and transnational histories.

Monash University and the University of the Sunshine Coast provided financial support.

I am grateful to Katia Wilson for her punctual, accurate, and sensitive editorial assistance.

My love and gratitude (and a very warm poncho) to my smart, brave and beautiful wife Lek.

Clayton, Australia Francesco Ricatti

[1]Spelling and transliteration of Aboriginal language groups may vary.

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CHAPTER 1

Mapping Complexity: A Transcultural Approach

Abstract This chapter introduces the key theoretical frames for the book. It situates the book within prevailing historiographical debates in current Italian migration history, with specific attention to transnationalism. This chapter emphasises the importance of transculturation in reconceptualising Italian migrants' histories, identities, and memories. It also highlights the need for an intersectional and decolonial approach that takes into considerations matters of class exploitation, racism, and sexism.

Keywords Italian migration · Australia · Transculturation
Decoloniality · Intersectionality

Italian migration history is a core aspect of Italy's national history, and is essential to understanding Italy's lack of a strong national identity, its complex presence in the wider world, and many key futures of its fragile and contradictory relationship with modernity.[1] It is also a history

[1] It is not within the scope of this book to provide exhaustive references to this field of study. Essential volumes that have influenced my work include Audenino and Tirabassi (2008), Bevilacqua et al. (2001), Choate (2008), Colucci and Sanfilippo (2009), Corti and Sanfilippo (2009, 2012), Gabaccia (2000), and Verdicchio (1997). Many of these studies also argue for a *longue durée* approach to Italian migration history. I will touch on this important frame in Chapter 2.

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F. Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in Migration History,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78873-9_1

that goes well beyond the Italian national frame, contributing to the development of more complex and accurate national and transnational histories all over the world. In most of the countries affected by Italian mass migration, it has become apparent that the countries' own national histories cannot confine the experiences and contributions of Italians to tokenistic celebrations of nation-building or multiculturalism. In Australia, where almost half of the population is either born abroad or has at least one parent who was born abroad, migration is gradually—and perhaps still too slowly—becoming an important facet of academic and public history. Globalisation and the development of multicultural societies have provided fertile ground for this kind of research, and the elaboration of new historiographical paradigms in world, global, and transnational histories have also played a central role in the process. In the last thirty years, these developments have resulted in an exponential growth in the scholarly literature on Italian migration (Sanfilippo 2015). This has been mirrored by the development of solid and innovative research in Australia (see Iuliano and Baldassar 2008; Pretelli 2009; Sanfilippo 2015).

The notions of diaspora and transnationalism, so central to scholarly literature about migration over the past thirty years, have likewise been significant in the debate about Italian migration to Australia. Such debate has centred around disciplinary tensions (traditional historiographical approaches versus multidisciplinary ones), gendered frames (with many female and some male scholars asking for a renewed attention to migrant women), and theoretical concerns (in particular a more or less prescriptive use of the concept of transnationalism and its applicability to the Italian-Australian context).[2] In this book, I adopt a broad and multidisciplinary definition of transnationalism, but also acknowledge the fundamental role of accurate historical research. I thus suggest that there is a need to complicate and enrich the transnational approach through a critical use of decolonial, transcultural, and intersectional frames.

Transnationalism focuses on the links between the country of origin and that of migration (Basch et al. 1994, 7), and on "social fields that cross national boundaries" (Basch et al. 1994, 22). This approach

[2]The debate is well exemplified by the differing opinions on Cresciani's (2003) book *The Italians in Australia*: see Baldassar (2003–2004) and Tavan (2004); and, on the opposite side of the debate, Luconi (2009).

recognises that migrants' lives and identities are impacted by "hegemonic categories, such as race and ethnicity, that are deeply embedded in the nation building process" (Basch et al. 1994, 22). Transnationalism also focuses on migrants' connections across nations and continents, the often non-linear progression of their migratory paths, the frequency of return or temporary migration, and the strongly gendered nature of processes of migration and settlement. These are all essential aspects of Italian migration to Australia. However, such an open and multidisciplinary approach to migration studies can tend to lose sight of the centrality of locality and emplacement in migrant lives. The need to reterritorialise the study of transnational migrations has become a central concern in the recent scholarly literature (see for instance Cingolani 2009). This is where a strong reliance on historical research, and an innovative focus on transculturation might prove particularly helpful.

Vince Marotta's (2014) theorisation of the multicultural, intercultural, and transcultural subject, and Ilaria Vanni's (2016) theorisation of "the transcultural edge", provide some essential boundaries to a proper understanding of transculturation, a term first used by anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1940, 1947). Ortiz used transculturation to describe the complexity of social and cultural exchanges, and reciprocal influences, between the colonisers, the slaves, and the Indigenous population in Cuba. Transculturation's substantial and significant contribution to subsequent Latin American studies has been its critical insistence on the importance of analysing cultural interactions in colonial and migratory contexts by taking into consideration multiple perspectives and speaking positions, multiple zones and modes of contact, and reciprocal influences (see Allatson 2007; Vanni 2016). Transculturation provides a good tool for complicating and challenging simplistic and essentialist theories of acculturation. With regards to public attitudes and policies about migrants in the specific Australian context, public and academic discourse still privileges a narrative of gradual evolution: from the complete rejection of migrants by Australian society, to a push towards assimilation first, integration later, and finally multiculturalism. Conversely, transculturation shifts the focus to the reciprocity of cultural exchanges and influences between Indigenous, settler colonial, and migrant groups throughout Australian settler colonial history. From this perspective, when referring to the 'transcultural' in this book, I am not conceptualising transculturalism as the next step in the evolution of Australian society, following on from multiculturalism. Instead, I am interested in

transculturation as an alternative and more fruitful way of studying and conceptualising Australian society throughout its settler colonial history and up to the present day.

This also means that transculturation itself must not be essentialised or idealised. In particular, one must recognise "the dark side" of transculturation (Marotta 2014, 95), that is, the power imbalance always inherent in the processes of reciprocal transculturation. Transculturation must then be intersected with matters of race, class, gender, sexuality, and age. The migrant subject, from this perspective, is a transnational and transcultural subject—not an abstract and at times poetic entity, free-floating in between different cultures, but a historical subject deeply immersed in the prejudices, values, attitudes, traditions, and habits of specific communities and localities. Thus, transculturation is not a process of cultural or even intellectual transcendence, but a process of orientation and emplacement within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts. At the same time, the transcultural edge between different environments is also a potentially fertile ground for the development of innovative ecosystems (Vanni 2016). This is also true for the Italian-Australian community, which should be reconceptualised beyond the usual stereotypes as a space of deep, flexible, and reciprocal exchanges and influences between many transcultural communities; a space which has not only produced new urban, rural, and 'natural' environments, but which has also prompted profound changes in culture and society.

Ethnic identities that provide migrants with social, cultural, political, and financial capital are often imagined within a specific, essentialised understanding of a given culture. Yet they become efficient cultural and social tools only insofar as they adapt to both different and changing social contexts, and to the needs of the specific individuals that come to embody and promote such identities. For instance, as it will be argued in the Chapter 5, the idea that family values are central to Italian migrants' lives and communities has often been used by migrants as a marker of difference and moral superiority (Ricatti 2011); and the idea itself is the result of a simplified, essentialised, dehistoricised, and often inaccurate understanding of Italian culture and society. Yet that same idea can be given profoundly different meanings—depending on who employs it and for what purpose—and it is part of the broader processes of interrelation and negotiation migrants develop within their own family, their own community, and the wider society.

In other words, even when migrants employ apparently fixed identities, they do so with a significant degree of variation, flexibility, and multiplicity. As argued by Marotta (2000, 645–46), terms such as 'family-oriented culture' and 'community' imply homogeneity and sameness. At the same time, such terms are inherently open to an array of different uses by migrants. Moreover, these markers of identity cannot be considered in isolation from broader processes of transculturation, such as translocal and transnational networks, assimilationist and colonial attitudes in the host society, and the influence of globalisation. Furthermore, markers of ethnic identity are constantly challenged and redefined at the intersection of other markers of identity and transculturation, such as age, race, class, gender, and sexual preferences.

One of the main arguments framing this book is that in this Babel of linguistic, cultural, and social signifiers, a certain degree of rigidity provides a specific identity with a power that is crucial in migrants' attempts to reject, resist, negotiate, and embody complex processes of transculturation. While a strong attachment to values that are identified as traditional and typical of a certain ethnic group is often described as opposed to cosmopolitan and transcultural processes, in actual fact it is, for most migrants, an essential tool in navigating and adapting to transcultural societies. While the consolidation of certain markers of identity, such as core cultural values and beliefs, can be easily perceived as a sign of backwardness, conservatism, and cultural isolation, it is more often a strategic and active function of transculturation. This apparent paradox helps explain the complexity, richness, and flexibility of contemporary migrant identities that originated from migrant communities often wrongly described as illiterate, superstitious, patriarchal, stuck in the past, drowning in nostalgia, and unable to integrate. Reconceptualising essentialised markers of ethnic identity as transcultural tools allows us to perceive their alleged rigidity not in contradiction to their flexible, variable, and multiple uses, but instead as a complementary and powerful function of the same processes of transculturation.

Marotta argues that "as historical actors, cross-cultural subjects do not occupy a boundless social and cultural vacuum" (Marotta et al. 2009, 282). Living, working, and moving within societies that impose upon them multiple boundaries (social, cultural, legal, economic, bureaucratic, environmental, physical, racial, linguistic), migrants must attempt to be(come) culturally open and flexible, without renouncing the capital

and comfort they acquire from a strong sense of community and ethnic identity. While specific individuals, families, and groups might tend strongly towards one side of this tension, it is the tension itself that makes transculturation possible and, to a large degree, inevitable.

Transnationalism, translocality, and transculturation are thus useful categories of analysis only insofar as they do not deny or underplay the importance of locality, embodied orientation in space, and change over time. Geographical and historical specificity must remain central to a transcultural and transnational perspective. Transcultural forms of communication and identity formation have often been idealised in the broader scholarly literature, to the detriment of a more realistic and practical understanding of the actual processes of transculturation in which all migrants, to a varying extent, participate. As a consequence of this idealisation, statistical data, archival documents, public memory, and even migrants' own memories and stories, are rarely interpreted through a transcultural perspective. Thus, even those processes of reterritorialisation that are part and parcel of transnational phenomena (see Jackson et al. 2004, 6) and that should be interpreted in relation to transculturation, are often instead read as evidence of migrants' inability or unwillingness to escape the boundaries of their ethnic identities, communities, traditions, and belief systems.

Within the history of Italian migration to Australia, the communities that developed through chain migration, or that later regrouped around strong identity markers (such as parochialism, regionalism, nationalism, and the Catholic faith), have received more attention from scholars due to their quantitative prominence and their stronger visibility and recognisability. Conversely, the groups and individuals that have invested more heavily in multi-ethnic relationships, transcultural identities and memories, or more mobile, flexible, or unusual migratory strategies, have instead been largely overlooked.

Furthermore, there is a substantial underestimation of the transcultural character inherent in even the most parochial Italian migrants in Australia. Most of them, in fact, speak at least one mother language other than Italian (for instance, a dialect or minority language); most of them can, to a variable extent, communicate effectively in Italian; most of them have learnt to communicate in basic to good English after migrating; most of them have developed friendships with Italian migrants from other regions and often also with migrants of different nationalities; many of them have returned temporarily or definitely to

Italy, or otherwise maintained significant links with their country of origin; a number of them also migrated elsewhere before or after coming to Australia; and most of them have had close relationships with their children, who were raised in Australia in rapidly changing times. All of these migrants, in fact, have had to resist and negotiate with the invasive and violent assimilationist policies, attitudes, and practices that have dominated Australian society over most of the past one hundred years, while also striving for upward socio-economic mobility and increased social and cultural capital. Only by employing a racist and classist prejudice, can such migrants be described as 'stuck' or 'frozen' within a specific culture and language, and unable to develop transnational connections and transcultural strategies.

Such prejudice becomes, at times, apparent in the historiography of Italian migration to Australia. For instance, Livio Bertelli (1983), divided the history of Italian migration to Australia into three separate moments and groups: (1) Italian migrants before World War II, who were mostly northerners, politically active and largely successful, and uninterested in developing relationships with post WWII migrants; (2) migrants in the 1950s and 1960s, who were mostly southerners, professionally and culturally unprepared, conditioned by parochial traditions, without a class or group consciousness, and relatively successful in economic terms, but only through hard work; and (3) the few migrant arrivals of the 1970s and early 1980s, who were children of the Italian modernisation, politically mature, and hostile to the apathy and lack of unity of 'the masses'—that is, the working-class and peasant southerners of the second group (Bertelli 1983, 107). This largely unsubstantiated narrative of Italian migration to Australia mirrors broader prejudices about the cultural backwardness of the southerners, whose complex cultures and transcultural abilities are openly denied through a simplistic, racialised, and classist understanding of modernity (see Pugliese 2002b, 2007a, b, c).

Another reason for the substantial underestimation of transculturation in Italian-Australian history is the tendency of Australian multiculturalism to emphasise strong markers of ethnicity over transcultural processes. This rhetorical strategy maintains mainstream, white, Anglo-Australia at the core of what should otherwise be recognised as a transcultural and settler colonial nation. This strategy is deployed by emphasising and objectifying markers of cultural difference that are specific to certain migrant groups and to Indigenous people; and by underestimating the presence and impact of relationships, migratory strategies, and cultural

exchanges amongst and between those groups, that attempt to limit the power and influence of the hegemonic culture. As a result, social, cultural, political, and financial capital is more easily conceded to those migrants who provide identifiable evidence of assimilation or of a distinct and reassuringly stereotypical ethnic identity. It is in the false dichotomy between assimilation and multiculturalism that the complex processes of transculturation are rendered invisible.[3]

When one considers all these factors, it becomes apparent that the broader society has constantly and consistently denied the transcultural identities, competencies, and strategies of Italian migrants in Australia. These factors are also often rendered invisible by historians, and at times even underestimated by the migrants themselves, who have been encouraged to underplay the cultural and social complexities of their lives and migratory experiences. Still, as it will be shown throughout the book, such complexity re-emerges in clear and undeniable terms from primary and secondary sources. If, for instance, we consider the research conducted by Stephanie Thompson in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Thompson 1980, 1984), Italians' own stories are marked by transcultural attitudes and competencies. Based on interviews with Italians who had returned to Italy, Thompson's work is particularly telling because it makes explicit the migrants' discontent with Australian negative attitudes towards them, their resulting social isolation, and their need to find comfort, socialisation, and help amongst *paesani*. Thompson insists that the migrants' social isolation was mostly due to Australians' discriminatory attitudes, the long hours spent in hard jobs, and the migrants' poor control of the English language. Yet, I argue, a closer look at Thompson's research reveals how transculturation is hidden in plain sight. For instance, she notes how, by the time these migrants went back to Italy, they had become "*gente con doppia cultura*" (Thompson 1984, 46). In the interviews, those same migrants recognised the many positive aspects of Australian society (while being very critical of other aspects); they were happy to be able to communicate again in dialect once back in Italy, which suggests the common use of Italian and English while in Australia; they remembered talking and joking with Australian colleagues at work; they noted that many Italians, after just a few months in Australia, were taking up Australian values and habits; they talked

[3]For a critical interpretation of Australian multiculturalism see the fundamental work of Ghassan Hage (1998, 2002). See also Ricatti (2016).

about attending English lessons; they discussed migration as a temporary strategy to acquire financial capital; and they noted how relationships with Australian neighbours often improved thanks to the efforts of the Italian families. I do not intend to underestimate the deep feelings of social and cultural isolation many migrants experienced, especially in the early stages of settlement, or to deny the need for more comfortable social, cultural, and linguistic interactions with people from the same village or region. Rather, I want to suggest that these feelings should be interpreted as part and parcel of the process of transculturation, and not in opposition to it.

A transcultural history of Italian migration to Australia that aims to understand and complexify, rather than simplify or idealise, the experience of Italians in Australia, must consider transculturation within, and through, other essential theoretical frames. I have identified and made use of six essential frames throughout this book.

The first frame is intersectionality, which is the awareness that the actual condition of individuals and groups within society needs to be considered at the intersection of the multiple aspects that define not only their identities, but also their positions and roles in society. That is, intersectionality is the need to study and understand the complex intertwining of different forms of discrimination, oppression, and exploitation. This means that issues of age, class, gender, race, bodily ability, and sexual orientation, for instance, cannot be considered each in isolation. This frame, again, complicates any stereotypical impression we might have of a migrant group. It suggests that what we need to consider are the most significant variables within that group, the ones that determine different forms and levels of discrimination, marginalisation and exploitation, and that generate different tactical and strategic responses.[4]

The second of these essential frames is decoloniality, and more specifically, the need to research and write stories that address the settler colonial character of many of the countries to which Italians have migrated, including Australia. Thus we must interrogate not just the application of

[4]The concept of intersectionality first became influential through the work of Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989). For the use of the concept in relation to transnationalism see for instance Chow et al. (2011). The scholar that more than any other has worked on intersectional issues in the Italian Australian context is Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli (Pallotta-Chiarolli 1989, 1992; Pallotta-Chiarolli et al. 2000; see also Pallotta-Chiarolli and Skrbis 1994).

colonial and racist ideologies to the treatment of Italian migrants, but also the different roles those migrants have had in the dispossession of Indigenous land and in the process of racialized violence that remains at the core of most settler colonial nations (Pugliese 2002a; Ricatti 2013).

The third frame is one I have developed in the past ten years for my own study of Italian communities in Australia, and that I have described as "the *intensity* of migrant lives" (Ricatti 2009, 2010). I include in my understanding of intensity two other concepts that share the same etymological roots: intention and tension. Intensity describes not just a feeling, but the fact that most migrants have *intention* (for instance to improve their living conditions), but are also *in tension* (for instance in between different countries, cultures, beliefs, generations): as a result, most migrant lives have a specific kind of intensity that must be acknowledged. Migrants' transcultural identities, for instance, present an element of agency and choice, as well as an element of constriction, being characterised at once by a nostalgic attachment to the past, an intense presence in the places of settlement, and a strategic, forward-looking perspective. Such intensity might allow gradual and profound changes, or at times reach a point of existential, psychological, and social rapture.

The fourth frame is orientation, which I interpret as the connection between embodiment and emotional emplacement, and which should be employed to correct the often abstract, disembodied, and de-territorialised understanding of transnational and nomadic lives. The fact that migrants are bodies that orient themselves within specific places, spaces, and environments is a fundamental aspect of migrants' lives and identities. Migrants' bewilderment and *spaesamento* is not only linguistic, cultural, and psychological, but also spatial and physical, sensual, and gendered and sexualised; and so are the tools migrants use to reorient themselves in the new reality (Ricatti 2011, 2014).

The fifth frame is provided by the concept of the uncanny, or perhaps more correctly, the unhomely. This word implies a crucial paradox: that the homely, the familiar, always contains a secretive, and therefore disquieting, element; conversely, what scares us always includes an element of familiarity, either because we have been taught to fear it, or because is a reminder of some aspects of our life or our society that we have repressed. This is an important concept in critical migration studies because it allows us to reconceptualise the ideas of home and community as ambiguous, contradictory, and potentially dangerous. It calls for a complex and, at times, critical understanding of what is too

often naturalised as essential to migrants: the development of a sense of belonging that might be exclusive rather than inclusive, to the detriment of other people within or outside the family, the community, and the broader society (see Marinelli and Ricatti 2013; Ricatti 2013).

The sixth and final frame is a critical understanding of the role of transcultural memory in migratory lives.[5] This must include the crucial relationship between memory and history. I am particularly interested in highlighting the importance of those transcultural memories that might challenge prevalent rhetorical interpretations of the complex history of Italian communities in Australia. Italian migration to Australia over the past one hundred and fifty years has been a complex, multi-layered, and often contradictory phenomenon. When talking or writing about their reasons for migrating to Australia, most migrants refer to family reasons, financial necessity, or a broader, at times vague, desire for freedom and adventure. In recalling their decision to migrate, migrants refer to dialogues with family and friends, epistolary exchanges, local knowledge, and the specific socio-economic conditions they were experiencing in their town of origin at the time of migration. Often, they add interesting anecdotes that, while referring to actual events, have been rehearsed and gradually embellished or exaggerated over time during long conversations with themselves and with others, about their adventurous, intense, and sometimes tragic lives. The influence of other, complex phenomena, at the regional, national, transnational, and global level, only seem to matter to migrants insofar as those phenomena had a direct impact on their small families and local communities, and at times precipitated their decision to migrate.

Migrants' narrow focus is not surprising, as we all tend to remain very close to our hearth, our heart, and our body, when talking about the most emotional events in our lives. This more personal dimension should not be overlooked or discarded by historians, as it provides, often behind a curtain of sentimental rhetoric, the essential details of which any real life and any good story are made. Individual stories and memories show how broader social and cultural contexts influence individuals, families, and communities; how the social reality is experienced, understood, and negotiated by the individual; and how social reality itself comes to

[5] On transcultural memory, see in particular the volume edited by Rick Crownshaw (2014), and the special issue of *Memory Studies* (Kennedy and Radstone 2013), about Australia.

be structured through individual discourse. Yet broader phenomena, happening over longer time-periods and within broader geopolitical contexts, albeit often overlooked or understated by migrants, have also mattered enormously, causing specific challenges and providing migrants with particular opportunities, paths, and patterns to migrate and settle abroad (Corti and Sanfilippo 2009).

While clarity often requires a linear progression from the past to the present, and from the global to the individual (or vice versa), the reader of this book should always keep in mind that the complex relationships between these different historical and geographical dimensions are inevitably intertwined, fragmented, and contradictory. A chronological sequence (from the past to the present) is acceptable only insofar as it is employed as a narrative tool, and not as a deterministic imperative. Similarly, moving from the global to the individual might provide an easier mapping of complex transnational phenomena, but it should not be used to suggest that global phenomena always determine or significantly influence local concerns, community strategies, and individual decisions.

It is an old rhetorical trick to suggest that a study such as this poses more questions than provides answers, but there is also an essence of truth to it. While the study of Italian migration to Australia has grown exponentially in quality and quantity over the past thirty years, transculturation and its intersection with matters of coloniality, race, class, gender, sexual preferences, body ability, and age have remained largely overlooked. This book aims to provide innovative paths for the development of this particular area of study, situated within broader concerns about migration and its role in the contemporary history of an increasingly globalising world. My hope is that the transcultural, decolonial, and intersectional approach used in this book might provide an opportunity to rethink the past more effectively, at a time in our history when increasingly complex and rapid social, cultural, and political changes call for new tools of navigation, rather than for the consolidation of old perceptions and perspectives.

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CHAPTER 2

Historical Outline

Abstract This chapter provides a historical summary supported by demographic data. The first part of the chapter focuses on the broader history of Italian mass migration. This section is structured around three historical coordinates: the first is the persistence of Italian migratory strategies, paths, and networks over many centuries. The second is the quasi-colonial nature of Italy's unification, and the persisting political and economic imbalance between North and South. And the third coordinate is the specificity of Italian mass migration in the period between the 1870s and the late 1960s. The second part of the chapter focuses on Italian migration to Australia, emphasising the socio-economic and geopolitical factors that influenced the different waves of migration, and the centrality of the postwar period in the development of a large Italian community in Australia.

Keywords Italy's unification · Italian migration—Australia
Socio-economic and geopolitical factors · Demographic data

Italian Mass Migration

From a purely numerical point of view, Italian migration to Australia represents a minor chapter in the history of Italian mass migration. The 1950s and 1960s saw the highest volume of Italians migrating to Australia to date. Yet by the mid-1970s, Italian migration to Australia

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F. Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in Migration History,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78873-9_2

represented only around 1.5% of the total migration from Italy since 1876. For comparison, 52% of Italian migration was to Europe, and 44% to the Americas; the number of Italians migrating to Australia was even smaller than the 2% migrating to Africa—the latter obviously influenced by the Italian colonial presence (Favero and Tassello 1978, 12). Nevertheless, Italian migration has played an important role in the development of Australia and its multi-ethnic society, especially since the 1950s. The Italian-born population in Australia reached its peak in 1971, rising to almost 290,000—representing 11.2% of the overseas-born population, and 2.3% of the total population (Castles and Vasta 1992, 107). In 1947, only 33,632 Italian-born people were living in Australia (4.5% of the overseas population, and 0.4% of the total population) (Castles and Vasta 1992, 107). A decline since the early 1970s has been apparent, with only a slight inversion over the past five years. In 2016, the Italian-born population was 194,900, the seventh largest group of overseas-born residents in Australia, and 0.8% of the total population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016c). The demographic impact of the large Italian migration in the postwar period is still significant in contemporary Australia. Italian ancestry in 2016, for instance, was the sixth most common ancestry among the general population, at 4.6% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016a).

This data alone provides too narrow a window through which to view what is a rich and complex history. While the statistics clearly confirm the centrality of the postwar period in the history of Italian migration to Australia, the numbers should not lead us to underestimate the long roots of Italian migration, and its persisting ramifications. It is also essential to read this specific Australian history within the broader frame of Italian migration history. Despite its peculiarities, Italian migration to Australia must be understood within the broader mass migration that characterised Italian history in the first hundred years after Unification; which itself must be understood in relation to migratory paths and trends that started well before Italy's unification. From a geographical and historical perspective, Italian migration to Australia cannot be read in isolation from much broader national, transnational, and global trends, such as the development and then gradual shrinking of the Atlantic routes followed by European migrants, or the establishment of strong transnational networks. On the other hand, these broader phenomena should not lead us to underestimate the specificity of the Italian-Australian history, and the historical and geographical peculiarities of

processes of orientation and settlement within the Australian context (see Chapter 3). This scholarly tension mirrors the complex and flexible choices migrants have been taking, and their transcultural strategies. Thus, this chapter can only provide some provisional mapping of a complex and multi-layered part of Italian migration history.

I want to suggest three historical coordinates that might help us make sense of such a multi-faceted history. The first is the existence and persistence of migratory strategies, paths, and networks that can be traced back to much earlier times, and, in some instances, to the early modern or even late medieval period. The second historical coordinate is the quasi-colonial nature of Italy's unification, and the persisting imbalance between the economies of the north and the south of Italy. This is a key element to understanding not just migratory movements and strategies, but the actual life experiences of migrants, and their underlining ideologies—such as the actions of migrants when dealing with other ethnic groups and with Indigenous people (see Chapter 4), or when involved in transnational politics (see Chapter 6). The third historical coordinate is the large-scale Italian mass migration in the period between the 1870s and the late 1960s. This coordinate is essential in understanding the high degree of mobility of Italian migrants, including the consistently high rates of temporary migration, the fact that many Italians have migrated to more than one country over their lifetime, and the gender imbalance in temporary migration and in the initial stages of migratory settlement.

