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Carlo Carli, Dr Gerardo Papalia, Katrina Lolicato, Dr Paolo Baracchi.

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The *Italian Historical Society Journal* invites submissions from its readers. Guidelines for submissions are on the last page of this issue.

Letters and inquiries to:

The Editors
Italian Historical Society Journal
Co.As.It.
189 Faraday Street
Carlton, VIC 3053
Australia

Email: ihs@coasit.com.au

Front cover: Assunta Mazzà (first from right) visiting relatives on their farm at Mildura, Christmas 1963. Assunta migrated to Australia from Caulonia (Reggio Calabria) in 1961 with her mother Carmela and sisters Rosa and Genoveffa.

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to the reader

Dear Friends,

We are proud to present vol. 19 (2011) of the *Italian Historical Society Journal*, the publication of the Co.As.It. Italian Historical Society and Museo Italiano. This issue, in line with the Journal's tradition, hosts a wide variety of pieces exploring many facets of the history and culture of Italians in Australia.

The Journal relies on stories, memories and reflections by members of the community. These precious primary sources are offered in these pages in a spirit of sharing and dialogue.

The Journal also publishes articles submitted by researchers and scholars on all aspects of Italian Australian history and culture. These pieces contribute to situating the Italian Australian story in the appropriate Australian, Italian and international wider contexts. By publishing these pieces, the Journal acts as a forum and catalyst for the current interpretive conversation on Italian Australian history and culture.

By bringing together primary material and interpretations, in the awareness that no rigid separation can be drawn between the two, the Journal collects, preserves, interprets and shares the history and culture of Italian Australians – to paraphrase the mission statement of the Italian Historical Society.

The articles included in this issue fall quite naturally into four sections, with a number of contributions focusing on the interwar years.

1. COMMUNITY VOICES

The issue opens with **Nick Storino's** recollections of his youth spent in Carlton during the historically crucial period 1937 – 1947. Readers may wish to compare Nick's testimony with **Prof Ivo Vellar's** recollections of Carlton in roughly the same period (see *Italian Historical Society Journal*, vol. 17 – 2009, pp 12-18). Memories of the war years are also central to writer **Grania Lattanzi's** tribute to her father Mario. The section closes with **Dr Marcus Luigi Spiller's** family history piece, in which an important role is played by a 19th century *bigolaro*.

2. MOMENTS IN HISTORY

This section contains two essays on historical topics. **Dr David Faber**, a specialist in Italian Australian history of the interwar and WW2 periods, has investigated the politically controversial visit to Melbourne of the Italian warship *Raimondo Montecucoli* in 1938. The same event is narrated, from the perspective of a six-year old, by **Nick Storino** in this issue of the Journal (see above). Next, **Frank Canu** responds to a remark in **Dr Gianfranco Cresciani's** 'Refactory Migrants. Fascist Surveillance on Italians in Australia 1922 – 1943' (*Italian Historical Society Journal*, vol. 15 – 2007, pp. 9-58) regarding Frank's father Antonio's political allegiances.

3. CULTURE AND THE ARTS

The section on culture and the arts hosts **Dr Claude Culvenor's** family history, which traces the remarkable musical activities of the Gervasonis from their arrival in Australia in 1858 to the present day. In the next article, Monash University musicologist **Dr**

John Whiteoak offers a tribute to the gifted Italian Australian accordionist Peter Piccini. John has published widely on the music of the Italian Australian community – in the *Italian Historical Society Journal*, see 'Mambo Italiano: Ugo Ceresoli and His Orchestra Mokambo' (vol. 15 – 2007, pp. 59-73) and 'Family, Friendship and a Magical Carpet: The Music of Franco Cambareri' (vol. 16 – 2008, pp.25-34). **Sandra Graham's** history of the Dante Alighieri Society of Brisbane closes this section with a study that chronicles the Society's development while connecting it to the relevant social and political background.

4. ESSAY

This issue of the Journal ends with a contribution by **Prof Antonio Cortese**, 'Note sull'emigrazione italiana in Australia'. Prof Cortese was the Director of ISTAT (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica) in Rome (the Italian equivalent to the ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics) and is a scholar of international repute. We have decided to publish Prof Cortese's article in its original Italian, with an English translation being considered for a future issue.

The Journal welcomes contributions in Italian, while striving to maintain a balance between the two languages in each issue. This seems appropriate, both given the Journal's subject matter and its objective of expanding its readership and the range of its contributors.

The Editors

letters to the editors

The Editors of the Italian Historical Society Journal gratefully receive and publish the following comments regarding articles which appeared in previous issues of the Journal.

Dear Editors,

I recently came across Dr John Whiteoak's article 'Mambo Italiano: Ugo Ceresoli and His Orchestra Mokambo' the *Italian Historical Society Journal*, vol 15 – 2007. I was fascinated by Dr Whiteoak's article as my father Alberto Caselli was one of the band members of the Mokambo Orchestra for many years. I remember being taken to the Saturday night Mokambo dances by my mother: I would sleep in a pram behind the stage.

There are a couple of factual points in the article that should be corrected for the sake of completeness. They are:

p. 61: 'Most of these players appear to have stayed with the band throughout the 1950s despite the entry of new players such as Giuseppe Alessandrello on bass and tenor saxophonist Alberto Caselli.' should read 'Most of these players appear to have stayed with the band

throughout the 1950s despite the entry of new players such as Giuseppe Alessandrello on bass and **alto saxophonist and clarinet player Alberto Caselli**'

p. 64 (caption): 'L-R Ugo Ceresoli (accordion), Pietro Alessi (cantante), Franco [unknown] (alto sax), Nino Cabrera (trumpet), Renzo Conte (drums), Alberto Casselli (tenor sax), Ken Whitburn (piano), Bruno Ceresoli (bass).' should read 'L-R Ugo Ceresoli (accordion), Pietro Alessi (cantante), **Alberto Caselli (alto sax)**, Nino Cabrera (trumpet), Renzo Conte (drums), **Franco Incerti (tenor sax)**, Ken Whitburn (piano), Bruno Ceresoli (bass).

Kind regards,

Anthony Caselli

Dear Editors,

The two photographs published in the article 'From Mezzogiorno to Sydney Seaside: An Historical Sketch of Italians in Warringah' (*Italian Historical Society Journal*, vol 18 – 2010, pp. 15-18) on p. 18 were incorrectly attributed. The captions should read: **Fig. 1. John Caputo, Mayor of Warringah, 1998-1999.** [Photograph from website of Italian Chamber Of Commerce and Industry in Australia, http://www.icciaus.com.au/board_members] and **Fig. 2. Cover of Sempre con te** [From website of New South Press <http://media.unswpress.com.au/hiresimages/9780980564938.jpg>]

Kind regards,

Prof Malcolm Prentis

The Editors of the *Italian Historical Society Journal* apologise for the error.

my carlton years: time of austerity 1937 – 1947

by nick storino

Nick Storino was born during the Depression to parents who had migrated to Carlton from Viggiano, Italy. In this article, we hear some of Nick's boyhood reminiscences. He tells his story as a young boy observing an evolving community and the impact World War II had on the people around him.

My name is Nick Storino. I would like to recollect my early years – some of my boyhood memories and experiences.

Early days in Australia

To the best of my knowledge, my mother, Caterina Giliberti, migrated to Australia in 1928 with her mother, Rosa, her four sisters and one brother. They came from the small town of Viggiano in Basilicata, Italy. Her father, Michelangelo, had arrived two years earlier on the same ship, the *Orama*. After 40 days at sea he had arrived in Melbourne with no accommodation. Not knowing any English, he had little hope of finding work. Fortunately, he met a well-established Viggianese family, Mr and Mrs La Battaglia, who owned two houses side by side in Bell Street, Fitzroy. They lived in one, and they offered my grandfather and his family the house next door.



Fig. 1. The Giliberti family in Carlton, 1928. Bottom row left to right: Rosina, Esterina and Michelangelo; top row left to right: Antonietta, Salvatore, Elisa, Lucia and Caterina.

My father, Vincenzo Storino, also from Viggiano and a family friend, had arrived in Melbourne some months after my grandfather, in the same year, 1926. Mr Storino asked Caterina to marry him, and she accepted. They were married in 1930 and rented a single-fronted house in Drummond Street, Carlton, where the Carlton Clock Tower is now. Like most people during the hard times of the Depression, they had their photo taken at Allen's Studio in Smith Street, Fitzroy, in sepia colour.



Fig. 2. Wedding photograph of Vincenzo and Caterina Storino [nee Giliberti], 1930. From left to right: Esterina Giliberti, Salvatore Giliberti, Vincenzo and Caterina Storino, Michele Gagliardi and Lucia Giliberti. Photographer Allan Studios, 318 Smith Street Collingwood.

My father, who had been a tailor in Italy, found a job with Cohen Brothers, in Flinders Lane, behind the *Herald Sun* building. He worked manufacturing army uniforms, which was later considered an essential service for the war effort. By then, he had become a naturalised Australian citizen. He remained with the Cohen Brothers for 29 years. My mother also worked in a clothing factory. She earned one pound seven shillings a week (around \$2.70).

A Carlton childhood

My father, mother and myself lived in the house in Drummond Street for five years. House rent at the time was the equivalent of \$1.50 per week. We lived three doors from a large merchant's bottle yard, where empty bottles sold for one penny a dozen. I recall very vividly that in the evening we would walk to see the horse stables in front of the Carlton Court House, where Safeway now is.

Before the 1939-1945 war, two Italian warships, the *Armando Diaz* and the *Montecuccoli*, visited Australia and docked in Melbourne. This was a big event for the community and large crowds visited the ships. Silk Italian flags were distributed to the people. I had kept mine until it was lost a few years ago.



Fig. 3. The battle cruiser A. Diaz berthed at Port Melbourne.

At the start of 1939, my father and mother decided to leave the rented house in Drummond Street and we moved into a better, renovated home at 131 Station Street, Carlton. The new house, which was purchased from another Italian, Isidoro Bertazzon, had a large backyard and back lane, an outside toilet and a tin bath. It also had a wood chip hot water service. We had a gas stove in the kitchen and it was operated by inserting a one penny coin in the metal control box under the front veranda. My mother became a full time housewife so that she could care for both of us. The cost of the house was 750 pounds (about \$1,500).

I was very happy to be close to my cousin Rocky, who lived at 40 Princes Street, North Carlton. His father, Michele Gagliardi, had married my mother's sister, Esterina. Zio (uncle) Michele was my godfather and he opened my first bank book at the National Bank in Elgin Street with five pounds. Zio Michele was always ready to help us and many others in time of need. Like his relatives who had migrated to Melbourne around the turn of the century, zio Michele was a professional musician. He was employed with the ABC orchestra and at the Tivoli Theatre in Bourke Street. This was before black and white television, when radio and music was the 'number one' source of entertainment for the community.



Fig. 4. Musicians Michele Gagliardi and Angelo Candela with two other musicians.

I started my primary school education at St Bridget's on Nicholson Street. It was a mixed gender school. The school was fully run by nuns, who I remember as being very strict.

During this time my father continued to work for Cohen Brothers. Sometimes he would walk home from work at Flinders Lane, which took about an hour. Often my mother and I would go to Victoria Market. Once we bought small chicks and a chook and travelled home by tram without any problems!

When I was about eleven years old, we purchased our first electric fridge. It was called *Electric Ice*, and we bought it in Collins Street. No longer was I expected to cart ice home from the ice factory in Brunswick Street, in my old pram, twice a week, in the middle of the hot day! In those days ice was delivered twice a week directly to people's homes. The delivery man would come through the back door, which was always left open, take a one shilling coin from the kitchen table and leave the block of ice in its place!

My father was a strict and very traditional person, who valued his Italian heritage, so I was sent to learn to read and write the Italian language. Every Saturday at eleven I would attend class for an hour. My teacher, Mrs Fidelia Badio, also taught at University, but these classes were held at a private house on the corner of Drummond and Faraday Streets. I continued learning for a few years but I remember my biggest concern was that I might miss the Carlton football matches!

Our neighbours when we lived in Station Street were Sergio Silvagni and his family. My other friends were Bruno Bonollo, Frank Morellato. Renee and John Stella lived opposite. In Canning Street there were many hard working Italian families. Some important people worth remembering were the medical professionals within the community. Dr Soccorso Santoro had his clinic on the corner of Rathdowne and Barkly Streets. The large bluestone building still stands today. Dr Struss was on Elgin Street. Most respected and loved was Dr Pagliaro, a specialist who practised on Collins Street. Dr Pagliaro would personally visit many of his patients. After retiring, he was often invited to community events, particularly by the people from Montemurro and Viggiano.

The war

Once the war had begun, ration books were issued to every person. Accommodation was scarce and our house became a hub for accepting people in need. Amongst those who stayed with us were the Gallichio family, who came from Griffiths in New South Wales (Dr Tony and his brother still practice in Rathdowne Street, Carlton). Vince Pricoli from Grumento, Prospero Papaleo, the Laraia family, Mario Gerardo and my father's sister, zia Adelia all lived at our house for short periods at various times. We assisted lots of other people needing guidance and struggling with everyday language problems.

Fearing imminent invasion by the Japanese, my father and I, along with Mr Bruno and the Falasca Brothers, from Grumento, dug a two metre square hole in the yard, one metre below ground level. We mixed the concrete by hand and put in metal reinforcement. We created a small entry and a half-metre square opening for air intake. The "bunker" was ready. Australia waited with fear and worry.

One Sunday morning, on the way to eleven o'clock mass at St. Bridget's, on the corner of Station and Neil streets, I noticed a Japanese Zero spy plane flying high above. It was shot at by Australian Defence. This was reported much later in the *Sun* newspaper, so as not to alarm the people in Melbourne. From then on, search lamps would light up the skies at night in search of enemy planes.

Enemy alien

During the war years aliens and foreigners were not looked upon favourably. Some were arrested and sent to internment camps. Some of my uncles spent many years cutting wood in internment camps. They were paid the equivalent of 25 cents per day, just enough for cigarettes. My father had to dispose of his hunting gun and also his Philips short wave radio. We endured years of regular nightly blackouts. Curfews were enforced which meant that as aliens or foreigners, we had to be indoors by 8pm.

Friends of ours in Emerald, Mr and Mrs N. Toscano and their sons Lou and Tony, from Grumento, like many Italian families grew potatoes for the war effort. They told us that we were welcome to take refuge with them at their farm in case of Japanese attacks. I did spend some time with them. They had a team of horses to work paddocks, water tanks, no electricity and a bush toilet.



Fig. 5. Men, women and children at the farmhouse in Emerald, Victoria, 1939. Included are Ralph Rago, Prospero Papaleo, Vincenzo Pricoli, Antonio Montemurro, Nicola Toscano, Antonio [Tony] Toscano, Giselda Rago [married Guzzardi], Luigi Toscano, Giuseppina Toce [married Angerame], Raffaella Toce, Anna Rosa Toscano and Rosina Rago.

Italian prisoners of war were sent all over the world. Some came to Parkville (Camp Pell), where the Commonwealth Games village is now. I would visit them frequently with my father and mother and our friend Rosario, who had a van. We had a special permission of entry to deliver large amounts of pasta my mother cooked, ready to eat for the prisoners. We did this in the hope that they would feel they were not forgotten – as an act of human kindness, to bring a glimmer of hope to these men locked up in a foreign country.



Fig. 6. Civilians visiting Italian prisoners of war detained at the Royal Park Compound in Melbourne 1941. Included are Mr Tummino, from Muro Lucano in Basilicata, and Mr Nitti.

My life began to get very busy after school. During my two-weeks school holidays, I took a part time job at Lifesavers, in Johnston Street, Fitzroy. I also cleaned second-hand bricks for Mr O'Reilly of Neill Street, Carlton, and repaired wooden crates reusing the old nails, as they were scarce during the wartime. I was paid two shillings a week. At that time haircuts at the ex Air Force Returned Soldiers in St George's Road, North Fitzroy cost sixpence during the week and one shilling on Saturday mornings.

During the war years, my father was given part-time tailoring work by Mr Steinberg of Elgin Street, Carlton. Twice a week after school I would deliver and pick up trousers for father to complete. My father taught me to use the electric sewing machine so that I could help him to sew pockets to trousers etc., and make sure that items would be ready in time to be pressed and delivered back to the shop.

Simple pleasures

Through all this, we still found time for some fun. Entertainment for me and others during the forties was on Saturday afternoon. Picture theatres would be full. I recall many of them: the Regent in Johnston Street, Fitzroy; the Adelphi in Nicholson Street Carlton North; Merri in St George's Road, North Fitzroy; the Carlton in Faraday Street, next to Dorrit Street in Carlton as well as the Westgarth and the Empire on Sydney Road, Brunswick. Most people went to movies twice a week. For five cents during the day and twenty-five cents at night you could see two full movies.

Football was the other passion. I remember the first Grand Final after the end of the war, in 1945. Carlton beat South Melbourne. I was thirteen years old and I still remember all the team very well. These were also the Bradman years of cricket. I would listen to the test matches on my Stromberg Carlson console radio.

It was during the war that I first saw hot fire-roasted chestnuts for sale in Melbourne. They were sold by Mr L. Benincasa at the Exhibition Building in Carlton from a hand cart. I think he lived next to the government mint in Young Street in Fitzroy.

Also, I must mention the first time I recall seeing

homemade *gelato* for sale. The vendor would push his homemade ice cream cart, ringing his brass bell along Station Street and around Carlton. I believe he too came from Basilicata.

The end of the war, and beyond

General Douglas MacArthur, US Commander of the Pacific Forces, accepted the surrender of Japan from foreign minister Shigemitsu on board the aircraft carrier "Missouri" on 2 September 1945. The war had ended.

One morning, shortly after I left school at the Christian Brothers' College Parade in East Melbourne, where I had stayed for four years, I read an ad in the *Sun* for apprentices in a new radio factory on Elizabeth Street, in the city. I went for an interview, and I was accepted. My life had a new beginning. I started my new employment on a radio assembly line for \$4.50 a week. Some time later, I enrolled at the Marconi School of Radio in the AWA building in Queen Street, City. After three years I qualified as a radio mechanic.

It was 1947 and football was my big passion. Carlton won a thrilling Grand Final against Essendon, with little

time left in the final quarter, when Fred Stafford snapped the winning goal. So ended 1947 with a great outcome for Carlton and me!

Later on in the 1950s, during the influx of overseas migrants, I used to accompany people to the Immigration Department in Elizabeth Street, near Flinders Street, where migrants had to present their documents. I acted as a translator and filled the required forms for them. My footprints must have been left around the Carlton post office in Elgin Street, as a result of the dozens of times I took clothing and food parcels for various people who could not go themselves due to work commitments! Parcels would take three months to arrive to Italy by ship. Never did I accept any payments. It gave me great satisfaction and pride to help these families.

I have come to the conclusion of writing my experiences: it has given me great pleasure to recall the memories of my younger years. I sincerely hope that some of the people who read this magazine can relate back to their own childhood days.



Fig. 1. Mario Lattanzi in his navy uniform.

my father mario lattanzi

by grania lattanzi

Grania Lattanzi was born in Melbourne soon after her mother returned from Italy in 1938. She graduated in Arts from Melbourne University and later completed a Bachelor of Education and an M.A. in Public History at Monash University. She is the author of two books, Carbine (Waterloo Press, 1985) and Jimmy Watson's Wine Bar (Grapevine Press, 1989). Grania, her brother Christopher and her sister Maria have all been to Italy to visit the family, and maintain contact with them. Their children have also visited.



Fig. 2. At sea on the ship "Remo", 1933. Nancie Baird is second from left; Mario Lattanzi in the centre.

Mario Lattanzi was born on 15th April 1904 in Carrara, the eldest son of Corrado and Ida Lattanzi (nee Baratta). Corrado and Ida had three more children, Carlo, Maria and Giorgio. When Mario finished school he expressed a wish to join the navy. This was not a career his father viewed as fitting for his son and he hoped

the rigorous cadet training on the sailing ship, Cristoforo Colombo, would discourage him. However this did not happen and Mario completed his training at the Naval Academy at La Spezia. After graduating from the Academy, Mario worked for Lloyd Triestino and by the 1930s was First Officer on the "Remo", which sailed on the route to Australia. After completing a Degree in Music at Melbourne University in 1933 my mother Margarita (Nancie) Baird, her mother and a group of friends left for a tour of Europe on this ship. Somehow, in spite of the fact that my mother spoke no Italian, and, I imagine, my father had only a little English, by the time the ship arrived in Genova, they had formed a close relationship. While in Italy my mother was introduced to the Lattanzis, who remarked on her "belle gambe". Neither family was pleased with this relationship, the Italians because their son was marrying a Colonial, and the Australians because their daughter was marrying a foreigner. However, the relationship flourished and by the time the return trip to Australia was completed, after a quick trip to the jeweller to buy a ring, they became engaged and the "Remo" left on

its return voyage a few days later. They were married in June 1936 at St Finbar's Church, Brighton, and their honeymoon consisted of a train ride to Sydney and a few days in that city before boarding the "Remo" on its return journey, to begin their lives together in Italy. They moved into an apartment on the seafront in Viareggio, and my father continued working for Lloyd Triestino, but on shorter trips, sailing to Italian Somaliland, one of Italy's African colonies. During this time he was promoted to Captain, and my mother always referred to him as "Cap".



Fig. 3. Mario and Nancie Lattanzi enjoying a meal. Viareggio, late 1936.

Already war clouds were gathering over Europe. In November 1936, Mussolini signed the Axis Pact with Hitler, which aligned Italy against the British. Life began to be more difficult for British citizens in Italy, which would have included my mother, as all Australians at this time were British citizens. In 1937 my brother Cristoforo (Christopher) was born. By 1938 my mother, pregnant with me, convinced Mario to move to Australia. She left before him, and he remained behind to settle his affairs. It had been decided that they would run a business in Australia selling goods imported from Italy, including Richard Ginori china and other exclusive Italian household items. It was not permitted at that time to take money out of the country so my mother travelled with an amazingly beautiful jewellery collec-

tion. They opened their shop in a Melbourne arcade, but the enterprise was to be short-lived, as everything changed when Italy entered the War in 1940. Immediately my father became an "enemy alien".

Many Italians were interned, but my parents were given the option of moving to the country, where my father had to report to the police every week, and was not allowed to travel. They moved to a house in Silvan in the Dandenong Ranges, an area known for its market gardens. Many of these were owned by Italians and he got some casual work picking fruit and labouring on these farms. He also cleared a large part of the block on which the house was built and began growing raspberries and strawberries, and later gladioli, for sale at Victoria Market. This brought in some money but the land was too small to create enough income to support us. During this time my brother remembers letters arriving from the Italian Government telling him to return to Italy immediately to take command of a warship. He also received letters from the Australian Government, informing him he would be interned or, alternatively, he would be called up to fight for Australia. Mostly people were very nice to us, but there were some who were suspicious of foreigners. One neighbour tried to ensure that my mother should also report to the police each week. This did not happen, but my mother found the suggestion very upsetting. My brother and I attended the local school and some of the parents complained that we should not be allowed to march on Anzac Day. Our grandmother produced the medals won by our great-uncle who was killed in WW1, and we took our places in the parade wearing these. Mum's friends were very welcoming, and one of them went to great lengths to make Dad feel at home by serving tinned spaghetti sandwiches for afternoon tea! He politely ate them but never forgot it.



Fig. 4. The house in Silvan where the Lattanzi family lived. Mario planted the cypress tree. [Image courtesy Grania Lattanzi]

In many ways we lived a traditional Australian way of life, but also with Italian influences. Although we always spoke English in the home, my brother and I learned the Italian names for the objects around us. At night, our father would read to us from Italian children's books sent to us from Italy by Aunt Maria. My parents drank wine with dinner which was unusual in Australia at the time, and as children we were allowed to taste it. We always had ground coffee, except for some time during the war when coffee was unprocurable, and we had to make do with coffee and chicory essence. We had zucchini and artichokes which my father grew, be-

fore they were readily available in shops, and we always had pasta rather than fish and chips on Friday night. We used olive oil for cooking and our salads were dressed with oil and vinegar at a time when salads in Australia were served without dressing or with mayonnaise made with sweetened condensed milk and vinegar. I remember a friend from school refusing to eat the salad as “olive oil was only for babies’ bottoms”, and could be bought for this purpose in small bottles at the chemist shop.



Fig. 5. Nancie and Mario Lattanzi at the zoo, mid 1940s. This was one of the first family outings after Mario was free to travel. [Image courtesy Grania Lattanzi]

After the war Mario wished to become an accountant, the career of his father and two brothers. He was told that only Australians and British could, at that time, practise that profession. He got a labouring job with the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, and later bought a truck which he drove as part of his job with them. He was also active in the Italian community in the area, acting as an interpreter and helping with filling in forms and other bureaucratic complexities. In the late 1940s Mario became an Australian citizen. Nancy and Mario had a third child in 1949, my sister, Maria. During the 1950s he was invited by the Democratic Labour Party to stand as their candidate for the area but he refused. My brother, who took a summer job with the Board of Works during school holidays, remembers one of the Australian workmen telling him that Dad was “the whitest man he had ever met”. A compliment indeed!

My parents both enjoyed horseracing and my father loved cricket so we would listen to these on the radio on Saturday afternoons. On many Saturdays my parents went to the races and then on to the Florentino for dinner afterwards. My father took us many times to the cricket at the MCG. He also enjoyed Australian Rules Football and took us to some matches. He and my mother both loved opera. My sister remembers him singing arias from opera but I don’t remember much singing during the war. I do remember, just after the war when he was allowed to travel, he took us to Melbourne to go to the pictures. We thought we were going to see Mickey Mouse, but we saw “the Barber of Seville” instead. For their annual holidays my parents

would go to the city and stay at Mario’s Hotel and eat at Mario’s, The Florentino, Ricco’s or The Society every night, and go to the opera or the theatre as often as they could. This was their idea of a great time and a chance to experience something Italian.

Mario was very generous with his time in helping others, and was a wonderful, warm, loving father. He and my mother had a great marriage. I am sure that before he came to Australia, he had never done manual work or had to worry about money, and, although he must have found it very hard, he never complained. Although, when we were growing up, our parents must have been very distressed by their precarious position, we were unaware of this. We have been truly blessed in having him for a father. He died on 25th April 1982, an Australian citizen but a son of Italy. We will never forget him.



Fig. 6. Mario Lattanzi and his children Christopher and Grania. Silvan, Victoria, 1941.

surviving the great depression with italian ingenuity

by marcus luigi spiller

Dr Marcus Spiller is an economist and urban planner in private practice in Melbourne. He is a graduate of St Joseph's Marist Brothers College in North Fitzroy (now closed), Melbourne University and RMIT University. He was born in Fitzroy in 1954 and grew up in North Carlton, the second of four children to David Spiller (born Vicenza 1922, died Castlemaine, Victoria 2009) and Laura (Spiller) Crenna (born Verbania, Piemonte, 1925).

It's 1932. Like the rest of Australia and most of the world, the small coal mining town of Thirroul near Wollongong is in the grip of a seemingly endless Depression.

Pietro Spiller sits down to a meal with his 6 children, including a new born. Presently his wife, Rosina, joins them fresh from her labours at the stove. Lord knows what the other barefoot urchins of the neighbourhood are eating tonight. Pietro and his family have before them a huge pot of steaming *bigoli* – Veneto style pasta. The coarse and grainy spaghetti made with semolina, water and eggs is tossed in a rich sauce of stewed chicken. Pietro had unceremoniously despatched the fowl in the gloomy light of early morning; the creature was beyond its best egg laying days.

After this course, the Spillers enjoy some home grown radicchio served with fresh ricotta, made by Rosina with the obliging assistance of Mabel, the family's cow. Oddly enough the meal is finished off with a pumpkin pie and cream.



Fig. 1. Pietro Spiller and his family. Thirroul, c1933. [Image courtesy Marcus Spiller]

Only a couple of hours earlier, Pietro had finished his long and arduous shift in the Illawarra Coal Mine. He didn't mind the work; like all the miners, he was paid on piece rates and knew that effort would generate good money quickly. Long before Rocky Balboa (Syl-

vester Stallone) made it famous, Pietro would rise at the blackest time of night and gulp down half a dozen raw eggs to fortify himself for the day's work ahead, knowing that inch by inch he was advancing the cause of his family.

It was a dirty, back breaking and dangerous occupation. Even the pit ponies stiffened and resisted as their handlers pulled them towards the shaft. Every working day, as the coal dust relentlessly infiltrated Pietro's lungs, he developed a prodigious thirst, not only to replace the sweat expended down below, but also to find some relief from the grind of his life. He drank heartily with his Australian born and Italian mates at the pub before walking, and sometimes stumbling, up to his sprawling timber home, high on its 5 acre lot overlooking the endless Pacific.

He may have had his fill of beer, but he always washed down his meal with a glass or two of wine. It was home made. He had cleared the orchard on his lot, save for a few peach trees and a lemon tree and planted whatever grapes he could find. They turned out to be table grapes. Nevertheless, each early autumn would see him raucously instruct his sons to meticulously wash their feet before hopping up into the foot powered juicing vat he had rigged up.

In an age of rampant unemployment and poverty, the Spillers of Thirroul seemed to some to live like kings.

This wasn't a matter of luck or privilege. Pietro, who was the highest paid worker in the mine owing to his driving ambition and work ethic, had swooped on the Hill House when its owners found themselves drowning in debt. They were helpless as the economy ground to a halt and went into reverse, with the banks foreclosing left right and centre.

He had grown up in a share farming household in Isola Vicentina and knew the value of a few productive acres.

He also recognised the enduring value of real estate; he understood its power to liberate the worker from servitude. At the tender age of 16 he left home to work in Germany before going further afield – all the way to the USA – where he accumulated enough cash working in steel mills to acquire his own farm in Isola before he was 30.

It was during this stay in America that he had met Rosina, Tuscan born but Chicago raised, and where they produced their first two children, Caterina and Antonio. He'd taken his family back to Isola, where the pair had two more children, David and Peter, but Rosina soon made clear that she was not interested in the rustic charms of the Veneto. Again Pietro launched himself into the unknown, this time to Australia, to find a home, and real estate, for his family. Following a short reconnaissance conducted by Pietro, the family duly arrived in Thirroul in 1925. Here they would have two more children, Noe (also known as Quinto) and Claudio, born in the same year as the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and known ever since by his middle name as 'Syd'. Rosina would continue to indulge her

American dream, baking her apple, or pumpkin, or blackberry pies and wistfully singing Mid West tunes on Wollongong radio.



Fig. 2. The Spiller bigolaro, produced in c1895. [Image courtesy Marcus Spiller]

As his brood of children gathered at the table, Pietro also knew that he had Italian innovation and technology on his side. Shortly after arriving in Australia, he had written to his father asking him to send the *bigolaro* out to Thirroul, under the care of some paesani who had similarly resolved to make a new life in Australia.

The *bigolaro* is a device for making spaghetti, rigatoni, tagliatelle and other pasta types using an ingenious extrusion process. The pasta dough is placed inside what looks like a small bronze cannon barrel. A screw propelled plunger is then applied to the dough ball and it is pushed through a 'form' to produce the chosen pasta shape.

The *bigolaro* was patented in 1875 and is still in production by the firm ('Bottene') which originally came up with the idea¹. Bottene was established even further back in 1805 in Marano Vicentino, only a good day's walking distance from Isola Vicentina.

¹ <http://www.bottene.net/products.htm>



Fig. 3. Detail of the Spiller bigolaro, showing the make as F[rate]lli Bottene – Marano V[icenti]no. [Image courtesy Marcus Spiller]

The dies used in the *bigolaro* produce a pasta with a “totally authentic rough surface”. “This results in the pasta holding a sauce much better than pasta made by any other method and it is a quality that was much prized by the Venetians”.

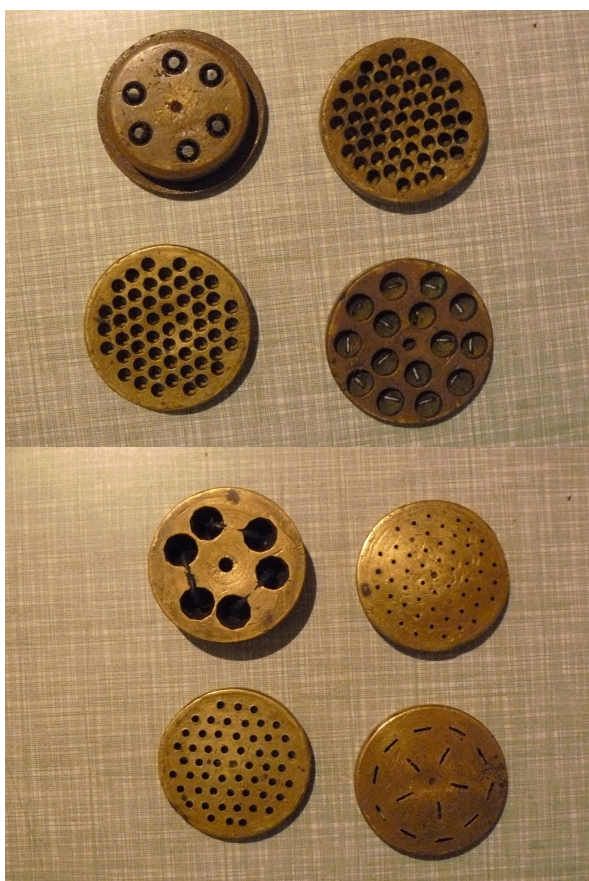


Fig. 5. Recto and verso of the four dies for making different kinds of pasta. [Image courtesy Marcus Spiller]

The *bigolaro* is designed to be used with a purpose designed bench or *cavalletto*. The operator would sit astride the bench and turn the screw on the pasta dough in the manner of bike handle bars. Pietro had made his own innovations. Instead of the *cavalletto*, he attached the *bigolaro* to a sturdy plank. This would be placed on top of a table and one or two of the Spiller children would be required to sit on, and hold the plank in place, as Rosina turned the screw, and other kids cut and caught the pasta on broom sticks, as spaghetti

or other pasta varieties fed through the machine.

Fig. 6. A modern day bigolaro fixed to its cavalletto. [Image courtesy Marcus Spiller]

David Spiller, Pietro’s third born and father of the au-



thor, inherited the *bigolaro*. He made a cavalletto for it with a view to making a film demonstrating the properties of this marvelous machine. Unfortunately, this endeavour was not fulfilled; David died in May 2009 at age 86. But the *bigolaro* lives on; a device that, in no small part, helped a family survive the Great Depression.



Fig. 7. David Spiller, inheritor of the bigolaro, front row, fourth from right. [Image courtesy Marcus Spiller]



Fig. 1. The Italian warship Raimondo Montecuccoli on visit to Melbourne for the sesquicentenary celebrations of European settlement of Australia. This visit caused great controversy within the Italian community in Victoria.

fascist salute: the *montecuccoli* visits australia 1938

by david faber

Freelance historian Dr David Faber is the author of a PhD thesis on the life and times of the leading Italian Australian anarchist Francesco Giovanni Fantin 1901-42 [Adelaide 2008]. Born and bred in Tasmania, he has lived and worked in Adelaide since 1977, except for a sojourn in Milan 1985-8. He speaks Italian and adopts a multicultural labour history perspective. His current research interests include Australian wartime xenophobia of Italians during World War II.

'I am proud to bring to Australian seas the glorious Italian tricolour symbol of the power of Fascist Italy.'
Captain Da Zara²

In January 1938 an ultramodern Italian light cruiser, the pride of the Marina Militare, steamed into Australian waters on a goodwill visit. Never was goodwill both so necessary and so illusory. The period from January to the Munich Crisis of September 1938 has been described as 'the Climax of Appeasement'.³

Historians owe their readers an account of their orientation. I am linked to that annus horribilis by a folk memory, handed down to me by my adoptive father, a Socialist shopkeeper, Cyril William Clements of Somerset, Tasmania, son in his turn of another Socialist shopkeeper, Cyril Baden Clements of Triabunna, Tasmania. Dad told me on his knee of the dark days when

the supreme evil of Fascism was trifled with by its Conservative admirers. He fed my juvenile passion for history rather as if he were reading me a saga like Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. I particularly recall his emphasising that Appeasement, the policy of positive engagement with Fascism, was illogical: you only stimulate the appetite of a ravenous beast by feeding it, he argued.

I still find these views fundamentally more convincing than the revisionist view that Appeasement was essentially noble pacifism,⁴ even allowing for the apprehension of contemporaries about mass slaughter which was a prime legacy of the Great War and certainly personally moved Lyons, who had been a Labor Anticonscriptionist and remained staunchly for voluntary service even as United Australia Party Prime Minister.⁵ But he was also a devout Catholic, and an Italo-

² The message was sent to well wishers in WA. National Archives of Australia, AP501/2/0 NN Montecuccoli.

³ Bird, *JA Lyons-the Tame Tasmanian*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008, Chapter 6.

⁴ Bird, *JA Lyons – the Tame Tasmanian*, cit. p2.

⁵ Bird, *JA Lyons – the Tame Tasmanian*, cit. per index

'Conscription'. Especially after Guernica, Baldwin's warning that 'the

phile, who could not but be influenced by Pope Pius XI comment that Il Duce was a man sent by Providence to save Italy from Communism, 'the only man at that time in Europe with a sufficiently active policy to be able to fight Bolshevism'.⁶ As recently as the June 1937 Imperial Conference, Lyons had argued for imperial Appeasement, asking with particular reference to Italy:

Might it not be possible in a comparatively short time for the old traditional friendship between Italy and the British Empire to be re-established? He had recently seen Signor Mussolini who had told him that there was every possible reason why Italy should be friendly with Great Britain. If relations between the two countries were strained, Italy could not possibly develop her homeland much less her overseas empire... Signor Mussolini had asked him to inform Great Britain that he wanted peace, and wished to live on the most friendly terms with Great Britain in the true interests of Italy herself.⁷

By the time of the Munich crisis he was cabling Chamberlain suggesting that the Australian representative SM Bruce be sent to Rome to broker an accord 'because as Prime Minister of Australia, I am on good personal terms with Signor Mussolini'⁸, evidently unaware that Bruce had offered Ramsay MacDonald Australian military assistance for war in North Africa against 'the dirty Italians'.⁹ The visit to Australia of the *Raimondo Montecuccoli* represented a policy of flattering a Dominion the better to impress an Empire on the one hand, and on the other, a last gasp of Appeasement.

Not a few Australians were coming to the view of ER Dawes of Adelaide who told the 1938 Sydney Summer School of the Australian Institute of Political Science:

We are at the stage where we have to make a choice between collective security used in the interests of peace, and folding our arms and allowing arrogant fascism to run over us... I say quite frankly that we are not concerned about Britain's vested interests... but if Britain's... interests coincide with our desire to check some of these aggressive nations that threaten to destroy our democracy, then why should we not seize the opportunity to push them back?¹⁰

Probably more mainstream was the stance of Garratt of the *Manchester Guardian* who reproved the philofascist clique around press lords Rothermere, Beaverbrook and Astor for disregard of 'the safety of the Empire'.¹¹ Mainstream views of Fascism at the time could be surreal to the point of bizarre. Ralph Glasser, a native of the Glasgow slum the Gorbals and of Lithuanian Jewish extraction, was horrified to learn on winning a scholarship to Oxford that talk of the Holocaust was regarded on campus as Zionist fantasy, despite the presence at the university of refugees from Germany.¹² Churchill's Germanophobia was so monomaniacal it fuelled an unstinting admiration of Italian

bombers will always get through' was cause for widespread alarm.

⁶ Teeling, *The Pope in Politics: The Life & Work of Pius XI*, Lovat Dickso, London, 1937. On the philofascism of Pius XI see Santarelli, *Storia del Fascismo*, Edizioni Riunite, Roma, 1973, Vol. II p105-6.

⁷ Neale ed., *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*, Vol. I: 1937-8, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975, p97.

⁸ Andrews, *A History of Australian Foreign Policy*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1984, p87.

Fascism and Mussolini throughout the dictatorship, isolating him from antifascist opinion and rivalling the Foreign Office's attempt to reconcile with Italy through the thick and thin of the Abyssinian debacle and the shame of 'Nonintervention' in the Spanish Civil War.¹³ Such was the background of the Lyons government's invitation to Italy to be represented at the celebration of the sesquicentenary of European settlement in Australia.

The *Montecuccoli* sailed into Sydney Harbour on 25 January 1938, and almost immediately encountered political opposition. While she was in port the Italian Consul General was mobbed at a reception for the crew at Paddington Town Hall by counter demonstrators brandishing placards proclaiming 'Down with Mussolini' and 'Down with Italian Intervention in Spain'.¹⁴ This embarrassment occurred in a context of nearly two decades of see-sawing relations between the Fascist regime and the British Empire, which all three governments concerned were anxious to improve. Even before the March on Rome of October 1922 Mussolini had avowed his intention to make of the Mediterranean an 'Italian lake'.¹⁵ In the early days of the regime, it claimed not only the return from France of the Mediterranean port of Nizza [from which Garibaldi had sailed] and the ancestral transalpine homelands of the Savoy dynasty, but Malta also as a jewel of the Italian crown.¹⁶ But the real curtain raiser on Mussolini's foreign and Mediterranean policy was the bombardment of the Adriatic Greek island of Corfu on 31 August 1923.¹⁷ It was a brigand's policy of gunboat diplomacy, brinkmanship and affront to the League of Nations and international law. Il Duce also had early ambitions to expand Italy's possessions in the Aegean to the Anatolian mainland in the revolutionary chaos which absorbed Turkey in the wake of her defeat in the Great War.¹⁸ In 1925 'after much haggling' Britain honoured the secret Treaty of London of 1915 which had triggered Italian Intervention in the Great War by ceding Jubaland from British Kenya to Italian Somaliland.¹⁹ Declaring himself a protector of Islam, in 1934 Il Duce began broadcasting from Bari Anti-Semitic propaganda into Palestine and Egypt.²⁰ A consolidation of this vi-

⁹ Bird, *JA Lyons – the Tame Tasmanian*, cit., p241 & 252.

¹⁰ Duncan ed., *Australia's Foreign Policy*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1938, p1 & 210.

¹¹ Garratt, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, Penguin, 1938, p116-18.

¹² Glasser, *Gorbals Boy at Oxford*, Chatto & Windus, 1988 p32.

¹³ Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure*, Penguin, 1973, p329-30, 333, 407 & 409.

¹⁴ Gammage & Spearritt, *Australians 1938*, Fairfax Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, p23 & 386.

¹⁵ Tasca, *Nascita e avvento del fascismo*, Laterza, Firenze, 1982, p416.

¹⁶ Greenwall, *Mediterranean Crisis*, Nicholson & Watson, London, 1939, p159.

¹⁷ Greenwall, *Mediterranean Crisis*, cit., p7 & 13-14.

¹⁸ Greenwall, *Mediterranean Crisis*, cit., p14-19.

¹⁹ Garratt, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, cit., p13. On the Treaty of London see Mack Smith, *Italy: A Modern History*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, p298-300.

²⁰ Garratt, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, cit., p16. Garratt, it should be noted, was a Zionist sympathiser.

sion began with General Graziani's genocidal war of 'pacification' against the Senussi resistance, concluded in 1931 with the hanging of its leader, Omar el Mokhtar.²¹

Planning almost immediately began for war in East Africa against Abyssinia. By early 1934 Mussolini was declaring that Italy's position in the Mediterranean endowed her with a civilising mission in Africa which 'earlier arrivals' ought not to obstruct.²² Diplomatic escalation led to the provocation of hostilities at Wal Wal oasis in December 1934.²³ Italy became so isolated one commentator, George Martelli, the Rome correspondent for the *Morning Post*, entitled his book describing her defiance of the League of Nations and invasion of Ethiopia *Italy against the World*.²⁴ One sign of intellectual resistance in Australia was the awarding in 1936 by the University of Adelaide of the League of Nations Prize to law student Ronald Lisle Johnson for a critical essay on Italian violation of international law in Ethiopia.²⁵ This climate of opinion eventually led to the 'half hearted' application of League of Nations sanctions by Britain to Italy, oil and other essential war supplies absurdly exempted, the main effect of which was to rally national support to the regime, incensing Italian opinion at the hypocrisy of Britain, clinging to her own empire whilst denying Italy a place in the sun.²⁶ As Mussolini succinctly put it in 1935:

As soon as the British have sated themselves with colonial conquests, they impudently draw an arbitrary line across the middle of the page in the Recording Angel's book, and then proclaim: 'What was right for us till yesterday is wrong for you today.'²⁷

²¹ Santarelli, *Storia del fascismo*, cit., p71-3.

²² Garratt, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, cit., p51.

²³ Regarding the political preparation and military execution of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, see Hudson, *Australia & the League of Nations*, SUP, 1980, p73-87; Mack Smith, *Italy: A Modern History*, cit., p448-53; Andrews, *A History of Australian Foreign Policy*, cit., p73-4 & Robson ed., *The Political Quarterly in the Thirties*, Allen Lane, London, p162, 166 & 174. In 'Meditation on Abyssinia' of January 1936 Leonard Woolf recalled that 'between July 1934 and January 1935 evidence began to accumulate even in the Press that Signor Mussolini was ... preparing ... for the conquest of Abyssinia.' See also Santarelli, *Storia del fascismo*, cit., Vol. II, p359f.

²⁴ Chatto & Windus, London, 1938.

²⁵ *Abyssinia, Italy & the League*, University of Adelaide, 1936, Barr Smith Library Special Collections. For a meticulous contemporary chronicle of Italy's Abyssinian adventure see Martelli, *Italy Against the World*, cit. The duplicity of British diplomacy compensates for its discrete Italophile bias.

²⁶ For a critical view of the sanctions episode, see Santarelli, *Storia del fascismo*, cit., p380-85. For confirmation of the effect of sanctions on Italian public opinion, see Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, Penguin, 1985, p158. Garratt, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, cit., p85 mentions that 'oil was the one essential to keep the [Italian] military machine moving in Ethiopia' and that the question of its inclusion in the list of sanctioned commodities was continually deferred. Defining the application of sanctions as 'half hearted' [p86], he devotes Chapter 6 to a discussion of sanctions. He notes p87 Beatrice Baskerville's *What Next O Duce*, Longman Green, London, 1937 as 'a good account of Italy's internal reactions to sanctions.' Another concise discussion is in Martelli, *Italy Against the World*, cit, Chapter XIII Sanctions.

²⁷ Cited in Garratt, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, cit., p14. Of much the same period and spirit was the following remark: 'We will imitate to the letter those who are lecturing us. They have shown that when it was a question of creating an empire, or of defending it, they never took any account at all of the opinion of the world.' Garratt, op. cit.,

There was no comeback to this challenge but decolonization, which the British Conservative government was not about to countenance. Humanitarian public opinion in Britain and Australia was horrified by reports of Italian deployment in Ethiopia of chemical weapons, attacks on the Red Cross and Vittorio Mussolini's extolling of the bombing of tribal horsemen as beautiful and 'exceptionally good fun.'²⁸ Although the Conservative British government had connived with Italy,²⁹ Anglo Italian relations were in tatters. 'The Gentlemen's Agreement', so christened by Mussolini, of January 1937 between Italy and Great Britain to reciprocally respect the status quo in the Mediterranean, was a façade which Italy belied within days of its signature by her escalating intervention in Spain.³⁰ Then as one British insider put it: 'Then came that blessed word Non-Intervention. For the sake of Non-Intervention we lay down on our stomachs in the mud and allowed Mussolini and Hitler to walk across our prostrated bodies.'³¹ Nothing good followed but the remedial Nyon agreement to staunch the wounds inflicted by Italian submarine piracy on the sea roads of Republican Spain.³² Reporting after the *Montecuccoli's* departure from Adelaide the luncheon aboard hosted by Commandant Da Zara, the *Truth* observed that the Premier [Mr Butler] 'was present to cement Mr Chamberlain's new friendship with Italy.'³³ All to no avail. The renewal of the 'Gentleman's Agreement' by Chamberlain on April Fool's Day 1938 was Appeasement's forlorn hope.³⁴

The *Montecuccoli* was not the first warship to show the Italian tricolour in Australia.