There is a general agreement amongst contemporary historians that the mass migration of the post-unification period is linked with much older migratory phenomena. As argued by Paola Corti and Matteo Sanfilippo (2009a), Italy has always been at the crossroads of migratory paths, due to its crucial position in the Mediterranean. A growing number of historians have emphasised how the mass migration of the past hundred and fifty years must therefore be understood from a much longer historical perspective.[1] The 2009 volume edited by Corti and Sanfilippo (2009b), in particular, provides a fundamental point of reference in reshaping our understanding of Italian migration through a *longue durée* perspective, dating back to the Mediterranean migrations of the late medieval and early modern eras (see also Corti and Sanfilippo 2012).

[1] See for instance the essays in the first part of the first volume of *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana* (Bevilacqua et al. 2001).

Many different forms of migration from the Italian peninsula have developed over the centuries. Michele Colucci and Matteo Sanfilippo (2009) describe, for instance: migration due to specialised labour, and the political and religious exiles of the medieval and early modern period; the temporary and short-distance migrations related to the sharecropping system (*mezzadria*) in central Italy up to the late eighteenth century; and the development of the transatlantic routes in the 'rediscovery' of America by European and Italian peasants since the early nineteenth century. Well before the unification of the country and the mass migration of the late nineteenth century, Italian villagers descended from the mountains to work seasonally or temporarily in agriculture; wanderers and vagabonds took up various poorly-paid jobs around Europe (as chimney sweepers, street musicians, shoe-shiners, etc.); and mariners and fishermen, at times, became migrants and adventurers (Porcella 2000). According to Donna Gabaccia (2000, 43), in the period between 1789 and 1871, more than 500,000 people migrated from the Italian peninsula, of which 47% went to South America, 28% to Europe, 11% to Africa, 9% to North America, 4% to Asia, and 1% to Australia.

These long migratory processes provided the essential substrate for the development of mass migration in the second half of the nineteenth century. The mass migration of the post-unification period was possible due to the knowledge, experience, skills, and social connections that had been gradually developed during earlier periods of migration. While it would be hard to deny that the unification of Italy was followed by a migratory exodus rarely seen in any other comparable context, this was not a new phenomenon, nor was it purely determined by the political and economic situation of the newly formed nation. The pre-established migratory paths suggest the reframing of migration from the Italian peninsula as a fundamental transcultural strategy that has been activated and reactivated at different times by different communities, depending on the complex interaction of local, national, continental, and global factors. At the time of Italy's unification, migration was already an established strategy that had been developed over centuries by specific communities—and was often seasonal or temporary in nature.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, settler colonial nations in North and South America required a large and constantly growing number of flexible transnational workers to propel their growing industries, replace slaves and indentured labourers, exploit the vast and fertile lands that had been, and were being, stolen from Indigenous peoples,

and whiten their racial and ethnic make-up. With the development of more rapid and secure means of transportation in the nineteenth century, temporary migration paths and patterns were opened up. North and South America were able to provide job opportunities that, while often dangerous and exploitative, were consistent with the temporary migration strategies of Italian communities in earlier periods. Between 1871 and 1920, more than 14 million Italians migrated abroad, of which more than 3 million went to Argentina and Brazil alone, and more than 4 million to the United States (Audenino and Tirabassi 2008, 65–69).

While these long trends and global phenomena need to be emphasised, one should not underestimate the fundamental role of Italy's unification in profoundly altering the scale and quality of Italian migration. Higher taxes were imposed to repay the debts accumulated during the Risorgimento wars (Cresciani 2003, 19). The Italian governments encouraged mass migration, which they considered an important safety valve to alleviate social tensions, acquire more foreign capital through migrants' remittances, and over time achieve a reduction in welfare payments (Castles 1992, 36–37). Of particular importance, with regards to the emigration from the south of the Italian peninsula and the islands, was the quasi-colonial nature of Italy's unification. For the southern peasants, the new State meant a further exacerbation of their already difficult living conditions (Orizio 1981, 107–8). The colonial attitudes continued well into the twentieth century. The industrialisation of the south remained neglected under Fascism and in the immediate postwar period of reconstruction (Castles 1992, 36). Later, the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s was largely built on internal migration and the cheap labour millions of southern Italian migrants provided to the industrialised north of the country. Due to such social and economic imbalance, migrations from the south and the north of Italy can be considered as two partially distinct phenomena. In the first part of the nineteenth century, and still in the early years after Unification, most Italians migrated from poor areas of the north, and followed paths and strategies delineated translocally in the period preceding Italy's unification. Southern migration, instead, even when following similar paths, grew exponentially after Italy's unification and continued to grow well into the final years of Italy's economic miracle, in the early 1960s. This is a key element to understanding crucial differences in the migratory experiences of the southerners and the northerners in Australia, as will be emphasised later in the book.

In the century since 1876 (the year when data about migration was collected for the first time), around 26 million migrations from Italy were recorded (Favero and Tassello 1978, 11), including around 8 million definitive migrations (Bonifazi and Heins 1996, 247–75). Migration rates grew consistently in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and were at their highest the first fourteen years of the twentieth century, with millions of Italians leaving the country. There were also high rates of migration in the early 1920s and in the twenty years following the end of World War II, when hundreds of thousands of Italians left the country (Bonifazi and Heins 1996, 275). Italian mass migration began slowing down in the second half of the 1960s, mostly due to the positive effects that Italy's economic miracle, and the development of its democratic institutions, were having on the social fabric of the country. By the early 1970s, Italian migration had become numerically negligible, and it was only in the early 2000s that it begun growing again at an increasing but still relatively slow rate.

As stated earlier in the chapter, Italian migration was often characterised by its temporary nature. Rates of return have been recorded since 1905, and between 1905 and 1981, there were approximately 8.5–10 million returns (Bonifazi and Heins 1996, 274–75; Favero and Tassello 1978, 12, 18). While the gap between expatriation and repatriation has varied significantly, the pattern has been largely consistent—years that recorded an increase in expatriation also recorded an increase in repatriation, and vice versa (see for instance Bonifazi and Heins 1996, 275, table 1). This suggests that temporary migration has remained a constant feature of Italian migration. Both expatriation and repatriation came to a halt only during the two world wars. It is important to differentiate between return as the result of a temporary migration plan, and return motivated by other factors, including personal and family reasons, health issues, unemployment in the country of immigration, or new opportunities of employment in the country of origin (Bonifazi and Heins 1996, 288). We also need to consider, however, that migrants might keep an open mind about settling or returning; that they might migrate again after returning; and that they might migrate to a third country. It should also be noted that temporary migrants tend to be more invisible to general statistics, and therefore their number is always underestimated.

Another important indicator of overall migratory strategies is women's migration. In the period between 1876 and 1976, 75% of Italian migrants were men. This is further evidence that most migrants planned to return (Gabaccia 2000, 7). Higher rates of women's migration are

recorded in the postwar period, and reach around 37% in the late 1960s (Favero and Tassello 1978, 38). During this period, women's migration is particularly high for intercontinental movements, and lower within Europe, suggesting it was linked to permanent male migration (through family reunion, marriages, marriages by proxy, etc.). The higher rates of both female migration and temporary migration suggest a substantial change in migratory patterns after WWII, which are highly relevant for Italian migration to Australia. Before WWII, even transcontinental migration often had a temporary character—most men migrated alone and many of them did actually return. After WWII, temporary migration was still prevalent but mostly directed to the north of Italy (from the south) or to Europe. Transcontinental migration had meanwhile acquired a more definitive nature, in part, because visa restrictions increasingly limited migrants' mobility (in particular their ability to move back and forth from Italy). Another important factor to keep in mind is the gradual increase in independent women migration.

Since the early 2000s, there has been a significant increase in emigration from Italy, but the numbers are still much lower than those characterising the mass migration of earlier historical periods. Statistical data about recent Italian migration varies dramatically depending on the source, and often provides an unclear or even contradictory picture of the phenomenon. According to the Fondazione Istituto per lo Studio della Multietnicità (Fondazione ISMU), the number of Italians cancelling their Italian residency each year (i.e. moving their residency abroad) has doubled between 2002 and 2012—from 34,000 to 68,000 (see Tirabassi and del Pra' 2014, 4). According to the Fondazione Migrantes (Licata 2016, 6), the number of Italian citizens who were officially residing abroad in the years between 2006 and 2016 increased by 54.9%, from just over 3 million to 4.8 million. The most exhaustive study to date on recent Italian emigration (Tirabassi and del Pra' 2014), suggested that up to 100,000 Italians might have left the country in 2014 alone. However, this would include a high number of short-term temporary migrants, such as those holding a working holiday visa. These crude statistics suggest a significant increase in migration over the past ten or fifteen years, but the numbers remain distant from those at the peaks of Italian mass migration. For instance, 600,000 Italians migrated per year in the first fourteen years of the twentieth century—873,000 left Italy in 1913 alone—and almost 400,000 Italians migrated per year in the early 1960s (Bonifazi and Heins 1996, 275–76).

Italian Migration to Australia

Australia was, for a long time, not a viable alternative to the Atlantic route for Italian migrants—its drawbacks including the enormous geographical distance, its small population, its limited economic development, and the challenging nature of its social and natural environment. Australia only became a major destination for Italian migrants in the twenty years following the end of WWII, through a convergence of various factors including: faster means of transportation; reduced access to the United States; the so called 'populate or perish' policies of postwar Australia; employment availability; the experience of many Italian prisoners of war who had been sent to Australia; the possibility to resettle people displaced by the war (such as Italians from Istria); the official agreement signed in 1951 between the Italian and the Australian government to encourage migration; and other Australian immigration policies that facilitated chain migration and family reunion.

Italian migration to Australia before Italy's unification only consisted of a few people a year, often missionaries, political refugees, and adventurers of various, and not always respectable, kinds (Cresciani 1983, 6; Cavallaro 2003). The numbers slightly increased in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century, but remained extremely low, especially when compared to numbers of transcontinental migration to the Americas in the same period. As noted by Gianfranco Cresciani (cited in Alcorso 1992, 8), only 0.13% of the more than 14 million Italians that migrated abroad between 1876 and World War I chose to come to Australia. Between 1877 and 1939, just over 67,000 Italians migrated to Australia; but only between 1922 and 1927 were there more than 4000 per year (Baggio and Sanfilippo 2011, 479). The majority of Italian migrants to Australia in the period between 1840 and 1940 came from Sicily (21%), Lombardy (18%), Veneto (17%), Calabria (8%), and Piedmont (6%) (Baggio and Sanfilippo 2011, 480).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Australian population grew exponentially—"from less than one million in 1850 to 3.8 million by 1901" (Castles 1994, 343)—but this was only in minimal part thanks to the Italians. The first census of the Australian nation in 1901 recorded 5678 Italians (Favero and Tassello 1983, 61) out of a population of almost 3.8 million (Alcorso 1992, 8), though it is likely that the actual number of Italians in Australia was above 8000 (Cresciani 1983, 12). These uncounted Italians had mostly come to Australia towards the end

of the nineteenth century, usually through chain migration based on family and community ties back in Italy, but also in order to fill requirements for specific trades. This is consistent with the trade-related migrations of earlier periods. For instance, Tito Cecilia (1987, 98) suggests that the first significant group of Italians to arrive to Australia were a group of seventy Lombard stonemasons. Other migrants who arrived in the late nineteenth century were street musicians from Basilicata, fishermen from Sicily, and figurine makers from Lucca (Mecca and Iozzi 2000, 77; Cavallaro 2003). A number of Italians had also been part of the gold rush in Victoria in the 1850s (Cresciani 1983, 7).

New Italy, the first Italian settlement in Australia, was developed in the 1880s, on the land of the Bundjalung people, following the tragic failure of a colonial expedition by Veneti and Furlani in New Ireland (now part of Papua New Guinea) (Alcorso 1992, 9; Cecilia 1987). Fishermen and seafarers from Sicily and Apulia developed a settlement in Western Australia, quickly monopolising the fishing industry in Fremantle, (Alcorso 1992, 9; Cavallaro 2003), in the area known to the local Nyoongar Whadjuk people as Walyalup. In 1891, more than 300 northern Italians from Piedmont and Lombardy settled in North Queensland and begun the expansion of Italian migration into the agricultural fields of Queensland. In the following forty years, Italians would go on to establish a relatively large community in Queensland (Agutter 2009; Alcorso 1992, 11; Dewhirst et al. 2009), especially in the cane fields of the north, on the land of the Bandjin, Djiru, Girramay, Gugu Badhun, Gulnay, Jirrbal, Nywaigi, Warrgamay and Warrungnu peoples, and in the agricultural districts of the 'Granite-Belt', on the land of the Kambuwal people. With the end of indentured labour in North Queensland, Italians also replaced Pacific Islanders (Cresciani 1983, 11). In the late nineteenth century, a significant number of Italians also migrated to Western Australia to work in the mining industry, often under terrible conditions. Numerically small, but culturally significant, was also the presence, usually in the largest cities, of political activists and intellectuals, and a few professionals and businessmen, some of whom contributed to the development of the first Italian language newspapers in Australia (Cresciani 1983, 12–13).

In the early years of the twentieth century, improvements in transportation encouraged many Italians to come to Australia. If in 1921, the Australian census counted 8135 Italians, by 1933, this number had increased significantly, to around 27,000 (Cavallaro 2003, 66). The increase can be explained, at least in part, by the restrictions imposed

on Italian migration in the United States between 1917 and 1924 (Randazzo and Cigler 1987; Mecca and Iozzi 2000, 77; Boncompagni 2002). Still, migration and settlement remained low in both absolute and relative terms; in 1933, Italians made up only 0.4% of the Australian population, which had by then reached 6.5 million. It is important to restate that many temporary or irregular Italian migrants might have not been counted. Before WWII, Italians' largest presence was in the cane field areas of North Queensland (Castles 1992, 44), with a significant presence also in other areas, including the mining regions of Western Australia, the countryside of Victoria (see Cecilia 1987), and Sydney's inner-city (Castles 1992, 44–45), on the land of the Gadigal people.

It is only between the early 1950s and the mid-1960s that we can talk about Italian mass migration to Australia. The highest number of Italians settling in Australia—330,000—was recorded in the twenty years between 1941 and 1961 (Cavallaro 2003, 67). Most of these migrants came to Australia between 1951 and 1960, when Australia had become a major attraction for Italian migrants—accounting for 6.5% of the total migration from Italy (Castles 1994, 346). Only 16% of all Italians who migrated to Australia between 1876 and 1976 did so before 1948 (Favero and Tassello 1978, 37), and 54% of all Italians who migrated to Australia in those one hundred years did so between 1946 and 1961 (Favero and Tassello 1978, 42). Even during the mass migration to Australia in the postwar period, rates of return migration remained relatively low—in fact, the lowest of all main destinations, at around 15%—suggesting that Italian migration to Australia was less temporary in nature (Favero and Tassello 1978, 38). During the fifteen years of peak migration to Australia (1946–1961), 5% of all Italian migrants went to Australia, while those who went back to Italy from Australia were only 1% (about 20,000) of all returning migrants in the same period (Favero and Tassello 1978, 43–44; Cavallaro 2003, 67). Between 1947 and 1976, there were 360,000 arrivals to Australia, and 90,000 departures, with a net intake of more than 270,000 (Castles 1994, 346). By 1986, according to the data of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 587,000 Italians lived in Australia, which accounted for around 10% of all Italian citizens who were living abroad (Bonifazi and Heins 1996, 279). If up until WWII, the majority of Italians came from the north of Italy, in the postwar period the majority of them (81.5%) came from the south and the islands (Boncompagni 2002, 116). By the late 1960s, the economic miracle in Italy had become apparent. This resulted in a gradual

but substantial decrease in migration, and more and more Italians abroad decided to return to their home country. By the early 1970s, the number of Italians leaving Australia was higher than the number of those entering the country (Castles 1994, 346).

The sudden and strong increase of migration in the postwar period was determined by the convergence of four main factors: First, global movements of people, goods and capital were re-opened following the end of the period of crisis and isolationism between 1914 and 1945 (Sori 2009). Second, due to the tragic consequences of WWII, there was a mass migration from Europe of around 2 million people (Colucci and Sanfilippo 2009). Governments were well aware of the need to restart and incentivise migration quickly to reduce the growing social and political pressure caused by the devastation of the economy and infrastructures, the displacement of millions of people, and the returning of millions of traumatised soldiers, including hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war (Audenino and Tirabassi 2008). Third, a number of factors caused a difficult economic, social, and political situation in Italy itself—the lost war, the displacement of a significant number of people, the end of the colonies, and the civil war between the Resistance partisans and the Fascists in the Nazi-occupied north. And fourth, Australia was instigating the urgent development of a mass migration program under the slogan 'populate or perish'.

In the fifteen years after the end of the war, emigration was seen by the Italian governments as an essential tool to reduce the social and political risks attached to the destruction brought about by the war, and by the persisting poverty and mass unemployment. New emigration also meant a substantial increase in remittances from abroad (Sacchetti 1978, 260–61). Italian governments began changing the Fascist laws and regulations that had limited emigration (Balletta 1978, 86), while also gradually establishing migration agreements with various countries in Europe and beyond. This resulted in fifteen to twenty years of intense migration, especially from the south of Italy. This migration was mostly directed to the north of Italy and Europe (Malfatti 1978, 110), but also resulted in a substantial increase in migration to Australia and Canada.

In Australia, the war—in particular the expansion of Japanese-occupied territories and the surrender of Singapore—had shown that the country could no longer rely on British protection, and that a dramatic economic and demographic growth was needed to secure the country's future (Castles 1994, 345; Hawkins 1989, 31). A new migration

program was developed, which aimed at attracting 70,000 people a year (Price 1983, 31). Given that the greatest threat to Australia during WWII had come from Japan, the racist and strongly anti-Asian policy established since 1901 continued well into the 1960s. This meant that the Australian mass migration program of the postwar period focused on attracting European migrants.

Through recruitment strategies and limited quotas imposed on southern Europeans throughout the 1940s, Australia intended to attract mostly British migrants—ten for each European migrant (Hawkins 1989, 32)—and people from northern and eastern Europe. However, it soon became clear that only southern Europe could satisfy Australia's needs for large arrivals of working-class migrants. By the end of the 1950s, southern Europe had become Australia's main source of migrants, with Italy, in particular, second only to Britain (Castles 1994, 345). Overall, in the postwar period (1947–1969), Australian net immigration counted 2,080,000 people, of which 42.3% were from the British Commonwealth (84% assisted), 25% from southern Europe (24.5% assisted), 26.7% from northern or eastern Europe (around 66% assisted), and 6% from elsewhere (21.5% assisted) (Sherington 1980, 147). This data clearly shows Australia's intention to attract and assist mostly European migrants, within a racist logic that largely excluded non-Europeans and clearly penalised southern Europeans. Following the same racist logic, Australia initially attempted (and failed) to attract mostly northern Italians, for instance, by opening offices in cities of northern Italy (Jenkins 1993, 178).

The transportation to Australia of 18,400 Italian prisoners of war between 1941 and 1945 (Hall 2000, 95) is an often forgotten factor in Italians' choice to settle in Australia after the War. During the war, many of the prisoners were required to work in the fields to address the shortage of rural workers (Hall 2000, 96). The debate around the negative consequences of letting them stay in Australia after the war suggests the persistence of stereotypes against Italians, often reinforced by Italy's involvement in WWII. Commentators questioned Italians' ability and willingness to work hard, their 'racial stamina' as soldiers, their standards of living, their violent attitudes, and their lack of personal qualities (Hall 2000, 97). At the same time, more positive views about them were also expressed, suggesting that the large presence of Italian POWs, especially in rural areas, might have, in fact, played a positive role in preparing Australians for the Italian mass migration of the postwar years (for the historiographical debate on this see Hall 2000, 97).

Another important factor in the establishment of Italian mass migration to Australia in the postwar period was Australia's acceptance of a large number of displaced people, especially from eastern Europe. The plan aimed to accept around 137,000 people by the end of the 1950s (Borrie 1994, 227). When the areas of Fiume, Zara, Istria, and Pola became part of Yugoslavian territory following Italy's defeat in WWII, more than 25,000 displaced Italians from those areas moved to Australia (Mecca and Iozzi 2000, 77). As recently suggested by Gregoria Manzin (2009), this is a peculiar chapter in the history of Italian migration to Australia that would certainly deserve further investigation. Manzin (2009, 868–69) noted how these migrants tend to describe their experience of migration as either 'exodus' or 'exile', and focus on the impossibility of moving back to their region of origin, rather than on their experience of settlement in Australia.

As part of the 'populate or perish' drive, agreements were signed by the Australian Government with many countries, including Italy, Malta, West Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Austria, Spain, Belgium, and Turkey (Hawkins 1989, 35). The agreement between Italy and Australia was signed in March 1951, and aimed at increasing and regulating migration. It planned the arrival of 100,000 Italians over five years, through a vetting process that excluded Fascists, Communists, and criminals (Castles 1994, 345). The focus was on healthy working-class men, who were then sent to work in infrastructure projects, industries, and agriculture. The sudden recession of 1952 forced many of them to spend months in camps, waiting for employment, and resulted in a riot at the main camp in Victoria—Bonegilla, on the land of the Wiradjuri people (Sluga 1988; Dellios 2017). However, the overall need of the Australian economy in the following ten years meant that migration from Italy and settlement in Australia continued to grow.

In the postwar period, the Italian migrants consisted mostly of young men from the southern rural areas of Calabria, Sicily, Abruzzo, and Campania, but also included peasants from the poor rural areas of Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia in the north (Castles 1994, 346). However, the agreement between Italy and Australia did not cover family reunion, included young single women only from 1959 (Wardrop 1996, 6), and was suspended and renegotiated twice. The agreement was therefore directly responsible for only 20% of Italian migration in the 1950s (Castles 1992, 41), 40,000 out of around 200,000 in the decade 1951–1961 (Price 1983, 32). The agreement offered Italians worse terms than those

in the British, German, and Dutch agreements; the resettlement of eastern European refugees was also to be preferred over Italian migrants. For this reason, many Italians continued to come on their own resources and through their own networks, and the Italian government refused to renew the deal in 1961 and until 1967, when equal terms were offered (Price 1983, 32–33). Such disparity indicates clearly racialized preferences—other groups that were penalised were the Greeks and the Lebanese.

Australian immigration policies of the time allowed family reunions and facilitated chain migration patterns through sponsorship (Castles 1992, 41). This gradually resulted in increasing intakes of wives, children, older relatives, friends, and *paesani*. The gender imbalance typical of the Italian-Australian community of the 1950s was largely rebalanced in the following two decades.

The vast majority of workers and their families settled in the growing industrial cities of Melbourne, on the land of the Kulin Nation (including the Wurundjeri, Boonwurrung, Taungurong, Dja Dja Wurrung, and Wathaurung peoples), and Sydney, on the land of the Gadigal people. A significant number of them also settled in smaller towns that provided employment in specific industries, such as the heavy industry towns of Newcastle, on the land of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples, and Wollongong, on the land of the Dharawal people, both in New South Wales; or the car industry in Adelaide, on the land of the Kaurna people. The sugar cane industry in the small rural towns of North Queensland were still, in the 1950s and early 1960s, providing opportunities for quick and relatively well-paid employment to new arrivals, with extensive cultivation having been developed, often by earlier Italian migrants. In this period, many Italian migrants gradually moved to the inner-city suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne, which were better placed for their specific cultural, religious, and community needs, as well as for work opportunities in manufacturing, commerce, and services. Later on, many Italian migrants moved to the outer suburbs (Favero and Tassello 1983, 71; Castles 1992, 45); once they became more integrated into Australian society, the family socio-economic status (signified by the home) often took precedence over the need to live within an Italian community.

By the mid-1970s, Italian migration to Australia had come to an almost complete halt, and only totalled around a thousand people per year (Favero and Tassello 1983, 59). According to Dino Ruzzene and Simone Battiston (2006, 22–26), between 1947 and 1971, the Italian-born population had grown from 33,632 to 289,476, while in the

following 30 years, it decreased to 218,718 in 2001, with a median age of 62. Conversely, the number of Australians with Italian ancestry was booming, reaching more than 580,000 by 2001 (Ruzzene and Battiston 2006, 25) and over 900,000 by 2011 (Rubino 2017, 49); and in the early 2000s, Italian remained the second language most commonly spoken at home, after English (Boncompagni 2002, 111).

In the past ten to fifteen years, there has been a resurgence of Italian migration to Australia. According to Riccardo Armillei and Bruno Mascitelli (2016, 20–21, 76), between 2004 and 2015, 126,233 Italian citizens held an Australian temporary migration visa (1.5% of the total temporary visas held in Australia); of those, more than 40% held the working holiday visa type, and 20.3% held a visitor visa. In the same period of time, 8711 permanent visas were granted to Italians (0.5% of the total). Finally, the number of Italian citizens who obtained Australian (dual) citizenship in the same period was 8673 (0.7% of the total). By 2016, the Italian language, which in 2011 was still the third most common language spoken at home in Australia (at 1.4%), had come to occupy the sixth position (at 1.2%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016b). This data suggests that the hype about a new Italian mass migration to Australia is grossly exaggerated. The obstacles to permanent migration, which in most instances is only possible through employer sponsorship, or through marriage or de facto partnership, makes it difficult for Italians to plan and achieve long-term migration to Australia. But this data also shows a relatively high degree of mobility and temporary migration. If one considers the long history of Italian migration, it is not implausible to assume that the recent increase in migration might be a sign of the reactivation of dormant migratory strategies and transcultural competencies that are deeply rooted in Italian transnational history, and that now operate within a context of worsening economic crisis in Italy, and a global increase in transnational mobility.

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CHAPTER 3

Work and Socio-economic Mobility

Abstract This chapter focuses on matters of work, class exploitation, and socio-economic upward mobility. In the first part, it illustrates the centrality of work and mobility in the process of migrants' orientation, settlement, and economic success. In the second part, the chapter highlights the relationship between class exploitation and the development of self-employment strategies, especially around small ethnic businesses. In the third part, it emphasises the essential role that Italian migrant women's work and agency have played in making migration a viable strategy: in building the family and community resilience; in contributing to the Australian economy; and in promoting the rights of migrant women against a backdrop of prejudice and sexism.