In March 1922, some six months or so before the Fascist March on Rome in October, the Royal Italian Cruiser *Libia* visited Melbourne as the representative of an allied power.³⁵ A closer precedent chronologically and politically is afforded by the visit to Australia of the *Armando Diaz*, named in honour of the field marshal who had overseen Italy's military recovery from the disaster of Caporetto in 1917 and was later one of the military backers of the March on Rome. Her itinerary took in Fremantle, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and, in October 1934, Cairns. With war between Fascist Italy and Ethiopia just a shot away, North Queensland Antifascists printed Italian handbills inviting sailors to desert, succeeding in convincing and hiding one Casaburi.³⁶ But this was a preliminary skirmish to the main

p65.

²⁸ Garratt, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, cit., p101-2.

²⁹ Garratt, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, cit., p109, speaks of 'the solid determination of the Government not to hinder a rapid Italian victory.'

³⁰ Eden, *Facing the Dictators*, Cassell, London, 1962, p432, 554, 570 & 589.

³¹ Greenwall, *Mediterranean Crisis*, cit., p176.

³² Greenwall, *Mediterranean Crisis*, cit., p175-6.

³³ NAA AP501/2/0 NN Luncheon Aboard, *Truth*, 5 March 1938.

³⁴ Greenwall, *Mediterranean Crisis*, cit., p230. See also Hibbert, *Benito Mussolini*, Reprint Society, London, 1963, p118-19.

³⁵ Deputy Adjutant General, 9 March 1922, National Archives of Australia, Victoria, MP 367.

³⁶ Cresciani 'The Proletarian Migrants: Fascism & Italian Anarchists in Australia' *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No 1, 1979, p14.

engagement of the *Montecuccoli* visit of 1938.

The Royal Cruiser *Raimondo Montecuccoli* to give her full title, was 'named in honour of a glorious Italian General who achieved the highest military rank fighting in the service of the Emperor Leopold of Austria' in the 17th Century.³⁷ Thus she was meant to embody an Italian vocation for war. Launched in September 1934 at the Genoese Ansaldo docks, her sea trials were conducted in 1935. She had a staff of 30 officers and a crew of 500 men. Her displacement was 7,000 tonnes and she was 182 metres from stem to stern and a mere 16 metres across the beam. She was protected by 60 millimetres of chromium-nickel-steel armour plating. She had a top speed of 38 knots and her motto was 'Resolutely and Swiftly'.³⁸ She was armed with 8 cannon of 152/53 calibre and 6 of 100/47 calibre intended for naval defence and anti-aerial defence. She had won the Italian naval gunnery competition for 1938. Also in anti-aerial function were 8 heavy and 8 light machine guns. She had 2 twin torpedo tubes and carried two flying boats for aerial reconnaissance.³⁹ A light cruiser built for speedy reconnaissance and raiding, in the contemporary phraseology of the Italian Navy she was designed to negotiate 'the straits' of the 1922 Washington naval disarmament treaty controlling the construction of capital ships, animated by memories of the naval arms race which was one of the contributors to the Great War.⁴⁰



Fig. 2. Angelo and Gina Menegazzo with friends on board the Italian warship *Raimondo Montecuccoli* during her visit to Melbourne. The photograph, taken on 25 February 1938 at Port Melbourne, shows children dressed in the Balilla uniform.

The visit of the *Montecuccoli* to Melbourne at the invitation of the Australian government was to see the high point of Antifascist opposition in Australia to Fascist intervention in Spain. The visit began well, with the mainstream Melbourne press dubbing her 'a greyhound' of her class and enthusing over her 'ultramodern appear-

ance'.⁴¹ The prelude to the trouble which ensued was the smuggling of Antifascist literature aboard the *Remo* in Melbourne in January 1938 by the Anarchist leader Francesco Carmagnola.⁴² Forewarned, Commander Bondi, second in command of the *Montecuccoli*, paraded the crew on the propaganda 'menace', provocatively suggesting countermeasures against distributors. Protestors organised an Italian dance at McArthur Place, Carlton for the Saturday evening of 13 February 1938 after the cruiser's arrival at South Wharf. A party of sailors and fellow travellers attended to disrupt proceedings and there were clashes with casualties on both sides. On Monday 15 February an Italian taxi driver twelve years resident in Australia with an Australian wife and children, Ottavio 'Taffy' Orlando, accepted a fare from some sailors, who may have thought at first that they recognised a protagonist of the clash of the Saturday night, namely Carmagnola. Orlando was invited aboard the ship, overpowered and bashed. It emerged that Orlando had been a member of the Matteotti Club, and he found to his consternation that as a result of political surveillance 'they knew all about me'. There was talk of his being taken to Italy. Orlando was held for some hours before Wharfies' associate Percy Laidler was able to negotiate his release.⁴³ On Wednesday 17 February over 7,000 workers and other democrats gathered at South Wharf to burn an effigy of Mussolini and hear a brief address from Carmagnola.⁴⁴ Orlando's case was taken up by the Australian Council for Civil Liberties, which requested an enquiry. After undertaking to make representations to the regime, and going so far as to forward to the Foreign Office a demand for an apology and compensation, the government reneged, leaving the ACCL with the impression that it had caved in to pressure.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Venturini, *Never Give In*, Search Foundation, Sydney, 2007, p590.

⁴² Cresciani, 'The Proletarian Migrants: Fascism & Italian Anarchists in Australia', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No 1, 1979, p15.

⁴³ This account of the Orlando incident is drawn from Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, International Bookshop, Melbourne, 1966, p65 & Bertha Walker, who refers to the visit of the cruiser as 'the big event that brought Australian and Italian antifascists together' in: 'The Raimondo Montecuccoli' *The Recorder*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Melbourne Branch, February 1988.

⁴⁴ The conservative crowd estimate is from Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, cit., p65 Cresciani reports that police estimates were as high as 10-12,000: 'The Proletarian Migrants: Fascism & Italian Anarchists in Australia' *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No 1, 1979, p15. At the time the Communist Party claimed an attendance of 20,000: 'Masses force Lyons to act', *The Workers' Weekly*, 1 March 1938.

⁴⁵ Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, p84 News of the representations forwarded to the Foreign Office was reported in the *Adelaide News*, 26 February 1938.

³⁷ The family were old nobility from the Modenese Appennines. *Grande dizionario enciclopedico UTET XII*, Torino, undated.

³⁸ Giorgerini, *Gli incrociatori italiani*, Ufficio Storico della Marina Militare, Roma, 1964, p562.

³⁹ 'RI Montecuccoli', caratteristiche; National Archives of Australia SA AP501/2/0 NN, Montecuccoli & Giorgerini, *Gli incrociatori italiani*, cit., p554.

⁴⁰ On this topic see Harris, *Naval Disarmament*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1930 & for the Italian view De Risio, *Tempesta sul ponte di volo*, ADN Kronos Libri, 1987, p27.



Fig. 3. Maria Fontana and Vicenza Gradito near the Italian warship Raimondo Montecuccoli docked at Port Melbourne, 1938.

After a quick visit to Hobart the *Montecuccoli* made for Adelaide, arriving in the middle of the aroused atmosphere of a State election campaign in which the official reception accorded the ship itself became an issue.⁴⁶ As the South Australian labour movement geared up to receive the *Montecuccoli* with protests, the Italian Adelaide Vice Consulate prepared for the ship's arrival by going into surveillance mode. On 14 February Amerio wrote to Consul Arrighi in Melbourne:

I enclose for your information cuttings from the *Advertiser* of the 12th on the subject of the protest made to the Premier of this State by the local United Trades and Labour Council against the visit of the *RI Montecuccoli* to Adelaide. The T Garlan [Tom Garland] mentioned in the cutting is known as the leader of the communists in SA. Local authorities do not think that hostile demonstrations will occur here...⁴⁷

Clearly 'local authorities' were partners in surveillance with the Italian consular service. The authorities, Italian and Australian, were obviously concerned that the scale of the Melbourne protests not be repeated, and

in this they were to be gratified, but the visit did not pass unremarked by opponents of the regime and Appeasement.

A gathering reported as being between 500 and 600 people at Speaker's Corner in Botanic Park heard the Secretary of the SA Council against War and Fascism JL Cavanagh Jr move the following resolution:

This meeting views with alarm the Fascist brutalities which have coincided with the visit of the Italian cruiser to Melbourne. We protest against the action of the Premier (Mr Butler) in inviting these agents of Mussolini to this State and entertaining them with taxpayers money, also his refusal to meet a deputation from the two largest workers organisations of this State. The Melbourne outrage is an outstanding example to the people of Australia of what Fascist barbarism really is, and which has turned Spain and China into shambles. We call on all who cherish liberty and democracy – this includes the great majority of Australian people – to unite and crush Fascism wherever it appears.⁴⁸

The reply of the establishment came in the editorial column of the *Advertiser* of 28 February, the day of the *Montecuccoli*'s departure. Under the heading 'Our Italian Guests' the *Advertiser* entrenched its growing reputation as a Tory party organ, developing the Premier's argument that State obligations and the laws of hospitality so vital for a tourist destination obliged the reception of the *Montecuccoli* in a spirit of goodwill. Moreover the requirements of national and imperial policy were to be born in mind.

The personnel of the *Raimondo Montecuccoli* are the representatives of a nation with which Great Britain is at the present moment striving to reach a better understanding in the interests of peace.

The editorialist then tried to have it both ways by arguing that 'the visit has no political significance' for the purpose of stigmatising as political, unedifying and factional the demonstration at Melbourne, to which the Adelaide visit was the sequel. South Australians, sniffed the *Advertiser*, 'are not accustomed to allow their politics to obtrude themselves so unfortunately.' In any case the Melbourne incident was now being addressed through official diplomatic channels.⁴⁹ There were however plentiful indications to the politics of the visit, beginning with the official exchange of courtesies between Captain Da Zara and the Premier and Lieutenant Governor, not to mention scattered notices in the press. The press published on the ship's arrival on Saturday 26 February a photograph of 'sailors of the Italian cruiser *Raimondo Montecuccoli* lining the rails as they give a smiling greeting to South Australia... Some are giving the Fascist salute.'⁵⁰ Some indeed on

⁴⁶ For the Premier's policy speech see the *Advertiser*, 25 February 1938. For the initial protest of the United Trades and Labour Council see the *Advertiser*, 12 February 1938. The Premier's retort that 'one must show the visitor's courtesy' was reported by the President of the UTLC J Flanagan, a returned serviceman, in the *Advertiser* on 26 February 1938. ALP members seemed to have boycotted the visit as requested, and unionists were also invited to do so. Flanagan concluded by wishing that Butler be thrown out of office over the issue. Butler was returned with independent support at the poll held on 19 March 1938: Hughes & Graham, *A Handbook of Australian Government & Politics 1890-1964*, ANU Press, 1968, p555.

⁴⁷ NAA AP501/2/0 NN Vice Consul Adelaide – Consul Melbourne, 14 February 1938. Garland was effectively a prominent communist and Secretary of the UTLC. See index to Moss, *Sound of Trumpets*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1985.

⁴⁸ NAA AP501/2/0 NN, *Advertiser*, 28 February 1938.

⁴⁹ NAA AP501/2/0 NN, *Advertiser*, 28 February 1938.

⁵⁰ NAA AP501/2/0 NN. As there is no trace in the *Advertiser* photographic archive of this emblematic image, the original newsprint cutting in the NAA file and subsequent photocopies are the sole records of this historical moment. The cutting reference to the publication has been excised, and a check of the *Advertiser* and the *News* for 26 February, the date reported in the cutting, and the 28th, yielded no trace. As the photograph may have originally been part of an official press release, it is possible that an Italian archive may yet yield a copy of it.

the dock reportedly returned these salutes.⁵¹ There were other mentions in the press of the politics behind the mission. It was noted for example that 'in a casket in the conference room there is a Fascist flag and the ship's fighting flag, both of which were presented by Count Montecuccoli of Modena Province, a descendant of the general after whom the ship is named'. At the dinner given by the Italian community to the ship's officers no speeches were given out of consideration to the English speaking guests but one significant toast was given: 'To the King of England and the King of Italy and Emperor of Abyssinia.'⁵²

That the Adelaide leg of her cruise was a specific response to a further invitation of the Commonwealth Government is shown by the text of a telegram received 23 January 1938 by the Lord Mayor of Adelaide from the Italian Consulate in Sydney.

Have pleasure informing you my government accepting kind invitation Australian government decided cruiser *Montecuccoli* to call Adelaide about twenty fourth to twenty eight February instead [of] returning to her base Shanghai.⁵³

That Lyons was shaken by the Melbourne events but resolute in his stance of Appeasement is demonstrated by a communiqué received in Adelaide on the second day of the cruiser's visit to Port Adelaide. Received from Italian Consul Melbourne Arrighi:

Italian Vice Consul. Adelaide 26 February 1938 – Year XVI Fascist Era. Confidential. Please communicate to Captain Da Zara...: Prime Minister speaking for Mayor City of Albany invites royal ship to stay in that port. Should Your Excellency stay even for a day at that place he would be grateful especially to demonstrate to public opinion that the disturbances at Melbourne have not influenced either the course of the cruise nor the warm reception of the Australian people.⁵⁴

After the *Montecuccoli* sailed away, *The Advertiser* reported 2 March 1938 that the Lieutenant Governor had received an encomium from Captain Da Zara:

I wish Your Excellency to [accept] the warmest thanks on behalf of my officers and men for courtesies received during our stay in Adelaide. We leave your beautiful State with great regret, and with sincere hope to come back in the near future.

This was a vain hope.⁵⁵ Shortly after the cruiser sailed west, the Adelaide edition of *Truth* of 5 March reported under the headline 'Now We Know' that Da Zara could not be drawn out politically by wild dogs. But he added 'I will let you into a secret... We Italians [have] a great admiration for your Mr Eden.' Even as he spoke Mus-

solini had declared otherwise,⁵⁶ and Eden was preparing to resign in protest at his party's foreign policy⁵⁷, to be replaced by the arch Appeaser Lord Halifax. An Anglo-German rapprochement was bruited.⁵⁸ Also during the *Montecuccoli* visit, the European crisis known as the 'Anschluss' or annexation of Austria by the Third Reich was approaching its culmination on March 13.⁵⁹ As the anti-Semitic policies of the Reich were applied in Austria, so Italy began to align its internal racial policy with its partner in Fascism.⁶⁰ The hopes of Appeasers that Italy would detach herself from the Rome-Berlin Axis became more and more illusory. In less than two years the *Montecuccoli* would be performing the first of 120 missions in the coming war, [some admittedly as an Allied co-belligerent after the Armistice of September 1943], more than any other cruiser in the Italian navy.⁶¹ Though she never engaged the Australian navy, she was a vital part of the forces ranged against it in the Mediterranean.⁶²

The *Montecuccoli* left mixed emotions in her wake. Also on 2 March *The Advertiser* reported comments critical of the cruiser's visit. 'Non Com', a returned serviceman, made telling remarks to the effect 'that the visit of the *Montecuccoli* was undesirable'. First he cited 'the massacres in Abyssinia and the enslaving of the Ethiopians.' Clearly 'Non Com' was no racist. Secondly he accurately cited 'the merciless bombing, by Italian airmen, of helpless women and children in Barcelona'. He did not charge this crime directly against the cruiser, as organisers of the Melbourne demonstration had done, but rather to the power and the policies she represented. Thirdly he again held his fire somewhat in arguing that 'the *Montecuccoli* stands accused of acts of piracy against unarmed British merchantmen in the Mediterranean.' This was a reference to the charges by the Trades and Labour Council and the state ALP, reported in *The Advertiser* of 23 February 1938, that the *Montecuccoli* had sunk two British merchantmen.⁶³ My efforts in the mid 1980s to have the Italian Navy confirm or deny that the *Montecuccoli* had seen secret active service in Spanish waters prior to her departure for the Far East proved fruitless. That some Italian surface vessels did so is known. On 24 May 1937 the Republican air force scored near misses on the *Quarto* and *Mirabello*. On 29 May they hit the *Barletta*, killing 6 sailors. The same day the German battleship *Deutschland* suffered two direct hits, costing

⁵⁶ Greenwall, *Mediterranean Crisis*, cit., p177.

⁵⁷ Eden, *Facing the Dictators*, Cassell, London, 1962 Foreword.

⁵⁸ See the Italian note 'La crisi britannica' published by *The Mail*, 26 February 1938.

⁵⁹ 'Anschluss', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Out of consideration for the visitors the *News* published details of the crisis in Austria in Italian on 26 February 1938.

⁶⁰ Santarelli, *Storia del fascismo*, cit., p106f.

⁶¹ Giorgerini, *Gli incrociatori italiani*, cit., p565-6. 'Co-belligerency' was the status accorded defeated Italy after the fall of Fascism. It conferred the obligation of supporting the Allied war effort without the privileges of a military ally.

⁶² For Australian naval operations in the Mediterranean including the exploits of 'the scrap iron flotilla', see Gill, *Royal Australian Navy 1939-42*, Australian War Memorial, 1957, per index 'Mediterranean Sea', & Gill, *Royal Australian Navy 1942-5*, AWM, 1985, p89f.

⁶³ Venturini, *Never Give In*, cit., p591-2.

⁵¹ NAA AP501/2/0 NN, *Advertiser*, 28 February 1938.

⁵² NAA AP501/2/0 NN, *Advertiser*, 28 February 1938.

⁵³ Adelaide City Archives. Town Clerk's Dept (C15) Dockets (S3) No 3820 1938.

⁵⁴ Arrighi-Amerio No. 140; National Archives of Australia SA AP501/2/0 NN Montecuccoli.

⁵⁵ The *Montecuccoli* did however return flying the Republican tricolour to Melbourne during the 1956 Olympics as a training vessel on a circumnavigation of the globe. I am indebted for this information to Dr Paolo Baracchi of the Italian Historical Society.

her the loss of 20 sailors with 23 injured. In reprisal a flotilla led by the *Admiral Scheer* bombarded the undefended town of Almeida on the Spanish south coast with 200 shells, killing 20, wounding 50 and destroying 40 buildings. Italian submarine piracy in August of 1937 alone accounted for 200,000 tonnes of Republican shipping,⁶⁴ ultimately leading Britain to protect her interests by the Treaty of Nyon with Italy in September 1937⁶⁵.

It appears that in the fog of war aroused by passion engendered over events in Spain that these incidents became conflated in the charge that the *Montecuccoli* had bombarded Republican refugees along the Spanish coast and the civilians of Barcelona.⁶⁶ Famous incidents such as the machine gunning of Republican refugees on the Spanish south coast around Malaga early in the war⁶⁷ and the international scandal of Guernica in April 1937⁶⁸ also contributed to perceptions of the *Montecuccoli*. But when the Italian air force bombed Barcelona in January 1938⁶⁹ the *Montecuccoli* was already steaming for Australia, and had been at her eastern station off Shanghai since September, asserting Italian interests there. The accusation of raiding the Republican and British merchant marine at some time between the outbreak of the civil war in July 1936 and mid 1937 is more plausible, but again the *Montecuccoli* had only been in service since August 1937, allegedly performing normal patrols in the Mediterranean before she weighed anchor at Naples for the Orient on 27 August 1937.⁷⁰ Nonetheless that the *Montecuccoli* represented Italian intervention in Spain and expansionism in the Mediterranean was beyond dispute. Lastly 'Non Com' charged that Italy had perfidiously 'deserted her former allies from motives of sordid gain.' WS Lewis of South Road Edwardstown thought it 'clearly evident that Mr Butler's Italian sympathies find a ready reflection among many members of Adelaide's police force' to judge from their conduct in keeping 'a thousand or so' Antifascist protestors at bay at the function for the cruiser's crew at Apollo Place the previous Monday. JL Cavanagh Jr remembered being 'marched away from Apollo Place by six feet of uniform'. He thought the demonstrations there and in Botanic Park 'huge successes'. Vice Consul Amerio made a marginal note that Cavanagh, who was twenty-five years old at the time, was 'the head of the Com-

munists in Adelaide', in keeping with the right wing penchant for applying this term with malicious abandon. In fact Cavanagh was the son of a Catholic Labor Anticonscriptionist who left the Church due to its support of Franco during the Spanish Civil War. James Cavanagh Jr was to be a Labor Senator for South Australia from July 1962 to 1981 and a Whitlam government minister.⁷¹ In the Thirties Cavanagh Jr was SA Secretary of the Council Against War and Fascism, which the Vice Consul would have dismissed as a Communist front.

The 1938 voyage in Australian waters of the *Montecuccoli* revealed deep divisions in both the Italian and the wider Australian community as to the stance Australia should take in world affairs. While the visit was seen as a qualified success by the Italian and Australian authorities, within months the judgement of history was to be pronounced on the side of the dissenters in favour of an international Antifascist front, above and beyond the intentions of the States who formed it. In this sense events overtook the *Montecuccoli* and her Australian interlocutors, such as Lyons and Butler. By the same token, the embattled Antifascists within the Italian and Australian communities and the organised labour movement emerge, with all of the resources of the State and media against them, as capable and resilient, and in a certain sense triumphant against the odds. Their historical achievement encourages emulation to this day in a likewise troubled world.

⁶⁴ Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2006, p322-4.

⁶⁵ Eden, *Facing the Dictators*, cit., p459f.

⁶⁶ Macintyre recycles a version of this myth in *The Reds*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonard's, 1998, p348. The contemporary Communist Ralph Gibson credited another version of it: see *My Years in the Communist Party*, cit., p65. Macintyre's error at least has the perverse virtue of guaranteeing the reporting of the contemporary myth. It is emulated by Venturini *Never Give In*, cit., p590. Macintyre's confusion of the *Montecuccoli* with the *Remo* is less happy.

⁶⁷ Seton-Watson, *Britain & the Dictators*, Cambridge University Press, 1938, p380.

⁶⁸ For a contemporary account of Fascist atrocities in Spain, see the Duchess of Athol MP, *Searchlight on Spain*, Penguin, June 1938 Chapter IX with specific reference to Guernica, p153f & Garrett, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, cit., Chapter XIV.

⁶⁹ Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1961, p794.

⁷⁰ Giorgerini, *Gli incrociatori italiani*, cit., p562.

⁷¹ On the Cavanaghs, see Moss, *Sound of Trumpets*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1985, p239, 241-2, 251 & 335, & Cavanagh JL, Parliament's Oral History Project, *National Library of Australia*, Oral TRC 4900/27, Tape 1: p1-2,5, 27-8.

a communist? oh, brother

by frank canu

Frank Canu is a freelance television and radio producer who began work as a journalist at The Sydney Morning Herald and he was a correspondent for two years in the Fairfax group's London Bureau. He was until recently a senior producer at the Nine Network in Sydney. He completed an Arts degree at the University of Sydney with an Honours year in Italian Studies, graduating in 1984 with First Class Honours and the University Medal.

Abstract: This article has grown from a seed planted by Dr. Gianfranco Cresciani in the *Italian Historical Society Journal*, when he documented how Fascist officials and informers kept watch on many Italians in Australia from 1922 to 1943. Antonio Canu was among those under surveillance. The Fascist system labelled him as a Communist and he was recorded as such in this Journal. The article hereunder discusses documentary evidence and more, and suggests an affirmative answer to the question: did Fascist officials smear the wrong man in their secret files?