Keywords Italian migration—Australia · Mobility · Work · Class exploitation · Socio-economic upward mobility · Ethnic businesses Migrant women

Mobility and Emplacement

This chapter considers migrants' adaptation to different and often challenging working environments, to class exploitation, to socio-economic upward and downward mobility, and to the gendered nature of the opportunities afforded to migrant workers. The aim is to show how, for the most part, Italian migrants demonstrated agency and ability to

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F. Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in Migration History,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78873-9_3

adapt. This did not always result in upward socio-economic mobility, but many of them succeeded in their main socio-economic objectives: saving money, buying a home and supporting their family financially (in Australia or back in Italy), and providing better opportunities to their children. What in English is often described as socio-economic upward mobility, in Italian is usually expressed with a relatively static term indicating the achievement of a comfortable stability—*sistemarsi* (and the related noun *sistemazione*). Loretta Baldassar (2009, 475) has emphasised how *sistemazione* was often imagined and planned to be achieved back home in Italy with the money earned in Australia, within a circular, rather than unidirectional migratory strategy. The reality for the majority of migrants proved to be one of settlement in the new country, compensated, as Baldassar emphasises, by translocal and transnational relationships and, when possible, visits back to Italy. Such objectives were pursued, if not always reached, within difficult and often hostile natural and social environments, in which migrants inevitably had to apply transcultural strategies to resist and negotiate with racist, assimilationist, and exploitative ideologies and structures of power. The intensity of migrants' lives also originates from this tension between the focus on *sistemazione* and the challenges inherent in the process of migration and settlement. On a macroeconomic level, Italian migrants, especially in the postwar period, provided an essential workforce for Australia's industrial development, through a complex process in which class exploitation was constantly resisted and limited by migrants' own agency and determination.

While transnationalism and transculturality are often understood within the frame of de-territorialisation (as a sort of detachment from a specific locality and its culture), they are in most instances effective strategies for re-territorialisation and comfortable settlement. By employing and developing transcultural skills, and by maintaining transnational and translocal networks, Italians in Australia had a much better chance to accumulate social and financial capital, to find a good job, to find a good partner, and to live a meaningful and comfortable life, either abroad or back in Italy. Donna Gabaccia (2000, 11) has highlighted how "migration made transnationalism a normal dimension of life for many, perhaps even most, working-class families." This is true for the Italians who migrated and settled abroad, those who went back to live in Italy, and even for those who never migrated but maintained relationships with their families and communities abroad. At the core of this third chapter

is the idea that transculturality and transculturation must be understood not in opposition to locality, but in close interrelation with it. For instance, in migration history, one must acknowledge the cumbersome presence of the nation states, with all their rules, regulations and borders; their bureaucratic, political, and ideological boundaries; and a common obsession with imaginary ideas of unity and uniformity. From this point of view, transculturation also explains how the persistent and dominant presence of the nation-state is the essential political dimension that migrants must face when they elaborate their strategies of migration and settlement, and when they develop their resilience and their agency in new environments and in new working contexts.

But transculturality and transculturation also relate closely to the specific local environments to and through which migrants move. Mobility, for instance, is in large measure a function of (re)emplacement. Even after migrating, most people move within the new country or within a specific city, in order to find a sense of community, better work opportunities, a better social environment, a better house, and better shops; that is, people move to achieve a more comfortable life, to feel more 'at home'. These movements require transcultural skills and the ability of migrants to reorient themselves in different and ever-changing environments. The socio-economic goals that often motivate migration mean that there is a complex relationship between job opportunities, mobility, and emplacement. From this perspective, transculturation happens not only at the intersection of communicative, linguistic, and artistic exchanges, but also in the everyday practices through which migrants find employment, work, socialise, create businesses, and accumulate various forms of capital (financial, but also social and cultural).

Class Exploitation and Self-Employment

In the past one hundred years, we can identify five major shifts in the employment patterns of Italians in Australia. The first, after World War II, was the shift from agriculture, which had dominated Italian migrants' employment in the first half of the century, to heavy industry and infrastructures for men, and manufacturing for women. The second, and closely related, shift—also in the postwar period—was from self-employment to labour-intensive salaried work. The third shift, in the late 1980s, saw most postwar migrants move from labour-intensive work to under-employment, self-employment (again), or retirement. In the

same period, the children of postwar migrants entered the work market for the first time in a wider variety of areas, including retail, service, and professional work. Finally, in recent years, we have witnessed three phenomena that are numerically less relevant, but still indicative of the new migrants' ability to adapt to the social and employment conditions available to them. Firstly, a limited number of migrants moved to Australia since the 1970s for individual reasons, such as love or desire to live abroad, and adapted to the job market in various and often creative ways. Secondly, especially since the mid-2000s, we have seen a significant increase in temporary work permits (working holiday visas, student visas) that have allowed new migrants to work in casual occupations in retail (especially restaurants) and agriculture (especially fruit picking). And finally, we must note a relative increase in professional migration since the 1990s, especially through sponsorships, which must be framed within the globalising market emerging in highly professional or highly skilled occupations.

All these shifts show migrants' willingness and ability to adjust to evolving working conditions in relation to their own aspirations, motivations, and capabilities. In fact, these changes in employment are closely related to the evolution of the Australian economy throughout the twentieth century. Furthermore, they show that migrants' mobility usually continued well after their arrival in Australia, and that mobility within Australia was, in fact, an essential component of the settlement process. If we focus more closely on the postwar period, this becomes even more apparent. For instance, before 1945, a third of Italian migrants in Australia were concentrated in North Queensland, but by the early 1990s only 7% of Italians were in Queensland, and most of them in the state capital Brisbane (Castles 1994, 348). Similarly, before 1945, almost half of the Italians in Victoria were living in rural areas, but by 1981, 90% of them were living in Melbourne (Castles 1994, 348). This link between work, mobility, and settlement can be noted at an even smaller scale, within a single city. For instance, when employment shifted from primary and heavy industries to manufacturing, construction, and transport, a large number of Italians moved to the west and the south of Sydney (Castles 1994, 348).

Together with work, it was the close proximity of *paesani* that influenced migrants' decision to live in specific parts of a city, but this was especially the case in the early years of migration. Once migrants felt more settled and economically secure, many of them moved to the

suburbs, marking a shift from community-oriented to status-oriented emplacement. So, for instance, most Italians in Melbourne were initially living in specific areas (Sicilians in Brunswick, Pugliesi in Fitzroy, and Viggianesi in Carlton), but many of them gradually moved to the northern suburbs in search of better housing (Castles 1994, 348).

All these shifts show Italian migrants' ability to adapt and adjust to the opportunities provided by a society in rapid change. Most of the workers employed in industries in the postwar period were peasants from rural areas of Italy, who in Italy had only worked in agriculture; many of them started out in the sugar cane fields of Queensland and then moved to industrial and infrastructure works that were better remunerated; and many others came assisted and were assigned specific jobs, but later moved to different cities and into different occupations. Furthermore, many of them, if certainly not the majority, began providing services to other Italian migrants. For instance, some migrants opened restaurants and cafés in the Italian suburbs of the largest cities, and these businesses, in turn, became an opportunity to attract a broader clientele and to hire more members of their own families and communities. Even when considering the large number of Italians who by the late 1970s and early 1980s were unemployed, under-employed, or had decided to go back to Italy, one should note that these changes were the result of a convergence between a changing economy and migrants own desire to have a more relaxed lifestyle after many years of intense labour, and in many cases, after having reached a better socio-economic status or at least acquired some financial savings.

One should not overestimate the rationality, skills, and success of Italian migrants in Australia. But the mobility, variability, and flexibility that they demonstrated needs to be considered within the actual constraints that limited their capacity for change and growth. Factors that must be kept in mind are: Italian migrants' peasant background; their limited literacy and their limited knowledge of English; the racism and hostility they had to endure; the process of emplacement in a different land and social context; the clear intention by the Australian government and industries to exploit them; and the constant changes of an industrialised society such as Australia, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. It is apparent that in most instances these migrants had to navigate difficult waters, and try and make the best of what skills and knowledge they had or could acquire. But when we get closer to the actual life experiences of these migrants, we discover in most instances,

a high level of engagement with their surrounding environment. If it is true, for instance, that many women in the postwar period followed their husbands and experienced a high level of social isolation in the first stages of their migration, it is also true that a significant number of them gradually found employment. Employment in manufacturing meant for many women an opportunity to work with other women from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, to learn English, and to experience some degree of *sistemazione*—a better home and better furniture, a supervisory role in the factory, the opportunity for their children to study, and the opportunity to travel back to Italy (see for instance Ricatti 2010). These are the kinds of complex pictures that might allow for a better transcultural understanding of the processes through which migrants find a provisional and ever-changing, yet relatively stable, sense of place and belonging. Closely related to these changes in employment patterns have been the specific social, natural, and urban environments in which migrants have moved and settled. For those migrants employed in agriculture and large infrastructure projects away from cities, their bewilderment has related mostly to the 'natural' environment: the Australian weather, the annoying insects, the dangerous or scary animals, the long distances, and often a deep sense of isolation (Ricatti 2014). For those who have lived and worked in urban environments, their bewilderment has related mostly to the social context: the hostility of their neighbours; the racism experienced in public spaces; the different attitudes of Australians towards sexuality, friendship, and socialization; the poor quality of the housing; and even the horrible smell or taste of Australian food. Many migrants have moved from rural to urban environments, especially in the early years of their migration, and so have engaged in both forms of transcultural, social, and physical adaptation.

In the early period of Italian migration to Australia, from the mid-nineteenth century to the late 1930s, agriculture was one of the most common occupations and sources of income for Italians, with many of them being able to replace Australian ownership and significantly improve the productivity of the land. Successful agricultural communities were established, for instance, along the Richmond river in New South Wales. More than 12,000 Italians settled in the Griffith area, between 1911 and the late 1930s, and by the late 1940s, 27% of the land in the area was owned by Italians (Panucci et al. 1992, 65). And many Italians came to play a crucial role as workers, landowners, and businessmen in the sugar cane cultivation of North Queensland, especially around

Ingham and Innisfail. The success of Italians in making the land productive, and the subsequent increase in land ownership, often resulted in the open hostility of Anglo-Australian neighbours. This was at times expressed through open racism and episodes of violence. There were also numerous attempts to prohibit migrants' settlement or acquisition of land, which continued as late as 1947 (Panucci et al. 1992, 66). As will be discussed in Chapter 4, this envy also had a significant impact in fostering the internment of Italians living in rural Australia during WWII.

While agriculture continued to represent a source of income and upward economic mobility for many Italians, most Italians who migrated to Australia after WWII found occupation in factory and infrastructures. Interestingly, the large majority of these workers came from the rural areas of southern and north-east Italy, but rapidly converged on the growing industrial cities (Castles 1994, 346). In 1947, most Italian men and women in Australia were self-employed (usually as small land owners) and employers themselves, but by the mid-1960s these numbers had reduced to only 8% of men and 6% of women (Panucci et al. 1992, 70). The more numerous migrants of the postwar period found employment in labour-intensive and poorly-paid jobs, with limited possibilities for upward mobility. The rigid and exploitative nature of this kind of employment was reinforced by a lack of recognition for the qualifications and experiences that they had acquired in Italy (Castles 1994, 346–47), as well as by the lack of opportunities for migrants to attend language courses and professional training (Panucci et al. 1992, 56–57). Many Italian migrants obtained a relatively comfortable financial stability, as evidenced by them having one of the highest rates of home ownership amongst any migrant group (Pulvirenti 2000). However, this apparent success was usually achieved by working very long hours, often in tiring, tedious, or dangerous jobs.

Two examples might provide some illustration of the difficult working environments in which most Italians found a source of income. In the postwar period, a high number of Italians were employed in the Snowy Mountains Scheme, a hydroelectric system that has played an essential role in Australian industrial and economic development, and that is still one of the major public projects ever developed in Australia. Italians and other migrant groups had to work in dangerous conditions, often in isolated areas, and were mostly employed by subcontractors who did not always abide by the required salary and safety conditions. Furthermore, most Italians were employed in a specific and particularly dangerous

task—the masonry work for the excavation of the tunnels. While working for the Scheme was for many Italians just the first opportunity to work in Australia before moving on to better occupations, it is still indicative of the kind of work they were called on to perform (Panucci et al. 1992). It might suffice here to note that, according to Robert Pascoe (1987, 125), one worker died for each mile of the tunnel.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of class exploitation of Italians in Australia is provided by their work in the 1950s and 1960s at the Wittenoom mine in the Pilbara region, Western Australia, on the land of the Banyjima people. The mine operated between 1938 and 1966, but the majority of Italians who worked there arrived in the 1950s and early 1960s (Merler et al. 1996, 556). Of the 7000 workers employed there over the life of the mine, 1100 were Italians (Di Pasquale 2011, 353). The data available suggests their mortality rate due to asbestos diseases might have been as high as 40% (Di Pasquale 2011, 374), probably higher than that amongst Australian workers (Merler et al. 1996, 556), but lower than that of Aboriginal workers, who, according to epidemiologist Peter Franklin, mostly "worked in the dusty, lower-paid job of loading raw crocidolite for transport to the ports" (Towie 2016). Most of the workers spent an average of four months at this mine, with 60% of them spending seven months or less (Cappelletto and Merler 2003, 1048). Italians, on average, stayed longer than other workers (Cappelletto and Merler 2003, 1050). The majority of them were employed in some of the most dangerous and dirty operations, which were also the ones for which the pay was lower (Cappelletto and Merler 2003, 1048). Many Italians were sent to the mine by the Australian government, as part of the two-year contract linked to their Assisted Passage migration. The mine was isolated, and the cost of leaving the mine by airplane was significant. Furthermore, many migrants acquired a debt with the company that owned the mine when, at arrival, they were provided with the essentials for their accommodation, at a cost equal to three or four months' salary, and could not leave until they had repaid the debt (Cappelletto and Merler 2003, 1049). Italian migrants interviewed by Francesca Cappelleto and Enzo Merler (2003, 1050–51) perceived the job as a form of dangerous forced labour. However, the high turnover of workers and the long latency period of lung cancer and mesothelioma meant that the vast majority of them continued to ignore the risks and consequences of their work at the mine for many years. Many of the health risks of exposure to asbestos, including asbestosis

and lung cancer, were known already from the early 1940s, and mesothelioma became apparent throughout the 1950s and early 1960s (Di Pasquale 2011, 353–54). In spite of this, the level of information provided to migrants about health risks was minimal and insufficient, and in some instances, they even received reassuring messages (Cappelletto and Merler 2003, 1053–55). Perhaps one of the most disturbing aspects of this tragic story is that, as Angela Di Pasquale's (2011) research has shown, workers' families were allowed to live in close proximity to the mine, and the children were also exposed to asbestos, causing some to die of asbestos related diseases.

The technological development that took place in Australia between the 1960s and the 1980s gradually reduced the need for unskilled work. Many Italian migrants, who were locked into unskilled jobs due to language barriers, employers' prejudice, and lack of training, were consequently forced to move onto unemployment, self-employment, or early retirement—often also due to health issues caused by the hard and dangerous working environment. By the 1980s, the majority of employed Italians were no longer working in manufacturing and construction, but rather in trade and tertiary services (Panucci et al. 1992, 72). This also signals the advent of the second generation, who compared to their parents were more integrated in the broader Australian society, had higher levels of education and training, and could rely on more social, cultural, and financial capital.

While the vast majority of Italians in the postwar period were employed in working-class jobs, the importance of small businesses for the development of the Italian community in Australia should not be understated. And the iconic visibility they have acquired in Australian multicultural society, especially through cafés and restaurants, certainly cannot be underestimated. Already in 1963, Charles Price emphasised some of the main reasons why not just Italians, but southern European migrants in general, were attracted to small business, especially in catering and food related areas. These reasons included: a desire for independence, the fact that only a small capital was required to start the enterprise, and the reliance on family labour. Jock Collins (1992, 74) has also added two other fundamental reasons: the possibility to escape exploitative working conditions and the racism of both Australian employers and Australian workers; and the fact that most Italians arrived through chain migration—a small family business could provide initial employment for relatives arriving in Australia, while these relatives

represented a reliable source of cheap labour. Rosario Lampugnani and Robert Holton's research on Italian businesses in South Australia (1992, 14–15) suggests that business for Italians was not a last-resort choice, but was rather motivated by a desire for autonomy, independence, and upward mobility. Also in this area, we can notice migrants' ability to follow general economic trends and to identify potential niches for successful business development. When we consider the four decades between the mid-1940s and the mid-1980s, we notice a clear shift from traditional self-employment based on agriculture and fishery, to retail, construction, manufacturing, and services (Collins 1992, 76). Interestingly, Italians went on to occupy and at times dominate specific sectors, such as cafés and restaurants, fruit and vegetables shops, and clothing.

Italian migrants' enterprises have had a higher success rate than the average in Australia, despite lack of education, financial capital, and ability or willingness to rely on external advice. The reasons for these successes usually include actual working experience in the specific area of business, greater motivation for success, and the ability to rely on ethnic networks, family knowledge, and family labour (see Lampugnani and Holton 1992). On this latter reason in particular, Collins (1992) has noted the fundamental role played by Italian women in the successful management of family businesses, which has not been sufficiently studied and emphasised, and which could provide a strong counterbalance to stereotypical ideas about the role of women in Italian migrant families.

Overall, still in the early 1990s, Italians were underrepresented in white-collar and skilled blue-collar jobs, when compared to the general Australian population (Castles 1994, 356). However, this should not be seen as a sign that they failed in reaching a significant degree of financial stability. We must consider that by then, many Italians had managed to move out from manual and unskilled jobs, that many of them had opened their own business, and that a higher number of them were self-employed compared to the overall population. Furthermore, consistent with migrants' explicit strategies, any consideration of upward mobility should also include the second generation, which achieved much higher levels of education and middle-class employment and status than their parents. While there is little doubt that much of this upward mobility was achieved at a great personal cost through dangerous and unsafe employment, long and poorly paid working hours, and deep tensions within families, the complexity and hostility of the social and working

environment in which it was achieved is evidence of migrants' ability to develop efficient transcultural strategies.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the small number of Italians who migrated to Australia usually did so in search of a better lifestyle and better professional opportunities. Although usually more educated than earlier migrants, and employed in more skilled professions, their work has often been related to the needs of the broader Italian-Australian community—in Italian-branded retail, as Italian teachers, in welfare related jobs, et cetera (Baldassar 2007). Throughout the 1990s, and even more in the past twenty years, the few Italians who have managed to obtain permanent residency status have, for the most part, been skilled workers and professionals, although this should not be equated with high levels of education or high socio-economic status. For instance, Italians have been able to obtain permanent residency thanks to their professional experience in restaurants, or even as hairdressers. A small number of them have also being able to migrate to, and settle in, Australia as partner, spouse, or child of an Australian citizen or permanent visa holder, independently from their professional skills. Since 2004, there has been a large presence of Italians on working holiday visas, which specify the holder must be no older than thirty and can stay in Australia only for a year. This visa is officially a holiday visa, and work is limited to six months of the year. The extension to a second and final year is dependent upon completion of 88 days of work in farms in rural Australia, usually as fruit pickers. Those Italians who come to, or remain in, Australia with a student visa can instead only work 20 hours a week, and cannot stay in Australia after completing their studies, unless they obtain a skilled or partner visa. The specific conditions of both these visas mean that cash-in-hand, exploitative, and poorly-paid employment is common (Grigoletti and Pianelli 2016, 86, 179; Mascitelli and Armillei 2016), and there is anecdotal evidence of workers being subject to physical and sexual abuse especially in the fruit-picking industry (see for instance Feller 2017). Nevertheless, many of the Italians interviewed for the *Giovani italiani in Australia* project (Grigoletti and Pianelli 2016, 64–65) also reported positive experiences that helped them develop independence, adaptability, and resilience. While we should ensure that instances of migrants' exploitations are reduced to the minimum, particularly through scholarly research and proper policy development, we should also avoid underestimating the positive impact that even temporary migration may have on individuals and communities.

Women's Agency

Women's high work productivity is essential to understanding the nature and success of migrant families, and yet, given its complex and often informal nature, in most migration histories, it remains much less recognised and celebrated than men's work. The long history of Italian mass migration after the unification suggests that in most instances, without women's work (and at times children's work as well), it was extremely difficult for families to accumulate enough savings to engender some form of upward mobility, such as the purchase of a house or investment in a self-employing business. While the work of most men can be more clearly defined as either independent or salaried, women's work took many different forms, often simultaneously. When the husband migrated first, the women were often left to manage small farms, at times by themselves. Once they reached their husbands and fathers, they often performed a remarkable variety of work. There was non-salaried, domestic work as mother and wife; work in the farm together with the husband and the children; seasonal work, especially in agriculture; informal work from home and in their vegetable gardens; domestic work in other people's homes; piece-work of various nature, often also from home; management of the home as a boarding house; work in family businesses, such as restaurants; and more formal, salaried occupations, especially in manufacturing industries. The much more flexible and informal nature of women's work has proven essential in most contexts of Italian migration, including in Australia, in allowing migrant families to adjust to the new social environment and to changing employment patterns. Naturally, these instances do not pertain only to Italian migrants and often follow general historical trends, such as the large number of working-class women who entered manufacturing occupations in most industrialised societies of the 1950s and 1960s.

There is strong evidence of Italian migrant women in Australia being involved in work outside the home throughout the twentieth century, although industrial salaried work in or around urban centres is rather a phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century. For instance, Italian women in North Queensland, in the first half of the century, worked in the cane fields, but also in restaurants and pubs, shops, and boarding houses (Menghetti 1988, 602). In rural areas in New South Wales, Italian women mostly worked on farms, while in the cities, they tended to work in family businesses but also in the textile industry

(Vasta 1992, 143). In the postwar period, most women were employed in the manufacturing industry (especially food and garments), mostly as unskilled or semi-skilled workers (Vasta 1992, 149). They were usually perceived by the Australian broader society as "illiterate, dependent and unproductive", and their main function was supposed to be marrying Italian men and help curbing their unruliness; thus, Italian women's role in the labour market was seen as limited and mostly temporary, when in fact they made an enormous contribution to Australian industrial development (Vasta 1992, 145).

By the first half of the 1960s, almost half of Italian-born women in Australia were officially counted in the workforce (Pesman 1993). They were often exploited, and the conditions in which most of them worked were unsafe and unpleasant (Pesman 1993). They experienced not just class exploitation, but also racism, sexism, and sexual abuse (Vasta 1992, 150; Alcorso 1991). In fact, as argued by Ellie Vasta (1991), both gender roles and class roles were racially constructed, and most of the Italian women Vasta interviewed in Brisbane recalled racism as the main issue they had to face. Due to the discrimination they experienced at the intersection of class, gender, ethnicity, and race, even when they arrived in Australia as skilled or semi-skilled workers the women could usually only find unskilled employment (Vasta 1992, 150). The need to work long hours both at home and in one or more workplaces, made the life of many Italian migrant women extremely difficult, especially in combination with other problems relating to migration, including poor control of the English language, racism, isolation, and depression. Women at this time were mostly employed in manufacturing, and their ability to move upward in their employment was further hindered by their housework duties, interruptions due to pregnancies and motherhood (Panucci et al. 1992), and the prevailing patriarchal attitudes within the family and the community.

Consistent with a stereotyped perception of racialized migrant groups from the colonial period to the present day, most Australians, including middle-class feminist women, have tended to emphasise patriarchy within the Italian traditional family as the major issue affecting Italian migrant women. In actual fact, as will be further discussed in Chapter 5, a rigidly patriarchal structure is not an adequate or accurate frame to describe and understand Italian migrant families in the twentieth century, as it fails to acknowledge the significant degree of agency women had acquired both in Italy and through migration. The male dominance within the

family had, in most instances, effective counterbalances on which Italian migrant women could rely, including strategies transmitted from mother to daughter, work outside the home, friendship, female solidarity, and, perhaps most importantly, the special bond with their children. Rather than the alleged patriarchal dictates of which many of these women were supposed to be passive victims, the issues that impacted more widely, frequently, and profoundly on their well-being were those relating to migration, and in particular, exploitation, social isolation, and racism (Vasta 1992).

Even with regards to social and working conditions, we should be careful not to represent Italian migrant women in Australia as passive victims of powers beyond their control. As noted by Roslyn Pesman (1993, 1996), researchers' own focus on social issues, and a middle-class perspective on working-class women, often meant that women suffering from poverty, exclusion, and mental illness were much more visible in research and reports than the many women who managed their life and work well. Employment also represented an opportunity for relative professional satisfaction and growth, increased freedom, social interactions and solidarity (especially with other migrant women), the fulfilment of personal and financial aspirations, and language acquisition. As noted by Vasta (1994, 411–12), "many Italian women have achieved a measure of social independence in Australia which they believe they would not have gained had they remained in Italy." The oral histories collected by the Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Emigrati e Famiglie (FILEF), the Italian Historical Society, and other pioneering institutions or individual researchers, especially in the 1980s, suggest that most women perceived and presented themselves as active agents of their migration and their lives in Australia (see Loh 1980; Vasta 1991, 1992; Pesman 1992a, b, 1993). Despite the reality of hard work, physical and mental exhaustion, exploitation, and racial and sexual abuse, many women were also able to manage employers' and husbands' oppression, and exercise a significant degree of independence and self-fulfilment (Pesman 1996).

Narratives about work and socio-economic upward mobility reflect Italian migrants' need to address different judgmental forms of social gaze by the broader Australian society. The Australian racist, classist, and sexist focus was, for decades, on Italian patriarchy, social and economic issues within the Italian–Australian community, and migrants' inability to integrate within the broader Australian society. Italians responded

mostly with a rhetorical discourse around sacrifice; business initiative and socio-economic success; the purchase of a house and, when possible, investments in apartment or commercial buildings; the insistence on the importance of their children's education; and the belief in a moral, emotional, and affective superiority over Australians, especially in the realm of family life (see Chapter 5). Through transculturation, whitening (see Chapter 4), the economic miracle in Italy, and the development of multiculturalism in Australia, Italians have gradually come to occupy a better position within Australian national imagery, becoming a symbol of successful integration into the Australian multi-ethnic and multicultural society. The emphasis has since moved on to the contributions Italians have provided to the economic, social, and cultural development of the Australian nation. There is now, perhaps, enough historical distance to start re-evaluating Italian migrants' working lives and socio-economic conditions without having to rely on the rhetoric of sacrifice, hard work, and contribution to the hosting society. The focus should instead move more decisively onto the complex, and at times contradictory, transcultural and transnational processes through which all migrants, not just Italians, respond and adjust to the specific, ever-changing, and often hostile conditions they find in the country of migration. This will help inform our histories on the processes, policies and practices through which positive transculturation can be engendered to the benefit of migrant communities, as well as to the broader society in which they migrate to and possibly settle in.

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CHAPTER 4

Racism and Racial Ambiguity in a Settler Colonial Context

Abstract This chapter applies a decolonial frame to the study of racism in the Italian-Australian context. The first part provides a historical outline of Australian racist and xenophobic attitudes, policies, and practices against Italians. The second part analyses the strategies these migrants employed in response to such prejudice; it highlights, in particular, Italian migrants' constant attempts to be recognised as white and respectable, often to the detriment of other, darker, and more subaltern groups. The third part of the chapter argues for the importance of a decolonial approach to the study of Italian migration history. This section emphasises the Italian role in the dispossession of First Nations' land and the persisting prejudice against Indigenous people, while also drawing attention to the many positive relationships between Italians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Keywords Italian migration—Australia · Racism · Whitening Decoloniality · First nations · Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Racism Against Italians

Understanding the discrimination that Italians have endured in Australia requires taking into consideration three historical phenomena. The first is the deep historical nature of anti-Italian sentiments in Europe, which

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F. Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in Migration History,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78873-9_4

Matteo Sanfilippo (2011) dates back to as early as the sixteenth century, linking them to even earlier migratory phenomena from the Italian peninsula. The second is the quasi-colonial nature of Italy's unification, and the way racism towards southern Italians largely originated in Italy and then became a transnational phenomenon that reached North and South America first, and finally Australia. The third is the settler colonial and profoundly racist nature of the Australian nation, which since its foundation has established whiteness as a core aspect of its democracy, identity, and class structure.

The racialized position of Italian migrants, especially the southerners, between white and black, is central to any understanding not only of the discrimination they endured, but also of their strategic attempts to contrast and mitigate such discrimination. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Italians were consistently positioned in between the superior and the inferior races (Sanfilippo 2011, 49); their alleged racial closeness to the races that were considered inferior—Chinese and Blacks—made them untrustworthy. After Italy's unification, such racial ambiguity was reinforced by the attitudes of the Italian Kingdom's administrators, who were seriously concerned about southern Italian peasants being too close and too similar to Africans. This attitude was further reinforced by the success of social Darwinism and the anthropological theories of Cesare Lombroso, which acquired scientific credibility and international fame in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The quasi-colonial nature of Italy's unification must not be described in terms of an absolute dichotomy—this would fail to acknowledge the classist nature of Italian internal colonialism, and the inclusion of many middle-class southern Italians into the realm of culture and education, bureaucracy, and politics. Elida Meadows (2000, 314) has rightly argued that "in Italy Southerners belonged simultaneously to the culture of the colonised (the South)—through local and oral traditions—and to the culture of the colonisers (the North) through the system of the state". Thus, the southern Italian was conceptualised as racially ambiguous and always at the intersection of race and class; that is, it is the southern peasant that is racially ambiguous. Interestingly, the southern peasant was also often constructed as sexually ambiguous, which shows how exploitation comes to be structured at the intersection of different markers of subalternity.

In the late nineteenth century, and indeed well into the twentieth century, the 'scientific' theories of Italian anthropologists such as Lombroso and Niceforo—who argued for the racial inferiority of southern Italians and their racial proximity to Africans—were very popular not just in Italy but also in the Americas. In countries of Italian migration like the United States, Brazil, Argentina, and Australia, these theories fostered the idea that southern Italian migrants were not really white, that they were racially ambiguous, that they had a drop of black blood in their veins, and that they were the 'Chinese of Europe' (Gabaccia 1997). In other words, for a long time Italian migrants, especially those from the south of Italy, have occupied an ambiguous position between the racialised dichotomy of black and white.

The persistent representation of southern Italians as almost African and almost black was easily appropriated by Australians, within a broader obsession with whiteness as the founding character of the Australian nation and its democracy. As noted by Richard Bosworth (1983, 40), "much discussion of Italian migration to Australia [was] set within racist parameters". Importantly, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Australian racism was framed as a positive and progressive ideology, central to the development of a democratic nation and to the defence of workers' rights. In 1901, the so-called White Australia policy was made into law as one of the first legislative acts of the new nation, and it became one of its strongest ideological foundations well into the second half of the twentieth century. The Australian obsession with whiteness is key to understanding the formation of Australian national identity and the consolidation of its understanding of democracy as a strongly racialized form of government. Firstly, it was believed, as the Attorney-General Alfred Deakin stated in 1901, that "the unity of Australia is nothing if it doesn't imply a united race […] a people qualified to live under this constitution—the broadest and most liberal perhaps the world has yet seen reduced to writing—without abusing it" (cited in Alcorso 1992, 7). In other words, it was believed that an advanced democracy was only possible within a racially homogenous society in which (white) people would not abuse democratic rights. Secondly, unions and the labour movement more broadly perceived migrants as endangering white Australian workers' rights, by providing sources of cheap and unregulated labour. This perception was also strongly racialized and was particularly prevalent at times of economic depression and high unemployment (Cresciani 1983, 14).

The structural racism at the core of the Australian nation continued well into the multicultural era and continues to the present day. As Ellie Vasta and Stephen Castles noted in 1996, "the two centuries in which racism was an almost universal tenet have left their mark on institutions, social practices, intellectual discourse, popular ideas and national culture. The anti-racism of official policies and public rhetoric is often only skin-deep: it masks the continuing reality of differentiation and discrimination based on biological and cultural markers which are linked to discourses of race and ethnicity" (Vasta and Castles 1996, 4–5).

Italian migrants' alleged racial ambiguity was already noted in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and at the time, the distinction between the alleged whiteness of the desirable northern Italians and the almost blackness of the undesirable southerners was a common and effective way to categorise Italians (see Alcorso 1992, 9–10). At times, even the northerners were brought into the process of racialisation. For instance, in 1907, the Australian newspaper *Bulletin* noted that while the southerners had African blood, the northerners had German blood but had somehow 'degenerated' (see Dewhirst 2008, 42).

This hegemonic racialisation, which located Italian migrants at the bottom of the racialized hierarchy of whiteness, has been paradoxically appropriated by Italian migrants themselves. Many of these migrants have recognised their intermediate position between the whites and the blacks, and have tried to exploit it by acting as a sort of relatively permeable buffer between the colonisers and the colonised, or other subaltern groups (slaves, indentured labourers, darker migrants). The northern Italians exploited the racial ambiguity by suggesting their racial superiority over the southerners, while both the southerners and the northerners have, over time, increasingly distanced themselves from the blacks—first, for fear of being absorbed into the category of blackness (Sanfilippo 2011, 83), and later, to exploit the advantage of being admitted to the realm of whiteness more permanently. This phenomenon of racial intermediary has taken different shapes in various migratory contexts, but can be consistently observed in North and South America, Europe, and Australia.

In the late nineteenth century, the Queensland government decided that only northern Italians should be admitted to Queensland to work in the sugar cane industry (Randazzo and Cigler 1987, 33). Between the 1890s and the 1920s, the hard work of Italians in North Queensland was seen as a possible replacement for the indentured labour of the Pacific

Islanders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century ('the blackbirders' from the Melanesian Islands, often referred to as Kanakas). As noted by Helen Andreoni (2003, 81), the debate around the idea of substituting indentured labourers with Italians demonstrates not only the strong racism towards Italians (often characterised by a clear distinction between southern and northern Italians), but also how the racist discourse was inextricably entangled with the need to exploit people of colour in order to make profitable the land that had been dispossessed from First Nations people. For instance, in 1881, the *Boomerang* suggested that "the kanaka is comparatively harmless; he could not successfully struggle against us; he is freedomed [sic] to extinction. But the fiery Italian is as explosive as his native mountains" (cited in Andreoni 2003, 81). The article continued with references to Mafia, Camorra, "quarrels being settled by knife", and "the terror of organised assassinations". The Neapolitans were described as "blood-liquefying lazzaroni", with reference to the miracle of the liquefying blood of Naples' Patron Saint Gennaro, but also to the alleged idle nature of Neapolitans. Racial and crime-related xenophobia informed much of the debate around Italians in the late nineteenth century; the *Bulletin,* for instance, described the typical Italian migrant as carrying "his stiletto and his strange assorted diseases and his dirt and his vast and wonderful ignorance" (cited in Cresciani 1983, 15). Furthermore, as noted by Catherine Dewhirst (2016, 32), a certain degree of blackness could also be acquired: in the late nineteenth century, Italians could be accepted to Australia as white, but then be "ascribed non-white status, given the racial stigma associated with sugar-plantation work in the tropics, where, it was believed, white people were susceptible to 'degeneration and disease'".

Educated Italian migrants and expatriates in Australia were well aware of this situation. Leopoldo Zunini, Italian Vice Consul for Western Australia, remarked in 1906 how "Italians were not held in high esteem at that time. According to public opinion we were classed somewhere between the Chinese and the blacks. I am not exaggerating when I say that we were often dubbed 'black fellows'" (cited in Dewhirst 2008, 35).

By the 1920s, Italians were often described as 'black Mediterranean', and there is some anecdotal evidence that a variation of this expression, namely 'black Italians', was still used in North Queensland in the 1960s (Moraes-Gorecki 1994, 306). These forms of racism were a structural aspect in the exploitation of Italian migrants in the sugar cane fields. Blackness was also seen as an essential characteristic of men who had to

work under extremely harsh environmental conditions. Women and children, in this context, were seen as a source of "cheap and reliable gang labour" to their own men (the opinion of the prominent planter Charles Young, as cited in Randazzo and Cigler 1987, 28). What made Italians at once desirable and feared was their racial ambiguity, their 'olive' colour. Following the establishment of the White Australia policy in 1901, many employers and landowners complained about the risk of reduced access to cheap labour; conversely, the unions were strongly promoting the policy to protect the jobs and salaries of their constituency (Andreoni 2003, 82–83). Italians were white enough to be admitted to Australia, as long as they were in great physical condition. But they were also black enough to be employed in the sugar cane fields of Queensland, and to be exploited and discriminated upon. In 1925, the Ferry report investigated the presence of southern and eastern Europeans in the sugar fields of Queensland. This report was instrumental in establishing overt racism as the central attitude of the Commonwealth towards southern Italians (Dewhirst 2014, 327). While it was recognised that Italians were European, and thus also protected by international laws applying to other Europeans, the standards of living and dubious morality of southern Italians were noted as a significant source of risk and as strong reasons to limit their presence in Australia (Dewhirst 2014).

The situation of discrimination and exploitation towards Italian migrants in the sugar plantations of North Queensland recalls, in many aspects, that of those Italians who replaced the slaves in the coffee and sugar plantations of Brazil (see Monsma 2006). A transnational and comparative history of the Italian presence in the plantations of the global south is still to be written, but would perhaps provide evidence of a consistent pattern of racialized exploitation of Italian migrants, including women and children, following the end of various forms of forced labour (see also Gabaccia 1997).

The racist discourse against Italians reflects earlier discourse against Asians. The 'yellow peril' became the 'olive peril', while Italians were still at times called 'the Chinese of Europe' (Andreoni 2003, 86). This approach was also consistent with the exploitation of Italians' racial ambiguity in Europe and the Americas (see Gabaccia 1997, 178). As is often the case with colonial racism, the Mediterranean temperament was also constructed as essentially childish and feminine, through the alleged excessive emotionality of Italian migrants (Bosworth 1983, 41). The *Smith's Weekly* in 1926 provided perhaps the most infamous definition

of the Italian migrants as a "dirty Dago pest" and a "greasy flood of Mediterranean scum that seeks to defile and debase Australia" (cited in Cresciani 1983, 15).

In the interwar period, this racist hostility towards Italians resulted in a series of racially motivated attacks in Queensland and Western Australia. The two most infamous attacks happened in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, on the 12th of August, 1919 and on the 28th of January, 1934 (Cresciani 1983, 14–15). In the 1919 incident, in response to a pub brawl between Italians and Australians, a crowd of hundreds of returned soldiers under the banner of the Union Jack hunted down and assaulted Italians in the streets, as well as destroying and ransacking their shops and properties. The events of 1934 were related to the increased hostility towards Italians during the period of the Great Depression, with the unions particularly active in promoting discrimination towards Italians, for instance, in the sugar cane industry of North Queensland (Cresciani 1983, 15). The death of an Australian, who had been punched by an Italian during a fist-fight, resulted in riots during which three Italians were killed and many more sustained gun-shots and other injuries; many Italians ran to hide in the countryside, and food had to be brought to them in the following days, as they were too scared to return to town.

Racism was also central to the internment of Italians as 'enemy aliens' during World War II. When Italy declared war on Great Britain and France in June 1940, Italians who were living in Australia became 'enemy aliens', under the War Precautions Act of 1916 (Spizzica 2013, 65). Those who were considered to pose a threat were imprisoned in internment camps around Australia. Around 5000 Italians and Italian-born Naturalised British Subjects were interned (Spizzica 2013, 69), then just over 10% of the Italian population in Australia (Alcorso and Alcorso 1992, 19). They were mostly men, but some women and even children were also interned. While this dramatic page of the history of Italians in Australia could be read from other perspectives, including the political and the military, the racist and xenophobic component is crucial in understanding why so many people who had little, or nothing, to do with Fascism and did not pose any real or presumable threat to Australia were unjustly interned, at a great cost for themselves, their families, and their communities. Importantly, the internment of 'enemy aliens' also impacted Italian families whose members were not interned, given the climate of suspicion and hostility it created, and the threat it constituted (Cresciani 1980). In addition, many of the Italians who were not interned were conscripted into work.

When deciding who should be interned, nationality was not necessarily a criterion: around 1000 Naturalised British Subjects of Italian origin, 35 of whom were born in Australia (Spizzica 2013, 66) were also interned. There were significant differences in the treatment of enemy aliens from state to state, with Queensland being particularly indiscriminate and interning the majority of the 1000 Naturalised British Subjects. Political affiliation was also not always a criterion: while many pro-Fascists were interned, the majority of the interned enemy aliens were apolitical or anti-Fascist (Spizzica 2013, 66). In some paradoxical instances, people were interned who had actually migrated to Australia because of their opposition to Fascism (Alcorso and Alcorso 1992, 28). Military and strategic consideration also had little influence, as Italians in Australia had very few opportunities to influence the war in any shape or form. It was rather the potential, and often imaginary, danger to the community that was taken into account, which was largely based on the actual hostility of the local community against Italians. This helps explain why the internment of 'enemy aliens' was particularly widespread and severe in North Queensland, where there was a large presence of Italians who over time had become prominent in the sugar-cane industry. Victoria was more moderate; the Archbishop Mannix actively intervened in defence of the local Italian community, and even in defence of specific individuals (Alcorso and Alcorso 1992, 19). Perhaps even more importantly, it should be acknowledged that the identification and internment of 'dangerous' enemy aliens was instrumental for the attempt by the Australian government to reinforce nationalistic and racist sentiments at a time when great sacrifices were required from the Australian population; this is particularly apparent in the many attempts by the media to incite openly racist and xenophobic sentiments, with the tacit assent of the government (Alcorso and Alcorso 1992, 30).

The usual stereotypes were also applied in relation to the more than 18,400 Italian prisoners of war who were sent to Australia between 1941 and 1947 (Alcorso and Alcorso 1992, 31), many of whom were required to work in public projects as well as, from June 1943, in private farms (Cresciani 1989, 205). These Italian POWs were described as "ill-advised enough to drink wine in a public space", "blood-thirsty fighters", "mentally […] childlike", and "sly and objectionable if badly handled" (see Bosworth 1983, 42). In the camps, there were numerous episodes of violence and sedition organised by Fascist POW (Cresciani

1989, 211). However, there is also anecdotal evidence that many of the Italian POW who were sent to work in private farms without guards managed to build good and respectful relationships with the farmers that employed them (Alcorso and Alcorso 1992, 32–33). This might have constituted a good precedent for the admission of Italian migrants in the postwar period. Overall, as argued by Cresciani (1989, 207), "the scheme of employment of Italian POW's without guards in rural industry was a great success". One should not lose sight of the paradox of many Italian soldier POWs, including Fascists, being allowed more freedom than the mostly apolitical civilians who were interned as enemy aliens. These latter were for the most part Italian, or Italian-born Naturalised British Subjects, who had peacefully lived in Australia for years, if not decades, and had contributed to the social and economic development of Australia, and yet were treated as being more dangerous than the captured soldiers of an enemy country.

Racism towards Italians was also an aspect central to the experience of Italians in the postwar period. Initially, when the mass migration program was established, it was not envisaged that Italians, and especially southern Italians, would be included at all. Once it became clear that the 'populate or perish' objectives required the admission of southern Italians as well, this resulted in the expression of serious concerns by the media and politicians. In 1958, for instance, one member of parliament protested against the large arrival of southern Italians and noted that while northern Italians were "very attractive people, highly skilled and with a fine cultural history", Sicilians "have had no law but that of the tooth and the knife" (cited in Castles 1992, 39). Italy's alliance with Hitler's Germany in WWII added another reason for open hostility, and a further element of suspicion amongst authorities and the media, as did the strength of the Italian Communist party in the 1940s and 1950s. The riots at Bonegilla in 1952 certainly did not help—many Italian migrants complained about unemployment and the scarcity of food, and were, in return, accused of violent actions and ungratefulness (their food had, after all, been provided at taxpayers' expense) (see Bosworth 1983, 50).

Once the Australian economy recovered and the need for Italian migrant workers became even more apparent, authorities begun relaxing their hostility towards southern Italians. Racism towards them, however, remained widespread. Throughout Australia, including in the large cities of Sydney and Melbourne, Italians in the 1950s and 1960s were often

described as 'greasy wogs'. It was common for Italians arriving in Sydney to be spat on by Australians. Still in the 1950s, Italian migrants were described in popular newspapers in offensive and stereotypical terms, such as "the dregs not only of Europe but of humanity" (cited in Musico 2000, 180). This offensive description still often maintained a racial connotation: "not even the children born here of the hybrid, criminal Italian race are fit to merge in the Australian race" (cited in Musico 2000, 81).

Italians were required to assimilate into the 'Australian way of life', the characteristics of which were of course hard to pin down. Linguistic policies, practices, and attitudes certainly played an important role, with Italians often scorned when speaking Italian in public, and with the schooling system pushing children to speak only English. Consistent with much of Australian settler colonial history, the focus of assimilationist policies was, in fact, predominantly on the children.

In the last fifty years, the racial discrimination towards Italians has been gradually weakening, due to the combination of a series of complex factors. These include the development of multicultural policies in Australia; Italy's economic development and increased cultural status; the end of Italian mass migration; the arrival to, and settlement in, Australia of new and darker migrant communities; the shift in racist focus from economic migrants to refugees and asylum seekers; and Italian migrants' transculturation, with the grandchildren of the postwar migrants now in their twenties and thirties, and the fourth generation of school-going age. The deep-rooted racism towards Italians, however, has not completely disappeared. The racist and classist dichotomy between the south and the north of Italy is still apparent in the appropriation and celebration of the Renaissance and what Joseph Pugliese (2007, 29) has called 'the Tuscan fetish', in opposition to the peasant culture of the south. Even when the south is fetishized in Australian imagery, the usual colonial mixture of desire, fear, and exoticism tends to prevail. For instance, in 1980, Leslie Gardiner wrote that: "You cannot escape the sensation, when you venture towards Calabria, of straying into lost territory, of crossing an invisible frontier into a land which breathes the perfumes of Arabia, or at least a bouquet d'Afrique" (Gardiner 1968, 2; quoted in Meadows 2000, 310). The distance between colonial exoticism and blatant racism is unfortunately never too great. Anecdotal evidence, for instance, from the research conducted by Antonia Rubino (personal correspondence), suggests that southern Italian children and teenagers are still being bullied at school with epithets such as 'wog', and 'sand nigger'.

Whitening and the Politics of Race

To understand the racialized nature of Italian settlement in Australia, one needs to consider not just how Italians have been treated, but also how they have reacted to racist and xenophobic insults, and, perhaps more importantly, how they have attempted to 'whiten' and to build a racial respectability over time. The way Italian migrants have responded to racial and xenophobic insults has varied in strength and nature, from avoidance and passive resistance, to verbal replies or even physical confrontations. A common story that migrants like to share in their conversations is how they used to reply to racist remarks by noting the roots of the Australian Nation as a penal colony, and by remarking that the offender's ancestors were probably criminals who had made it to Australia in chains. Anecdotal evidence also exists of brawls in or outside pubs that Italian migrants were prevented from entering. Some of these stories are still told by elderly migrants, but perhaps even more common is the tendency to either deny or downplay the forms of hostility, racism, and exploitation they have experienced.

Together with individual responses to specific acts and utterances of racism, it is important to understand more broadly the collective and structural responses that Italian migrants put in place to contrast or manage the racism they endured. An immediate and often efficient strategy has been the development of ethnic solidarity and a sense of shared identity not just with *paesani* but also with other migrants from Italy. This has often been accompanied by improvements in Italian language use, the growth of a sense of Italian national identity, and, in some instances, the development of transnational political links and practices. This sort of reaction is not surprising, and has been seen in many other contexts of Italian migration in which racialised hostility and discrimination towards Italians pushed them to seek cultural, social, and political capital not just in their (trans)local communities, but also through a shared national language and a common national identity. This is not just about the development of an imagined Italian transnational community, but also about concrete expressions of Italian-ness in everyday life through, for instance, language, food, shopping, cultural events, urban monuments, football celebrations, religious *feste*, the development of museums, archives and associations about Italian migration history, and many other expressions of Italian national identity.

A second, and much more problematic strategy, which I call 'whitening', has consisted in the tendency by Italian migrants, especially from

the north, to insist on the whiteness of (northern) Italian people and to differentiate themselves as much as possible from more subaltern people, who are identified as racially inferior, or at least more racially ambiguous and thus less trustworthy. Northern Italians often considered southern Italians, especially Calabresi, as inferior to them (Huber 1977, 2). Many historians have noted how already in the 1920s, the expression of racist sentiments against southern Italians was a common strategy of northern Italian migrants to align with the Australian racist discourse and thus avoid racial discrimination (see Dewhirst 2014, 324). Both southern and northern Italians have applied this strategy to Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people, Pacific Islanders, and other ethnic groups, especially Asian migrants and more recently, migrants from Arab or prevalently Muslim countries. This strategy was developed over time around specific practices and rhetorical discourse, from supporting the White Australia policy and other racist and assimilationist practices, to openly supporting racist parties such as Pauline Hanson's One Nation. Racist and colonial attitudes have been an important part of Italian culture and society since the time of the country's unification, and were further entrenched by the Fascist propaganda and the openly racist and colonial laws, policies, and practices the Fascist regime promoted and encouraged. Many Italians thus were already racist before migrating to Australia, and they responded to the shock of being racially gazed upon and abused by becoming even more racist.

One of the racialised arguments that Italian migrants attempted in the early decades of the twentieth century was that white Australia needed (white) Italians as a sort of buffer against darker people. In other words, Italians were white enough not to be excluded or penalised by racist policies, and could play an important role in colonisation and demographic growth. In the early part of the twentieth century, Giovanni Pullé, through his newspapers *L'Italo-Australiano* and *Oceania*, attempted to portray Italy and Italians as a unified country firmly standing amongst other civilised European nations (Dewhirst 2008, 33), that is, sharing with them their allegedly white heritage. Consistent with a strategy still common amongst Italian migrant communities today (see Bartoloni and Ricatti 2017), it was Renaissance Italy that provided evidence of the civilised/white status of the Italians. This racial preoccupation was also linked to Australia's fear of a potential invasion from Asia, a racialized fear that would also be central in the Australian 'populate or perish' policies of the 1950s. As Pullé himself put it: "If we are to have

a White Australia, which Australians ardently desire, we must have the assistance of aliens. Population is imperative to defend and keep a 'white' Australia. We have to defend our door [from] a colored population, amounting, including India, Japan and China, to something like 700,000,000. And we have less than 5,000,000" (cited in Dewhirst 2008, 42). Interestingly, Pullé's rhetoric was also related to his colonist plan to develop Italian agricultural settlements in Australia. This peculiar link between colonial attitudes and the desire of Italian migrants to be included into the privileged realm of whiteness certainly deserves further attention (see Dewhirst 2016).

In the past fifty years, the whitening practice has mostly consisted in shifting the blame onto the victims of racism. This strategy is still common today and is often constructed by admitting that Italians were victims of racism too, but then emphasising that, contrary to other discriminated groups, Italians overcame such racism and came to be integrated into the Australian (white) respectable society through hard work and by assimilating—implicitly or explicitly suggesting that newer or darker migrants do not work hard enough and do not assimilate. This rhetoric, which essentially suggests whiteness is to be earned by migrants, is consistent with Australian discourse about the centrality of hard work in migrants' successful assimilation (see Bosworth 1983, 52). Closely related has been the denial that racism ever existed or that it largely disappeared through the development of multiculturalism. Migrants are usually aware that being vocal and openly political within a racist and assimilationist context carries significant risks and encumbrances, and many of them have thus strategically focused on individual socio-economic success and the acquisition of middle-class status as a more effective form of shelter for themselves and their children. Silence and denial have therefore appealed to a large number of migrants, and while they are morally problematic and politically self-defeating, these practices should also be understood as strategic and transculturally informed individual responses to a difficult social environment.

In more recent times, the Italian-Australian community has used multiculturalism as an effective frame to develop or reinforce their pride in their Italian origins. Some academics in the early 1990s rightly argued for the importance of making sure that the multicultural preservation of identity does not foster "a new Eurocentric conservatism, that excludes Asians and Aborigines" (Vasta et al. 1992, 230). Many of the children and grandchildren of the postwar migrants have had a chance to travel,

study Italian, and rediscover the greatness of Italian culture in many different forms. Nuanced reflections have been developed on the pride and opportunities afforded by the claim to an Italian-Australian identity (see in particular Baldassar 2001; Sala and Baldassar 2017). A particularly interesting example of the complex positioning of second-generation Italian-Australians has been the appropriation of offensive terms such as 'wog' and 'olive' since at least the late 1980s. As illustrated by Andreoni (2003, 86–90), this has been an ambiguous and not always effective strategy. At times, it has been informed by a politically aware decision to mirror similar appropriations by other minority groups, especially Black Americans; at other times, it has simply reiterated a desire to be included in the realm of mainstream white Australia by self-inflicting the same kind of racist humour and terminology of which they had been victims.

Towards a Decolonial History

In the concluding section of this chapter, I aim to discuss how colonist attitudes, whitening, and political activism have affected Italian migrants' relationships with Indigenous people. Given the brief nature of this volume, I can only refer succinctly to some key aspects of what I consider an essential and yet still overlooked task for historians of Italian migration: the development of a decolonial historiography.

The fact that Australia is a settler colonial nation should never be overlooked when writing the history of any migrant group in this country. We should also be aware that settler colonialism is a continuing structure, not an event concluded in the past (Wolfe 2006, 388; 2016; Kauanui 2016). This means that Italian migrants' complicity in settler colonialism is as relevant for the present as it is relevant for the past, although of course, racism and settler colonialism are mutant beasts whose biography is always hard to write coherently. Meadows (2000, 315) was, to my knowledge, the first scholar to explicitly state that "Italians, both Northerners and Southerners, are part of this European colonisation."

The place Italian migrants have often come to occupy as in between the colonisers and the colonised, subaltern others (Indigenous peoples, but also indentured labourers and former slaves), as well as the history of Italian migrants' relationships with Indigenous people, must be understood within the complex racialized context I have illustrated in the first two parts of this chapter. Historical research in countries like the USA

and Brazil have shown how Italians, and especially southern Italians, often came to these countries to replace former slaves or indentured labourers, and then tried to establish or reinstate their whiteness to the detriment of darker, more subaltern people (see for instance Monsma 2006; Orsi 1992).