In a previous edition of this journal, Dr. Gianfranco Cresciani gave an outstanding and most comprehensive review of the Fascist regime's surveillance on Italians in Australia from 1922 to 1943, after he painstakingly researched a rich source - the extensive Fascist-era files kept in Rome in the Casellario Politico Centrale (Central Political Repository).⁷² Among the Italians kept under surveillance, Cresciani noted:

Perhaps the most blatant attempt to ingratiate himself with the representatives of the Regime was that made by Antonio Canu, a Communist sailor, who in February 1927 deserted from the MV *Re d'Italia* in Brisbane and settled in Texas (Qld). Canu, who until 1931 was still publicly venting his spleen against the Regime and its Government, by July 1933 was, in Consul-General Ferrante's words, 'managing a tobacco plantation known as *The Alalà Plantation* [from the Fascist war-cry] and was noted for his constant praises of the Authorities and the Regime'. On 3 October 1934 his name was taken off the list of subversives.⁷³

More than two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, being called a Communist may not have the sting it once did, but for Italians during the two decades of Fascism it was a very serious matter indeed. So, when reading the passage above, an intriguing question came to mind: was Antonio Canu – my father – really a Communist?

The first part of an answer can be formed by looking in detail at the Central Political Repository file devoted to him. Archivists in Rome provided photocopies of the 22 pages in the file to this writer. The file is stamped with the classification – *comunista* – and it confirms that Antonio Canu was removed from the Fascist regime's list of subversives (*radiato*) on 3 October 1934. The first report in the file is a letter written on 7 July 1931 from the Prefecture in Nuoro, Sardinia to the Italian Minister for the Interior in Rome. This first report begins:

With secret letter 17/3/1928 no. 738 the Consul General in New York drew the attention of the Royal Prefecture of Cagliari to identifying a certain Canu, sailor deserter, aged around 30 years, resident in New York who had been reported to him as a dangerous Communist [*comunista pericoloso*].

From investigations carried out it has emerged that this Canu, identified subsequently as Antonio Canu son of the late Pietro [Canu], under discussion now clarified, already embarked on the steamship 'Re d'Italia' from which he deserted on 5/2/1927 at Brisbane...

From information supplied by the regional police headquarters of Sassari it emerges that this Canu during his residency in that Province maintained regular ethical conduct; politically he revealed himself to be always opposed to the Regime and the Government.⁷⁴

Pulling together information from three continents, the Fascist surveillance system labelled Antonio Canu as a Communist. The key initiating factor was the letter from New York, but officials knew he had also been a mariner based in Terranova Pausania (renamed Olbia in 1939) and he had trained as a navigator and skipper at La Maddalena. Both were Sardinian ports noted for left-wing activity. It may have seemed to Fascist zealots that they had identified another Sardinian *sovversivo* [subversive] from the same dangerous stock as Communist leader Antonio Gramsci and anarchist Michele Schirru.⁷⁵

⁷² Cresciani, G, 'Refractory Migrants. Fascist Surveillance on Italians in Australia 1922–1943', *Italian Historical Society Journal*, vol. 15, January–December 2007, pp. 8–57.

The file on Antonio Canu discussed hereafter is held in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Ministero dell' Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Casellario Politico Centrale (ACS/CPC).

⁷³ Cresciani, op. cit., p. 32, referring to ACS/CPC, Canu, Antonio, *b.* 1019, *f.* 95232, henceforth ACS/CPC.

⁷⁴ ACS/CPC. Passage translated by this writer.

⁷⁵ Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), co-founder of the Italian Communist Party, was arrested in November 1926 and sentenced to 20 years prison. He died in a Rome hospital. Anarchist Michele Schirru (1899–1931), naturalised in the USA and carrying an American passport, was arrested in Rome on charges of plotting to assassinate Benito Mussolini. He was executed by a firing squad of Sardinian Fascist volunteers.



Fig. 1 Antonio Canu c1918. [Image courtesy Frank Canu]

However, Antonio Canu never lived in New York. He did not visit the city, according to his youngest brother. To be completely sure, this writer searched shipping records and found no record of him arriving at U.S. ports. Who then was the “dangerous Communist” with the Canu surname in New York? The likely candidate is his brother, Giuseppe Canu.

Antonio was one of eight siblings. There were six brothers who all went to sea as teenagers to make their living and five of them abandoned Italy during the Fascist regime; two sisters, Agostina and Giovanna Antonia, married and raised families in Italy. Four of the brothers settled in the United States of America, one after the other: Sebastiano, Salvatore, Giuseppe and finally Giovanni Maria, who was the youngest of the family and the last to leave Italy when he joined his brothers in New York in 1928. All four of these men “jumped ship” at U.S. ports, to use Giovanni Maria’s words, voting with their feet as far as Fascist Italy was concerned, just as their brother Antonio did in Australia in 1927. Giovanni Maria told this writer that his motive for leaving Italy as a 19-year-old was to avoid military service in the Fascist regime’s forces. Fourteen years later, he volunteered for service in the U.S. Army after his adopted nation entered World War II.

In August 1979, three years after the death of Antonio, Giovanni Maria Canu was believed to be the last of the Canu siblings still alive when he recorded his memoir on audio tape for this writer on Long Island, New York, and copies were circulated to Giovanni Maria’s daughter, nieces, nephews and grandchildren. When asked about Giuseppe during this recording, speaking in American-accented English, he called his brother “Joseph”:

Speaking of Joseph, the other brother in here [in New York

City], he had little Communistic [sic] ideas... when there was a call, I remember, in the Spanish Revolution [sic], I think they had in there, there was a call, [for] volunteers in here, they would be well treated, well paid and all, and I think Joseph a couple of times told me that he had an idea of going in there. All of a sudden he disappeared... I didn’t hear from him, I tried to search. I went where he used to live still in New York City, in the northern part of New York City. I couldn’t find traces [sic] of him...⁷⁶

Giuseppe (Joseph) Canu was a heavy drinker with Communist sympathies whose garrulous nature would have brought him to the attention of Fascist informers in New York. He was last heard of in the city circa 1936, leaving behind a mystery that has not been solved to this day. He may have gone to Spain. It is possible he may have simply run away to avoid paying a large number of debts. Giovanni Maria paid those debts in a futile attempt to uncover any information on his whereabouts.



Fig. 2 Giuseppe Canu at right with Giovanni Maria Canu in New York c1928. [Image courtesy of Katherine Stevens.]

There are five Fascist-era files for people bearing the Canu surname in the Central Political Repository database in Rome, but Giuseppe Canu is, curiously, not one of them. Antonio Canu heads the list and the others – four men and a woman – are not related to him.⁷⁷ While Giuseppe was talking openly about his Communist ideas in America his oldest brother, Giovanni Antonio Canu, was preparing to join the Fascist Party and to stay in Italy.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Giovanni Maria Canu speaking on 2 August 1979. In the USA, he was known as John M. Canu; among Italian-speaking relatives, he was known as “Billia”.

⁷⁷ Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Casellario Politico Centrale. Viewed online 12 February 2011. See http://151.12.58.148/cpcview/Archinauta_NSC.aspx.

⁷⁸ ACS/CPC: Giovanni Antonio Canu’s membership of the Fascist Party is reported in a letter from the Prefecture in Nuoro to the Italian Minister for the Interior, 12 March 1934, in this file.

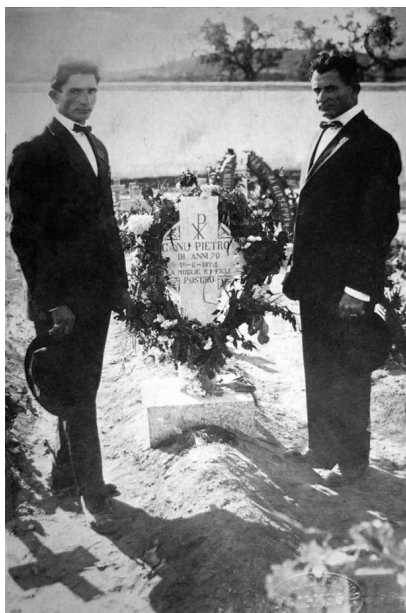


Fig 3. Antonio Canu at left with Giovanni Antonio Canu by the grave of their father Pietro Canu in Terranova Pausania, June 1924. [Image courtesy Frank Canu]

Giovanni Antonio Canu enjoyed a cordial relationship with the Fascist regime, toed the line during his military career, and went into comfortable retirement in Terranova Pausania when he finished his service in the Royal Italian Navy. Sailing from this same port, Antonio Canu had crewed and skippered a series of *golette* [trading schooners] before and after his military service, but his prospects began to decline when Fascists came to power. His independent stance was questioned forcefully when he was confronted by Blackshirts.

Terranova Pausania was among the Sardinian centres with the most frequent and violent clashes, before and after the first Fascist congress on the island took place on 12 October 1922.⁷⁹ Antonio Canu eventually became a fully-fledged target of the you-are-with-us-or-against-us policy of the Fascist squads as they stepped up campaigns across Sardinia and all of Italy. He was seized, bound, bashed and publicly humiliated. Giovanni Maria Canu recalled:

The Fascists of Olbia [Terranova Pausania] knew who was leaning towards Communists... he [Antonio Canu] was not a Communist but he was not a Fascist so in order to teach him a lesson, they gave him that quart [one litre] of castor oil right there in the public square... that was the punishment, castor oil at that time, for those who were leaning towards Communism. Some of them they beat badly, according to how they had their information...

This violence – set against the background of a broad campaign of terror that included murders, as recounted vividly by Giovanni Maria in his memoir – prompted Antonio Canu to leave Italy. He resigned his commission as a sailing boat skipper and moved to the mainland, where he

signed on as a “steersman” (a helmsman), not as a “sailor”, with the steamship *Re d'Italia* in Genoa on 10 December 1926, two days before she weighed anchor.⁸⁰

He had qualifications but he did not have his choice of vessel. At Genoa, mariners whether skilled or unskilled were directed to whichever ship needed them at the time, as Giovanni Maria explained:

His looking [sic] was towards North America but he didn't have the chance, so he went to Australia, that's how he remained there.

When he was planning his departure, Giovanni Maria was patient and waited for voyages to European and South American ports to pass until he secured a position on a vessel bound for the U.S. in 1928. He was able to fulfil his plan, but Antonio had been impatient to leave in 1926 and despite his desire to go across the Atlantic, it was his destiny to be assigned to a passenger vessel heading for Australia. He reached Brisbane a few days after his 29th birthday and took his chances as an illegal immigrant. Of course, the overwhelming majority of Italian immigrants in Australia and the U.S. came in the normal, regulated manner, including many aboard the *Re d'Italia*.⁸¹ However, Antonio Canu was far from alone in the way he entered this country.⁸²

From the viewpoint of our time all these years later, it is surprising that an illegal immigrant, moreover one who had been brutalised by Fascist thugs, would in the first few months of his life in Australia accept help from the Italian Consul in Brisbane, Count Gabrio di San Marzano, an energetic supporter and agent of the Fascist regime, but this is what occurred.

No first-hand account has come to light of how and when they met, although Giovanni Maria Canu confirmed that his brother Antonio was helped by San Marzano. However, the Fascist Consul and the deserting mariner shared several traits that would have cemented their link. They were the same age, they were World War I veterans, they were highly ambitious and had particularly tenacious personalities.

⁸⁰ National Archives of Australia, *Crew list Re d'Italia*, FP290/3, 1926 & 1927.

⁸¹ The *Re d'Italia* completed 16 years of voyages to the U.S. in November 1923 before transferring to the Australian route, according to the Ellis Island database, New York, viewed 12 February 2011. See http://www.ellis-island.org/search/ship_year.asp?letter=r&half=1&sname=Re*d'Italia

Melbourne journalist and writer Tony De Bolfo researched 110 passengers, including his grandfather and two great-uncles, who migrated to Australia aboard the *Re d'Italia* in late 1927 on the next voyage after Antonio Canu left the ship. His book is: De Bolfo, T., *In Search of Kings*, HarperCollins, 2002. The De Bolfo collection relating to his research is held at the Italian Historical Society-COASIT. See <http://www.coasit.com.au/ihs/collection.html#debolfo>

De Bolfo has also introduced thousands of people to a documentary that he brought to light during his research, showing a voyage of a sister-ship of the *Re d'Italia*, the *MV Regina d'Italia*. The documentary is: *Dall'Italia All'Australia* [From Italy to Australia], 1924, black & white film, Drovetti, A.

⁸² Prominent writer Delia Falconer recounted that her grandfathers were English merchant mariners and they both illegally entered Australia at the port of Sydney (Falconer, D., *Sydney*, University of NSW Press, 2010, p.7). She used the term “jumped ship”. Cresciani used the word “deserted” when he wrote about Antonio Canu, directly translating from Italian in the Fascist ACS/CPC file, while he also recorded that another Italian mariner, Leonardo Altomare apparently “jumped ship” in Philadelphia in 1923 and was sentenced to 6 months jail and a 120 lire fine for “mercantile desertion” (see Cresciani, op. cit., p. 18).

⁷⁹ See Vittoria, A., *La Sardegna durante il ventennio fascista*, Università Tor Vergata, Rome, 2010. Viewed online 12 February 2011: <http://dspace.uniroma2.it/dspace/bitstream/2108/1380/4/capitolo+1.pdf>, pp.28-30.

While there was considerable violence in Terranova Pausania and La Maddalena, perhaps the most savage of the Fascist raids in Sardinia was the march on Portoscuso on 29 December 1922 that led to the murders of Salvatore and Luigi Fois.

ies, and above all, they were in a position to advance their own ambitions by helping each other.



Fig. 4 Antonio Canu working the oars on the Dumaresq River near the "Alalà farm" at Texas, Qld. Dated 1 January 1928 on the back of photo in his handwriting. Dressed in suits and ties, the men may be to church on this New Year's Day, a Sunday. [Image courtesy of Paola Bonetto.⁸³]



Fig. 5 Antonio Canu at right after the first "Alalà farm" tobacco harvest. He dated this photo 28 April 1928 and identified from left: Gonario Maccioni, the farm cook Mrs Devlin, and visitors Mr McDonald [sic] and Mrs Backer. [Image courtesy of Paola Bonetto.]

Would the Consul have been aware of having this "deserter" arrive on his watch? Most likely yes, but if he did know, or if he did not know, or if he chose to turn a blind eye, there is nothing in the ACS/CPC file to say. However, it is clear from other accounts that the Consul had already planned to support an expanding Italian presence in Queensland, and it was Antonio Canu's good fortune that he stepped ashore in the right place, at the right time, and met the right man.

Consul San Marzano gave most of his attention to Italians in northern Queensland later in his posting, but within a short time of his arrival in Brisbane, he made a well-publicised excursion south-west of the city to the Stanthorpe district, promoting his vision of a prominent role for Italians in Queensland. In mid-January 1927, three weeks before the *Re d'Italia* tied up at the port of Brisbane with helmsman Antonio Canu aboard, the Consul was quoted as saying:

In regard to my activities and visits, I would like to state that

from my observations it appears to me that the Texas areas under tobacco, at present being conducted by Chinese growers, who appear to be very medieval in their methods, could be developed and greatly improved by more able, concentrated, agricultural development and more modern methods.⁸⁴

It suited the Consul to have young and willing Italian workers such as Antonio Canu available in Brisbane. He also had available Gonario (John) Maccioni and Gonario's brother Pietro Maccioni, Sardinians who had come south from Ingham, and with the Consul's support the men all set out for Gunyan Station, east of the township of Texas.⁸⁵ Their venture within the borders of the Gunyan property was called "The Alalà Plantation" or "Alalà Farm". It is not known who suggested the name, but it would have certainly pleased or appeased Consul San Marzano because *alalà* was indeed the resounding last word in the Fascist "war-cry", taken from D'Annunzio and belled out by Blackshirts in their marches and rallies throughout the regime's two decades and by Italian soldiers on many war fronts.⁸⁶

Antonio Canu was not the "manager" in 1933 when Consul-General Ferrante wrote about him. The land was leased from Gunyan Station by Gonario Maccioni and Gunyan had a succession of Australian managers; in 1930, for example, it was run by a Mr John Leahy.⁸⁷ The Italian men were sharefarmers and partners. They were "reputed to be excellent workers" according to a journalist who reported that the Italians were "under the supervision of Mr. S. M'Master [sic], manager of Gunyan."⁸⁸ The tobacco farm that they called *Alalà* among themselves traded as "Maccioni Bros."⁸⁹

⁸⁴ 'No Friction', 1927, *The Brisbane Courier*, 13 January, p. 7. Viewed online 15 February 2011. See <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/21114703?searchTerm=italian%20consul&searchLimits=l-decade=192||||l-year=1927||||l-monthInYear=January|monthInYear%3A01>

⁸⁵ Gonario (John) Maccioni's life story was recorded in a large feature article, 'Una vita tra le piantagioni di tabacco', 1981, *La Fiamma*, 2 July, p. 40. The article included a photo that showed him with fellow farm workers including Pietro Maccioni and Antonio Canu, grouped together with Consul San Marzano, and dated December 1927. However, editing of the lengthy interview and the letter that Gonario Maccioni gave to *La Fiamma* excluded any mention of Antonio Canu, who is standing at left in the photo.

⁸⁶ Journalist Giordano Bruno Guerri wrote that Gabriele d'Annunzio borrowed from ancient Greek sources to include the phrase "Eja, alalà" in an early poem written no later than 1897, and he shouted these words during three night-time air raids during World War I, but after Fascists adopted his war cry, D'Annunzio lamented in 1921 that it was being used by the Blackshirt squads for pointless violence and unjust retribution. (Guerri, BG, 2010, 'Il poema satirico da cui partì il grido "Eja alalà"', *il Giornale*, 9 May, viewed online 12 February 2011). See http://www.ilgiornale.it/cultura/il_poema_satirico_cui_parti_grido_eja_alala/09-05-2010/articolo-id=444007-page=0-comments=1.

⁸⁷ McMahon, TJ, 1930, 'Texas District', *The Brisbane Courier*, 19 February, p.10. Viewed online 15 February 2011. See <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/21495710?searchTerm=texas%20district&searchLimits=l-decade=193||||l-year=1930>

⁸⁸ McMahon, TJ, 1929, 'Tobacco Growing at Texas', *The Brisbane Courier*, 16 February p.11. Viewed online 15 February 2011. See <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/21377041?searchTerm=reputed%20to%20be%20excellent%20workers&searchLimits=l-decade=192||||l-year=1929||||l-monthInYear=February|monthInYear%3A02>

⁸⁹ See 'Texas Tobacco', *The Brisbane Courier*, 2 July, 1931, p.12, viewed on 15 February 2011 at: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/21708390?searchTerm=maccioni%20bros&searchLimits=>

⁸³ Figures 4, 5 and 6 are photos sent by Antonio Canu to his sister Agostina in Genoa in 1928. Fearing possible retribution, she burned his letters and consequently there is no detailed description available for the images, beyond notes that he wrote on the back of each.



Fig. 6 Workers on the “Alalà farm”. Antonio Canu is in white, crouching in the front row. He wrote that this photo was taken at the end of the harvest, dating it 28 April 1928, and he noted that the “Manager” (not named) was marked on this photo with a dash, and the cook (also not named) was marked with a cross. [Image courtesy of Paola Bonetto]

As Cresciani made clear, there were tens of thousands of Italians “who were forced to leave Italy because their lives had been made impossible by Fascist beatings, harassment, violence and persecution...”⁹⁰ Antonio Canu was one of them and he had reason to be bitter after his humiliation in Sardinia, but did he continue “publicly venting his spleen against the Regime and its Government” until 1931, as Cresciani wrote? On the contrary, the ACS/CPC file shows that he built links with representatives of the Regime in the 1930s, continuing a pattern established with Consul San Marzano in 1927-28. Consul-General Ferrante, quoted by the Prefect in Nuoro, wrote in September 1930 that Antonio Canu had never been involved in any political activity in within. Australia, had always been respectful and deferential, had signed off his letters to the Consul-General with Fascist salutations, and he had even asked about the possibility of taking up land in the Italian colony of Libya.⁹¹ He was making compromises, grasping for opportunities, and cultivating contacts at a time of rapidly growing economic dislocation, as Australia slid into a national downturn in the late 1920s and then into the Great Depression of the early 1930s. The Italian Consul-General also wrote in August 1933 that he had never given cause for unfavourable criticism at all; he made himself noted for constant deference towards the authorities and the Regime.⁹² At the time when this particular letter was written, Antonio Canu was planning to return to Italy and his cultivation of the Consul-General had already paid dividends, with the issue of his Italian passport in Sydney in February 1933.

He left Australia in December 1933, seven years almost to the day since the *Re d'Italia* steamed out of Genoa. He would have had some inkling that he was being watched everywhere he went, after disembarking at Naples on 24 January 1934, and after disembarking from a ferry at Teranova Pausania three days later, and throughout the six months he spent in Sardinia. Befitting a police state, his ACS/CPC file records these movements as he was kept under constant surveillance [*assidua vigilanza*] in that period.⁹³ He could also sniff the wind at that time. There was

talk of war and instead of remaining in Italy, he married and left with his wife Serafina as soon as they could to start a new life together in Australia as officially approved migrants. Among other Italians, they arrived in Sydney on 29 August 1934 aboard the liner *SS Oronsay*.⁹⁴

As a young man at sea, Antonio Canu was a qualified navigator, reading winds, tides, and constellations, and he set his course accordingly. On land, his instincts led him to take the line of least resistance. Instead of fighting Fascism, he fled Italy, twice. In Australia, he cultivated, and he was cultivated in return. He sought ways to profit from a morally bankrupt ideology and he was removed from the Fascist list of subversives on 3 October 1934 after years of demonstrating that he was an ambitious opportunist, even a “blatant” and persistent one, but not a Communist, let alone a “dangerous” Communist.

From the comfort of suburban Australia now, more than 80 years after he turned his back on the *Re d'Italia* at Brisbane, it may seem reprehensible that he made a series of compromises as he sought to advance himself in the years that followed. There are many illegal immigrants of our day who have recently fled to Australia, who would know what it means to hunger for freedom and security. Perhaps those who have suffered persecution, violence and humiliation in our time would be able to cast some light on the actions of Antonio Canu and provide insights into why the police state that he escaped from, Fascist Italy's violent totalitarian regime, was doomed to fall apart, rotting from

postscript

Antonio Canu continued farming in southern Queensland and northern NSW after the Fascist regime lost interest in him. He was not interned during World War II because Australian security officialdom deemed him “well conducted and not connected with any Fascist or Nazi organisation”.⁹⁵ After 20 years of hard work on leased and share-farmer land, he and his family were able to buy their own freehold farm in 1954. In the following decade the former illegal immigrant and alleged subversive was invited to work for the Australian legal system and the Italian consular network. On 6 November 1963 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace in NSW and soon after the Italian Consul-General in Sydney asked him to become his agent in northern NSW (*Corrispondente Consolare d'Italia*). In his collected papers, his Sardinian cultural heritage lives on in many poems and songs that he wrote during his sailing voyages and his farming years in Australia. Among those papers is a sparse two-page memoir that he typed out in 1972, in halting and uncorrected English, where he recorded only fleetingly that “Fascist compellant force” [sic] pushed him to leave Italy, but he did not mention contact with Consul San Marzano in 1927. His brother Giovanni Maria Canu died on 23 August 1987, still not knowing what had become of their brother Giuseppe. Antonio Canu died on 6 February 1976, in Tamworth, NSW, 49 years and 1 day after he was reported missing from the *Re d'Italia*. A news-

terior, 28 July 1934.

⁹⁴ The *Oronsay* carried many Italian migrants to Australia in the 1920s and 1930s. She was converted to become a troopship during World War II and in a bitter quirk of history she was torpedoed on 9 October 1942 by Italian submarine, *Archimede*, off the west coast of Africa.