Within this complex racial history, there is a historical thread that is, for the large part, still overlooked. This is the crucial colonial role Italian migrants have played in settler colonial societies—the active role many of these migrants have played in the expropriation of Indigenous land and in the violence and repression against First Nations peoples and their cultures. First Nations people are almost completely invisible in most of the histories of Italian migration.

There are two main narratives through which this historical erasure is produced. The first is the narrative according to which Italians were 'latecomers' to colonial countries such as Brazil, Argentina, and Australia. It is commonly argued that Italian migrants settled in those countries when the most ugly aspect of colonisation, namely the violent dispossession of land, had already been completed. The second and closely related argument is that even in more recent years, since the mass migration of the postwar period, Italians have had little to do with Indigenous people.

While the 'latecomers' narrative has some historical legitimacy, especially with regard to Australia, it is unfortunately misused to construct a false and self-absolving narrative about the Italian migrants' involvement in settler colonialism. My argument is that Italian migrants, even as latecomers, actually played an important role in settler colonialism. There are two main reasons why the 'latecomers' narrative is not convincing and needs to be challenged. First, the little research that has been conducted about Italian colonists, especially in Brazil, suggests that Italian migrants, especially those from the north-east region of Veneto, in fact, *had* contacts and violent clashes with the Indigenous population, and that the memory of such clashes were then repressed, silenced, or falsified (Brunello 1994; see also Fasce 2002).

My second main concern with the 'latecomers' narrative is framed by settler colonial theory. As already noted, settler colonial studies in Australia and elsewhere have convincingly argued that settler colonialism and its manifestations of racialised violence and injustice are not an event concluded in a distant past, but a violent structural process that continues to be implemented and institutionally legitimised and supported up

to the present day. Here it is essential to understand that the conquest of the frontier does not mean the end of colonial practices and ideologies. Racist ideologies, for instance, are required in order to manage the persisting presence of the Indigenous other, while implementing more gradual and subtle forms of genocide. Racism is also essential to manage the exploitative and cheap labour of the subaltern others without which the dispossession of the land would have been futile. Racism, and a certain idea of whiteness, have also been essential in building the national identities of many settler colonial nations. In countries like Brazil, Argentina, and Australia, whiteness became more important once these Imperial colonies became independent nations—this is certainly the case with the infamous White Australia policy. So, even when it is reasonable to argue that Italian migrants mostly arrived when the frontier wars were over, that does not mean Italians were not involved in the continuing violence, dispossession, and racism of settler colonial nations.

A few examples of how Italian migrants in Australia have described Aboriginal people might illustrate this point. Italian geographers and missionaries who visited Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth century often reinforced stereotypes about Aboriginal people, instead of promoting the more accurate information that was already available. In these publications, Aboriginal people were often described as savages, as resembling apes rather than humans, and as people of a limited intelligence, which allowed them to learn only vices (Lucchesi 2000, 248–49; see also Ricatti 2013).

Decades later, on the 14th of November 1939, the journalist Franco Battistessa writes of his visit to Palm Island in an article for Il giornale italiano, a weekly Italian-language newspaper published in Sydney, with a wide Australian circulation of around 8000 copies. In the article, Battistessa writes that, "When surrounded by so much savage and natural grace, the only depressing and ugly thing are the Aborigines who have been attired in the clumsy clothes of our decadent sartorial civilisation. Completely naked in their Apollonian beauty, the black oxidised bodies of the Indigenous people would acquire a healthy and splendid pagan beauty, which would be in tone with the lush palm trees […] But dressed in this way, with the dismissed clothes of white people, they are a living anachronism, a burlesque parody and a caricature that would be funny if they weren't so sad. The defacing civilisation of the moralist vandals covering the splendid nudity of the savages has insulted the serene beauty of nature" (my translation). Later in the article, after a long and

disturbingly sexualised gaze on young aboriginal girls, who he calls *le verginelle in gabbia* (the little virgins in a cage), he expresses his sadness for the children born from white fathers and black mothers: "The only sad note", he writes, "is the presence of numerous half-caste (*meticci*) kids, very white and blond children who were born from black mothers and white fathers. Amongst the kids of an inferior negroid race, these poor illegitimate kids (*figli di nessuno*), social pariah who are neither white or black, fill our soul with immense pity" (my translation).

Another sixty years pass by, and in the late 1990s, Carmelo Caruso ([1998] 2008, 280–81), a Sicilian migrant who had come to Australia in the 1950s, devotes two pages of his autobiography to a group of nuns who in the early 1970s, educated and assisted Aboriginal children, who he describes as 'orphans or abandoned'. The two pages are an exemplary collection of racial stereotypes about Aboriginal children, and incredibly invert the reality of the Stolen Generation by suggesting that even when the nuns were successful in educating these children, they were often taken away by the parents who had initially abandoned them.

These examples, sixty to seventy years apart from each other, tell us of the persisting power of the racialized gaze on Aboriginal people by Italian migrant communities in Australia, but also of the way such gaze has changed over time, revealing different cultural and social concerns, and different racialised fantasies. They show the active role Italian migrants have played in the settler colonial process.

Since Italians began migrating to Australia, there have also been many cultural encounters, respectful friendships, political solidarities, and intimate relationships between migrants and First Nations people. Rare, but extremely significant, are examples of artists and intellectuals who took the side of the First Nations people and denounced the violence and dispossession perpetrated by the settler colonialists before and after the foundation of Australia as a settler colonial and racist nation. These include, just to name some of the most important examples, the pantomime *Gilburnia*, published in Italy in 1872, and written by Raffaello Carboni, one of the protagonists of the Eureka Stockade (see the 1993 edition); the novel *Polenta and Goanna*, written by Emilio Gabbrielli (2008), and inspired by some research into the intimate relationships between Western Desert Aboriginal women and northern Italian men in Western Australia in the early twentieth century; some of the poems of Lino Concas, who developed a poetic and uncanny connection between Sardinia and the Aboriginal land in poetry collections such as

Malee, *Muggil*, *L'uomo del silenzio*, and *Cobar* (Concas 1998; see also Rando 2013); and the extraordinary documentary movies co-directed by Alessandro Cavadini through a close and innovative collaboration with First Nations communities—see in particular *Ningla A-Na: Hungry For Our Land* (1972); *Protected: The Truth About Palm Island* (1975); and *Two laws* (1981).

With a few exceptions, such as the novel *Polenta and Goanna*, or some interviews with Italian-Aboriginal couples by journalists at SBS radio, complex stories and memories of relationships, friendships, and collaborations between Italians and First Nations peoples have been largely ignored—both in Italy, within a political and cultural context that is still to address the colonial nature of Italian migration; and in Australia, within a multicultural framework deeply rooted in colonial and assimilationist practices, and always centred around white, mainstream, Anglo-Australia. Creating artistic and scholarly emotional spaces in which such stories and memories might emerge and be known, then, becomes an essential step in shifting both Italian and Australian national histories towards more authentic, complex, and transcultural narratives.

One of the most recent attempts to give visibility to the unusual but highly significant encounters between Italians and First Nations peoples is the 2012 documentary movie *Far Away Is Home. La storia di Clely* (Cenetiempo 2012). In 1954, at the age of 12, Clely migrated with her family from the Italian city of Trieste to Adelaide. Since the early 1970s, she has lived in north-east Arnhem land. She later married Terry Yumbulul, a Warramiri artist. She has been, for many decades, a respected member of the Warramiri people, and her Warramiri family now calls her *nonna* (grandma, in Italian). As Matteo Dutto (2016, 65) notes, what emerges from Clely's words in the documentary movie is that her sense of identity is not divided between Italy and Australia, but rather between Trieste and Warramiri country. As Dutto (2016, 70) convincingly argues, "*Far Away Is Home* stresses the enduring nature of colonialism in Australia and localises Clely's dissent story within the history of Warramiri country, thus expanding the space of remembrance to include different voices and highlighting the dialogical and historical nature of the way in which she has relocated her sense of self and belonging". The life of Clely has certainly been unique, but the unique life tapestry her memories, stories, and languages weave into the movie provide a different path to our understanding of much broader national, colonial, migratory, and Indigenous histories. As Pugliese (2002, 9) has

argued, personal stories and anecdotes are "potentially dissident sources of Australian history" and have an essential role to play in the development of a decolonising historiography of Italian migration.

The history of Italian relationships with First Nations people, in Australia and elsewhere, is still to be written, and could provide a new and different perspective from which to read the colonial nature of Italian mass migration, and the complex ways in which Italian migrants have responded to their own racialisation. Racism, in contexts of Italian migration, must be reconceptualised as a complex, evolving, and often contradictory phenomenon in which Italians have been at once the victims and perpetrators of racist ideologies, attitudes, and practices, as well as effective and affective agents in the resistance against structural racism and its horrific and uncanny manifestations.

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CHAPTER 5

Family and Generational Negotiations

Abstract This chapter reflects on the centrality of the family in the lives of Italian migrants and their children. First, it acknowledges the actual complexity of Italian-Australian families, against the tendency to oversimplify and essentialise their composition, their values, and their resistance to change and transculturation. The chapter then focuses on three pivotal aspects of family life to demonstrate the actual cultural complexity and flexibility of these families. These aspects are: marriage, and especially the peculiar phenomenon of marriages by proxy; the complex processes of intergenerational and transcultural negotiations between migrants and their children, especially with regards to matters of gender and sexuality; and the complexity of familial, community, and transnational arrangements around the management of health issues, aged care, and death.

Keywords Italian migrants—Australia · Family · Marriage
Gender and sexuality · Aged care · Death

Family Tensions, Values, and Identities

Family life, in all its complex, gendered, and more or less stereotypical iterations, has constantly been at the centre of private, public, and scholarly discourse about Italian communities in Australia. General conclusions by prominent scholars of Italian migration to Australia, including

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F. Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in Migration History,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78873-9_5

myself, should be read together as complementary sources, rather than in opposition with one another. The limited scope of these studies, when considered individually, have often depended upon specific primary sources, disciplinary perspectives, theoretical frames, and scholarly agendas. Gianfranco Cresciani (2003) has largely overlooked the topic, while the early literature has tended to emphasise, often in stereotypical terms, the patriarchal structure and amoral nature of Italian families, and the imposition of traditional values, networks, and practices. Feminist scholars in the 1990s—including Ellie Vasta (1991, 1992a, b, 1993, 1994), Roslyn Pesman (1993) and Caroline Alcorso (1991, 1993)—have offered a more balanced account, taking into consideration women's agency and their strategic choices. Over the past twenty-five years, scholars have increasingly acknowledged the negotiating practices and strategies employed within Italian-Australian families to manage the complexity of the relationships between family life, intimacy, and the construction of an ethnic identity (Vasta 1992a, b; Baldassar and Gabaccia 2011; Ricatti 2011).

The centrality of family is a commonly accepted feature of Italian communities in Australia, and, more broadly, of Italian modern culture and society. One chapter cannot deal comprehensively with such a complex topic. Instead, this chapter focuses on how traditional values and attitudes are employed by migrants in the process of transculturation, particularly with respect to marriage, generational negotiations, and aged care. My argument is that, rather than standing as evidence of parochialism and traditionalism, family values are employed by migrants as tools to perform, negotiate, and justify certain practices, according to their individual, family, and community needs, and within the complex and constantly changing contexts of migration, settlement, and transculturation.

I am aware of the risk that this chapter's focus on family might reproduce the marginalisation and exclusion from the community of those who did not conform to the traditional family model. In my previous work on Italians in Australia (Ricatti 2006, 2011), I have touched on fragmentary and sporadic evidence of transgender identity and transsexual desire, homosexuality, impotence, separation and divorce, escape from arranged marriage, reclusion into psychiatric hospitals, family violence, adultery, sexual fantasies, and many other significant variations from the established and respectable norms that are often heralded within the community. While this chapter specifically focuses on family

as a core institution within Italian communities in Australia, much more research must be conducted into the lives and memories of those who, willingly or unwillingly, did not conform to the dictates of such institution.

Several tensions arise from the complexities of marriage and family life within the Italian-Australian community. Most Italian migrants to Australia came from a peasant background in Italy, and moved into an urbanised and industrialised context in Australia; and the vast majority of them settled in Australia at a time when Italy itself was becoming increasingly urbanised and industrialised. Furthermore, once settled, most of them shared the home only with their children, but their migration was often engendered through larger family networks and sponsorships, thus consolidating strong relationships with the broader family both in Italy and in Australia.

The family unit and the home represent, for both migrant men and women, a space relatively protected from the racism and discrimination they experience in the broader society. For Italians in Australia, this was especially true before the development of multiculturalism, but it remains relevant today, if to a lesser extent. The home is the space in which both men and women have become custodians of their cultural practices and traditions, and have developed close relationships with their children and grandchildren. It has been the transcultural space of gardening and vegetable growing (Du Chesne 2016; Vanni 2016), food making and cooking (Bosworth 1991), and emotional displaying of belonging and religious identities (Pugliese 2005; Palaktsoglou et al. 2013–2014). At the same time, the home is also the space where patriarchal structures can be not only imposed and reinforced, but naturalised. It is the space in which most violence and abuse is perpetrated and in which generational distance might widen; it is a space that is as secretive as it might be protective (Ricatti 2011). This tension, well described by the concept of the uncanny/unhomely (see Morley 2000; Ricatti 2011; Marinelli and Ricatti 2013), is rarely spoken of by migrant individuals and communities, and often overlooked by scholars. It is important that the conflictual aspects of domestic life be acknowledged and addressed more explicitly in the scholarly literature.

The role of women in migration forms another important tension. Migrant women are often the bearers of tradition and ethnic identity, which itself should be understood within complex transcultural, transnational, and generational negotiations. Feminist historiography of Italian migration over the past twenty-five years, especially in North America, has highlighted the complexity of women's roles within the processes of

migration. As noted by Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta (2002), for instance, one of the main reasons why so many men could migrate was that the women who remained in Italy were used to their men being away, and could take care of themselves, their families, and their villages. Migration, after all, was usually the result of family strategies and community practices, rather than an individual choice. Many of the Italian women who have migrated since the late nineteenth century, either alone as labour workers, or more often as wives, daughters, and sisters, settled in urban contexts and worked outside the home, often also developing some level of political awareness (Gabaccia and Iacovetta 2002).

The feminisation of home is a complex historical phenomenon in which domesticity can be a site of women's repression, but also a site of women's agency. By the time Italian mass migration developed, and even more so by the time Italians came to Australia in large numbers, the patriarchal structure within the Italian family had already profoundly weakened. In particular, the rigid separation of roles and the imbalance of power between husband and wife, and between parents and their children, was no longer as strong as it had been in the traditional patriarchal family before industrialisation and urbanisation (see Tirabassi 1993). Italian migrants' intention to maintain traditional values and practices, at times by re-establishing and consolidating practices already outdated in Italy, are only part of a much more composite picture of Italian families in Australia. Migration also meant travel, discovery, transculturation, and, as we have already seen in Chapter 3, the opportunity and need for women to work and come into close contact with other migrant and working-class women. The essential work of Vito Teti (1987), on the consequences that mass migration from Calabria had on Calabrian society and its peasant culture, is just one of the many evidences that earlier mass migration constituted an extraordinary challenge to traditional family and community structures.

In her study of Campanian migrant women in South Australia, Diana Glenn (2006) emphasised the strict patriarchal impositions to women, already before migration. According to Glenn, migration itself confirmed such forms of control, for instance, through marriages by proxy, and through the value assigned to virginity. Glenn also insists on the process of cultural crystallisation through which many of these women responded to cultural and social fragmentation, disillusionment, and disorientation in the new country. Similarly, Giancarlo Chiro and Jerzy Smolicz (1994, 2002) have insisted on the transmission of core values as central to Italian-Australian families.

Letters of grievances, and requests for help and advice written by Italian men and women in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, provide a more negative view of the often violent, abusive, and difficult family contexts in which especially migrant women and children exercised their agency and their survival strategies (Ricatti 2011). Furthermore, as illustrated by Tonina Gucciardo and Oriella Romanin (1988, 4), Italian women who came to Australia in the postwar period are often represented, and represent themselves, as self-sacrificing mothers who "feel threatened by their children's sense of independence, self-expression, and freedom of choice," and who were worried about the negative influence of Australian society on their children.

These interpretations, although all partially valid, need to be carefully reconsidered in order to acknowledge the actual variability and complexity of women's lives within their families, and in the context of a broader strategic process of emplacement, rather than simply as the expression of negative feelings and conservative values. Glenn herself argues that her oral history project demonstrates how many of these women developed "polysemous cultural identities, whereby familial, village based, provincial, regional and nationalistic affiliations were part of the flux of multiethnic identities, languages, cultural values and religious credences" (Glenn 2006, 6). She further emphasises how, for many of her informants, "the experience of transnational migration widened their personal choices, freeing them from traditional safeguards and impositions" (Glenn 2006, 7), and how they "created supportive networks through which they could valorise cross-cultural influences and develop links to facilitate the successful integration of their offspring within Australian society" (Glenn 2006, 7). My own research shows how migration itself was, for many women, perceived as an opportunity for freedom from family impositions. As it will be shown in the next section, even marriage by proxy could be conceived as a strategic attempt at a different and better life. And women's central role in maintaining and transmitting traditional cultural values did not prevent Italian migrant women from also developing and negotiating new cultural and political practices (Vasta 1992a, 154).

The boundaries between the public and the private spheres are much more permeable than is usually acknowledged. Loretta Baldassar and Donna Gabaccia (2011) have argued that the affective, emotional, and intimate dimensions of social life are essential in understanding not just how culture and ethnic identity might influence family life, but also how family life (within specific social contexts) might influence ethnic identity

and a certain attachment to the nation. Studies on the cultural politics of emotions in Italy (see Morris et al. 2012) suggest that the centrality of family and intimacy is not always in opposition to the nation (as it is often argued in theories of amoral familism). Rather, the family is a crucial emotional signifier of national identity and unity (for instance, in the idea of the nation as father/mother land). Migration, as demonstrated by Baldassar's (2011) essential work on transnational caregiving, comes to represent an ideal context in which the multifaceted and, at times, contradictory relationship between family and nation can be investigated. On the one hand, it is the family that connects the individual to the village and the nation of origin; on the other hand, specific ideas about regional and national identities and their core values are employed in the emotional and practical management of family life.

In my earlier study of Italian migration to Australia (Ricatti 2011), I have shown how the morality of the Italian family, together with the markers of their socio-economic success, has provided migrants with a sense of moral and ethnic superiority. This was especially important in a context in which reminders of the migrants' actual linguistic, social, and racial inferiority were frequent and structural, and were coming not just from the broader society, but also from their own ethnic community and their own children. Such moral discourse also helped migrants in constructing a sense of respectability, which was unfortunately, but perhaps inevitably, achieved through the marginalisation and invisibility of alternative forms of femininity and motherhood within the ethnic community.

Marriage

Marriage and family life have been central to the migratory experience of most Italian women in Australia. According to the 1971 Australian Census, 95% of Italian-born women over the age of 19 were married (Pesman 1993), and almost the totality of them were married to fellow Italians. The rate of endogamy in the Italian-Australian community was variable, both due to parochialism and moral values, and the particular conditions in the context of emigration (Pascoe 1987). Due to the cost and difficulty of finding and bringing over a spouse from the other side of the world, the rate of endogamy among early (male) migrants (between 1908 and 1922) was as low as 33%, but continued to grow over time. It reached a peak from mid-1950 to mid-1960

(75% for males and 92% for females), and then started to decline, but most Italian migrants married somebody from Italy at least until the late 1970s (Pascoe 1987, 182–83). For instance, data from the 1986 census (which included most of the Italian migrants who settled in Australia in the postwar period) suggested that 87.7% of women and 70.1% of men were married to fellow Italians (see Roy and Hamilton 2000, 68). The higher rate of intermarriages for women is due to the fact that most of the Italian women who migrated to Australia in the postwar period did so as wives, brides by proxy, or to marry an Italian. The overall preference for intermarriage by men is reasonably explained by the racism and hostility many migrants endured (Iuliano 1999, 327); their limited knowledge of English (especially in the early years of migration); and the pressure from family and community. Australian women often expressed open antipathy towards Italian men, and those who liked them were usually exposed to sexist and racist remarks by fellow Australians. Italians' own stereotypes about Australian women and their dubious morality further contributed to the scarcity of marriages between Italians and Australians.

While there is no doubt that intermarriage was central to the development of Italian families and communities in Australia, specific studies show different reasons for the prevalence of intermarriages in specific contexts. For instance, Silvia Stefanoni (1989) has emphasised how migrants from the north of Italy tended to marry women from their town of origin due to the importance of maintaining transnational links with that specific place in Italy. Conversely, at least certain groups of Sicilians privileged marriages with children of Sicilians already in Australia, in order to promote and consolidate new social relationships with fellow Sicilians who had already settled in Australia.

While endogamy has clearly been an important characteristic of the Italian-Australian community for the best part of the twentieth century, we should not forget that Italians who did not conform to endogamy remained a significant percentage throughout the period. The census data also suggests that younger and more recent Italian migrants, and those living outside the large Italian communities or the big cities, have been much less likely to intermarry (Roy and Hamilton 2000). And finally, we must keep in mind that a significant number of Italians, in fact, never married. For instance, according to Robert Pascoe (1987, 186), in Australia in 1976, there were 29,000 men and 16,500 women who were born in Italy and were unmarried.

An important phenomenon in postwar Italian migration to Australia was marriage by proxy, which allowed men to marry Italian women, usually from their own town or province, without having to travel back to Italy. Marriage by proxy has often been considered as evidence of Italian backwardness, conservatism, and narrow-mindedness, yet recent research suggests a more complex picture. I intend to focus on this specific form of marriage because it provides a good way of understanding transculturality as a key facet of Italian migration.

Proxy marriages, performed in the absence of the bride or the groom, became legal with the concordat between the Catholic Church and the Italian state in 1929, and with the revised Italian civil code in 1942. A few years later, the Australian governments of the postwar period were particularly keen to address the gender imbalance within the Italian community, and to reduce the number of single Italians, who were perceived as a social danger (Vasta 1994, 407) and a direct threat to Australian women (Iuliano 1999, 330). Thus, the Australian government shut their eyes to marriages by proxy, which were prevented or prohibited elsewhere (Iuliano 1999, 331). The Catholic Church at the time maintained an ambivalent position. While in principle, the Church was keen to limit the number of proxy marriages, this form of marriage was also an effective way to reduce the risk of Italian men marrying non-Catholic women, or marrying outside the Catholic Church (Iuliano 1999, 329–30). All these concomitant factors help explain why marriages by proxy became a common occurrence in the postwar period.

There were thousands of such marriages, especially in the 1950s and early 1960s (Wardrop 1996, 2). Susanna Iuliano (1999, 321) calculated that 923 proxy marriages involving Italians in Western Australia were celebrated between 1938 and 1971, and suggested that as many as 24,000 Italians who settled in Australia in the postwar period might have been married by proxy (Iuliano 2000, 562). The majority of proxy marriages were between southerners, but in percentage, northerners married by proxy as much as southerners, if not more (Iuliano 1999, 323). Men tended to marry respectable women from their own village or province; figures from Western Australia suggest, for instance, that more than half of the proxy spouses married men from their own hometown, and another quarter from within their province, while these forms of parochial marriages were only a significant minority when considering overall intermarriage rates (Iuliano 1999, 323; 2000, 564).

The bride and the groom often had little acquaintance, and the marriage was usually organised by the families, within the same community, and through the Catholic Church. It was often the groom's mother who chose the wife for her son, within their own village or in the neighbouring villages (Wardrop 1996, 20). Parochial endogamy meant that the spouses, or at least their parents, were usually not complete strangers at the time of the engagement (Iuliano 1999, 324). Proxy marriages were largely consistent with traditional marriages in rural Italy, insofar as they were not just the culmination of a romantic engagement between two people, but rather the expected outcome of more complex social processes of acquaintances, exchanges, and negotiations amongst the extended families and the communities of the two spouses (Scarparo 2009). At the same time, proxy marriages developed as a peculiar phenomenon of transnational migration between the 1930s and the 1970s.

Marriage by proxy guaranteed that a woman was married before undertaking the trip to Australia, thus protecting her honour. These marriages have often been perceived as a sign of Italian backwardness and another example of Italy's oppressive attitudes towards women, with many migrants themselves feeling the stigma (Iuliano 1999, 320), and later considering their marriage by proxy a shameful secret. But at the time when these marriages were performed, they appeared as a normal occurrence to most of the brides (Wardrop 1996, 23), and, in fact, were even seen as fashionable (Scarparo 2009).

Most of the women Iuliano (2000, 566) interviewed declared that their main reason for marrying by proxy was not marriage itself, but rather their desire to migrate. The women interviewed by Susanna Scarparo (2009) also refer to various reasons mostly relating to migration, such as dreaming and fantasising about Australia; a sense of destiny; family and economic problems that could perhaps be resolved through migration; or looking for the only way to migrate far away with parental approval. This form of marriage, in fact, provided many women with a unique opportunity to escape not only poverty and extremely hard work (Wardrop 1996, 23), but also the limitations of their patriarchal families and communities; the agency of proxy spouses should thus be acknowledged (Iuliano 2000, 561).

Forms of deceptions by the groom (providing false or inaccurate information about himself, such as his age, physical appearance, socio-economic situation, previous marriage, children, etc.), or by

the bride (for instance, running away before or soon after meeting the husband in Australia) became the matter of gossip, shared stories, and even a famous movie with Alberto Sordi and Claudia Cardinale. While some anecdotal evidence of such deceptions survive (Wardrop 1996, 26; Iuliano 1999; Ricatti 2011), their frequency and nature has certainly been exaggerated (Scarparo 2009). Stories about such deceptions came to constitute a sort of archetypical narrative, which was often promoted by the media—for instance the Italian-Australian newspapers (Scarparo 2009)—and certainly expressed the fear and uneasiness about this peculiar form of female migration. A more common deception seems to have been that a man would promise to come back to marry in Italy, but then change his mind, and thus force the already engaged and thus committed woman to marry by proxy (Wardrop 1996, 26). A courtship could last a year or more, and was usually carried out through epistolary exchanges. Despite the fact that very often the bride and groom knew little or nothing about each other, the Catholic Church received very few requests for dissolutions of proxy marriages (Wardrop 1996, 54).

The increased rapidity and cheaper cost of travel (which allowed migrant men to go back and marry in Italy more easily), the profound changes in Italian and Australian societies throughout the 1960s and 1970s in matters of women's rights and morality, and the improved transculturation of Italians within Australian society, resulted in a gradual reduction of intermarriages and endogamy, and in a sudden and definitive end to marriages by proxy.