⁹⁵ National Archives of Australia, *Refugee Alien Security Investigation* - Antonio Canu, 28 July 1940, C123/1, item 7739.

⁹⁰ Cresciani, G., op. cit., p. 40

⁹¹ ACS/CPC. Letter from Prefect of Nuoro to Italian Minister for the Interior, 7 July 1931, including a passage from a letter from Consul-General Ferrante, of 19 September 1930.

⁹² ACS/CPC. Letter from Consul-General Ferrante to the Italian Minister for the Interior, 11 August 1933.

⁹³ ACS/CPC. Letter from Prefect of Nuoro to the Italian Minister for the Interior, 28 July 1934.

paper obituary recorded the assistance he gave to “scores of families and individuals” who came from overseas to settle in his area, his two decades of service with the Good Neighbour Council, and the Italian Government’s recognition of his World War I service when it made him a Cavaliere dell’Ordine di Vittorio Veneto in 1971.⁹⁶

Consul San Marzano had an eventful sojourn in Queensland, which was marked by clashes between anti-Fascist and pro-Fascist Italians. He was transferred from Brisbane to Townsville in August 1928, and then to Switzerland in mid-1930 to take up “an important diplomatic post for the Italian Government”.⁹⁷ He carried considerable family history in his full name, Conte Luigi Gabriele Asinari Sigray di San Marzano. Society circles in provincial Brisbane were most impressed by the articulate and dashing aristocrat and his glamorous wife, Contessa di San Marzano, whose activities filled many newspaper column inches as she energetically supported her husband’s efforts to promote Italy, its culture, and its Fascist regime.

In the 1930s, the Italian Consulate-General in Sydney maintained a constant flow of secret cables to Rome about government plans and supposed anti-Fascist activity, with reports ranging from the serious to the mundane and bizarre. Particular attention was paid to Communist agitation, especially in the Royal Australian Navy.⁹⁸ However, after Benito Mussolini handed over the Italian Foreign Ministry to his son-in-law, Galeazzo Ciano, in June 1936, among the first cables to arrive from Australia for the new Minister’s consideration was one from Consul-General Vita-Finzi, proudly informing Rome that he had successfully browbeaten a film distribution company into making extensive cuts to the Marx Brothers’ comedy movie, *A Night at the Opera*, to censor material that was insulting to Italian dignity.⁹⁹ History has undermined the Consul-General’s opinion; *A Night at the Opera* was included in the Library of Congress Collection in Washington in 1993 because of its cultural merits.

⁹⁶ ‘Death of Tony Canu’, *The Northern Daily Leader*, 9 February, 1976, p.3.

⁹⁷ Public Notice, ‘Italian Consul’, 1930, *The Brisbane Courier*, 11 June, p.13. Viewed online 15 February 2011, See <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/41065536?searchTerm=italian%20-consul&searchLimits=l-decade=1931||l-year=1930>

⁹⁸ See for example Cable, 1934, Number G28154, National Library of Australia, Italian Australian Records Project (IARP), Reel 10, 4 September.

⁹⁹ Cable, 1936, Number G28158, National Library of Australia, Italian Australian Records Project (IARP), Reel 14, 11 August.



Fig. 1. Carlo Gervasoni's home, 'The Old Stone House', 1901. L to r: Johanna Gervasoni, Mrs Annie Gervasoni (Carlo's second wife), Annie Gervasoni with violin, Jim Neven, Theresa (standing), Nicol with cornet, Bridget Gervasoni, John Gervasoni with cornet, probably Battista Gervasoni, Carlo Jr (Cling) with accordion, Alf Kennett, Julia Gervasoni (standing). In front at left is the wine press. [Image courtesy Teresa Poletti]

early dance music in country victoria. the gervasoni contribution

by **claudio culvenor**

Born in 1925, Claude Culvenor is a cousin of the Gervasoni musicians, his mother being Carlo's daughter, Julia. He did not inherit musical ability but he spans the period from Carlo's family to the next generation of musicians and has kept in touch with them. He grew up on the farm of his father, Alexander (Pack) Culvenor. There, despite the difficulties of the 1930s and drought years, Julia insisted that her children receive a secondary education. For Claude, this continued to the University of Melbourne, where he obtained a PhD in organic chemistry and then to Oxford, England, where he spent two years. Returning to CSIRO, Claude worked on the chemical constituents of plants, especially isolating the toxins of plants poisonous to grazing livestock. After retirement, Claude has written historical books and articles on the goldfields and other aspects of the early days of Victoria. In this article, Claude shows how the coming of Carlo Gervasoni to Yandoit Creek led to several of his descendants playing dance music over a long period for country Victoria and NSW. For a detailed account of the settlement of Yandoit Creek during the mining period, see Culvenor, C.C. 1995, 2nd edn. 2003. The Settlement of Yandoit Creek and the Gervasonis, Jim Crow Press, Daylesford.

Abstract: Carlo Gervasoni came to the Victorian goldfields in 1858 from a small village near the town of San Giovanni Bianco in the foothills of the Alps, north of Bergamo. A singer, he played the violin and was joined in 1864 by his wife, Maria, an opera singer. That was a time, sadly brief, of enjoyable musical evenings with miner and other Italian friends. When Maria died in 1868, Carlo was left with two children. He married again to Annie Hallinan with whom he had nine more children, all of whom had musical talent, either singing or playing instruments. That family and their next generation supplied Gervasoni musicians that played, with others, for the country dances of the time over large areas of North Central and North-eastern Victoria and into New South Wales, over a period of 60-80 years.

There was a Yandoit Hill but no Yandoit Creek before the goldfield was discovered. To the surrounding district, Yandoit Creek was soon to be known as a different kind of place after the Gervasonis came. Carlo and

brother Giuseppe came to Australia in 1858, goldfields time, from the village of San Gallo along with other friends from San Giovanni Bianco in the Brembo River Valley in Northern Italy, about 30km north of Bergamo.

They went to Daylesford/Hepburn first, as did many other Italians and their Swiss neighbours from across the border. They soon went north to the goldfield that was to be named Yandoit Creek, along with others, including Ambrogio Invernizzi, Carlo Giupponi, and Battista Nani from San Giovanni Bianco, and Antonio Gervasoni from Sedrina, also in the Brembo Valley a little closer to Bergamo. They set up makeshift accommodation on a flat that was dubbed Italian Flat. With Carlo as leader, they decided that a more familiar and secure way of earning a living was to work together to produce and deliver food to the miners. They raised cattle and sold their milk, cheese and beef, fed pigs to make the sausages (half beef, half pork) popular with the miners and still made in the district as Bull-Boars, planted fruit trees and vegetables, and they also planted vineyards to make the wine they were used to and that others soon welcomed. When they were able to buy land, they began building a large house in Italian style that became Carlo's home.



Fig. 2. Carlo Gervasoni with his first wife Maria Formentini, c1864.

Earlier in Italy, Carlo had married an opera singer, Maria Formentini, who joined him in Yandoit Creek in 1864. She was well known for her fine singing and Carlo's first house was where several miners with similar interests in music would gather on Sunday evenings for recitals. Carlo also sang and played the violin. One who enjoyed and praised the quality of the music was a successful miner, George Vinicombe, from Newcastle-on-Tyne (his letters tell of the music). However Maria's health was not good and in 1876, while singing, she suffered a severe haemorrhage from which she did not recover. Carlo had two children and needing help, married again to Annie Hallinan of an Irish family. They had nine more children, all of whom were musical, either singers or instrumentalists playing violin, accordion, piano or cornet. When Carlo later enlarged his house, now called the Old Stone House, he added a ballroom where music and dancing were en-

joyed on Sunday evenings by a gathering of friends from nearby areas, after the afternoon sport of bocce. Other local Italian families also enjoyed similar weekend entertainment.

This way of life is what made Yandoit Creek different from many other localities. It also led to a sequence of Gervasoni musicians who helped to provide the music for the community dances that were the regular entertainment of country areas at that time. One of Carlo's sons, also Carlo and known as "Cling" (short for Carlin – "Charlie" in dialect), played the accordion and was the first to play regularly for dances in areas as far as Daylesford and Sandon, often joined by other local musicians such as Jack Heagney on the violin and Andy Rodoni on the accordion. They travelled then by horse and cart, so there was a limit to the distance they could go. Cling married and had a large family, his son Maurie soon joining him on an accordion or piano-accordion. Cling Gervasoni played into his older years, one of his star turns being to dance the Italian waltz with his sister Julia, the accordion being played behind her back. Although losing his sight as he aged, he never lost his pleasure in playing the accordion. Around this time, an excellent pianist, Bert Wallis, came to Yandoit Creek with his piano and played at the Old Stone House as well as at local dances. Carlo's youngest daughter, Theresa, also became a fine pianist of classical and dance music.



Fig 3. Carlo 'Cling' (abbreviation of Carlin) Gervasoni was a great musician on the button accordion. He played for local dances and other events.

Playing as a young man with his father, Maurie Gervasoni learned from him the Italian tunes introduced by Carlo, such as the Italian waltzes (some call them Gervasoni waltzes) and the Garibaldi Waltz. He also learned from his father to sing two Italian songs in the Italian words, and can still do so without knowing the meaning of the words; he writes the names of the tunes as "Tiera Tiera Comolassi" (still popular in Northern Italy) and "Onchami Laparsilving." He has played for dances around North Central Victoria for some 40 years, playing at times with Harry McQueen, Jack Heagney (violin), Jim Ebery (saxophone), Bert Wallis (piano), Peter Ellis and Des Skinner. He has played at many places, including Yandoit, Campbelltown, Guildford, Sutton Grange, Kyneton, Castlemaine, Hepburn, Daylesford, Eddington, Majorca and Leonard's Hill. Around 1990 he joined with Keith Ramsay (Hawaiian

guitar, banjo and violin), Ern Ramsay (bass guitar), Bernie Atkinson (saxophone, clarinet and violin) and John MacDougall (drums) to form the Yandoit Old Time Dance Band that took over the dances and balls in these areas. This Band continued until 1996. Maurie bought a saxophone at one time, enjoyed playing it but found he had to concentrate on one instrument, his favourite, the accordion or piano-accordion; he has a collection of six of them, his preferred Mezon finally nearly worn out and put aside to preserve it.



Fig. 4. The Yandoit Old Time Dance Band. L to r, John MacDougall (drums), Bernie Atkinson (violin and saxophone), Ern Ramsey (bass guitar), Keith Ramsey (banjo, slide guitar) and Maurie Gervasoni (piano accordion). [Image courtesy Maurie Gervasoni]

Now 76 years old and essentially retired, Maurie still plays for functions when asked. He is a great conduit to the Italian music of the goldfields time that some people are now trying to recover and document. Prominent among these is Peter Ellis of Bendigo who has recorded interviews and playing sessions with Maurie Gervasoni and others who remember the tunes such as Harry McQueen, Andy Rodoni and Ken Gervasoni of Shepparton. These interviews are now held as a collection at the National Library of Australia in Canberra.

When the Peter Ellis interview with Maurie Gervasoni became part of the Peter Ellis Folklore Collection at the National Library of Australia, Maurie's occupation was entered, in the biographical notes, as "grader operator at the time of this recording." He was, of course, many other things. He grew up on his father's small farm and vineyard at Yandoit Creek, learned to manage the grapes and make the wine, worked elsewhere – fruit-picking at Mildura, superintendant of works for several Shire Councils, where he became expert in building with stone and concrete, making new roads, building bridges (including big and costly ones) – and all this while he played for dances, sometimes 2 or 3 times a week. He also has an artistic talent that he displays from time to time.



Fig. 5. Private John J Gervasoni, with cornet, in the Australian Machine Gun Depot Band, Grantham, England, 1917. [Image courtesy Ken Gervasoni]

Another son of Carlo Gervasoni, John, started another offshoot of musical Gervasonis. John enlisted in the Australian Military Force and fought in the First World War. He played the cornet and a photograph shows him in the Australian Machine Gun Depot Band in Grantham, England in 1917. John was a character: he kept a pet fox as a mascot while in England but was not allowed to take it with him to France. Despite a shrapnel wound in the head and exposure to chlorine, John survived the war and took up a soldier settlement block at Katandra, close to Shepparton. He had married and had two sons, Carl and Jack, before leaving Australia, and another son, Ken, was born after his return. His sons were also talented musicians and formed an orchestra in Shepparton while father John managed the farm. The first Gervasoni Orchestra, formed in 1934, was made up of Carl on violin, Flo Morey who became Carl's wife and was a gifted pianist, Jack on saxophone, Percy Tonks on the drums, Bert Cornford on guitar and Jack Ryan on saxophone. They played to highly appreciative audiences at dances, balls and other functions, in Shepparton and much of north-eastern Victoria – Yarrawonga, Mulwala, Cobram, Strathmerton, Katandra, Mooropna, Murchison, Nagambie, Seymour, Tallarook, Echuca, Bendigo, Euroa, Violet Town, Dookie and a number of small localities with only a community hall. In NSW, they played at Albury, Deniliquin, Finley, Hay, Berri-gan, Tocumwal, Blighty and as far as Canberra. Their services were booked for regular events over a year ahead and they played as often as 3 or 4 times a week. On big occasions, there could be up to 1000 people present in big halls, with three course dinners served to everyone (including the orchestra) at multiple sittings during the night; dancing continued until 2 or 3am.



Fig. 6. The original Gervasoni Orchestra at Shepparton, 1934. L to r: Flo Morey (pianist, later Carl's wife), Carl Gervasoni (violin), Jack Gervasoni (saxophone), Percy Tonks (drums), Bert Cornford (banjo) and Jack Ryan (saxophone). [Image courtesy Ken Gervasoni]

When Jack married another keen pianist, Beryl Fell, they split into two Orchestras, playing either together or in sequence at large and late-night balls, sometimes sharing out their many bookings. Ken Gervasoni, a few years younger than his brothers, joined Jack's orchestra as drummer when he was 15 years old. A 1946 photograph of "Carl Gervasoni's Dance Band" (as displayed on the large drum) is of Bob Mitchell on clarinet and baritone saxophone, Vern Williams on drums and soprano saxophone, Carl Gervasoni on violin, Flo Gervasoni at the piano, and Don Creighton on accordion; the saxophones were played as the mood required.



Fig. 7. Carl Gervasoni Orchestra, 1946. L to r: Bob Mitchell (clarinet and baritone/alto saxophone), Vern Williams (drums), Carl Gervasoni (violin), Flo Gervasoni (piano), Don Creighton (piano accordion). [Image courtesy Ken Gervasoni]

On a memorable occasion in 1976, Jack Gervasoni's Orchestra with Ken on the drums, joined by Maurie Gervasoni, played at a fund-raising night in the Katakmatite Hall for a Miss Gillespie, a contestant in a Miss Australia competition. Nearly 1000 people attended, among them four more from Newstead (Maurie's brother Frank, and his wife Margaret, and my brother Alex and his wife, Joan). The evening, continuing until 3 or 4am, was greatly enjoyed by all, but the main point for this account is that Maurie was staying with Ken Gervasoni

and they returned to Ken's house at 5am; despite weariness and the late/early hour, they started playing together in front of recording apparatus. They continued for an hour or so. There now exists a tape of these two living members of the two main Gervasoni dance music groups playing together. They had kept in touch with each other through the years.

When Carl and Jack reached their eighties and were unable to continue, Ken joined other musicians, including Mal Turnbull (trumpet), Jack Kellie, Grace Scolyer (electric keyboard), and Don Dunnachie. It was called Grace's Old Time Band since she was the prime organiser, and they played until 2004. Ken has shown me a large advertisement for a Christmas Dance, a Gala Old Time Dance complete with prizes, raffle and novelties, at St. Brendan's Church Hall in Shepparton, 15th December 2001. Attached to it is a copy of their dance programme with the songs played by Grace's Old Time Band. On this occasion, the Band was joined by Maurie Gervasoni who was again visiting Shepparton. Some members of the Band decided they were getting too old in 2002 but it took another 18 months to play out the bookings already made.



Fig. 8. Grace's Old Time Band, Shepparton 2001. L to r: Ken Gervasoni (vocal, drums), Maurie Gervasoni (piano-accordion), Jack Kellie (alto saxophone), Don Dunnachie (saxophone, banjo), Grace Scolyer (electric keyboard). [Image courtesy Ken Gervasoni]

The Gervasoni Orchestras of Shepparton played to young people who preferred New Vogue music and dancing, so they played popular music rather than harking back to their Italian heritage. Ken is still a great source of information on the Shepparton Gervasonis, their music and the other musicians who played with them. He also speaks of driving at night on the bad roads of rural Victoria at that time, fogs and storms that had to be endured, getting home normally at 4 or 5am, 4 hours sleep a night, petrol coupons during the war, running their cars on a mixture of Shellite (used in petrol lamps) and kerosene (used in their farm tractor). He enjoyed the life immensely and, given the choice, would do it all over again. In his eighties, Jack Gervasoni made a recording of playing solo on the saxophone, not dance music but slowly and with great feeling; it shows Jack's mastery of the saxophone and is another valuable piece of history that Ken Gervasoni has.

There are two more musical connections back to Carlo

Gervasoni. One is Bert Poletti, son of Carlo's eldest daughter, Annie (herself a violin player). Bert played the saxophone in a dance band in and around Woodend, in the 1930-1950 period

The other connection is Peter (or Pete) Gervasoni, another generation on. He is a grandson of Carlo's oldest son, Battista, and was born in Ballarat. Pete has made a new impact as a singer of modern country music. Pete is highly regarded for his vocal skills, for his song writing and as an entertainer. In 2004, the AFL invited him to perform his own composition "What Are They Marching For?" as the main musical introduction to a football match at the MCG on Anzac day, before an audience of 60,000 people. In 2005 he competed in the finals of the "Telstra Road to Tamworth" competition in Tamworth and was a finalist in the male vocalist section. In 2006, he formed a touring band of players of country music, the "Rednex", to perform at shows and festivals across Australia. In 2010 Pete became the first commercial singer to record with a military band. Pete recorded and released the CD and music video "What Are They Marching For" featuring the Australian Army Band – Sydney. The release, supported by the Minister for Veteran's Affairs, the Australian War Memorial and the Department of Defence, was launched at Defence Headquarters in Canberra by the Acting Vice Chief of the Defence Force. Pete relocated from Ballarat to Canberra in 2008 to pursue his work and music career and returned in 2011 to reside once again in Ballarat.



Fig. 9. Pete Gervasoni waves to the crowd at the MCG on ANZAC Day 2004 after singing "What are They Marching For?" [Image courtesy Pete Gervasoni]

The Gervasonis were, of course, only one line of early Italians and other immigrants who provided the music for community dances at a time when there was little other entertainment in rural Victoria, other than sport. However the Gervasonis have been active and prominent right from the goldfields time until the present, and recognition is due for their great contribution. A Melbourne group, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, or ACMI, have appreciated this and when they made a number of short films recently to illustrate aspects of country life, three in each of the country towns, Castlemaine, Newstead and Maldon, one of the Newstead films featured Maurie Gervasoni (who lives in Newstead) playing his accordion and singing old Italian tunes at Carlo Gervasoni's Old Stone House at Yandoit Creek. Those films were shown recently at Newstead and Castlemaine and made available as a DVD entitled "Stories from Mt. Alexander." Other recordings made of the Gervasoni music played at the early dances are still available and it is possible and desirable that selected recordings be copied to CDs to preserve as much as possible.



Peter Piccini [Image courtesy Colin Nichol]

vale peter piccini. a tribute to one of the most gifted italian australian accordionists

by john whiteoak

We publish below, by kind permission of the author, with slight modifications, a section from the manuscript of a book about professional Italian Australian accordionists being written by the Monash University music historian, Dr John Whiteoak, who will contribute a full article on Peter and his talented father and mentor to a future issue of this journal.

Peter resided in Perth with his charming wife of fifty years Fina (Serafina). Right to the very end, he played brilliantly, composed and mentored gifted students, despite a health setback that few would have had the faith to overcome. While representing a living link with the commencement of the piano accordion tradition in Australia ninety years ago through his father, he was also a good example of the often encountered Italian family convention where accordion knowledge and love of the accordion is transferred from father to child. In Peter's case the gift of knowledge he received was immense, and taken with deep and lasting gratitude. He says of his influences that 'My Dad was the number one – as an accordionist, composer arranger and teacher.'

Peter was born in Sydney in 1936. His mother, Veronica was Irish-Australian, therefore it might be expected

that Peter's engagement with Italian ethnicity would turn out to be the most assimilated of all those discussed so far. Yet he was destined to make some strong and lasting connections with Italy early in his career. Like the Toppanos, he inherited very good looks and a talent that was apparent by age seven when he gave his first performance on accordion in a church hall at Greenwich, New South Wales. Soon thereafter he also studied piano, but his general education suffered severely because of chronic asthma and other illnesses. His father remarried and relocated to Perth just after the War, and when Peter joined him there in 1949, Peter Sr compensated for his absence and his son's loss of general education by intensely fostering and promoting his musical talent and passing on everything he knew about the piano accordion.

By 1951 at age fifteen Peter had begun broadcasting with the ABC, commercial stations, Perth community

radio and also on a weekly radio program that publicized his father's thriving Musette Music Shoppe and school in Forrest Place, Perth. Broadcasting, club work and teaching for Musette kept him fully occupied until 1954 when he too sought his own fame in Britain and the Continent. His many successes included nineteen broadcasts for BBC and commercial television and a televised appearance at the iconic Pigalle Restaurant in Piccadilly with the world renowned French vocalist, Line Renaud. He appeared on programs with two of England's leading accordion virtuosi, Ivor Beynon and Jack Embrow (leading his Art Van Damme-style quintet) and was a featured Guest Artist at the 1955 International Accordion Festival of Great Britain. In Germany he broadcast over a continent-wide network. *Record Mirror* published a glowing article about his 'magic' musicianship entitled 'Ace Accordionist from Down Under' which was reprinted in *The Australian Accordionist*.

Back in Australia the following year, he threw himself into management of the school and its 150 students a week, broadcasting, and leading a trio at a popular Perth night club, Corzino's. He then he received probably the greatest honour ever offered to an Italian-Australian accordionist: a tour of Italy with the world famous star of the San Remo Song Festivals, Claudio Villa. On hearing Peter play, Villa is reported to have become very enthused and to have declared: 'I'll take you with me to Italy. We are going to find an accordion worthy of your passion.' He joined Villa in Rome in August 1958 where he was given two new accordions by Galanti, and the first month of his engagement diary, alone, suggests the incredible pace and excitement of this adventure: Pescia, Rimini, Parma (with 32,000 audience), Reggio Emilia, Bologna and Lucca. He also did radio and television shows and recorded film sound tracks and many singles for the Italian recording company Cetra in Turin, including several of his own compositions.

Soon after returning to Australia in 1959 and re-engaging with the local scene he met Fina. They were married in 1961 by which time the Piccini music school had taken on three teachers Peter performed at his father's restaurant, La Fontana, in Como between television and other engagements and he continued with teaching and managing business and producing more sides for Cetra, including his own *Serafina Tarrantella*. In April 1963 he wound up his Musette affairs when, David Krueger, a gifted former student of his father's, agreed to take over his students. Accompanied by Fina, Peter embarked on another Italian musical adventure that continued until July 1965 and provided a further wealth of professional experience. Importantly, for his career to come, it required him to rapidly become a first class pianist as well as an accordion virtuoso.