During the years of very low Italian migration, from the early 1970s to the early 2000s, anecdotal evidence suggests that love, rather than marriage, gradually became one of the major reasons for Italians to move to Australia. Italians began falling in love with the Australian daughters and sons of Italian postwar migrants who were travelling back to Italy, with other Australians visiting Italy as tourists or students, and with Australians and Italian-Australians they met during their own travels in an increasingly globalised and cosmopolitan world. This process might have further increased in the last fifteen years, as new visas have allowed a large number of young Italians to work and spend their holidays in Australia for a limited period of time. Gay and lesbian Italians are also finding perhaps a more tolerant and supportive environment in the large multicultural cities of the Australian continent.

It would be a mistake to assign only to these more recent migrants the badge of transcultural partners within a transnational and globalising

world. The history of Italian migration to Australia shows that even marriages by proxy, which superficially might appear as the most parochial and conservative of all forms of marriage, and one of the least romantic, often engendered complex and contradictory relationships, and, especially for women, an opportunity for adventure and migration, an acceptable escape from the constrictions of the parents' home, and at times even the chance to challenge consolidated cultural expectations.

Youth, Gender, and Sexuality

The children of Italian migrants who were born in Australia, or arrived when still very young, have played an essential role in the transculturation between their families and the broader Australian society, through complex processes of transcultural negotiations within and without their families and communities. The centrality of hard work, food, and family gathering are often cited as central to their identities, cultural practices, and emotional emplacement. Other aspects, such as religious observance and the celebrations of the patron saints have carried less significance in the second-generation (Vasta 1994, 413).

The contradictions in which the children of migrants have found themselves growing up are of various nature. In terms of class, they have usually enjoyed a higher socio-economic status and better opportunities than their working-class parents, while remaining disadvantaged compared to the overall Australian population (Vasta 1994, 418–19). In terms of cultural identity, they have occupied an ambivalent and often liminal space between the world of their parents and the broader Australian society, a space that is particularly stressful in the teenage years, when sexuality and peer pressure often contrast more openly and explicitly with parents' worries and moral concerns.

Until at least the 1980s, these children were also pressured from opposite sides by two conservative institutions: the Italian family that insisted on cultural maintenance, and the Australian school that pushed for their assimilation into mainstream society (see Ricatti 2011). However, Italian families also wanted their children to be successful within the broader society and were aware that this goal required forms of transculturation, for instance around education and language proficiency. Another difficult issue that the second-generation had to face at the time was the racially-motivated bullying that was common in Australian schools.

The generational negotiations were further complicated by the profound changes that occurred in Western societies between the 1950s and the 1970s, especially around sexuality, politics, the use of drugs, popular culture, and intergenerational relationships. These changes were often read by migrants as signs of Australian moral weakness, and perceived as a threat to their children and to themselves, when in fact, those same changes were happening simultaneously in Italian and other Western societies. The situation has certainly improved since the 1980s, with the development of multiculturalism, the 'whitening' of Italians in Australia, and the consolidation of Italian-ness as a positive, 'cool' marker of identity. Nevertheless, it would be disingenuous to assume that even in recent years ethnically- and racially-motivated bullying towards Italian children has disappeared.

It is not surprising that generational negotiations have been particularly difficult for girls. Cultural emotions such as honour and shame are significant in the Italian context; women have specific roles in preserving family values and traditions, and the core of many Italian families is their ethnic morality—the attempt to define their ethnic identity through specific markers of morality (Ricatti 2011). Studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s emphasised the complex ways in which second-generation Italian women in Australia constructed their sense of self. Norma Grieve et al. (1988), for instance, emphasised how adolescent working-class girls were more controlled by their parents than boys, and had to perform many more domestic duties. When compared to Anglo-Australian girls, they showed a greater attachment to a traditional understanding of femininity, and a greater preoccupation about their relationship with parents; but they also showed the same level of self-esteem and satisfaction with their sex-role. Similarly, Rosenthal and Grieve (1990), in their study of tertiary female students of Italian background, showed that these women declared the same (medium to high) levels of well-being, satisfaction, and self-esteem as their Anglo-Australian counterparts. While showing more traditional attitudes to motherhood and to the role of women in society, these Italian-Australian women also showed the same level of commitment to study and career, and the same attitudes in relation to marriage.

Loretta Baldassar's work emphasises issues of longing, belonging, nostalgia, intimacy, and caregiving, which overall provide a nuanced confirmation of the centrality of family kinship in Italian migrant communities. Baldassar's (1999) analysis of Italian-Australian wedding ceremonies

emphasised how young women of Italian background had to manage and negotiate difficult but not always rigid boundaries. She argued that in dealing with the 'moral community' created by their parents, the second-generation tended to develop its own informal network and its own moral community, which was constructed through selective appropriation, contestation, and rejection of their parents' values (especially with regards to honour and shame), but also "in opposition to the perceived identity, pattern of gender relations and sexuality of their 'Australian' peers" (Baldassar 1999, 1–2). These studies suggest a high level of transculturation by these young women, who could appropriate different attitudes towards family and work in order to maintain a sense of belonging and attachment to family values, without compromising their access to study and professional fulfilment, their sense of worth and well-being, and a gradual emancipation from the restrictions imposed by family honour in relation to sexuality and love.

Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli's work shifts the focus further towards an intergenerational understanding of family relationships, in which the voice of the second-generation can more clearly be heard, and their distance from their parents more clearly perceived. In their study of young Australians of Italian and Yugoslavian background, Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli and Zlatko Skrbis (1994) have demonstrated how—due to the fact that sexual and marital control was used by Italian-Australian families and communities to maintain ethnic cohesion—sexuality, intimacy, and gender construction are centrally important in the negotiation of the generational gap. Pallotta-Chiarolli and Skrbis noted how young Italian-Australians had to manage not only the expectations of their ethnic group, but also those of the broader society, which was also characterised by patriarchal and heterosexist norms. In other words, these young Italian-Australians were pushed towards conformity both within and without their community. They responded in many different ways, through compliance, negotiation, resistance, or rebellion—some were proud to conform as much as others were proud to challenge the status quo. Many of those who felt the need to negotiate, resist, or even rebel were at the same time worried for their parents, as they were aware of the weight of the community gaze and of all the sacrifices their parents had made for them. Many embraced and embodied certain values, but rejected others that they felt were no longer relevant. Many, as already discussed, did not see a contradiction between the role of women within the Italian family and their desire to study and work professionally.

These and many other responses testify to the richness and complexity of the Italian ethnic community. Neither the Italian migrants nor their children should be superficially categorised within one specific intersection of sexual and ethnic identity.

A particularly interesting study on the stressful and complex nature of intergenerational negotiations has been conducted by Pallotta-Chiarolli and her gay and lesbian second-generation informants since the 1990s (Pallotta-Chiarolli 1992; Pallotta-Chiarolli et al. 2000). This study has highlighted changing attitudes towards homosexuality, consistent with the growing visibility of LGBT people both in Italy and Australia, and their increasingly successful struggles for equality. Most Italian families have shown a complex and nuanced approach that has evolved over time. Still, in the 1980s and 1990s, family cohesion remained the main worry for most Italians. This created a paradoxical situation in which traditional and religious values were perceived by parents as an essential signifier of cohesion within the family, and yet, if such values were enforced too rigidly, they could create a fundamental rupture with their gay and lesbian children. This meant that many families adopted a 'don't ask don't tell' strategy. At the same time the focus on honour and shame, especially within the family and the community, the religious pressure from the Catholic Church, and the outward focus on respectability as a political tool for the community, meant that even when accepted within the nuclear family, the homosexuality of their children was information rarely shared by parents outside the home.

Second-generation children also felt a duty to their parents—many of them were aware of how hard their parents had worked, and the discrimination they had suffered. Sons and daughters worried about the further stress and suffering their parents could experience, should their homosexuality become common knowledge within the broader family and the community. Pallotta-Chiarolli and her informants (2000) have identified crucial tools through which gay and lesbian children of Italian migrants have managed to mediate different and, at times, contrasting needs, and to negotiate their complex identities within the family, the migrant community, and the broader society. These tools include strong support networks and friendships within the LGBT community; strategic and shifting choices about when, how and to whom they should 'come out'; use of developing community organisations and services for LGBT people; and reliance on increasingly positive and supportive understanding

of homosexuality in the media and in educational institutions. It will be the future work of scholars to ensure that intersectionality plays its role in protecting young Italian-Australian LGBTQIA+ people. From the studies undertaken so far, it can be seen that the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual identity is complex, and each factor important to understanding intergenerational interactions.

Aged Care

Within the study of the Italian community in Australia, it has only been in the last ten years that a serious scholarly reflection has developed on the complex implications of an ageing migrant population (see in particular the work of Baldassar 2007a, b, 2008, 2011, 2017; and the volume recently edited by Cosmini-Rose 2015). The focus has been on three major aspects: how migrants relate to and care for their parents in Italy; how they face their own old age and the prospect of death in Australia; and how their children and grandchildren care for them. The complex negotiations within families to accommodate the needs of aging and dependent parents is crucial, yet until recently, was an often overlooked aspect of migrants' lives (Baldassar 2011, 172). Furthermore, the strong sense of obligation towards aging parents is central to the way Italian migrants define their identities and ethnic boundaries (Baldassar 2011, 173; Cosmini-Rose and Belperio 2015). This also relates to broader historical and social characteristics of the Italian welfare system, which has often left to the family the responsibility of caring for the elderly.

Baldassar (2017) has argued that the nature of migration—in particular, the existence of social networks and family strategies—has also had a significant impact on the way migrants have negotiated and perceived their care duties towards aging parents. Typically, when migration was part of a large social phenomenon and a family strategy based on chain networks, it resulted in less disruptive relationships with the family and community in Italy, and in stronger, and at times, more closed ethnic communities in Australia. This is especially the case with postwar migration. When migration has been, instead, more of an individual choice, and migrants have lacked the social and parental 'licence to leave'; they have tended to structure their lives and family relationships around more variable and flexible forms of socialisation and transnational connection. This has been increasingly the case with more recent migrants.

These specific aspects of migration have had direct repercussions on the way the care of aging parents has been experienced and negotiated both in Italy and in Australia. In the case of chain migration, for instance, migrants experience less social and family pressure for their relative inability to take care of parents in Italy, but more pressure if they fail to do so with their parents in Australia. Of course, the specific lives of individuals present many more variations than these broad categorisations. For instance, within the chain migration process of the postwar period, a wife who followed her husband to Australia could lack a clear and unconditional 'licence to leave' from her parents, and experience an increased sense of guilt and impotence when they got sick and frail (Ricatti 2010).

Importantly, Baldassar (2008) has emphasised how the transnational nature of migration means that caring and kin relationships develop not only through physical presence or proximity, but also through complex emotional and practical work in which the (co)presence is developed virtually, by proxy, or through imagination. The quantity and quality of such interactions have of course changed over time, with technological developments in transportation and communication (Goodall et al. 2015). This should not, however, lead scholars to believe that alternative forms of transnational caring and family life could not be engendered and negotiated before the era of the Internet; for instance, through remittances, letters, and care arrangements with siblings and other relatives (Baldassar 2017). Nor should we underestimate the possibility that many elderly Italians in Australia today might be limited, or even excluded, from information and communication delivered through digital media (Goodall et al. 2015).

In the first part of the twentieth century, holidaying in Italy was incredibly expensive and impractical—return migration was instead a much more reasonable and cost-effective strategy. A large number of Italians who arrived during the mass migration of the postwar years also struggled to go back to Italy for brief visits. More common were attempts to spend a few months back in Italy, to evaluate the possibility of resettling there. Still, due to financial, family, and work-related constraints, many migrants did not go back to Italy for two decades or more. This was still the time in which even a telephone call to Italy could prove very expensive, especially for families whose savings and home repayment were funded through hard, intensive, and often poorly-paid work. Migrants still maintained strong links with the family at home, and with

Italy in general, through remittances, (rare) phone calls, letters, newspapers, ethnic radio stations or programs, and other means of communication; but their ability to travel, communicate, and care for aging parents was inevitably felt as inadequate. This often engendered a deep sense of guilt and sadness in many migrants, even those who had had a 'licence to leave', especially when their parents died before they were able to go back to Italy and see them again one last time. Most migrants had imagined their migration as temporary, and the fact that they had not been able to see their parents again after migrating, made the worry for ill parents particularly stressful, and the bereavement particularly tragic (see Ricatti 2010). In such situations, the caring of elderly parents usually rested with brothers and sisters who were still in Italy, and this could also create further tensions within the family. Caring for their elderly parents in Italy was also one of the main reasons for many migrants to return to Italy, especially in the absence of siblings who could take care of their parents (Thompson 1980).

In more recent years, much faster and cheaper means of transportation and communication have been developed, and migrant families have seen improved financial situations. This means that for younger or newer migrants, and for those postwar migrants whose parents died very old, transnational care giving can be a more reliable, continuous, and consistent practice. Baldassar (2016) has insisted on the importance of digital media in facilitating and sustaining relationships across great distance. Furthermore, for the younger, often professional migrants of the past twenty years, in particular, frequent travelling back to Italy has become a common occurrence and a key aspect of their migratory experience and lifestyle (Baldassar 2011, 179; 2017). These travels, and the possibility to spend time with their aging parents, provide migrants with a "sense of redemption" (Baldassar 2011, 182) and might also contribute to a process of reconnection with their own country and culture. In practical, as well as affective terms, these travels also allow migrants to provide some respite to the siblings or other relatives who are taking care of their parents in Italy, a responsibility that is particularly felt by women (Baldassar 2011, 180).

While taking care of their parents in Italy, and their children and grandchildren in Australia, many Italian migrants who arrived in Australia in the postwar period have themselves become elderly. While for a long time, popular and scholarly literature has focused on youth and the generational gap between young Italian-Australians and their parents, we are now experiencing the inevitable evolution of that

phenomenon, with an increasing number of studies focusing on second-generation adults caring for their elderly parents. Many elderly Italians feel the desire to reconnect with their land physically, breathing and smelling the place of their youth (Baldassar 2011, 182), and it is not uncommon for these migrants to desire to go back to live in their hometown in the final years of their lives (see for instance Sinclair et al. 2014). For the majority of them, though, the presence of their children in Australia, and many other practical concerns, make the prospect impractical and unrealistic. This sensory longing is often compensated by the physical importance of the home and of food, which helps explain why most Italians want to age and die at home, and their reluctance to move into aged-care facilities.

Studies in cross-cultural gerontology have suggested that elderly Italian migrants, when compared with Australian, American, and even other European migrant groups, have closer kin contacts, more often live with their children, and see their friends more frequently, yet perceive less emotional support than all other groups. This might suggest that they have very high expectations, which are deeply rooted in their culture, community life, and ethnic identity (Stanaway et al. 2011). A recent study specifically focusing on Italian elderly men in Australia concluded that they were "twice as likely to report low subjective expressive social support as their Australian-born counterparts" (Stanaway et al. 2011, 216). The causes of such disparity could be cultural perception (a more social orientation), greater need for support (for instance, due to linguistic and cultural issues), and a culturally driven willingness to complain more or more openly. The study also emphasised that Italian migrant men tend to have less support outside the family than the Australian counterparts.

In the Italian-Australian community, there is a strong perception that the 'Italian way' of caring for the elderly is to keep them at home, rather than in an aged-care facility (Baldassar 2011, 175). There are cultural, sentimental, and practical reasons for this. For instance, Italian migrants' expectation about proper Italian food, and their at times, limited ability to speak English, especially in instances of linguistic regression due to dementia, make life in aged-care facilities particularly hard for most elderly Italian migrants. It is to be noted that Italian migrant associations, especially the Comitato Assistenza Italiani (CO.AS.IT.) and the Scalabrinians, have been instrumental in providing culturally sensitive care for those elderly migrants who could not live with or be cared for by their children.

The strong focus on family care often results in an additional burden being placed on care givers. For instance, in cases of dementia, carers, almost always women, have to address and negotiate often unrealistic expectations—from the care recipient, the family, the community, and themselves. Carers tend to access external support and services as late and as little as possible. While having positive feelings about the family solidarity and reciprocity that inform their care, carers often struggle with feelings of stigma, being judged, loss of freedom, and a dangerous combination of emotional, social, and physical issues directly related to their caring (Benedetti et al. 2013). Furthermore, these values often contrast with those prevailing in the broader society, especially around personal life satisfaction and career progression (Cosmini-Rose and Belperio 2015), which make the availability of the second-generation women as carers much more problematic than the community rhetoric would suggest.

The family focus on aged-care also seems apparent when it comes to attitudes towards dying and assisted dying. For instance, when compared with Dutch elderly migrants, elderly Italians stress more the importance of family in end-of-life matters and show more trust in family members making decisions on their behalf, to the point of considering advance care planning redundant (Sinclair et al. 2014).

Even in the final stage of their life, Italians in Australia rely heavily on their family as the main point of reference within a difficult social context. However, as this whole chapter has argued, such reliance should not be read in terms of an essentialised adhesion to traditional and parochial values, but rather as an important tool in managing a complex, contradictory, and often challenging process of transculturation across great distances and multiple generations.

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CHAPTER 6

Transnational Ideologies and Transcultural Practices

Abstract This chapter explores how transcultural skills and practices are influenced by ideology, and vice versa. The first part of the chapter interprets migration as a strategic response to illiteracy. It shows the influence of conflicting ideologies over language use and acquisition, and the importance of migrants' linguistic and transcultural skills and practices. The second part analyses the role of religion in the lives of Italian migrants, and the contrasts between Italian Catholic migrants and the Irish-Australian Catholic hierarchy. The third part of the chapter illustrates the transnational nature of migrants' political ideologies, but also their transcultural flexibility in promoting and negotiating their politics. The concluding section analyses the importance of ethnic media in providing key information and support to the Italian community, but also the ethnic media's limitations in representing and giving voice to the experiences and ideas of the majority of migrants.

Keywords Italian migrants—Australia · Language · Illiteracy
Fascism · Communism · Catholicism · Ethnic media

Religious, political, and media organisations often use ideology as a justification for broad, undeclared, and at times obscene interests. Strong ideological beliefs within a migrant community can exclude and marginalise many of its members. Yet this is often softened by the need of migrant organisations and associations to acquire political, social,

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F. Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in Migration History,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78873-9_6

cultural, and even financial capital in negotiation with the hegemonic cultures, ideologies, and structures of power in the host society. Many migrants in the 1920s and 1930s embraced Fascism not out of a strong political belief, but rather out of national pride and in response to the discrimination they endured in the country of migration. Fascist organisations abroad certainly benefitted from the bombastic nationalism and exaggerated claims of their leader Mussolini, but then they also had to provide social and concrete support to the migrants they wanted to attract to their cause. Similarly, Catholic priests and welfare associations in the second half of the twentieth century often relied on migrants' religious faith, beliefs, and traditions to support, structure, and finance their operations, but then also cared and catered for non-Catholic or anti-clerical migrants and their families. These examples illustrate how ideology works: its foundational myths, grandiose objectives, and dogmatic rules are all functions of much more practical, mundane, and tangible goals.

The transnational character of political ideologies in the twentieth century meant that ideologies played a particularly important role in the establishment of transnational networks and identities within migratory contexts. Furthermore, these ideologies were promoted and supported in a migratory context that required transcultural skills, and which was, in turn, shaped by complex processes of transculturation. The relationship between transcultural practices and national and transnational ideologies is therefore unavoidable.

Language is a powerful illustration of such relationship, as will be discussed in the first part of this chapter. Languages—it is often multiple languages—are the most essential tools of communication and orientation for a migrant in a new country, and often also constitute major barriers in the process of transculturation. At the same time, language competence and shifts in language use are strongly influenced by political structures and ideological beliefs in the country of origin, the country of settlement, and the migrants' own ethnic community. Moving along the same theme of ideology and transcultural practices, the chapter then goes on to consider religious ideologies and practices. In particular, the role of the Catholic Church and Catholicism in the lives of Italian migrant individuals, families, and communities suggests a close relation between transnational ideology and transcultural practices even within a grossly assimilationist context. The chapter then provides a brief overview of the political ideologies and practices that have characterised the Italian-Australian context over the past one hundred years, and this discussion

is followed by a closely related analysis of the role of ethnic media in the Italian community in Australia. Politics and media showcase the influence of the migrant middle-class minority over the much larger peasant and working-class section of the community. The chapter concludes with a cautionary note for scholars who have assumed that ethnic media, and in particular newspapers, have been representative of the characteristics, values, and interests of the broader Italian community in Australia.

Language

Before taking English into consideration, it is important to acknowledge three factors when reflecting on language and the orientation and emplacement of Italian migrants: firstly, Italy is a multilingual country in which most local languages are not dialects of the Italian language, but rather evolved from Latin; secondly, and closely related to the first point, most Italian migrants at least until the 1950s, had a limited knowledge of the Italian language, and used prevalently their native local language, especially within the home; and thirdly, for a long time after the unification of Italy, illiteracy remained widespread, especially amongst peasant and working-class people. All these factors gradually weakened throughout the twentieth century, but remain to varying extents significant into the present day. For instance, it was only in 1991, according to the Italian census, that Italians with a university degree outnumbered those who were illiterate (the number of illiterate also having been underestimated) (Vedovelli 2011a, 53). In the collective imaginary of the Italian nation, the use of dialect was itself a strong signifier of illiteracy, at least until the 1970s. And, in turn, illiteracy has often been equated with poverty, lack of power, and a substantial inability to adapt and succeed.

My argument, as a historian rather than a linguist, is that migration has been for Italians a response to illiteracy as much as a response to poverty. Illiteracy, in the context of migration, is not a cause of passive resignation to poverty and marginality. On the contrary, as argued by Massimo Vedovelli (2011a, 56), it is precisely in the context of migration that illiterate Italians have become aware of the possibility of not just offsetting the negative socio-economic effects of illiteracy through transcultural mobility, but of, in fact, overcoming illiteracy altogether. Factors that have been crucial in achieving this are: communication with fellow Italians from other parts of the country, education and the schooling system (especially for young migrants and for the second generation), a new

transcultural and linguistic awareness, socio-economic upward mobility, and even the ethnic media.

Migration is a response to illiteracy insofar as it shifts the focus from linguistic purity and accuracy—which are fundamental tools of social exclusion used by the dominant classes—to communicative and expressive functionality (Vedovelli 2011b, 92). In a new linguistic and cultural context, which is full of challenges, but also opportunities, communicative efficacy matters much more than linguistic precision. Thus, transcultural communicative skills matter more than possessing the ability to write, a proper knowledge of grammatical rules, or a vast vocabulary in the Italian language. Furthermore, we must recognise that language use and language shift are influenced not just by their instrumental and practical value, but also by their ability to communicate nuances and to transmit and engender emotions, affectivity, identity, and a deep sense of belonging. From this perspective, languages are both effective and affective tools of orientation in migratory contexts.

This is not to deny the many struggles that Italians in Australia had to face because of their illiteracy and their poor knowledge of both the Italian and the English language. The lack of English, in particular, is an aspect that has been constantly emphasised in the historical literature, and also in migrants' own memories and autobiographies. Rather, I would like to suggest a shift in focus from migrants' linguistic limitations to their transcultural abilities to communicate across three or more languages, with an extraordinary degree of adaptability and creativity. While the traumatic consequences of not being able to understand crucial information in another language remain vivid and painful in the memory of migrants, especially during the early years of their settlement, there is a more complex story that needs to be told about their ability to learn, communicate, adjust, and strive through an array of communicative skills and transcultural strategies. As argued by Antonia Rubino (2017a, 121), "in the Australian context, the Italo-Australians continue to use their linguistic resources effectively, both in the family and outside." It is not within the scope of this section to explore this argument in all its implications, but a brief consideration of the linguistic history of Italians in Australia might provide some context.

There is a substantial difference in Italian language proficiency between Italians who went to Australia after World War I—who often had limited education and professional competencies—and those who went

after World War II—who were more educated and had better knowledge of the Italian language (Gallina 2011, 440). Nevertheless, in the early 1980s, at least a third of Italian migrants in Australia could not read or write, and many more had only completed primary school (Clyne 1994, 113). The 1981 census indicated that of the 271,256 Italian-born people in Australia, only 2% had a high school diploma or a university degree (Ercole 1987, 142). For most Italian migrants in the postwar period, dialect was the dominant language (Rubino 2017b, 56). They soon became acutely aware of the need not only to acquire a functioning knowledge of the English language, but also to improve their Italian, which was the language used within the broader Italian-Australian community.

According to Rubino, in the decades between the 1950s and the 1990s, the nature of the co-existence between dialects and Italian in Italy changed rapidly and profoundly (Rubino 2014, 31). This was due to the socio-economic development of the country, the increased levels of literacy, and the influence of new media, in particular television. The Italian language has not become exclusive; rather, both the Italian language and dialect are now used by the majority of Italians, depending on social context. Significant regional variations persist, as well as marked differences depending on the age, gender, and socio-economic level of the speakers. As a consequence of these changes, dialects are less frequently used by Italians who have arrived in Australia after the end of the mass migration period (from the mid to late 1960s onwards). I would argue this might also be due to the higher socio-economic status, literacy levels, and transnational engagement of more recent Italian migrants, for whom chain migration and ethnic concentration are no longer common mobility and settlement patterns.

The vast majority of Italians in Australia have been able, over time, to use at least three languages: their native dialect, the Italian language, and the English language. There are a few monolingual migrants who only speak dialect, mostly amongst people of the lower socio-economic level and those who migrated later in life (Rubino 2014, 53). However, many scholars have emphasised that this is a rare occurrence, for two essential reasons: for migrants, the Italian language is both socially more prestigious than dialect (thus its use often signifies the socio-economic mobility migrants have achieved or aim to achieve), and it is also the language needed for communication amongst the multilingual Italian community in Australia (see Rubino 2014, 53).

Migrants' dominant language has gradually become a regional variety of Italian (Rubino 2017a, 106). This is especially the case since the 1970s, as the Italian community has become more organised. Australian multiculturalism has also facilitated the proud maintenance of national languages, and new means of communication have increased the chances to talk and maintain relationships with relatives and friends in Italy, and to access Italian language media (Rubino 2017b, 63). English has remained migrants' third language (Rubino 2017a, 110), although there has been a shift towards its increased use. There have been many factors influencing the actual level of English competency reached by different migrants over time, including age at arrival, education and occupation, gender (men use it more often than women), and level of general integration within the broader Australian society (Rubino 2017a, 106; 2017b, 54). The shift to English has been "faster in those states with a lower concentration of Italian migrants, as well as among the second generation, men, younger speakers of the first generation and older ones of the second, and those in exogamous marriages and relationships" (Rubino 2014, 50–51).

The linguistic context is even more complex when considering other factors. First, the use of these languages is characterised by diglossia—for instance, dialect is used within the family and when talking to *paesani*, while Italian is used publicly. Second, the permeability and reciprocal influences of these languages is remarkable. For instance, while dialect is the language mostly spoken at home, it influences the Italian language, which prevails in the public space and in formal contexts within the Italian-Australian community. English, meanwhile, is the language used in the broader society, but also infiltrates the family conversation through the second and third generations, thus tending to have more impact on the dialect than on the Italian language (Gallina 2011, 457). Furthermore, significant variations in the use of these languages depend on many other factors, such as the linguistic competence, gender and age of the speaker and their interlocutor, the social context, the pragmatic implications, and the intention to recall symbolic and affective elements of identity and belonging through language (Gallina 2011, 458).

Rather than focusing on this linguistic complexity, there is a tendency in public discourse and some of the scholarly literature to focus on *Australitaliano*, a term sometimes used to indicate the mixing of Italian or dialect and English in words like *fenza* (fence), *marchetta* (market) and *carro* (car). Australitaliano is characterised by code-switching, lexical

borrowing, phonetic adaptation and semantic transfers (Clyne 1994, 114), as well as by a high degree of formal and functional variability and instability. Most scholars agree it should not be considered an Australian variety of the Italian language, as it lacks standardization. Australitaliano could be seen as further evidence of the linguistic vitality and creativity of migrants, but instead is too often laughed at by more recent and educated migrants. These derogatory undertones are highly problematic, insofar as they are based on a classist understanding of the importance of linguistic purity and accuracy, instead of a transcultural understanding of the value of linguistic creativity and effective communication. What such a superficial attitude fails to acknowledge is migrants' ability to control the mixing of Italian, dialect, and English depending on the social context and the interlocutor.

For the second generation, the dominant language is English, although dialect was their first language after birth, usually until the time of school (Rubino 2017a, 106). Most of them understand Italian, but there is great variability in their speaking competence. For the third generation, English is often the exclusive language, at times with the exception of the dialect used with grandparents (Rubino 2017a, 107).

The linguistic maintenance over time and through generations is stronger with Italian migrants than with groups who have more easily assimilated, such as the Dutch and the Germans, but weaker than with other groups who were discriminated upon as much as Italians were, such as the Greeks. Overall, the rate of intergenerational language transmission is good, with 40% of the second generation still using Italian at home in the 1990s (Rubino 2017b, 53). The racism and hostility Italians experienced resulted in a strong sense of identity and thus a strong linguistic maintenance. Furthermore, specific characteristics of the Italian community helped migrants preserve the use of their languages; these include chain migration, which facilitated the maintenance of dialects, and mass migration, which facilitated the development of large Italian-Australian communities in which people tended to use the Italian language. On the other hand, there are a variety of factors that determine the prevalence of the English language over time, especially amongst the second and third generations. These include a 'natural' process of linguistic transculturation towards English (as the dominant language in society), the stigmatization of dialects in Italian schools (Rubino 2014, 29), the limited knowledge of the Italian language by most migrants, and the assimilationist attitudes of the Australian society and its school system.

Dialect has been commonly spoken at home, and thus passed on to children and grandchildren much more effectively than Italian—although its transmission has been limited by its lack of prestige, especially when mixed with English (Bettoni and Gibbons 1988). Still, dialect has continued to play an important role for the second generation, especially in showing respect to their parents, in maintaining an emotional connection with them, and in caring for the elderly (Rubino 2017b, 61–62). With the gradual disappearance of those migrants who arrived in Australia in the postwar period, the Italian language actually has a greater chance than dialects to survive and remain in use within the large cohort of Australians of Italian descent. This is due to a series of factors, including the increased prestige of the Italian language, the possibility to use it for travel and work, the ability to communicate with fellow Italian-Australians, the geographical spread of the Italian community away from parochial concentrations of *paesani*, the fact that Italian is commonly taught throughout Australia—including in a great number of schools and a relatively small number of universities—and the increasing number, in recent years, of Italians migrating to Australia.

As this brief account of the complexity and evolution of language use within the Italian community in Australia shows, proper and critical consideration should always be given to the resourcefulness, agency, creativity, and adaptability of migrants, but also to the ideological implications of changes in language use. In the age of assimilation, the Australian gaze on Italian migrants tended to overemphasise hardship, marginalisation, and social issues. In the subsequent age of multiculturalism, the focus suddenly turned to Italian migrants' success and great contribution to Australia's economy, society, and culture. Oblivious to the contradictions inherent in this shift, public discourse on Italians in Australia has largely continued to ignore the possibility that both interpretations might be gross exaggerations. Such historical hyperboles have been appropriated, internalised, and exploited by many in the Italian-Australian community, through the trope of sacrifice (see also Ricatti 2009). However, it seems to me infinitely more interesting and fruitful to focus on migrants' ability to live, communicate, work, and negotiate across multiple languages, cultures, and ideologies, effecting constant evolution and reciprocal interaction. There is a need for literature that leans towards a more transcultural and transnational history of Italians in Australia, and away from the parochial history of the Australian society and its peoples. The focus in public discourse on how much Italians (or

other migrant groups) suffered in Australia, or how much they contributed to Australian society, is a symptom of either a childish or a paternalistic attitude. Rather, history should provide a critical understanding of the complex processes through which societies, communities, and individuals change over time. The majority of Italian migrants in Australia, who were often illiterate or had a limited level of literacy, were able to live meaningful lives and build strong communities through their use of multiple languages. This is a better testament to the intensity and richness of their lives, and their invaluable transcultural skills, than any celebration of individual success or sacrifice will ever be.

Religion

When considering Catholicism in Italian-Australian communities, there are at least five different groups we must not conflate, but rather understand as being in constant tension and negotiation. The first is the Roman Church, which has been, since at least the mid-nineteenth century, insisting that Catholic dioceses around the world provide practical and religious care to Italian migrants, and, in turn, ensure moral and political influence over them (Sanfilippo 2002, 481). The second group is the Australian Catholic Church, which for a long time was dominated by the Irish-Australian hierarchy and was suspicious of the particular form of Catholicism embodied by Italian migrants. The third group is made of the Italian priests who came as missionaries or in support of the Italian migrant community, and whose practices had to mediate between contrasting interests and beliefs. The fourth and largest group is made of the Catholic peasant and working-class migrants, who were treated with a degree of suspicion, if not open hostility, by the Irish-Australian hierarchy for their 'pagan' ways of worshiping God and their distrust of priests. And finally, there were the middle-class aspirational and usually conservative migrants, who were a numerical minority within the Italian community but could exercise significant cultural influence on it.

Within the Italian-Australian community, Catholicism was mostly promoted through family and schools (Barbaro 2000, 596). The Catholic Church itself played for a long time only a secondary and often contradictory role—Italian migrants were expected to conform to the Irish-Australian Church, but often failed to do so, showing instead anti-clerical attitudes and rarely attending mass (Barbaro 2000, 594–95), which was instead a ritual central to Irish Catholicism (Cappello 2000, 599).

In the colonial period, a small number of Italian missionaries operated in cities as well as rural areas, usually as part of a broader attempt by the Catholic Church to establish a stronger presence in Australia and the Pacific. A number of Italian priests had direct contact with the Indigenous population; for instance, the Benedictines who worked at the New Norcia Monastery, on the land of the Yued people of the Noongar nation, or the Passionists who attempted and failed to establish a missionary presence on Stradbroke Island (Cahill 2000, 509), known as Minjerribah to the local Quandamooka people. Importantly, there was rarely a clear distinction between missionary activity and activity in support of Italian migrants, as the two often converged and diverged according to external factors over which the priests had limited control.

The presence of the Italian missionaries was often opposed by the local Irish-Australian hierarchy (Cahill 2000)—in the first half of the twentieth century, it was already apparent that Italian Catholicism was profoundly different from Irish Catholicism. For instance in 1916, the then Vicar-Apostolic of Cooktown, John Heavey, noted that Italians acted as if they had no faith, no trust in priests, and no interest in mass except for rituals marking key moments in family life, such as baptism, marriages, confirmations, and burials (Barbaro 2000, 594). In 1924, in his communications to the Vatican, Heavey insisted that Italians' refusal to attend mass was disgraceful, but that sending Italian priests would not solve the problem. The Australian episcopacy often failed to understand how Italian Catholicism could go hand in hand with anti-clericalism, and how the authority of God could be compelling beyond, and independently from, the authority of the clergy. More importantly, the Australian Catholic Church failed to recognise that the religious faith of Italians was profoundly intertwined with anthropological, social, environmental, and at times, even ontological aspects of life that could not be reproduced easily in the context of migration. Stefano Girola (2003) notes how it was not so much that Italian Catholicism in Australia did not have a social dimension, but rather that the old social dimension made little sense in the new social setting. Furthermore, ritualistic attempts by migrants to reproduce this broader social and anthropological dimension, through specific rituals, traditions, and celebrations, were usually perceived by the Australian Church as expressions of paganism and superstition (Bosworth and Melia 1991; Girola 2003), and symptoms of a lack of intention to assimilate. These practices and expressions

of faith by Italian migrants were barely tolerated, and only allowed for mostly pragmatic reasons, especially before the development of multiculturalism (Girola 2003).

The hostility of the Irish-Australian Catholic Church at the beginning of the twentieth century contrasted with the attitude of the Vatican—the Roman Church was aware of the importance of developing specific congregations, *opere*, and initiatives in order to provide religious, moral, and material support to the millions of Italians who were migrating abroad (Rosoli 1984, 15). At this time, the Roman Church focused largely on the areas to which the most Italians migrated, especially the Americas. Yet they also put some pressure on Australian bishops, encouraging them to care for the religious needs of Italian migrants. The attempt to provide Italian migrants with the support of Irish priests who could speak Italian helped, as did the presence of a limited number of Italian priests who were sent to Australia at that time. However, as Monica Tolcvay (2007) notes, only those priests who had already worked with migrants and were able to recognise their specific practical, social, cultural, and religious needs were able to bring back Italians to Church. These needs could go from their devotion to the Madonna, which was deeply rooted in pagan traditions and was not understood by the Irish-Australian Church, to the attempt to avoid the humiliation of attending the Sunday mass when they were too poor to afford proper clothing.

For a long time, the Australian Catholic Church refused to create nation-based churches in support of migrants, preferring a highly assimilationist attitude (Cahill 2000, 510). Things changed after WWII, when the arrival of Italian priests was finally expedited (Cahill 2000, 510). Australian Catholicism came to play an increasingly important role in facilitating both the integration of Italians into Australian society, and a stronger unity amongst Italians from different regions (Cahill 2000, 512). In the postwar period, Italian migrants—who were almost all, at least nominally, Catholic—made Roman Catholicism the largest religious group in Australia. For many of them, the Catholic Church provided familiar places, assistance, and guidance in the settlement process (Alcorso et al. 1992, 107). This is especially true for those migrants who could count on the support provided by the Scalabrinian priests and the Capuchin friars, the two orders who sent the highest number of priests to Australia, especially between the late 1940s and the early 1960s. Still, for many Italians, there were fundamental differences between the

expressions of faith in Irish-Australian and Italian Catholicism. In the words of Father Pittarello (1980), religious life in Australia, especially compared to the one back home, was a 'soup without salt'.

Desmond Cahill (2000) has suggested that in the postwar period, significant issues remained at the core of Italian Catholicism in Australia. These included the racism and hostility towards Italian religious practices and traditions, and opposition by the assimilationist Australian episcopacy to the development of ethnic churches, and thus, the impossibility of following the model already successfully developed in the USA (see also Bosworth and Melia 1991, 74). By this time, at least, the religious hierarchy was no longer opposing the presence of Italian priests, the majority of whom ended up working with the Italian community. Tensions still remained, especially about Italians' reluctance to attend mass regularly and to support local churches financially (Cahill 2000, 511). There is anecdotal evidence, for instance, that Australian Catholic priests were annoyed by the fact that many Italians would attend a wedding party without first attending the wedding religious ceremony (Cahill 2000, 511). Another point of contention was Italian migrants' flexible attitudes towards Catholic education, as many of them sent their children to public schools or, when they could afford it, to prestigious, independent schools that were not Catholic (Cahill 2000, 512). Only around half of Italian children in the 1950s and 1960s were sent to a Catholic school (Cahill 2000). Furthermore, very few children of Italian migrants decided to become priests or nuns, especially when compared with other migrant Catholic groups (Cahill 2000, 515).

Particularly interesting is the link between Catholicism and ethnic identity that emerges from religious processions. The analysis of these events in South Australia by Antonio Paganoni and Desmond O'Connor (1999) suggest that the majority of these celebrations developed between the early 1970s and the mid-1990s, in direct connection with the development of multicultural policies and financial support, especially by the Labour governments. Similarly, Richard Bosworth and Margot Melia (1991), in their analysis of religious celebrations in Western Australia, note how religious processions had mostly been established relatively recently, with a few developing in the late 1940s, and the majority during or after the end of mass migration. Over time, these religious celebrations have lost their potential for excessive and irrational behaviour, gradually becoming more akin to mild celebrations of multiculturalism, while their religious and pagan nature also makes them

fragile expressions of an ethnic difference that is less and less relevant to the second and third generations (Bosworth and Melia 1991). It is therefore important to reconceptualise what might at first appear as the most deeply rooted expressions of religious fervour and parochial identity. Religious processions are, if not examples of the invention of tradition theorised by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983), certainly examples of how popular traditions are, in actual fact, malleable, and adjust to specific historical processes of transculturation.

Within the Italian 'elite' of middle-class migrants, Catholicism was often employed as a marker of conservatism, respectability and morality—values that had to be transmitted to the broader migrant population in order to facilitate assimilation and good socio-economic outcomes (Ricatti 2011). The promotion of socially conservative Catholicism was provided not only through the direct activity of the Church, but also in Catholic schools, through social and community events, through political activism, and through the development of ethnic media, such as the Sydney-based Italian-language newspaper *La Fiamma* (Ricatti 2011). The moral panic of Australian Christians in the 1950s and 1960s around the dissolution of the traditional family, the antisocial behaviour of the youth, and the overall decay of moral standards (Hilliard 1997), gave ethnic communities a chance to acquire some degree of respectability within a deeply racist society through the promotion of their traditional religious beliefs and values. Nevertheless, this approach also had strong limitations, well exemplified by political activist Bartholomew Augustine ('Bob') Santamaria. As argued by Cahill (2000, 513), Santamaria, a second-generation Italian-Australian and devout Catholic, is a key figure in understanding the paradoxical role of Catholicism within Italian-Australian communities. Despite his strong and long-lasting influence in the fight against Communists, the unions, and the Australian Labour Party (ALP), Santamaria was largely unable to involve his own community of Italian migrants. His inability to relate to the majority of Italian migrants in Australia was due to his assimilationist attitude, as well as to a lack of understanding and acknowledgement of the exploitation to which many Italian migrant workers were subjected.

Many Italian migrants, especially among the working class, had moderate but progressive political views and showed a certain degree of distrust towards Catholic institutions, when not openly anti-clerical sentiments. Many of the priests who came to Australia also had

relatively progressive views, especially given their commitment to assisting migrants. And finally, the profound changes in Western societies from the 1950s onwards saw many Italian-Australians, and especially the second generation, growing increasingly distant from the beliefs, rituals, and traditions of the Catholic Church, especially in its more conservative incarnations, which attempted to resist modernity, gender equality, and social justice. The widespread apathy towards religion by contemporary Italian migrants reflects profound changes in both Italian and Australian societies, with an exponential growth in agnosticism, atheism, and indifference towards institutional religions.

Overall, while Catholicism represented an essential marker of Italian ethnic identity, and many migrants found in the Catholic Church help, support, and opportunities for socialisation and for the expression of their parochial identities, Italians remained, for the most part, independent from the dictates and practices of the Australian Catholic Church. Once migrants left rural Italy and embarked on the complex process of migration, settlement, and transculturation within a modern and assimilationist context, the deeply rooted anthropological and ontological connections between faith, nature, and society were largely lost. Thus, for most Italians in Australia, their relationship with God became a matter of personal belief, and religious institutions maintained relevance only insofar as they were able to provide practical support and opportunities to celebrate the family (wedding, baptisms, confirmations, etc.) and the community (for instance through religious processions). While many Italian migrants were deeply religious and found in religion great comfort from the vicissitudes and hardship of life, many others preferred to focus their hopes on hard work and socio-economic upward mobility, especially when they were finding in the Australian Church the same hostile attitudes of the broader Australian society.

Multiculturalism, for a while, provided new legitimacy to traditional celebrations, but in the process of transculturation, the Catholicism of Italian migrants changed profoundly. It also became clear to Australians that Catholicism could be profoundly different from the religion most of them knew. Despite its long-held assimilationist attitudes, Australian Catholicism, as Paganoni (2007, 202) put it, has gradually abandoned its insularity and "its dependency on the Irish model," in part, thanks to the presence and transcultural influence of Italian Catholic migrants.

Politics

When talking about politics in the context of Italian migration, we can differentiate at least four levels of political participation, each linked to different dimensions of political transculturation into the new country. These are: political beliefs migrants acquired while still in Italy; community-related political activity; involvement in broader Australian politics; and involvement in transnational politics. These four dimensions are not rigidly separated. Rather, they are intertwined, flexible, and permeable. While beliefs at the extreme ends of the political spectrum tend to be informed by a strong personal, intellectual, and emotional involvement, and therefore maintain a significant degree of ideological rigidity and political fidelity, the majority of migrants adapt and adjust their moderate political beliefs according to specific and ever changing social and political contexts, at local, national, and transnational levels. This is also true, for instance, of many of the migrants who embraced Fascism in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. While there were extremists within the violent Fascist fringes, the majority of Italians who supported Fascism while in Australia did so as an expression of their national pride and their conservative beliefs, and abandoned it once it became a matter of choice between the country in which they were born and the one in which they had settled. In the postwar period, it became hard to find amongst the Italian conservative elite anyone willing to admit their open and active adhesion to Fascism just a few years earlier.

The political ideologies, convictions, and practices that migrants carry with them certainly influence their understanding of the new social and political environment they immigrate to, and their ability to come to terms with it and influence its development. At this level, Italian migrants in Australia have tended to mirror the political divisions and allegiances they had left behind in Italy, with the majority of them maintaining apolitical or moderate positions. Many of the migrants had, in fact, experienced, before migrating, the traumatic consequences of political conflicts and ideological extremism—especially those who migrated after the end of WWII and Fascism. Those who were already in Australia before WWII had, instead, experienced the hardship of being considered enemy aliens, and being interned or marginalised further still on often inconsistent political grounds. Furthermore, the majority of migrants blamed Italian politicians for the bad state of the Italian economy and

the lack of social welfare that had forced them to migrate (Colucci 2002, 603), while also blaming Australian politicians for many of the issues faced in the new country. And finally, there have usually been significant discrepancies between parties and ideological positions in Italy and Australia, so it was not always easy to transfer into the Australian context the political beliefs and practices learnt and experienced in Italy. Nevertheless, the influence of those migrants who came to Australia with strong political convictions should not be underestimated.

Political emigration and exile from Italy to Australia has not been common, but a number of left-wing activists migrated to Australia during Fascism and in the postwar period. While we can talk about a form of exile due to Fascist repression, persecution, or harassment, anecdotal evidence suggests that the Italian authorities might have facilitated the migration of left-wing activists by hiding their political records (Castles et al. 1992, 126–27), as Australia would have not accepted Communist migrants. In both instances, these political migrants, for the most part, limited their political activity to the Italian community, and did not engage significantly with Australian politics.

In the 1920s, the Fascist party was one of the first political parties to promote transnational politics with great vehemence. Many of its leaders saw the millions of Italian migrants abroad as a tool for Fascist penetration and influence in the countries of migration (Cresciani 1988, 237), especially in those countries in which a large number of Italian-born migrants had acquired citizenship and could influence the outcomes of political elections. The Fascist government was perceived positively by most Western democracies as a buffer against Communism (at least until the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935), and during this time, Italian communities abroad became for the Fascist party an instrument of transnational propaganda and influence.

Many *Fasci all'estero* and more informal Fascist clubs developed in the areas of major Italian concentrations, including in large cities such as Melbourne and Sydney, and in the rural areas of North Queensland. Fascism also took control of government related or supported organizations, such as the Dante Alighieri Society and the Italian Chamber of Commerce (Cresciani 1988, 242–43). Amongst the working-class and peasant migrants, Fascism proved particularly attractive to those who had experienced isolation, discrimination, and abuse; they saw in the new government an opportunity for Italy to acquire a stronger political and economic presence and credibility (Cresciani 2003, 81).

The *Fasci all'estero*, and other Fascist clubs and organizations, were active during important events of the Fascist dictatorship, such as the Concordat with the Vatican in 1929, the Ethiopian war between 1935 and 1936, and Mussolini's declaration that Italy finally had an Empire, in 1936. Otherwise, the harsh reality of life and work for most migrants limited their ability to participate in the activities of these organizations, which remained, for the most part, the realm of the few aspirational middle-class Italians who worked as professionals or owned businesses (Cresciani 2003, 83). Fascism in Australia was also strongly supported by the Catholic Church, which even supported the Imperialist enterprises of Fascism in the mid-1930s (Cresciani 2003, 84, 92).

Lara Palombo (2000) has studied the involvement in Fascism by Italian women in Australia, through the *Fasci femminili*. The first of these societies was established in Sydney in 1927, and others were established around Australia soon after. Many of the activities of the *Fasci femminili* were in line with the demands of the Secretariat General in Rome. In Sydney, the women involved were mostly Catholic small business owners or professionals (or married to those same categories). They mostly carried out benevolent work for disadvantaged Italian migrant women and their families, with a social, rather than political emphasis, through the development of educative and cultural programs. This was consistent with the way Fascists saw the role of women in society, and with their attempt to attract migrants to the Fascist cause by presenting it within a respectable, reassuring, and almost apolitical frame. These activities fostered a broader acceptance of Fascist culture within Italian-Australian communities, including amongst those migrant women who benefitted from these forms of support.

The persisting racism and hostility against Italians, while providing migrants with a strong motivation to embrace Fascism as a form of national pride, also meant that their actual ability to influence the broader Australian society and its political views remained minimal (Cresciani 1988). Fascism did enjoy the support of large sectors of the Australian public opinion, especially amongst the government, the Catholic Church, the economic and political elite, the middle class, and the returned soldiers (Cresciani 2003, 91). However, this had more to do with international politics and the fear of Communism than with the direct influence of Fascist Italian migrants.

A significant minority of the Italians who migrated to Australia in the 1920s had anti-Fascist sentiments. They tended to live and work in

those areas in which the Italian presence was more numerous and well established, including in large cities such as Melbourne and Sydney, and rural areas such as Griffith, Lismore, and North Queensland. As a consequence, clashes with Fascists were relatively common, and at times quite violent (Cresciani 2003, 79). Anti-Fascist groups included the Communists, Socialists, Republicans, and Anarchists, who despite their political differences shared a deep-seated hostility against Fascism (Cresciani 2003, 80). Two important leaders of the anti-Fascist movement in Australia were the Socialist Omero Schiassi, a reader at the University of Melbourne, and the Anarchist Francesco Giuseppe Carmagnola, who in the late 1920s founded the newspapers *Il Risveglio* and *La Riscossa* (Cresciani 2003, 84–86).

Gianfranco Cresciani (1979, 4–5) has argued that while the majority of anti-Fascist migrants were either Communist or Socialist, the much smaller group of Italian Anarchists came to constitute the most effective, or at least visible, opposition to Fascism within the Italian-Australian community in the 1920s and early 1930s. Many of these Anarchists had witnessed the violent rise of Fascism in Italy between 1919 and 1921, and had thus developed a visceral anti-Fascism. Most of them migrated to Australia when Fascism took power, between 1922 and 1924, and their political activism in Australia begun emerging from 1927 (Cresciani 1979, 5–6). The Italian Anarchists in Australia remained small in number, were seen with hostility by most fellow migrants (including other anti-Fascists), had sectarian tendencies to split into even smaller groups, and suffered from the open hostility of the Australian government. Nevertheless, the Anarchists managed to print newspapers, organise strikes, respond to the Fascist violence with violence, and conduct a series of violent and insulting actions against Italian authorities in Australia (Cresciani 1979). By the second half of the 1930s, however, the much more organised Communist movement, which could also rely on a much stronger presence within Australian society, took over the anti-Fascist movement within the Italian-Australian community, through the *Casa d'Italia* in Melbourne (which opened in 1938) and the *Italia Libera* movement (Cresciani 1979, 15–16). When many Italians were interned during WWII (see Chapter 4), many Anarchists were also interned, despite their active, apparent, and courageous role in opposing Fascism. Many of them became victims of Fascist violence within the camps, including Francesco Fantin, who was murdered by Fascists in the internment camp of Loveday, in South Australia (Cresciani 1979, 15; Venturini 2007).

Italians in North Queensland played a central role in the 1935 strike by sugar cane cutters, who wanted the burning of the ground before the cutting of the canes—at the time the only effective way of preventing leptospirosis—to become compulsory. As illustrated by Dianne Menghetti (1981) in her important study of the Popular Front in 1930s North Queensland, this strike is particularly significant because it shows how Italians could contribute to workers' struggles when involved by local activists. While the Australian Workers Union was still promoting racist and discriminatory policies and practices against Italian cane cutters (who were accused of undermining pay rates and working conditions), the Australian Communist movement, in collaboration and solidarity with Italian Communist and Anarchist migrants, was able to bring Australian, Italian, and other migrant workers together in the struggle against horrible working conditions. A year later, those same Italian workers and their families joined in with other workers in providing strong political and financial support to comrades fighting in the Spanish war on the other side of the world. These events are important not only for the history of North Queensland and the Australian Communist movement, but also for Italian migration history. Racialized prejudice against migrant workers can compromise class solidarity, and migrants' lack of class solidarity can then be used by the same people who discriminated against them to reinforce racial prejudice, by claiming that migrants undermine class struggle and workers' rights and salaries. The events in North Queensland show instead that inclusive practices towards migrants are essential in allowing and encouraging their fundamental participation in class and workers' struggles.

In the Cold War period, while many migrants had little or no interest in politics, some of the major Italian community associations and organisations did express, and were informed by, strong political views. In a climate of panic about Communism, fostered by the Cold War, the greatest of such political divisions within the Italian community in Australia emerged between the two main welfare agencies, the conservative and Catholic Comitato Assistenza Italiani (CO.AS.IT), and the left-wing Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Emigrati e Famiglie (FILEF). The peak of such political rivalry was probably reached in the mid to late 1970s, when Ignazio Salemi of FILEF was refused permission to remain in Australia by the Australian conservative government, allegedly on pressure from conservative members of the Italian community (Castles et al. 1992, 128; Cresciani 2003). However, we should be careful not to characterise FILEF as a Communist organisation, or to assume that

CO.AS.IT was purely a conservative and Catholic association. Both welfare agencies mostly cared about the assistance provided to migrants, and they often took care of migrants who didn't share the same political views. Even important members of both organisations were not always or necessarily linked to official Italian or Australian political parties. For instance, as shown by Simone Battiston (2012), the Melbourne branch of FILEF experienced strong internal tensions throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. Some members were close to the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and more involved in Italian politics, while others believed that the relationship with the ALP should be privileged instead, as more functional to the actual interests of the Italian community in Australia, and in order to take advantage of the need by the ALP to attract the migrant vote.