The Golden Age of the accordion was over in mainstream entertainment but Peter still had a brilliant musical career ahead of him, especially in television as musical director, soloist and accompanist, leading bands in the top night venues, and further overseas tours, including a wartime tour of Vietnam, and tours to Europe and the USA. Despite his additional reputation as

a piano and organist he has never ceased to identify with the accordion as his instrument and to acknowledge his legendary ability as a gift from Australia's 'Daddy of the Accordion'.

inferno, purgatorio and paradiso: a brief history of brisbane's dante alighieri society

by sandra graham

Since her first Italian language class at Griffith University, Brisbane, Sandra has been a dedicated Italophile. She had served on the Dante Alighieri Society (Brisbane) as secretary until she moved to Sydney in 2003. She is currently writing her first novel set in Calabria and has just started a blog www.mypieceofitaly.wordpress.com about Italian culture in Australia. An amateur historian and past Cassamarca scholarship recipient, she is researching the history of the Dante Alighieri Society in Queensland.

“...da Tashkent a Montevideo, da Bangkok a Città del Guatemala, da Minsk a Brisbane”¹⁰⁰ The Dante Alighieri Society of Brisbane may be on the other side of the world from Italy, but its history reflects deeply Queensland's turbulent relationship with its Italian community.

In 2010, the Italian government announced that it would have to cut its funding to the Dante Alighieri Society by a shocking 53%. In monetary terms, that meant that from the considerable sum of 1,248,000 Euro given in previous years, the Dante Alighieri Society headquarters in Rome would now only have 600,000 euro to assist the 423 Dante societies worldwide. Gian Antonio Stella mentioned Brisbane in his article in Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* to indicate the length and breadth of Dante Alighieri Societies spread across the globe, little suspecting that the Brisbane branch had its own woes of a more personal kind with which to contend. Recent heavy rains had flooded (yet again) its ground floor rooms destroying the carpets and countless books, and the Italo-Australian Centre where the school rented its premises had suffered financial collapse. The Dante Alighieri Society of Brisbane had to scramble to find new premises, and at a time when the Rome headquarters had been severely knobbled, it also had to find the money to pay for the repairs before the start of the school term and a costly move. A major crisis by any definition, but a brief glance

at the history of the Dante Alighieri Society in Brisbane shows that it has weathered the ups and downs of major world events, some of which threatened to bury the society as a mere footnote in Brisbane's multicultural history. This article is a historical overview of the Dante Alighieri Society in Brisbane and the historical events that shaped it into the vibrant society that it is today.

It is commonly thought that the Dante Alighieri Society started in Brisbane in 1952 under the guiding light of Dr Francesco Castellano and Dr Raphael Cilento. However, such was the fascination with Italian language and culture in the Queensland capital and despite the relatively small number of Italian migrants, two brief incarnations had existed previously in the 1920s and then in the 30s. By 1921, Brisbane was considered a 'sleepy' town with a population that numbered around 21,000, and an Italian population in the entire state of Queensland that consisted of only 1838 persons¹⁰¹. Yet, only four years later in 1926, H.G. Tommerup, a university lecturer of modern languages at the University of Queensland founded a Dante Society in Brisbane. Whilst technically not a Dante Alighieri Society per se, it was named after the great Italian poet. It was Melbourne, at that point, which held the distinction of hosting the only Dante Alighieri Society in Australia, the first in an English speaking country and one

¹⁰⁰ Stella, Gian Antonio 2010, 'La colletta fra gli immigrati per salvare la società dell'italiano', *Corriere della Sera*, 25 November, P.25.

¹⁰¹ Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics 1954, 'Volume 3 – Queensland. Part II - Cross-Classifications of the Characteristics of the Population', 30th June, Canberra, p.18.

of the first Italian societies in Australia.¹⁰² Like the Dante society in Melbourne, the Brisbane society sought to promote the beauty of the Italian language and culture, rather than act as a bridge between Italy and the city's Italian migrant community.

An esteemed linguist, Tommerup had a vision of a Brisbane cultural society in which 'alien thought is studied, and alien sympathy is aroused but only for the purpose of bringing a better understanding and a friendlier feeling'.¹⁰³ He implied in the association's newsletter 'The Muses Magazine' that although several cultural associations promoting foreign cultures were present, their aims were misunderstood and consequently a great deal of prejudice was held against them. Perhaps it was Tommerup's own multicultural background and 'alien-ness' that compelled him to establish several cultural societies in Brisbane. Of Danish ancestry, he was born in Amsterdam in 1870 into one of the oldest families in Europe.¹⁰⁴ Having worked as a teacher of modern languages at a grammar school in Wales, he came to Australia in 1897 where he was employed as a journalist and then as a language teacher at secondary schools and at the University of Queensland. Tommerup had a profound love of art and culture, and believed in the pursuit of beauty and intelligence and perfection so that people may enjoy greater happiness. In November, 1927, some 14 months after the establishment of the *Società Dante*, Tommerup described Brisbane and the presence of these societies in the following glowing manner.

In Brisbane a great deal is undoubtedly being done for culture. There is a university, with an Arts as well as a Science side to it, and with a fairly equipped organization of primary, secondary, and technical school studies preparing for its life. The city itself is being beautified, and its attractive surroundings are being made more and more accessible. Above all, Art, in all its branches, is being ever more encouraged – and to make the absorption, so to speak, of the principles of the arts by the life of the community possible, or, at any rate, to assist it, there are a number of societies and associations.¹⁰⁵

The start of Brisbane's imminent Italian cultural society was shaky. Few people had attended the first meeting held in August, 1926. However, undeterred, a second meeting was held on 17th August, 1926 after more determined publicizing of the event, and it was agreed to all to name the society *Società Dante* in honour of Italy's greatest poet Dante Alighieri. The Archbishop James Duhig, a prominent Italophile since his training in Rome and stalwart against discrimination against Italians in Queensland, was the patron of the new society and Tommerup became its founding president.¹⁰⁶ Judging from the

names of the founding committee members, Italians had a strong presence in the society's establishment and life. The vice president was retired theatrical impresario Giovanni Tessoro, Dario Burla served as the Italian speaking assistant secretary and the weekly Italian language classes were conducted by Cesare Baucia who would become the editor of the then largest Italian language newspaper *L'Italiano* in the 1930s. By November 1927, the membership had swelled to around 50 members, and monthly meeting were held in the form of lectures, as well as a weekly class in Italian and one in English if desired by Italian speakers. Yet, despite the enthusiasm of the small group of Italophiles, the *Società Dante* met its demise a mere two years after its foundation. Given that Brisbane's Italian community numbered only around 200 at that time, it must have been an arduous task to maintain the momentum of such a society. Yet, that could not be the sole factor attributable to its demise. The political climate in Queensland had changed, anti-intellectual Australian Workers Union cliques dominated the Queensland state government from the 1920s and into the 1950s. Such an environment would hardly be conducive to promoting the arts, let alone foreign cultures in its midst. Despite Tommerup's earlier positive vision of a blossoming Brisbane embracing the arts in 1926, a mere two years later, those offshoots of beauty and knowledge had been nipped firmly in the bud. The Muses Magazine lamented, 'what other city of the same size in the British Empire would be satisfied with such a library as that in William Street? The shelves that hold Dickens would be a disgrace even to Dirranbandi.' Certainly, the environment that had produced the likes of Premier Samuel Griffith Walker¹⁰⁷ who in his spare time translated *La Divina Commedia* into English in 1912 appeared to be no more, and the *Società Dante* conceded defeat in 1928.

Undoubtedly missing the presence of an Italian cultural society, Archbishop James Duhig inaugurated the *Circolo di Cultura Italiana* in March, 1934, but sadly it too met its demise after only a year. Its albeit brief appearance did not dampen the desire amongst the Italian community and Italophiles for a cultural society in Brisbane where they could indulge their love of *italianità*, because only a few years later Brisbane's first official Dante Alighieri Society would be born in 1937. However, the political climate both in Australia and in Europe had changed. Benito Mussolini had been in power since 1922, Italy was under the grip of Fascism and in a few years, *il bel paese* would be embroiled in the second world war. These events, though on the other side of the world, would have an horrendous impact upon the fledgling society in Brisbane.

Rather than cultural philistinism that cut short the life of Brisbane's first official Dante Alighieri Society, it was the encroaching threat of Fascism, in particular the fear of a fifth column lurking in Queensland's Italian community and then finally the British Empire's declaration of war that was its bitter undoing. Queensland's relatively large Italian population in the north proved to be a powder keg for the growing hysteria regarding the presence of a fifth column in Australia. Spurred by postwar unemployment,

¹⁰² Mayne, Alan 1998, 'The Early Years of Melbourne's Dante Alighieri Society', in Rob Pascoe & J. Ronayne (eds), *The Passeggiata of Exile: The Italian Story in Australia*, Victoria University of Technology, Melbourne, p.45.

¹⁰³ Tommerup, H.G 1927, 'The Muses Magazine', November 1, p.26.

¹⁰⁴ 'State Loses Fine Scholar', *The Courier Mail*, Wednesday, 12 May, 1943.

¹⁰⁵ Tommerup, H.G 1927, 'The Muses Magazine', November 1, p.26.

¹⁰⁶ The officers of the *Società Dante* were: Hon. President, Signor G. Tessoro; vice presidents, Professor J.J. Stable and Signor Cesare Baucia; Hon. Treasurer, Miss K.M. McKellar; Hon. Secretary, Mrs V. Messervy; Hon. Assistant Secretary, Signor Dario Burla. See 'The Muses Magazine', November 1, 1927, p.27.

¹⁰⁷ Sir Samuel Walker Griffith was premier of Queensland from 1883 – 1888, and again in 1890 until he became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Queensland in 1893. His love of Italian literature arose from his travels through the Italy thanks to the T.S. Mort Travelling Fellowship.

social unrest in Europe and North America's tightening restrictions on immigration numbers, Australia became the next port of call for a vast wave of Italian migrants. By 1922, the Italian population had surged, almost tripling in number from the previous year's intake, and many prospered in the North Queensland cane growing areas along the Herbert River and in towns such as Ingham and Innisfail. However, over the years, their success raised the ire of the Anglo community who accused the Italians of undercutting wages and creating 'little Italy's' in their own backyard. In response, those opposed to the Italian workers agitated for an employment quota that came to be known as British Preference where there was a mandatory ratio of 75% Anglo-Australian cane-cutters to 25% Italian on a work site. British Preference dominated hiring practices between 1925 to 1940, and in reply, both sides – Italian and Anglo – grew increasingly militant in defence of their rights. Against the brewing world events, the Italians emerging collectivity during the 1930s became tainted with negative connotations of either a criminal organization known as the Black Hand gang or as a fascist organization, both of which served to stoke the Anglo fear of the enemy within. The Italian government exacerbated the situation. It actively sought to exert its influence and control over the Italian migrant population, and this was done mainly through the Italian consul who acted as a go-between. One very important avenue that the consul utilized was a network of cultural, sporting and social associations which had the express purpose of luring Italians, who may be wary of more overtly political associations, into their sphere of influence. So it comes with little surprise that when Dr Angelo Vattuone wrote an article in the Italian language newspaper *L'Italiano* advocating the formation of an Italian club that it met with the wholehearted approval of the then Italian Consul General in Sydney Paolo Vita-Finzi¹⁰⁸. It was Vita-Finzi who was instrumental in suggesting that the position of the President of the newly formed Dante Alighieri Society should be offered to Sir Raphael Cilento, and later, encouraged that cultured Anglo-Australians should also be recruited to the committee. In 1938, the fledgling committee consisted of Captain Filippo Quaglia who shared the role of vice-president with Mrs Fison; Giovanni Luciano served as Secretary and R.F. Tucker as Assistant Secretary. Mrs Messervy, obviously a stalwart supporter of Italian culture in Brisbane, was present on this committee, as she had been in the previous incarnation as the Società Dante (and would do so again in the reformed Dante Alighieri Society of 1952). On September 3, 1939, the British Empire declared war on Nazi Germany. Three days later, Sir Raphael Cilento who had obviously seen the writing on the wall, suspended the operation of the Dante Alighieri Society. Despite this, the existence of the society would have severe ramifications for its Italian members. Hundreds of Queensland Italians, including Vattuone, Cilento and a man who would play a major role in the Dante Society's renaissance, Dr Francesco Castellano, were sent to internments camps, accused of being Fascist collabor-

ators.

It is hard to know the true level of Fascist commitment that existed amongst the Italian Australian community. The community in Queensland, either Australian or Italian born, had diverging views of what Fascism actually meant, and different reasons why they joined. Aside from a certain level of patriotism to the motherland, it is believed that many of the Italian community leaders and business people had supported Fascism mostly for political and financial opportunism.¹⁰⁹ Dario Burla who had been the assistant secretary of the Società Dante had stated in his appeal against his internment, "If I had made an application to belong to some Fascio it was for business reasons, because the Consul had promised to give some consideration to the Italian community."¹¹⁰ Dr Vattuone, regarding his involvement in the fascist associations, has been described as a 'self-serving, but egregiously foolish bourgeois opportunist.'¹¹¹ Vattuone, to his benefit or not, was identifiably a strong supporter of the Italian Fascist government and actively founded societies such as the Cairns based Amando Diaz Society in 1934. The same can not be said for Dr Raphael Cilento, of whom the level of his support is still hotly contested to this day. A third generation Italo-Australian, Dr Raphael Cilento was born in 1893 in Jamestown, South Australia. Educated at Prince Alfred College and Adelaide University, he went on to specialize in tropical medicine and worked with the Commonwealth Department of Health in New Guinea from 1921 to 1934. From 1934, he became Queensland's director-general of health and medical services. His achievements were considerable, in particular, his establishment of publicly provided health services in Queensland. During the war years, every Italian (whether Australian or Italian born, naturalized or not) was suspected of Fascist collusion, and as hysteria and opportunism rose, many Italian Australians were interned on the flimsiest of evidence.

After the war, Australia had experienced a sharp surge in the number of Italian migrants fleeing a country that had been economically crippled. Whilst the majority of migrants had settled in Melbourne and Sydney, in a 1947 census¹¹², 8541 Italy born residents lived in Queensland, the third largest migrant group after the English and Scottish. By 1954, the number of Italian migrants residing in Queensland was recorded as 16,794, still by far the largest non-British migrant group in the state. Naturally, wherever Italians were settling in large groups, Italian restaurants, delicatessens, sporting and cultural societies

¹⁰⁹ Brown, David 2007, 'Fascism within the pre World War II Italian population of Queensland: a study of community processes and interaction', *Journal of the Royal Australian Political Historical Society*, June, viewed 8 February, 2011, <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb4817/is_1_93/ai_n293>

¹¹⁰ Brown, David 2007, 'Fascism within the pre World War II Italian population of Queensland: a study of community processes and interaction', *Journal of the Royal Australian Political Historical Society*, June, viewed 8 February, 2011, <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb4817/is_1_93/ai_n293>

¹¹¹ Dignan, Donald 1992 'The Internment of Italians in Queensland', in Bosworth, R and Ugolini, R (eds), *War, Internment and Mass Migration: the Italo-Australian Experience 1940-1990*, Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, Roma, p.64.

¹¹² Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics 1954, 'Volume 3 – Queensland. Part II - Cross-Classifications of the Characteristics of the Population', 30th June, Canberra, p.18.

¹⁰⁸ Paolo Vita-Finzi served as Consul General in Australia from 1935 to 1937. The Sydney Consulate General had jurisdiction over the ACT, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and New Guinea, with many consular agencies scattered throughout Australia where there were large Italian migrant populations. Vita-Finzi returned to Italy in February 1937 to be replaced by Amadeo Mammalella, considered a Fascist party stalwart, who remained in Australia until the outbreak of the Second World War between Italy and the British Empire in June 1940.

proliferated. At the same time, overseas travel was rapidly gaining popularity, and many Australians were heading to Europe in what can only be described as a rebirth of the 'Grand Tour'. Sydney historian Roslyn Pesman Cooper attributed the 1950s and 1960s phenomenon to 'the cheap fares offered on the returning immigrant ships brought Europe within the means of an unprecedented number of young Australians. In 1961, along with so many of my compatriots, I boarded an Italian ship and embarked upon that Australian middle class rite-of-passage, the overseas trip.'¹¹³

In response to the influx of Italian migrants, doctors Francesco Castellano and Raphael Cilento founded the second official incarnation of the Dante Alighieri Society in Brisbane in 1952. The aim of the society, as it had been in the previous versions, was to foster a deep and profound love of Italian culture and language. This incarnation has survived the decades of a changing Australian society, raised the status of the Italian language in the education system and made Castellano into a revered legend in the Brisbane Italian and Italophile community. Dr Francesco Castellano was born in Grumo Appula, a small town near Bari in the southern Italian region of Puglia on the 23rd July, 1899. He followed in his father's footsteps becoming a doctor after graduating in medicine from the University of Naples. In 1929, after his father had told him of a vacant position in Australia, he migrated to Queensland where he was one of ten Italian doctors to achieve registration in the state thanks to the Anglo-Italian treaty which allowed reciprocal recognition of British and Italian medical degrees. He was posted to the Italian community hospital in Ingham, North Queensland, and although the conditions were primitive, he spent three years there looking after the Italian sugar cane cutters and their families until he joined Doctor Angelo Vattuone in Cairns. Interned in the Gaythorne camp from 1940 until 1943, he established his medical practice in Brisbane in 1945, at a time when the Italian community would soon witness a mass influx of new Italian migrants, where many settled in the Brisbane suburbs New Farm and The Valley. Such was his energy and love of Italian culture and desire to propagate it in under the tropic sun that, aside from his role as founder and second president of the Dante Alighieri Society, he became patron of the Corale Giuseppe Verdi, the Azzurri Soccer Club, the Italian Tennis Club and the Italo-Australian Centre. Yet, his internment experienced had left an indelible mark, and he reiterated the need for the Dante Alighieri Society to remain non-political. A fervent wish he expressed again when he stood down as president of the society in 1967 after 15 years at the helm.

May I add one final note as a medical practitioner. A fragile patient can often be restored to robust health by the transfusion of new blood. But unless the new blood is one of the same blood group, it may kill him. I trust therefore that in the new year and succeeding years the society may always follow that policy of political impartiality which, in my opinion, is the strength and the root of its continued vitality.¹¹⁴

Throughout the succeeding decades, the Dante Alighieri Society offered lectures (often given by Dr Castellano when no-one else was available) on various non-political aspects of Italian culture, dinners, Italian language classes, a monthly newsletter, scholarships to study in Italy and a verse speaking competition. Many of the Dante Society's hardworking committee members were honoured with medals from the Head Office in Rome. In 1968, the then Italian Consul for Queensland Dr F. Valli awarded a gold medal to Doctor Castellano and a bronze medal to Mrs V.C. Messervy in recognition of their devoted service to promoting Italian culture. Castellano was also awarded the title 'Cavaliere Ufficiale' which is one of the Italy's highest public service awards instituted in 1951 and is given to individuals for distinguished services for their country.

Despite these achievements, it could not be ignored that Italian was considered merely a 'wog' language and children of Italian migrant parents could only learn Italian at home (where in many households, dialect not Italian was spoken). French was considered the more socially acceptable language to be studied in Queensland high schools and universities. From its very earliest years, the Dante Alighieri Society worked hard towards one goal: to introduce the Italian language into the Queensland education system as a serious avenue of study. The Dante must have thought it had achieved those goals when in 1959, after the university had received a complete set of books on Italian literature from the Italian ambassador, the University of Queensland's Vice Chancellor Sir Fred Schonell had declared that Italian would be taught at the esteemed university in 1961.¹¹⁵ Alas, 1961 had come and gone, and still Italian remained outside academic study. In 1969, former Dante Society vice president Mr R.E. McDonnell introduced Italian at the Brisbane State High School. It was not until 1976, when Griffith University established its Italian studies course, that the Dante Alighieri Society finally witnessed the Italian language and culture given its due at a tertiary institution in Queensland.

Since the early days of the 1950s and 1960s, the Dante Alighieri Society of Brisbane has seen many changes in Queensland's cultural landscape and Australia's national identity. 1988 was a watershed year for Brisbane. Expo'88, hosted along the riverbank, had put Brisbane on the world stage and many residents (author included) started to think of Brisbane as a city rather than an overgrown town. The city that would have once been ashamed of the state of its library collection was growing up. Added to the mix, multicultural debates were growing heated and in some cases, politically dirty. Australia was moving away from an homogenous Anglo view devoid of foreign communities (or languages), and this was reflected in the proliferation of non-English speaking services from the late 1970s onwards. SBS TV began broadcasting into Brisbane in 1985 and local ethnic community radio broadcaster 4EB began transmitting full time in 1981 from its headquarters in West End. Around this time and into the 1990s, there is a noticeable increase in articles in the Dante newsletter exploring Queensland's Italian migrant history. The Dante Alighieri Society's hard work did not go without notice. In 1991, the society achieved record levels of students enrolled in its school,

¹¹³ Pesman Cooper, Roslyn 1993, 'The Past: Australians and Tuscany 1850 – 1950' in Prampolini, G and Hubert, M (eds) *An Antipodean Connection: Australian Writers, Artists and Travellers in Tuscany*, Slatkine, Geneva, p.135.

¹¹⁴ *Dante News*, Jan / Feb 2002, p.11.

¹¹⁵ 'Waiting for Italian Course', *Courier Mail*, 21 February, 1968.

and the Italian Government recognized the society on the other side of the world as worthy of support, describing it as one of the most active societies in the world. In 1996, one year after Italian is finally included as one of the priority languages in the Queensland school's LOTE (Languages Other Than English) programme, the state's premier Rob Borbidge lauded the Dante Alighieri Society of Brisbane for its work.

From an indifferent 'sleepy' country town, to a devastating war and an influx of Italian migrants to the global financial calamity of the GFC to flooding disaster, the Dante Alighieri Society has not stood isolated from historical events, rather it is firmly entrenched in Australian historical tide. It has navigated the ebb and flow of Australia's relationship with her Italian community, reflecting back the change in attitudes, the politics and its widening national identity. Perhaps, as both young and old, Anglo and Italian Australian clean up the mud and ruin caused by the recent floods in the Dante premises, Tommerup's vision of a society bringing a better understanding and a friendlier feeling has finally been achieved.

note sull'emigrazione italiana in australia

di antonio cortese

Nota biografica: *Nato a Roma, Antonio Cortese si è laureato in economia iniziando poi a lavorare presso l'Istituto Nazionale di Statistica del quale è stato Direttore Centrale responsabile delle statistiche demografiche, sociali e ambientali. In seguito ha insegnato in diverse Università. È stato membro di numerose Società Scientifiche, italiane e internazionali. Ha svolto attività di ricerca anche per conto di varie Istituzioni e ha collaborato con la Cooperazione Italiana per progetti a contenuto statistico in alcuni paesi. È autore di numerose pubblicazioni.*

Abstract: Per molti decenni l'Italia ha alimentato cospicue correnti emigratorie verso l'estero per poi diventare a metà degli anni Settanta area di immigrazione. Tra il 1871 e il 1970 circa 26 milioni di italiani hanno lasciato il loro paese emigrando soprattutto verso le Americhe ed alcuni paesi europei. L'autore si occupa in questo lavoro dei flussi che si sono diretti in Australia, in particolare nei primi anni del secondo dopoguerra, con il proposito di evidenziarne, in un'ottica prevalentemente demografica, le dimensioni e di analizzarne, per quanto possibile, le aree di provenienza e le caratteristiche strutturali.

1. Premessa

Dopo l'unificazione, il nostro paese ha alimentato, per molti decenni, cospicue correnti migratorie verso l'estero. Tra il 1871 ed il 1970 circa 26 milioni di nostri connazionali lasciarono l'Italia. Nei 40 anni all'incirca che precedono il primo conflitto mondiale, l'Italia conosce la prima delle sue due grandi esperienze migratorie verso l'estero. In questo periodo, a una prima fase nella quale in realtà la massa migratoria, non ancora particolarmente intensa, si ripartisce in misura pressoché uguale fra le due correnti, continentale e transoceanica, ne segue una seconda nella quale la corrente transoceanica registra un eccezionale sviluppo: nel 1913, quando gli espatri rag-giungono la loro punta massima (873 mila unità), il flusso verso gli Stati Uniti è pari al 43 per cento circa del totale. Se nel quinquennio 1876-80 è il solo Veneto ad avere un tasso di migrazione superiore al 10 per mille, nel quinquennio 1910-14 quasi tutte le regioni del Mezzogiorno superano, e talvolta di molto, il livello del 20 per mille. Inoltre, se tra le due guerre predomina una politica di contenimento delle migrazioni, va evidenziato che dal 1945 sino all'ini-

zio degli anni Settanta le emigrazioni verso i paesi europei economicamente più favoriti sono quelle che svolgono un ruolo preponderante.