For a long time, the ALP and the union movement defended the White Australia policy and accused Italian migrants of worsening the salary and working conditions of Australian workers. A strongly racialized form of xenophobia meant that up to the early 1950s, the union movement was unwelcoming of Italian migrants. In the early 1960s, with the large arrival and settlement of southern European peasant and working-class migrants, the ALP came to realise that these migrants could represent an important source of support and votes, and operated actively to attract them to their political side. In 1983, it was estimated that 82% of southern Europeans voted for the ALP (Castles et al. 1992, 131). This data contrasts greatly with the prejudice about the Italian community being close-minded and conservative, and at least, in part, rebalances the idea of individual migrants only being interested in personal socio-economic benefit. The relationship with the unions remained more controversial. By 1982, workers of non-English speaking background were much more unionised than Australian-born workers, but remained largely underrepresented at leadership level and continued to be viewed with prejudice (Castles et al. 1992, 134).

The lack of political mobilisation along ethnic lines, especially by such a large ethnic group as the Italians in postwar Australia (Castles et al. 1992, 125), certainly deserves further investigation, as it differs greatly from the way the Italian community acted politically in the USA and Canada. It suggests significant differences not just in the political system, but also in the nature of assimilationist policies, and later multicultural policies, in Australia. Closely related is the issue of Italian migrants' limited involvement in the Australian political arena, at local, state, and

federal level. In this space as well, Italians in Australia have not acted and voted compactly as an ethnic group, and the influence of postwar migrants in the evolution of the Australian political system, in general, has been marginal.

In terms of political representations, most Italians became Australian citizens, but did so many years after migration. This meant that at least until the late 1980s, very few Italians had become members of parliament at the state or federal level (Castles et al. 1992, 129). While a few politicians, such as Franca Arena and Giovanni Sgro, did get elected to state parliaments due to their involvement with the Italian community, and did represent the needs of that community, the Australian political system has made it impossible for political parties to develop around a specific ethnicity, or even for individual politicians to solely rely on the ethnic vote from their community (Castles et al. 1992, 129).

The political parties and the political divide in Australia have maintained a class connotation rather than an ethnic one (Castles et al. 1992, 125–26). At the same time, Australian politics has remained, to the present day, uncannily white. Even the advent of multiculturalism, identity politics, anti-migration parties, and minority governments influenced by independent politicians, have not marked a significant shift in the Australian political structure with regards to the involvement of migrants and ethnic groups, as well as First Nations people. Although the transculturation of postwar migrants and subsequent generations has resulted in a much greater involvement of non-Anglo individuals at all level of politics, in most instances, these politicians' admission into the realm of Australian politics happens at an individual level and depends heavily on their whiteness and on their allegiance to predetermined ideological and political positions. Not only do these politicians not operate as representatives of their own ethnic communities, but in most instances, their ethnicity is not even used as a political token, and only surfaces at times in sentimental interviews and autobiographical narratives. This is a positive sign of migrants' transculturation within the broader society, which allows them to vote according to ideological, rather than ethnic, affiliations. However, it also constitutes further evidence of the persistence of whiteness and assimilation as the *conditio sine qua non* of political leadership in Australia.

The final important dimension to take into consideration is that of transnational politics. A good example of the way Italian politics could influence Australian politics through migrants is provided by Battiston

(2017) in his analysis of the visits to Australia by PCI officials throughout the 1960s and 1970s. These visits were instrumental in attracting a much larger number of Italian migrants not only to the PCI, but also to the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). The PCI officials provided a sense of empowerment to Italian radical leftists in Australia, and reinforced the influence of Italian Communists on Australian militants, which was also informed by the importance of the PCI in Europe, and by the intellectual and political influence of the work of Antonio Gramsci.

Particularly significant in the space of transnational politics has been the evolution of the Italian expatriate vote in the past fifteen years. Since 2003, a new electoral law has informed a peculiar electoral system in which Italians abroad elect their own representatives, and do so within geographically enormous electoral districts (Mascitelli and Battiston 2008). For instance, Australia is part of the same electoral district as the whole of Oceania, Asia, Africa, and Antarctica. This system means that in most instances Italians abroad exercise very little electoral influence over Italian politics, although in 2006, following a very close electoral contest, the victory of the centre-left coalition led by Romano Prodi over the right coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi was determined by two politicians elected abroad, one of which—Senator Nino Randazzo—came from Australia.

Two prejudices about migrants became apparent when this electoral law was first discussed and then approved and implemented. When the new electoral system for Italians abroad was proposed, it was initially opposed by the Australian government and some of the Australian diplomats (Mascitelli and Battiston 2009; Mascitelli et al. 2010). There were concerns relating to sovereignty and diplomatic implications, but also a fear of unsocial and potentially violent behaviour by Italians in Australia, due to an Italian political contest being played out on Australian soil. The second prejudice came from the Italian right parties, especially the Fascist and neo-Fascist politicians in government, who had proposed the law under the belief that most Italians abroad would vote for them. Both these prejudices have proven wrong. The majority of Italians in Australia have not felt interested or legitimate in influencing the Italian elections, and many of them have not even voted. Recent migrants have tended to vote on the left of the political spectrum. Italians abroad have mostly elected independent or centre-left candidates.

In this section, I have only been able to provide some snapshots of the multifaceted political landscape of the Italian-Australian community over the past one hundred years. As with the rest of this volume, the aim is not to paint an exhaustive picture, but rather to focus on some specific phenomena and events that might provide some orientation and some opportunities for reflection and discussion about a complex, ambiguous, and at times, contradictory history. A few concluding remarks on this topic can perhaps provide some further clarity.

Firstly, politics is perhaps the realm in which the transnational character of Italian migration to Australia most clearly emerges. It shows how migrants have been as constantly and consistently influenced by the political developments in Italy as they have by the political evolution in Australia. Italian political parties and governments have tried, and sometimes succeeded, in exercising an influence over Italian-Australian associations, communities, and individuals.

Secondly, we should not assume that all migrants were exclusively interested in financial gains and thus mostly uninterested in politics. Many Italians in Australia, especially within the working class, fought for better rights through workers' strikes and initiatives, through union membership and activism, and through migrants' associations such as FILEF. And many others, especially the aspirational self-employed migrants, have used politics as a signifier of their national pride and their personal ambitions, for instance through their adhesion to Fascism in the interwar period. A significant number of migrants were already politicised before migrating, and maintained some level of political involvement once in Australia, especially within the Italian community. A few even managed to be elected to Italian or Australian political institutions and, in some instances, played important political roles.

Thirdly, both men and women have been involved in political or politicised organisations and associations. I have already briefly referred to the *Fasci femminili* in the interwar period, but women's contribution to leftist politics and feminist struggles should also be recognised and further studied (see Battiston and Sestigiani 2015). My own work on Lena Gustin (Ricatti 2011), a fiercely Catholic and socially conservative journalist and broadcaster who cared greatly about the hardships Italian women endured in Australia, suggests the need for further studies of the complex relationship between religion and politics in the

Italian-Australian context, with particular reference to women involved in welfare agencies and benevolent activities.

Fourthly, the Italian-Australian community has never been politically united along ethnic lines; rather, it has often been strongly divided along stout ideological fault-lines, usually originating within the Italian political, social, and economic context. At the same time, even the most politicised organisations within the community have usually been willing and able to provide care and support to migrants who do not necessarily conform to their political and ideological convictions. This seems to suggest that concrete and tangible support to fellow Italians has played an important role within Italian-Australian political and welfare organisations, and that even when their activities have been informed by a remarkable degree of ideological rigidity, most of these migrant associations have remained aware of the need for some level of ethnic solidarity.

And finally, it is important to restate that transnational political ideologies have provided a significant number of migrants with powerful tools to interpret and influence a challenging reality of transculturation within a context of exploitation, marginalisation, and xenophobia. If it is true that political convictions can divide the Italian community and thus reduce its political leverage *vis a vis* the broader Australian society, it is also true that ideological convictions and political allegiances can provide support and solidarity within and beyond the Italian-Australian community. In other words, what can be lost in terms of intra-ethnic cohesion can be regained in terms of broader political cohesion along clear ideological fault-lines and political allegiances at the local, national, and transnational level.

Ethnic Media

Italian language and bilingual newspapers in Australia have played three main functions: firstly, they promote the interests of the community and attempt to improve its cohesion and respectability; secondly, they inform readers about news of Italy in Australia; and thirdly, they provide migrants with advice about legal and practical aspects of everyday life in a foreign country. Many of these newspapers have also promoted a clear political ideology; for instance, the Fascist *Il corriere degli Italiani in Australia* (founded in 1928), the anarchist *La Riscossa* (1928), the anti-Fascist and pro-Labour *Il Risveglio* (1944), and the initially

fervently anti-Communist and pro-Catholic *La Fiamma* (1947). Most of these newspapers were developed by individuals or small groups and had a short life. It is not within the scope of this section to provide a detailed history of these editorial productions. I will rather focus on a few media outlets that have been particularly influential.

Many of the Italian language newspapers that were published in Australia throughout the twentieth century claimed that they represented the Italian migrant community in its entirety. In reality, they were, for the most part, expressions of a relatively affluent or aspirational middle-class minority, who was particularly keen to demonstrate and promote the respectability of the Italian community: this is a salient trait of newspapers like *L'Italo-Australiano* and *L'Oceania* in the early twentieth century, as well as *La Fiamma* and *Il Globo* from the late 1940s and late 1950s respectively (see Briani 1977; Ricatti 2011; and in Chapter 4 of this book, references to the important work of Catherine Dewhirst).

The two major Italian language newspapers in postwar Australia, the Sydney-based *La Fiamma*, and the Melbourne-based *Il Globo*, played an important role in the life of postwar migrants. *La Fiamma* was founded in 1947 by the Italian priest Giuseppe La Rosa (Ricatti 2011), and although originally a Catholic and conservative paper, it soon came to express a mix of conservative, moderate, and progressive views under the editorship of Evasio Costanzo. It reached a circulation of around 44,000 copies by the mid-1960s (Pascoe 1987, 96), and in 1978, was acquired by the rival paper, the Melbourne-based *Il Globo*. *Il Globo* was established later, in 1959, and was initially more progressive than *La Fiamma* (Alcorso et al. 1992, 117). In the early to mid-1990s, *Il Globo* still had a circulation of between 30,000 and 65,000 copies (Castles 1994, 359; Johansson and Battiston 2014, 418). This has arguably been the most successful Italian language newspaper in Australia, and it has been claimed that in 2000 the newspaper still reached almost half of the Italian community in Australia—the readership of ethnic newspapers being much higher than the number of copies sold (Johansson and Battiston 2014, 418–19).

As argued by Brent Edwards (2009, 853), the Australian government exercised a limited control over ethnic print media, mostly due to language barriers and the conviction that most news was translated directly from the Australian media. This gave a newspaper such as *Il Globo* the freedom to criticise the Australian government, a freedom that the Australian newspapers did not enjoy to the same extent. Edwards (2009, 854) has counted 95 opinion pieces devoted by *Il Globo* to issues

concerning the management of immigration and migrant communities in Australia, in the period 1959–1969. The newspaper was particularly critical of the discriminatory policies and attitudes of the Australian government towards Italians (Edwards 2009, 856). *Il Globo* also devoted significant space to other topics that were relevant to the Australian community, such as the Assisted Passage scheme, Australian citizenship, and access to the Italian pension. The newspaper was, however, rarely concerned with grave social issues in the community, such as poverty and lack of accommodation (Edwards 2009, 856–57), consistent with a broader tendency by the Italian-Australian media of the time to underplay the struggles of the Italian community and emphasise instead the migrants' ability to integrate and succeed.

An analysis conducted on the decade between 1979 and 1989 (Johansson and Battiston 2014) suggested that *Il Globo*'s focus was still more or less on the same topics as two decades earlier, with an emphasis on Australian political issues, issues relating to the migration and settlement of Italians, and issues with Australian and Italian pensions, which, with the aging of the Italian community had become even more relevant. The newspaper certainly came to express many of the concerns of the community, and played a sort of intermediary role between the community and the governments at the state and federal level, although its political influence remained limited. It is important, however, to emphasise that these scholars have overlooked, or discarded, some very important sections of this newspaper, following a scholarly habit of focussing on opinion pieces and political commentary. For instance, an analysis of *La Fiamma* and *Il Globo* content in the late 1980s (Wales 1988, 135) found that sports news and advertisements constituted 46% of *La Fiamma*'s content and 33% of *Il Globo*'s content. Both my research on migration and football (Ricatti and Klugman 2013, 2014) and on the newspaper *La Fiamma* (Ricatti 2011) suggest that these sections were very influential and widely read, and deserve much more attention from scholars. Interestingly, the newspaper *Nuovo Paese*, founded in 1973 and representing the view of the leftist organisation FILEF, in the late 1980s only devoted 1.9% of its space to sport, and 6.4% to advertisements. News about activities and events within the Italian community constituted 11.1% of content in *La Fiamma*, 11.9% in *Il Globo*, and a mere 3.8% in *Nuovo Paese* (Wales 1988, 135).

It is a recurring argument in the historiography of Italian-Australian media that these newspapers have represented and expressed the opinion of the migrant community. For instance, F. Rando (cited in Wales 1988, 133; my translation) argued that "to write the history of Italian

journalism in Australia is to write a historical and human review of our emigration in the fifth continent." From a similar perspective, and perhaps with an excess of enthusiasm, Johansson and Battiston (2014, 426) recently argued that "by playing an active, public and even educative role, *Il Globo* helped shape Italo-Australians' identity and sense of community by providing a medium for discourse, to the extent that the community came to regard the publication as one of its leading institutions." The same scholars also argued that the newspaper reflected the community's opinions. My research on the newspaper *La Fiamma* (Ricatti 2011), would suggest a more cautious approach. Original letters written by migrants to the Sydney-based newspaper in the 1950s and 1960s show not only a diverse and fragmented community that a single newspaper would struggle to represent, but also the cultural, political, material, and financial distance between the educated and aspirational middle-class minority who would write for these newspapers or inform their content, and most of their readers. It is also perhaps only from an overly optimistic Melbourne-centric perspective that the influence of *Il Globo* can be extended to the whole Italian-Australian community.

Nevertheless, the research conducted to date on the two newspapers, *La Fiamma* and *Il Globo*, does show that they played a crucial role in helping migrants' settlement, through practical advice and by lobbying for some of their most pressing concerns. Importantly, as I have suggested in the section about language, these newspapers also helped improve migrants' literacy and their knowledge of the Italian language.

Since the postwar period, an important role has also been played by the electronic media; in the 1950s and 1960s, mostly through commercial radio, and since the late 1970s, through radio and television programs initiated mostly by the Australian Government's multicultural policies. An important role was played, over a span of many decades, by the Catholic and socially conservative Lena Gustin, for many years also a collaborator of *La Fiamma* (see Ricatti 2011). She used her popularity in print media and as a radio-broadcaster to create a strong emotional and affective connection with a significant section of the Italian-Australian community. She provided questionable advice, practical help and support, and linguistic and cultural education to thousands of migrants, especially, but not exclusively, women. Through a maternalistic use of the media 'Mamma Lena' was a point of reference for her ethnic community and the perfect incarnation of the aspirational lower middle-class migrant who becomes an icon of the community (Ricatti 2011, 2015).

Of particular relevance in the Australian ethnic media landscape has been the creation in 1977 of Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), a radio and television broadcaster that includes Italian language news (from RAI or self-produced), movies, and other shows, such as the *Festival di San Remo* song contest. Despite the good intentions and the excellent English-language content produced and broadcasted by SBS, its Italian language television content relies heavily on Italian productions and media outlets that are not representative of the transcultural complexity of the contemporary Italian society, and seem, for the most part, oblivious to the existence of millions of Italians living abroad. The Italian content on SBS radio (SBS Italian), which is for the most part produced in-house, has over time become an important point of reference for old as well as new migrants. The quality of SBS Italian's radio programming and podcasting can be at times inconsistent, but overall, it provides a valuable informative service to the Italian-Australian community.

Of the various expressions of transnational ideologies and transcultural orientation that I have discussed in this chapter, ethnic media represents, in my opinion, the one that has been most heavily appropriated and managed by a minority of middle-class, educated, and aspirational migrants. In their attempt to build a respectability for themselves and the broader Italian-Australian community, they have at times ignored the actual complexity and vitality of the community they were expected to inform and represent. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that most of these media have provided migrants with essential points of reference and orientation, linguistically, culturally, socially and even politically. Perhaps more research of the kind I attempted in my previous book (Ricatti 2011) could offer a more nuanced understanding of how different migrants have read, interacted with, and influenced Italian language media over time.

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CHAPTER 7

Concluding Remarks

Abstract This final chapter reiterates the importance of reinterpreting key aspects of Italian migration history through a transcultural approach. It notes many other areas of academic enquiry that would benefit from a transcultural reconceptualization, but which could not be included in this volume. The chapter concludes with a brief reflection on the importance of a critical and transcultural approach to migration history and public memory in producing effective and affective antibodies against the resurgence of neocolonial, racist, and xenophobic ideologies in Italy and Australia.

Keywords Italian migration—Australia · Transculturation · Racism Xenophobia · Historical memory

The process of migration and settlement in a new country is one of displacement and emplacement, disorientation and reorientation. One of the most common memories of postwar migrants is the seasickness after the long trip by ship from Italy to Australia, a condition that often continued for months after they had arrived—a physical and metaphorical expression of their initial disorientation. Settlement, however, is never a linear process of bewilderment followed by a newly found stability. Rather, migrants constantly redefine their points of reference, renegotiate their boundaries, and reinvent their relationships with place and people. Periods of relative stability and well-being can be followed by

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F. Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in Migration History,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78873-9_7

moments of crisis, and every migrant will rely on different abilities and resources to compensate weaknesses and to face obstacles. Throughout this book, I have suggested that with regards to the processes of physical, social, cultural, linguistic, and ideological orientation, mobility and settlement should not be conceptualised and described as separate or even opposite practises, but rather as intertwined elements of the same migratory and transcultural process.

Literary and cultural studies scholars constantly fall in love with such terms as turbulence (Papastergiadis 2000), hybridity (Bhabha 1994), and nomadism (Braidotti 1994). These terms illustrate well the complexity and contradictoriness of the migratory experience, and the need for migrants to address a sense of loss and bewilderment that is practical, corporeal, and material as much as it is social, cultural, linguistic, and psychological. Despite the many theoretical elaborations around the complex nature of migrants' identities, the myth of semi-illiterate migrants being 'frozen' or 'stuck' in time and space continues to dominate popular accounts of the migratory experience, and at times, flows into the work of otherwise sensible scholars and writers. Against that interpretation, I have suggested that strong attachment to what migrants (used to) know best is an obvious and understandable transcultural strategy for orientation and emplacement, at a practical, emotional, and intellectual level. There are no doubts that at times this strategy might result in extreme declamations of nostalgia, conservatism, parochialism, and hypertrophic commitment to (invented) traditions, beliefs, and values. But such attachment to what migrants knew best must also be contextualised within the much broader transcultural strategies and processes of orientation and negotiation that dominate migrants' everyday lives, and their social and cultural interactions. These strategies, in turn, have often produced complex processes of transculturation that have changed specific migrant communities as much as they have changed the broader Australian and Italian societies.

Most Italian migrant individuals, families, and communities in Australia have been mobile, transcultural, transnational, connected, and in constant evolution, rather than static, mono-cultural, isolated, and stuck. This is not to downplay issues of social isolation, marginalisation, and mental illness. Such issues are possible outcomes of the economic, social, and cultural challenges that migrants face every day, everywhere, before, during and after the processes of migration and settlement, or on return to the country of origin. These issues, in specific instances, might

be in part attributed to migrants' limited integration (Ricatti 2011). But they are not a necessary or inevitable outcome of migration, and, at least in the case of voluntary migration, they are certainly no evidence of migrants' inability or unwillingness to move, change, and adapt.

Many Italians, in the early stages of their Australian life, experienced social isolation. The reasons are manifold: they often lived and worked in isolated areas, as rural workers or in infrastructure and mining; the majority of them worked extremely hard and had little time and energy for socialising; and the broader Australian society often expressed hostility and racism towards them (see Thompson 1984, 55). The migrants who felt more isolated were usually young unmarried men, and married women in the first years after migration (Thompson 1984, 53). My previous research (Ricatti 2011, 2015) has suggested that both groups developed a great nostalgia for their life back in Italy, often expressed through a strong emotional attachment to, and longing for, their mothers. This social isolation had consequences on the mental health of many Italian migrants, both men and women (Ricatti 2011, 2012). The situation was particularly difficult in those rural contexts in which social isolation was worsened by great distances, exploitative working conditions, inability to speak English well, and a challenging natural environment (Andreoni 1994; Ricatti 2009).

While acknowledging these difficult conditions, scholars should refrain from imposing a pitying and paternalistic gaze over the lives of these migrants. Over time, most migrants did, in fact, build rich, complex, and fruitful social, emotional, and sentimental relationships with *paesani*, fellow Italians, other ethnic groups, and with Australians. The formation of ethnic communities provided most individuals and families with essential support, orientation, and a sense of belonging (Castles 1994, 360). The relatively small size of many of these communities, and their inevitably parochial nature, at times also meant an exacerbation of gossiping, bullying, and peer pressure, especially for women (Ricatti 2011). Nevertheless, most migrants managed to negotiate the boundaries between their private and their public life quite effectively, gaining from social and community life, but also preserving jealously the privacy of their family.

Essential to this process of social orientation, adaptation and social inclusion has been migrants' relation with private and public spaces, and in particular, the way they have positioned themselves in, and adapted to, new natural and social environments. In the process, they have gradually

transformed often incomprehensible, hostile, and dangerous places into more safe, comfortable, and reassuring places of belonging, sociality, affective life, and financial gain. These forms of emplacement have been developed by negotiating difficult and at times rigid boundaries, but also through place making—in a material and a metaphorical sense.

There are many topics and themes around these complex forms of transcultural orientation and place-making that I could not include in this short volume. These include, but are not limited to: diasporic and vernacular architecture in private and public spaces (Pugliese 2005; Jordan et al. 2009; Levin and Fincher 2010); the secretive yet powerful presence of criminal organizations, especially the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta (Sergi 2015, 2017; Sergi and Lavorgna 2016; Bennetts 2016); complex forms of kinship and social relationships (see for instance Marino and Chiro 2013, 2014); the value of preserved, acquired and reinvented objects, especially within the home, but also in the construction of the Italian-Australian identity and memory (Vanni 2005, 2013; Henrich 2011, 2013; Palaktsoglou et al. 2013–2014; Hutchison and Witcomb 2014); gardening and vegetable growing as a form of cultural agency and identity inscription into rural and urban landscapes (Du Chesne 2016; Vanni 2016); food as an essential tool for socialisation, identity construction, transculturation, and emotional well-being (Bosworth 1991; Postiglione 2010); the function of sports, especially cycling and different codes of football, in providing an opportunity for travelling through and discovering the urban space, orienting oneself in a new city, and imposing or negotiating ethnic identity and pride (Ricatti and Klugman 2013, 2014); the role of literature, cinema, and the arts in constructing complex identities and memories, and in either reinforcing or challenging stereotypes about migrant lives and communities (Rando 2004; Wilson 2008; Rando and Moliterno 2011; Gatt-Rutter 2014); the centrality of music, dancing, and ethnic soundscapes in the lives, identities and nostalgic memories of migrants (Garigliano 2009; Barwick and Sorce Keller 2012; Marino 2012); and travelling back to Italy, the region and town of origin, as crucial points of orientation (Baldassar 2001, 2011; Sala and Baldassar 2017).

Such a varied and complex array of important, yet only partially and inconsistently researched subjects, deserves a book-long discussion, which I would not have been able to provide in this short volume. I thus decided to restrict the aim and scope of this particular book to a reframing of major and already well-studied matters, such as work,

family, language, religion, and politics. I did so because I aimed to provide readers with an opportunity to reflect anew on the core issues that have informed academic and public discourse about Italians in Australia, including class exploitation, sexism, racism, and the generational gap between migrants and their children. My aim was to show how the potential for a shift in collective memory and public discourse, away from the rhetoric of sacrifice, hard work, individual success, and contribution to the host country, is already inherent in the existing scholarly literature, if not always explicit. The aim was to provide not just scholars, but the broader community, with a recognition that the history of Italians in Australia deserves to be told, loud and proud, as part of the broader history of Italian mass migration around the world, which saw millions of Italians responding bravely and creatively to the challenges imposed by poverty, illiteracy, political repression, and social injustice within the Italian nation. As I have illustrated in this book, this is a history informed by the transcultural skills, practices, and strategies that had been acquired through centuries of foreign domination and temporary and seasonal migration, and which were then applied to the specific social, geographic, and historical contexts of mass migration in the century following Italy's unification.

The critical work of scholars in such fields as history, sociology, linguistics, anthropology, ethnography, cultural and media studies, and critical theory, has provided over the past thirty years strong and multidisciplinary foundations for the development of an innovative, and potentially dissident, history of Italians in Australia—a transcultural history of resilience, resourcefulness, and creativity. This is the history I aimed to write in this short volume: a history of flexible and permeable resistance to class exploitation, racism, sexism, marginalisation, and deeply rooted social injustice; a history that pertains to Italy and Australia, but is also part of a much broader phenomenon, encompassing Italian transnational migration throughout the centuries and across the continents, since at least the early modern period, and within global waves of human mobility.

We live in a complex and interconnected world in which migration remains one of the most powerful engines of human progress and social justice, and yet the fundamental human right to move across nations and continents can be easily, arbitrarily, and ferociously denied. While I write these concluding words, in late November 2017, asylum seekers in Manus Island continue to be mistreated and denied fundamental

protection, under the hideous colonial agenda of the Australian government. Meanwhile, European governments, including the Italian one, implement brutal colonial policies that condemn hundreds of thousands of migrants to inhumane persecutions and horrible deaths every year. It is my hope that this book, by showing the vitality, resilience, and transcultural skills of migrants, will provide a contribution not just to Italian, Australian, and transnational history, but also to a more informed, decent, and sensible debate about migration. Too many Italians and Italian-Australians show either indifference or contempt towards any attempt to protect the fundamental human rights of migrants, including those of asylum seekers and refugees. They are often asked how they can ignore the similarities between the experiences of these new migrants and their own histories of poverty, displacement, migration, and marginality. Have they forgotten their own history? Or perhaps they do not want to be reminded of it? Either way, I hope this book demonstrates that it is, in fact, a history well worth remembering.

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