Non va però dimenticato che subito dopo la conclusione del secondo conflitto mondiale, vi è una momentanea ripresa del flusso migratorio verso l'Argentina mentre acquistano maggiore peso nuove mete quali il Venezuela e l'Australia. In particolare, intorno alla metà degli anni Cinquanta vi è una modesta ripresa, per qualche anno, del flusso verso gli Stati Uniti.

A segnare le vicende demografiche del secondo dopoguerra sono soprattutto le migrazioni verso i paesi europei. Sul totale degli espatriati cresce il peso dell'Europa che già nel decennio 1951-60 supera il 60 per cento e nel decennio successivo si attesta sopra l'80 per cento. Milioni di emigranti lasciano le regioni rurali e densamente popolate del nostro meridione per i paesi dell'Europa industriale: Francia, Svizzera e Belgio sono inizialmente le mete privilegiate, a partire dal 1960 diventa importante il

peso della Germania.

Nel corso degli anni Settanta, l'Italia conosce un'inversione di tendenza nei movimenti migratori: da paese, come si è visto, di emigranti diventa gradatamente area di immigrazioni.

Con riferimento alle vicende dell'emigrazione italiana, più sopra molto sinteticamente richiamate, scopo del presente lavoro è quello di ricostruire le varie fasi dell'emigrazione che ha riguardato l'Australia, sesto paese del mondo per estensione, utilizzando l'ampia documentazione sedimentatasi nel corso del tempo, con il proposito di evidenziarne, in un'ottica prevalentemente demografica (per i criteri seguiti nella selezione delle fonti statistiche e per l'attenzione riservata alla natura dei dati utilizzati), le dimensioni e di analizzarne, per quanto possibile, le aree italiane di provenienza e le caratteristiche strutturali.

2. Brevi cenni storici sull'Australia

Guardando il mappamondo oggi, è difficile immaginare come la grande terra del sud sia rimasta così a lungo inesplorata e addirittura sconosciuta per molti secoli¹¹⁶. Occorre attendere fino al secolo diciassettesimo per poter riscontrare avvistamenti della costa occidentale e settentrionale dell'Australia, anche se è da ritenere che siano stati i Portoghesi a scoprire per primi la "Terra Australis Incognita", nome che dopo il viaggio di Marco Polo in Cina, entrò nel vocabolario degli Europei e alimentò per secoli quella sete di ricchezze che è sempre stata il vero movente delle loro esplorazioni.

Con i loro possedimenti in Sud America, gli spagnoli si trovavano in una posizione strategica vantaggiosa per scoprire la grande terra del sud. Verso la fine del 1605, una spedizione capeggiata da Fernandez de Quiros e salpata dal Perù, raggiunse le Isole delle Nuove Ebridi. Luis Vaez de Torres, al comando di una delle tre navi della spedizione, veleggiò per proprio conto verso nord ovest passando a sud della Nuova Guinea. Scopri così nel 1606 lo stretto che porta il suo nome e che divide l'estremità nord dell'Australia, la penisola di Capo York, dalla Nuova Guinea. Si trattò di un passo importante per una migliore definizione del grande continente che Torres fece quasi per caso, avvistando forse la massa continentale ma non sbarcandovi.

A metà del secolo sedicesimo i Paesi Bassi gestivano la gran parte del lavoro di distribuzione dei prodotti delle Indie Orientali, soprattutto le spezie, che i portoghesi portavano in Europa. A seguito dell'incorporazione del Portogallo da parte della Spagna, vi fu un momento di difficoltà che non scoraggiò però una nuova repubblica marinara come quella olandese, con capacità tecniche notevoli, economicamente progredita e soprattutto decisa a far fronte alla sfida spagnola. Da distributori delle spezie in Europa, gli olandesi decisero di divenirne anche i procuratori dai paesi d'origine. A Batavia (Giacarta) essi fissarono il loro quartier generale con la Compagnia delle Indie Orientali. Proprio da quel porto, nel 1605, salpò un veliero capitanato da Willem Jansz che dette il via al periodo degli avvistamenti e degli sbarchi sul continente australiano. Jansz fu senz'altro il primo europeo che vi mise

piede secondo documenti verificabili storicamente. Gli incontri con gli abitanti di quella terra non furono dei migliori. Seguì pure nei decenni successivi una lunga sequela di rapporti negativi sull'Australia almeno fino all'arrivo, nel 1770, di James Cook, il più grande degli esploratori delle terre australi, con il quale si chiuse la lunga epoca dell'esplorazione del Pacifico e dei mari del sud.

La pace di Versailles del 1783 aveva riconosciuto l'indipendenza degli Stati Uniti d'America e aveva posto fine alle pressanti preoccupazioni del governo britannico verso quelle terre, ma aveva creato anche, di riflesso, molti altri problemi.

Le colonie americane avevano, infatti, ricevuto da tempo galeotti inglesi che non trovavano posto nelle patrie galee e fornivano, specialmente per i latifondisti del cotone della Virginia, manodopera a buon prezzo. Va ricordato che l'usanza di deportare in territori fuori dalla madrepatria alcune categorie di condannati era nata in Inghilterra agli inizi del sec. XVII come un sostitutivo della pena di morte¹¹⁷.

La nuova repubblica si rifiutava naturalmente di continuare a ricevere poveri condannati che venivano spesso deportati con pene pesantissime per aver commesso minimi reati, soprattutto contro la proprietà.

Nel 1776 il governo britannico, prendendo atto della situazione che stava determinandosi, annunciò la decisione di istituire una colonia penale a Botany Bay, così favorevolmente descritta da Cook, e nominò il Capitano Arthur Phillip quale Comandante della flotta che portò i galeotti agli antipodi e Governatore Generale del Nuovo Galles del Sud, come Cook aveva battezzato la parte orientale del continente australiano da lui scoperta.

Phillip partì da Portsmouth l'11 maggio del 1787 e dopo 15 mila miglia di viaggio, il 20 gennaio del 1788 arrivò in vista di Botany Bay. Si accorse subito che il luogo non possedeva le tanto decantate caratteristiche di cui aveva scritto Cook e non esitò a trasferire i suoi a Sydney Cove (l'odierna Sydney) così chiamata in onore del Segretario alle Colonie.

La nuova colonia-penitenziario ebbe una vita difficile fin dall'inizio. Alla piccola colonia di Sydney, Phillip lasciò comunque un assetto sociale solido, superando difficoltà enormi, spesso contrastato dalle critiche dei suoi stessi ufficiali, e assolvendo al suo dovere con efficienza, con una profonda comprensione dei reitti umani a lui affidati e soprattutto con la speranza del loro riscatto in quel mondo così nuovo e così difficile. Come osserva il Bini, spetta a lui, più che a ogni altro il titolo di padre dell'Australia.

Altre flotte giunsero negli anni seguenti. Dal 1788 al 1842, l'anno della fine delle deportazioni in Australia, ben 148 mila persone scontarono un periodo di detenzione provenienti dalle isole britanniche. Erano uomini, donne e bambini in prevalenza inglesi, scozzesi, gallesi e irlandesi. Vale pure la pena di segnalare che all'arrivo degli Eu-

¹¹⁶ Per questi richiami sono in gran parte debitore a L. Bini (2007) al cui volume rinvio per ulteriori notizie.

¹¹⁷ La deportazione nelle colonie penali era inizialmente concessa a mo' di grazia dal sovrano, ma in seguito fu decisa dal giudice stesso che ne pronunciava la condanna.

ropei si calcola (è molto difficile peraltro appurarlo con precisione) che vi fossero nel paese circa 300.000 Aborigeni.

I deportati possono essere divisi in tre grandi gruppi sulla base della loro estrazione sociale. Primi fra tutti, i criminali recidivi che anche in Australia non riuscivano a reinserirsi nella vita normale. Per quanto riguarda i prigionieri per ragioni politiche, essi giungevano soprattutto dall'Irlanda dove la lotta contro la sopraffazione inglese non si era mai sopita, ma erano presenti anche membri dei gruppi di lavoratori che stavano cercando di organizzarsi e che avrebbero poi fondato i sindacati britannici e dato una svolta radicale allo sviluppo politico e sociale della Gran Bretagna. Il terzo gruppo era costituito infine dalle vittime di circostanze economiche tanto avverse da averle indotte a rubare un pezzo di pane per sfamare le proprie famiglie e che, dalle campagne, andavano ingrossando il proletariato urbano a causa della nascente industria e della disastrosa politica agraria dei vari governi autocratici inglesi i quali governavano con e per i latifondisti aristocratici più che per la nazione intera.

Nel 1830 i galeotti rappresentavano il 40 per cento della popolazione, gli emancipati il 20 per cento. Gli immigrati liberi aumentarono progressivamente: dal 1821 al 1850 ne giunsero ben 250 mila.

Negli stessi anni l'Australia aveva trovato il suo prodotto base, la lana, che nel 1850 rappresentava i due terzi di tutta l'esportazione (le ventisei pecore merino arrivate nel 1797 diventarono dopo due secoli quasi duecento milioni!). Grazie alla costruzione di nuove strade ed alle esplorazioni, gli insediamenti andarono ben oltre la fascia costiera di Sydney, capitale del Nuovo Galles del Sud.

Con la scoperta dell'oro è poi lo Stato di Victoria ad avere un forte sviluppo. L'industria mineraria andava comunque oltre la produzione aurifera (carbone, rame, argento, zinco, ecc.).

Poiché più avanti avrò l'occasione di effettuare ulteriori richiami, concludo ricordando che l'idea di arrivare ad una federazione australiana, già presente negli atti deliberativi dell'ufficio coloniale di Londra nel 1847, si realizza il primo gennaio 1901 a Sydney, quando fu finalmente proclamato il *Commonwealth of Australia* con l'inaugurazione, dopo pochi mesi, del primo parlamento federale a Melbourne, diventata la capitale temporanea della federazione. L'Australia era ormai indipendente, anche se gli ultimi legami con il Regno Unito non furono recisi fino al 1986.

L'Australia è oggi una monarchia parlamentare federale e vanta una popolazione residente che ha superato la soglia dei 22 milioni di abitanti. Il governo federale (*Federal Executive Council*) è costituito dal Governatore Generale dell'Australia coadiuvato dai *Consiglieri Esecutivi*, ovvero il Primo Ministro e i Ministri dello Stato (*Ministers of State*). Di fatto il potere esecutivo è esercitato da questi ultimi.

3. L'immigrazione in Australia: considerazioni di carattere generale

Come si è visto, fu James Cook a dare il nome di *New South Wales* (Nuovo Galles del Sud) a tutte le terre che

aveva scoperto sulla costa orientale del continente australiano nel 1770. Il primo insediamento britannico del 1788 a Sydney, continuò l'uso del nome. Man mano che altri insediamenti si svilupparono e divennero colonie con una loro autonomia locale concessa dalla Gran Bretagna, presero il nome di: *Van Diemen's Land* (poi cambiato in *Tasmania* nel 1856), *Victoria*, *South Australia* (Australia Meridionale), *Western Australia* (Australia Occidentale), *Queensland*. La cartina (Fig. 1) consente di individuare i confini e di localizzare la posizione delle più importanti città del paese.

Fig. 1. Cartina dell'Australia con i suoi stati e territori e le città capitali. [Fonte: Antonio Cortese]



Già nei primi anni dell'Ottocento la colonia-penitenziario comincia una lenta trasformazione con l'espansione di Sydney oltre la stretta striscia di costa sull'oceano. A seguito di numerose esplorazioni, si trovò la via per superare le *Blue Mountains*. Il terreno estremamente accidentato cedette alla tenacia degli sterratori forzati e una nuova strada si dipartì dalla costa e aprì uno spiraglio verso gli immensi spazi del continente australiano. "Il superamento delle montagne simboleggia quella prima generazione di australiani liberi che si lasciava alle spalle l'insediamento edificato dalle sofferenze dei forzati della colonia penale" (Bini, 2007). Grazie ad esso si rende possibile la messa a pascolo di enormi estensioni di terra sulle quali affluiscono le greggi dalla zona costiera.

Altre esplorazioni verso il nord consentirono di individuare pure in quell'area, il Queensland, terreni particolarmente favorevoli all'espansione della pastorizia e allo sviluppo delle attività agricole.

L'insediamento britannico nell'Australia Meridionale si differenziava da quello attuato sulle altre parti del continente per essere totalmente libero. Il governo locale approvò la formazione della *South Australian Company* che proponeva per l'appunto l'insediamento di coloni liberi. Essa favorì fra l'altro l'immigrazione di un notevole gruppo di tedeschi che si insediarono nella Barossa Valley e posero le fondamenta della coltivazione della vite e della produzione del vino, attività per le quali ancora oggi l'Australia Meridionale è all'avanguardia¹¹⁸.

Sui flussi in arrivo che hanno riguardato l'intero paese nell'Ottocento, fanno luce i dati riportati nella Tav. 1. Quanto al calo che si registra, per alcuni anni, a partire dal 1842 (Melbourne era appena nata e la popolazione, ancora di ridotte dimensioni, era per lo più insediata, oltre che in Tasmania, nell'area di Sydney), si può ricordare

che la siccità aveva colpito la colonia e quindi influenzato al ribasso il prezzo della lana con conseguente flessione dei capitali di investimento. I dati della tabella pure ben evidenziano l'aumento dell'immigrazione che si ebbe dopo il 1851 con la scoperta dell'oro nel Victoria¹¹⁹, in varie località ad una distanza di circa cento chilometri da Melbourne. Arrivò un gran numero di americani (si stima 10 mila). A questi si unirono irlandesi appena ripresi dalla carestia che aveva afflitto il loro paese, tedeschi che dopo il 1848 cercavano all'estero nuove fortune, francesi ed altri cittadini provenienti da ogni parte d'Europa ed anche dall'Asia. Cinesi cominciarono ad arrivare proprio mentre l'oro si stava esaurendo e le loro strane usanze, il loro lavoro continuo ed organizzato in gruppi di centinaia di persone, il loro rilavorare i detriti scartati dagli altri minatori per recuperare anche il minimo residuo di oro, li rese invisibili agli altri minatori. Nel 1860 vi erano 60 mila cinesi solo nel Victoria e la tensione nei campi aumentò. Scoppiarono tafferugli che rappresentarono il pretesto per delle restrizioni che verranno applicate sull'ammissione di immigrati di colore. Motivarono inoltre quella politica di immigrazione della *White Australia* che rimarrà in vigore fino al 1972.

Tav. 1. Immigranti in Australia e Nuova Zelanda negli anni dal 1825 al 1891

Anno	N. immigranti	Anno	N. immigranti
1825	485	1859	32.073
1826	903	1860	24.742
1827	715	1861	24.504
1828	1.056	1862	42.781
1829	2.016	1863	55.620
1830	1.242	1864	41.592
1831	1.561	1865	40.117
1832	3.733	1866	24.670
1833	4.093	1867	14.610
1834	2.800	1868	12.982
1835	1.860	1869	15.042
1836	3.124	1870	18.395

¹¹⁸ Tra i contributi degli italiani per lo sviluppo della viticoltura, merita di essere segnalato quello operato da Angelo Giulio Diego Bernacchi. Nato in Provincia di Varese, si trasferì nel 1883 in Australia, stabilendosi sulla piccola isola Maria, a pochi chilometri dalla costa della Tasmania sud-orientale, dove lanciò un progetto per la piantagione di vigneti per il quale aveva importato i migliori vitigni (Bini, 2007).

¹¹⁹ Nel 1867 e nel 1886 si scoprì l'oro, in quantità limitate, anche nel Queensland e nell'Australia Occidentale.

1837	5.054	1871	69.350	1871	102.452	19.232	71.067	192.751
1838	14.021	1872	80.280	1872	118.190	19.541	72.763	210.494
1839	15.786	1873	93.815	1873	123.343	21.310	83.692	228.345
1840	15.850	1874	137.886	1874	116.490	20.286	60.496	197.272
1841	32.625	1875	134.091	1875	84.540	14.686	41.449	140.675
1842	8.534	1876	131.805	1876	73.396	10.097	25.976	109.469
1843	3.478	1877	139.798	1877	63.711	8.653	22.831	95.195
1844	2.229	1878	139.011	1878	72.323	11.087	29.492	112.902
1845	830	1879	150.942	1879	104.275	18.703	41.296	164.274
1846	2.347	1880	157.128	1880	111.845	22.056	93.641	227.542
1847	5.837	1881	165.588	1881	139.976	26.826	76.200	243.002
1848	25.555	1882	173.262	1882	162.992	32.242	84.132	279.366
1849	33.945	1883	234.920	1883	183.236	31.139	105.743	320.118
1850	16.555	1884	235.573	1884	147.660	21.953	72.566	242.179
1851	22.320	1885	238.016	1885	126.260	21.367	60.017	207.644
1852	89.076	1886	252.631	1886	146.301	25.323	61.276	232.900
1853	63.266	1887	238.732	1887	168.221	34.365	78.901	281.487
1854	88.144	1888	248.829	1888	170.822	35.873	73.233	279.928
1855	55.428	1889	235.300	1889	163.518	25.354	64.923	253.795
1856	46.475	1890	232.670	1890	139.979	20.653	57.484	218.116
1857	63.427	1891	215.912					
1858	40.945							

Fonte: Dirstat, 1892.

Fonte: Dirstat, 1892.

Con riferimento alle ultime considerazioni, due precisazioni si rendono necessarie. Quanto ai dati della Tav. 1, va tenuto presente che se il saldo migratorio risulta sempre fortemente positivo, resta elevato nello stesso arco di tempo il numero delle persone emigrate per ritorni nei paesi di provenienza e “per il movimento per via di mare fra una colonia e l'altra” (Dirstat, 1892). Preponderante è poi sicuramente stato, soprattutto nell'Ottocento, il peso dell'immigrazione proveniente dal Regno Unito. È interessante annotare che, almeno negli anni che vanno dal 1853 al 1891, le correnti migratorie alimentate dal Regno Unito sono state nettamente le più importanti in Europa. Nel 1883, anno nel quale i flussi in uscita raggiungono il punto più alto, gli emigranti del Regno Unito rappresentavano poco meno del 50 per cento delle migrazioni dei paesi europei, Russia compresa, dirette verso altre parti del mondo. Si veda in proposito la Tav. 2.

Tav. 2. Emigranti dal Regno Unito dal 1853 al 1890

Anno	Inghilterra e Galles	Scozia	Irlanda	Totale
1853	62.915	22.605	192.609	278.129
1854	90.966	25.872	150.209	267.047
1855	57.132	14.037	78.854	150.023
1856	64.527	12.033	71.724	148.284
1857	78.560	16.253	86.238	181.051
1858	39.971	11.815	43.281	95.067
1859	33.930	10.182	52.981	97.093
1860	26.421	8.733	60.835	95.989
1861	22.145	6.730	36.322	65.197
1862	35.487	12.596	49.680	97.763
1863	61.243	15.230	116.391	192.864
1864	56.618	15.035	115.428	187.081
1865	61.345	12.870	100.676	174.891
1866	58.856	12.307	98.890	170.053
1867	55.494	12.866	88.622	156.982
1868	58.268	14.954	64.965	138.187
1869	90.416	22.559	73.325	186.300
1870	105.293	22.935	74.283	202.511

“L'Australia – è stato recentemente osservato ribadendo valutazioni non nuove e comunque da condividere – è un paese di immigrati la cui struttura sociale è il prodotto di scelte oculate consapevolmente prese con l'intenzione di creare un certo tipo di società. Negli ultimi 150 anni, la politica immigratoria dell'Australia si è fondata su tre concetti chiave, ovvero il mantenimento di una identità britannica i cui cittadini avessero la pelle bianca, lo sviluppo economico e il rafforzamento strategico del paese attraverso l'ingresso di immigrati selezionati, e il controllo della diversità da parte dello Stato. Mentre il primo punto col tempo ha perso importanza e il secondo è stato a lungo discusso da quanti considerano la popolazione numericamente già soddisfacente, il terzo pilastro della politica migratoria australiana è invece rimasto alla base di ogni cambiamento *cosmetico* apportato negli anni al paese” (Vecchio, 2010).

Tornando alla Tav. 1, si può osservare che il flusso migratorio subisce un calo negli anni 1866-1870 per poi riprendere a crescere, specialmente a partire dal 1874, arrivando ben presto a superare la quota di 200 mila arrivi all'anno.

I nuovi capitali accumulati in seguito alla scoperta dell'oro e l'aumento degli investimenti britannici infusero nuove energie espansionistiche anche al governo: nuove strade, nuove costruzioni pubbliche e un nuovo sistema ferroviario ricevettero grande impulso negli anni immediatamente successivi alla corsa all'oro. Grazie a provvedimenti di natura protezionistica, adottati ad esempio dal Victoria, inizia poi lo sviluppo di una notevole base manifatturiera. Questa politica si porrà in contrasto contro quello che era stato fino a quel momento il ruolo economico dell'Australia in relazione alla Gran Bretagna, dalla seconda metà del diciannovesimo secolo officina del mondo e nazione industriale per eccellenza. L'Australia esportava materie prime verso la madrepatria e ne riceveva emigranti, manufatti e capitali per lo sviluppo economico.

Sempre nell'ottica di individuare eventi che possono aver influenzato il movimento migratorio con l'estero, merita di

essere ricordato che nel decennio 1870-1880 la Gran Bretagna ritirò i suoi contingenti militari lasciando in Australia solo una ristretta squadra navale. Ciò pose le varie colonie nella necessità di cominciare a sviluppare un proprio esercito e una propria marina.

L'esaurimento dei vari filoni auriferi portò a contraccolpi sociali che i governi delle colonie dovettero fronteggiare: occorre trovare impiego ad un numero sempre crescente di minatori che cominciavano ad affollare le città. Nel 1892 e nel 1895 gli investimenti britannici cessarono quasi del tutto e le colonie australiane furono investite da una massiccia crisi, con grosse perdite, chiusure e fallimenti di banche, con un deficit della bilancia commerciale. Si risollevarono lentamente solo negli anni a cavallo tra i due secoli.

I flussi migratori proseguirono naturalmente anche nel Novecento. Alle sue vicende riservo pochi cenni perché più avanti avrò l'occasione di tornare su passaggi importanti.

Dopo la fine della prima guerra mondiale, l'Australia ebbe anni di prosperità relativa, dovendo affrontare problemi di sviluppo anche per favorire l'impiego dei soldati rientrati in patria.

L'*Empire Settlement Scheme*, un programma di immigrazione dai vari paesi dell'impero britannico, portò in Australia, con la collaborazione dei governi britannici ed i finanziamenti governativi per i viaggi, oltre 200 mila persone tra il 1920 e il 1929, anno in cui la crisi economica mondiale bloccò d'un tratto il progetto. *Populate or Perish*, il motto di popolare il paese o perire, era alla base di questo nuovo impulso dato all'immigrazione e questa volta l'afflusso venne non esclusivamente dai paesi britannici, ma anche in piccola parte da altri paesi del continente europeo.

Alla fine del secondo conflitto mondiale, l'Australia si trovò in una posizione di grande vantaggio: era produttrice di materie prime in un mondo affamato di prodotti agricoli dopo le distruzioni belliche. Un nuovo programma di immigrazione fu lanciato dal governo: tra il 1947 e il 1968 quasi due milioni di immigrati arrivarono in Australia, metà dei quali da paesi non di lingua inglese.

Sugli incrementi di popolazione che si sono verificati nel corso di quasi un secolo e mezzo, il peso del movimento migratorio è in altri termini risultato preponderante¹²⁰.

¹²⁰ Poiché in seguito farò riferimento, anche citando diversi autori, ai risultati dei censimenti effettuati in Australia, mi pare utile fornire sintetiche indicazioni per una migliore interpretazione dei dati che saranno richiamati. Il primo censimento fu eseguito nel 1828 nel Nuovo Galles del Sud, che in seguito ne eseguì altri, presto imitato dalle altre colonie. Solo nel 1881 si realizzò la "simultaneità" nella esecuzione dell'operazione censuaria. Nel preparare il censimento del 1901 ci si rese conto che la nuova Federazione avrebbe dovuto in futuro prevedere l'adozione di un questionario unico nei vari Stati. Nel 1905 fu approvato dal Parlamento il "Census and Statistics Act" e nell'anno successivo fu istituito il "Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics" (CBCS). Il censimento realizzato nel 1911 può quindi essere per certi versi considerato il primo censimento australiano. Altri ne furono poi eseguiti negli anni seguenti: 1921, 1933, 1947, 1954, 1961, 1966, 1971 (nel 1975 fu istituito, come autorità indipendente, l'"Australian Bureau of Statistics" – ABS), 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001 e 2006. Il prossimo censimento sarà realizzato nel 2011.

"L'immigrazione in Australia è un fenomeno abbastanza recente al confronto di quanto accaduto in altri paesi. Nel 1850 la popolazione dell'isola era stimata nell'ordine delle 400 mila unità, mentre agli inizi del secolo successivo era di 3,8 milioni di abitanti. Nel Novecento, e fino ai nostri giorni, la popolazione residente è cresciuta pressoché costantemente, mantenendo un passo sostenuto nel periodo postbellico, per poi rallentare negli ultimi decenni in seguito alla normale transizione demografica verificatasi nella maggior parte dei paesi ad alto reddito" (Vecchio, 2010).

4. L'emigrazione italiana in Australia

Nella storia dell'emigrazione italiana vengono solitamente individuate quattro fasi, ognuna con caratteristiche demografiche e sociali proprie. Dal punto di vista cronologico possono essere così suddivise (Golini e Amato, 2001):

- (a) la prima dal 1876 al 1900;
- (b) la seconda dai primi del Novecento alla prima guerra mondiale;
- (c) la terza in coincidenza con il periodo tra le due guerre;
- (d) la quarta dal secondo dopoguerra alla fine degli anni Sessanta.

Il binomio crisi economica (si può ricordare la prima grande depressione mondiale del 1873-79 con il crollo dei prezzi delle derrate alimentari) e politica liberale (è la normativa Crispi del 1888 a sancire il principio della libertà di emigrare) sottende all'emigrazione del primo periodo, caratterizzato da una discreta consistenza dei flussi e, soprattutto, da una tendenza decisamente crescente, il cui anno di inizio si spiega con la nascita della prima rilevazione ufficiale.

La seconda fase coincide con l'avvio del processo di industrializzazione dell'epoca giolittiana che, per il fatto di essere non sufficientemente intenso e non sufficientemente diffuso sull'intero territorio nazionale, non fu capace di assorbire la larga eccedenza di manodopera presente sul mercato del lavoro. È in questo periodo che viene raggiunto, per l'esattezza nel 1913, il picco dell'intera nostra storia emigratoria con più di 870 mila espatri.

Nel terzo intervallo temporale l'emigrazione è fortemente decrescente, dapprima a causa delle restrizioni legislative imposte da alcuni paesi di immigrazione e in seguito come conseguenza della grande crisi economica. Non va pure trascurato il ruolo giocato dalla politica anti-emigratoria perseguita dal fascismo.

Dopo la fine della seconda guerra mondiale si registra inizialmente una fase di emigrazione crescente. Successivamente, negli anni del "miracolo economico", la spinta migratoria si riduce e negli anni Settanta il saldo del movimento migratorio con l'estero diventa positivo.

Per approfondire il tema in esame, la scelta è quella di fare riferimento a tre fasi: l'emigrazione di massa (si è parlato di "esplosione post-unitaria" per questa fase che va dal 1876 al 1915 e che quindi accorpa le due prime fasi della schematizzazione sopra richiamata), quella tra le due guerre (1916-1942) e l'emigrazione del lungo se-

condo dopoguerra¹²¹. Questa periodizzazione che per certi versi risulta opportuna allo scopo di inquadrare le vicende dell'emigrazione italiana verso l'Australia nel contesto più generale dei flussi in uscita dal nostro paese, per altri versi si rivela "di comodo" a motivo delle specifiche dinamiche che hanno riguardato le suddette vicende. Come si vedrà infatti più avanti, l'emigrazione italiana verso l'Australia caratterizza soprattutto il secondo dopoguerra: fino ai primi mesi del 1951 essa ebbe carattere individuale; il 29 marzo, con la stipula fra i due governi di un accordo per la cosiddetta "emigrazione assistita", la situazione muta radicalmente.

In via preliminare, qualche cenno merita infine di essere riservato alla natura dei dati statistici utilizzati partendo dalle indicazioni fornite dall'Istat. "Oggetto della rilevazione – precisa l'Istituto (Istat, 1976) – è stato: fino al 1913 il movimento dei cittadini italiani espatriati in disagiate condizioni economiche; nel 1914-1927 il movimento dei cittadini italiani espatriati a scopo di lavoro manuale o per esercitare il piccolo commercio o per raggiungere congiunti già emigrati per motivi di lavoro; nel 1928-1942 il movimento dei cittadini italiani espatriati a scopo di lavoro manuale o intellettuale o per raggiungere congiunti già espatriati per motivi di lavoro; dal 1943 in poi il movimento dei cittadini italiani espatriati per esercitare all'estero una professione, un'arte o mestiere in proprio o alle dipendenze altrui oppure per seguire o raggiungere familiari espatriati per tali motivi oppure per stabilire all'estero la residenza per altri motivi. Nei volumi che raccolgono le statistiche ufficiali dell'emigrazione italiana, gli espatriati sono definiti *emigranti*, fino al 1927; *lavoratori* dal 1928 al 1942; *espatriati* per motivi di lavoro o atto di chiamata dal 1943 al 1957; *emigranti* (lavoratori, familiari e per altri motivi) dal 1958 in poi".

È opinione diffusa che i dati disponibili non siano in grado di fornire una visione corretta del fenomeno migratorio con l'estero. La incompleta conoscenza del fenomeno – è stato osservato (Bonarini, 1976) – deriva dal fatto che unità statistiche sfuggono all'indagine determinando una dimensione ridotta rispetto a quella reale. "Del resto la storia di questa indagine, fatta di successive introduzioni di nuovi criteri, di revisioni ed integrazioni di dati con altri ricavati da differenti fonti amministrative o basati su stime, di interruzioni della serie delle pubblicazioni specifiche, se da un lato testimonia le difficoltà obiettive insite nella natura del fenomeno e lo sforzo costante nel tentativo di superarle, suona anche come implicita valutazione della non piena precisione dei dati"¹²².

¹²¹ Cfr. Nicosia e Prencipe, 2009.

¹²² "La statistica dell'emigrazione – ha osservato Luigi Bodio, direttore della statistica italiana dal 1872 al 1893 – non è difficile a farsi in quei paesi nei quali il movimento si concentra su pochi punti di frontiera". Non è il caso del nostro paese per il quale si devono interrogare i sindaci di tutti i Comuni sul rilascio del *nulla osta* per il passaporto. "Ma il rilascio del passaporto non è richiesto per entrare negli Stati limitrofi. E, per converso, fra coloro che prendono passaporto, quanti non sono emigranti, ma semplici viaggiatori, che si recano all'estero per affari, per studi, per diporto, e non con l'intenzione di stabilirsi in paese straniero? Che più? La nozione stessa dell'*emigrante* non è facile a definirsi. Non è emigrante l'*assente*, non il viaggiatore partito per esplorazioni scientifiche. Emigrante è chi si allontana dalla patria nella speranza, come dicesi, di far fortuna altrove; è colui che, andando in cerca di lavoro manuale o di altra occupazione lucrosa, ha l'idea di stabilirsi in altro Stato. *Nos patriam fugimus*. L'emigrante ha intenzione di non ritornare, o almeno non ha l'intenzione precisa di ritornare, non prevede se, né quando ritornerà. Gli altri che si assentano dalla patria per più o meno lungo

L'esistenza in talune epoche di un nucleo di proletariato *globe trotter* ha ulteriormente complicato le cose. "Prima della prima guerra mondiale, da 5.000 a 10.000 italiani entravano annualmente negli Stati Uniti da paesi diversi dall'Italia: erano i calzalai italiani in Pennsylvania che arrivavano dopo anni di lavoro in Brasile. Italiani lavorarono al Canale di Panama, come i calabresi avevano lavorato all'escavazione del Canale di Suez, o altri italiani al lavoro del Sempione. Più indietro nel tempo si segnalavano 200 italiani arrivati nel 1876 in Nuova Zelanda via Amburgo: erano muratori e operai in cerca di lavoro in Germania e di lì imbarcatasi dopo l'arresto dei lavori edili e ferroviari causato dalla crisi economica dei secondi anni '70. E ancora, si potevano trovare italiani sbandati a Barcellona, provenienti dalla Francia e in cerca di lavoro; a Cipro, dopo l'occupazione inglese del 1878, giunsero dall'Egitto e dal levante emigrati italiani in cerca di un lavoro che non ci fu..." (Sori, 1979)¹²³.

4.1. Dalla seconda metà dell'Ottocento alla prima guerra mondiale

I dati relativi alle correnti migratorie che dall'Italia si direbbero verso l'Australia, sono riportati nella Tav. 3. Si tratta in realtà di espatri che riguardano l'Oceania ma che nella quasi totalità concernono l'Australia. Insieme ad essi è bene tenere presenti quelli esposti nella tabella successiva, la Tav. 4, i quali danno conto del formarsi nel tempo di una comunità italiana ancora esigua, pur se in continua crescita. Il contrasto fra le due serie è solo apparente in quanto, al di là della inevitabile sottostima censuaria, occorre considerare il peso dei rimpatri, trascurati nel presente lavoro, che in ogni epoca non è mai risultato particolarmente consistente.

Tav. 3. Espatri dall'Italia verso l'Oceania negli anni dal 1877 al 1915

Anno	N. espatri	Anno	N. espatri
1877	216	1897	436
1878	194	1898	371
1879	31	1899	427
1880	15	1900	535
1881	10	1901	890
1882	29	1902	767
1883	164	1903	389
1884	173	1904	701
1885	158	1905	765
1886	231	1906	815
1887	216	1907	664
1888	163	1908	638
1889	156	1909	830
1890	291	1910	1.079
1891	784	1911	1.608
1892	144	1912	1.214

tempo, fermi sempre nel proposito di ritornare, e sapendo approssimativamente quando vi faranno ritorno, non possono dirsi veri emigranti. Accennare a siffatte distinzioni è dare un'idea delle difficoltà che s'incontrano nella indagine statistica sulla emigrazione" (Bodio, 1882). Sul tema rinvio pure a Marrocchi, 1965.

¹²³ Un caso per tutti: "Nel 1871, 37.221 dicevano di andare negli Stati Uniti, mentre la statistica di New York conta 46.256 immigrati italiani. Una parte degli italiani arrivati in America sono quegli stessi che uscivano dall'Italia dicendo di passare in Francia, in Svizzera, in Austria, ecc., in cerca di lavoro temporaneo, e che più tardi si convertirono in emigranti transatlantici" (Franzina, 1976).

1893	54	1913	1.682
1894	68	1914	1.397
1895	154	1915	347
1896	467		

Fonte: Nicosia e Prencipe, 2009.

Tav. 4. Italiani censiti negli Stati australiani con le rilevazioni dal 1871 al 1911

Stati	Censimenti				
	1871 ^(a)	1881	1891	1901	1911
Nuovo Galles del Sud	...	521	1.477	1.577	1.723
Victoria	772	947	1.717	1.526	1.499
Queensland	88	250	438	845	929
Australia Meridionale	...	141	186	327	184
Australia Occidentale	...	10	36	1.354	2.361
Tasmania	...	11	36	49	21
Territorio del Nord	...	-	-	-	2
Totale	860	1.880	3.890	5.678	6.719

(a) Il censimento riporta la categoria "Italians" solo nel questionario di due colonie.

Fonte: Milone, 1933.

“Tra il 1876 e la prima guerra mondiale oltre 14 milioni di italiani lasciarono la madrepatria per cercare fortuna all'estero, ma di questi soltanto 18.437 si diressero in Oceania, appena l'1,5 per cento. A scoraggiarli fu l'enorme distanza, la mancanza di una linea di navigazione italiana, l'inesistenza in Australia, al contrario delle Americhe, di grosse comunità italiane già insediate, la mancanza del mito di *fare fortuna presto* e una politica australiana avversa all'immigrazione non anglosassone” (Bacchetta e Cagiano de Azevedo, 1990)¹²⁴.

Di italiani in Australia ne sono venuti in ogni caso anche prima del 1876. Si è fatta perfino una ricerca su chi potesse essere stato il primo emigrante italiano in Sud Australia: è stato così individuato un certo Guerroni, nativo di Rimini, marinaio su di un veliero britannico, il "Recovery", giunto ad Adelaide nel 1839. Avendo lavorato inizialmente come cacciatore di balene, passò in seguito alla ricerca dell'oro per terminare come vetturino pubblico, poi proprietario di omnibus e di alcuni piccoli immobili: morì nel 1883 nella cittadina di Norwood della quale era diventato sindaco! (Masotti, 1992).

Negli anni 1854-1855 giunsero in Australia molti emigranti del Canton Ticino a cercare fortuna dopo il collasso della loro economia e la espulsione di tanti ticinesi dal Lombardo-Veneto da parte degli austriaci in rappresaglia per il loro appoggio alla causa italiana durante la prima guerra di indipendenza.

All'incirca negli stessi anni si segnala la presenza di emigranti italiani nel Queensland (tagliaboschi, carbonai, minatori, cercatori d'oro, ecc., che si spostavano da un luogo all'altro seguendo la disponibilità di lavoro). Alcuni anni fa è stata richiamata l'esistenza di un piano di emi-

¹²⁴ Osserva un altro autore: "La distanza dei porti di imbarco, unitamente alla lunghezza del viaggio dall'Europa all'Australia, le esigue sollecitazioni provenienti dall'unico agente ufficialmente riconosciuto dal governo inglese ed operante a Livorno, la presenza in quelle lontane contrade dell'Australia di pochi italiani, furono tutte cause del limitato afflusso di connazionali in quelle regioni" (Messina, 1976).

grazione per quello Stato preparato già nel 1865 e del conseguente flusso migratorio, costituito per lo più da coloni toscani, diretto verso il Nord della regione. Sempre in quel periodo si stabilì nell'area un consistente gruppo di operai, appositamente fatti venire dall'Italia, impiegati nella costruzione della ferrovia Cairns-Kuranda e, a dispetto di quanto indicano i dati della Tav. 4, va pure ricordato lo stanziamento di famiglie in prevalenza valtellinesi in diverse zone del Queensland. Fra il 1876 e il 1879 altri nuclei familiari o individui isolati partirono dall'Italia alla volta della colonia: con la nave *Reichstag* salpata da Amburgo arrivarono 29 emigranti italiani; la nave *Lammerhagen* partita dallo stesso porto ne portò circa 40, provenienti dalla Toscana, per lo più viticoltori, sericoltori e agricoltori; la *Indus*, proveniente da Londra, aveva a bordo 104 coloni toscani; 19 emigranti italiani arrivarono con la *Humboldt* salpata da Amburgo e altri 17 giunsero in Australia a bordo della *Charles Dickens*, partita anch'essa dal porto tedesco¹²⁵. Vale pure la pena di ricordare che nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento un certo numero di famiglie provenienti dall'Italia meridionale, principalmente pescatori di origine siciliana, pugliese e napoletana, si erano concentrate a Breakfast Creek, il sobborgo che a Brisbane sorge sulle rive dell'omonimo fiume, svolgendo attività di pesca e commercio del pesce in generale e in particolare di gamberi (Marletta, 1996).

È interessante riferire, in merito alla "spinta ad emigrare", che nel 1888 fu effettuata un'indagine (altre ne erano state effettuate in anni precedenti) con la quale fu, tra l'altro, posta ai sindaci dei Comuni che avevano avuto almeno dieci emigranti (ben 2.585 su 8.256 Comuni) la seguente domanda: "Quali sono le principali cause dell'emigrazione?". Le risposte date dai 2.320 sindaci che collaborarono furono le seguenti (Dirstat, 1889)¹²⁶:

- (a) il desiderio di miglior fortuna (920);
- (b) la miseria (853);
- (c) la mancanza di lavoro (251);
- (d) i cattivi raccolti (133);
- (e) la crisi agraria (36);
- (f) altre cause (117).

Il 1891 costituisce per gli storici un punto fermo di partenza per lo studio della nostra emigrazione nel Queensland. In quell'anno sbarcarono dalla nave *Jumna* 355 emigranti italiani (principalmente piemontesi e lombardi) inviati in diverse piantagioni dove si coltivava la canna da zucchero, per sostituire i lavoratori reclutati nelle isole del Pacifico, in particolare i *kanakas*, poveri indigeni provenienti dalla Nuova Caledonia oggetto di un vergognoso commercio schiavista, che si era deciso di rimpatriare. Quel primo stanziamento di italiani costituì il nucleo iniziale dal quale ebbe origine quella catena migratoria che fece in seguito del Queensland del Nord una delle regioni più densamente popolate di italiani. Va ricordato che l'Australia, almeno fino alla prima guerra mondiale, ha sempre e solo accettato come immigrati, lavoratori agri-

¹²⁵ Fra il 1841 e il 1875, 7.212.750 emigranti partirono dai porti tedeschi e 2.634.467 emigranti dal Regno Unito.

¹²⁶ Mario Sabatini, citato da E. Franzina (1976), rileva – lo evidenzio con riferimento a talune risposte – che le strutture precapitalistiche di molte regioni agrarie avevano dato luogo a un eccesso demografico contadino, conseguente al frazionamento della piccola azienda agricola e storicamente relativo al suo prodursi e riprodursi in una congiuntura di lunga depressione generalizzata che inizia nella decade del 1870.

coli (Cecilia, 1985). La grande maggioranza dei nostri emigranti era d'altro canto costituita da semplici braccianti; comprate poco a poco delle terre, essi poterono poi sfruttarle per proprio conto. Ancora nel 1921, il censimento dette modo di rilevare come, dopo i tedeschi, fossero gli italiani immigrati in Australia a presentare la maggiore percentuale di popolazione rurale (Milone, 1933). Un emigrante italiano scriveva con una certa enfasi sul finire del secolo: "Abbiamo delle colonie agricole che fanno davvero onore all'Italia e vengono indicate come modelli... Ovunque poi, troviamo italiani che occupano uffici di non lieve responsabilità: li troviamo nelle poste e telegrafi, nelle scuole pubbliche e private, nelle carpenterie di porto, nella stampa, nelle professioni legali e mediche, nelle case di commercio e nelle imprese industriali..." (Gagliardi, 1897).

Nel periodo qui preso in esame, è comunque la scoperta dell'oro a metà dell'Ottocento (dal primo giacimento di Ophir vicino a Bathurst, nel Nuovo Galles del Sud, sul quale si riversarono in poche settimane da tutte le parti dell'Australia diecimila persone, si passò alle ben più ricche miniere attorno a Melbourne nel Victoria) a rivoluzionare la storia dell'Australia e ad aggiungere nuovi connotati economici al suo sviluppo demografico (Bini, 2007).

Dal Victoria veniva estratto in quegli anni un terzo di tutta la produzione mondiale di oro. Nessuna sorpresa perciò nel registrare, nel decennio 1850-1860, l'aumento della popolazione della sua capitale, Melbourne, che passò da 39 a 140 mila abitanti. Fra i minatori venuti da ogni parte del mondo non mancarono gli italiani. Le cronache riferiscono che nelle vicende legate al moto di rivolta dei minatori scoppiato per l'inasprimento della tassa sulle licenze, un ruolo importante spettò all'italiano Raffaello Carboni, già carbonaro e reduce dell'avventura della Repubblica Romana con Garibaldi e Mazzini, posto a capo del gruppo internazionale dei minatori. Nel 1867 quando a Melbourne giunse in missione scientifica, commerciale e diplomatica per il nuovo Regno d'Italia, la corvetta *Magenta*, la prima nave italiana ad aver circumnavigato il globo, fu accolta dalla comunità italiana che allora contava nella città circa un migliaio di persone.

Tornando alla Tav. 4, va precisato che l'aumento della presenza italiana nell'Australia Occidentale dopo il 1891 va pure attribuito in gran parte alla scoperta dell'oro in quella regione. Proprio in questo Stato, nel corso del 1904 a pochi mesi dall'avvento al potere del "Labour Party", ci fu uno dei più gravi moti xenofobi della storia australiana, quando i minatori del luogo si rivoltarono contro gli italiani accusandoli di essere dei crumiri. "Il movimento laburista era contro l'immigrazione italiana...; gli emigrati italiani espandendo il mercato della manodopera e quindi la concorrenza, avrebbero messo i datori di lavoro nell'invidiabile posizione di poter scegliere e di poter dare ai disoccupati lavoro e una remunerazione più bassa" (Laracy, 1971). Contro queste prese di posizione e accuse, delle quali numerose inchieste provarono l'infondatezza, si batté Giuseppe Prampolini, pioniere del socialismo pugliese, che a Sydney nel 1903 fondò l'"Uniamoci", il primo giornale in lingua italiana del "Nuovo Continente" (Grassi, 1973).

Volgendo lo sguardo al Prosp. 1, aggiungo, nel comple-

tare le mie considerazioni su questa fase, che ad alimentare gli espatri in Australia fra il 1876 e il 1915 furono soprattutto, nell'ordine, Lombardia, Sicilia e Piemonte (Lancaster Jones, 1964 e Pascale, 1930).

Prosp. 1. Graduatoria delle prime dieci Province italiane che hanno alimentato l'emigrazione verso l'Australia nel 1880-1899 e nel 1900-1919

1880-1899	1900-1919
Sondrio	Sondrio
Messina	Messina
Torino	Bergamo
Brescia	Brescia
Bergamo	Alessandria
Lucca	Torino
Milano	Massa
Potenza	Bari
Novara	Udine
Belluno	Belluno

Fonte: Lancaster Jones, 1964.

4.2. Il periodo fra le due guerre

Nel 1919 scompariva l'impero degli Asburgo, il nemico contro il quale si era dovuta creare l'unità italiana, contro il quale si era affermata la rinascita politica dell'Italia. A dispetto della vittoria, gli anni che seguirono la conclusione della prima guerra mondiale, non furono però facili. La polemica sulla Dalmazia e Fiume mise di fronte "nazionalisti italiani" e "nazionalisti jugoslavi". Si parlò di "vittoria mutilata": era la prima delusione delle speranze fondate sulla fine del conflitto. Lo stato di guerra aveva poi chiamato in causa la politica economica e fiscale del governo. Sarebbe stato necessario prospettarsi una situazione di lunga durata e fronteggiarla con un piano organizzativo che invece mancò. Troppe erano state le illusioni in una guerra breve e rapida. Il governo si trovò quindi nella necessità di recuperare introiti con prestiti e imposte che, data la tecnica del sistema fiscale italiano, colpivano i contribuenti in maniera disordinata...

Per restare al nostro tema, la diversità nel rapporto tra ritmo di sviluppo demografico e ritmo di sviluppo economico, la cosiddetta "pressione demografica differenziale", individuata come causa di fondo delle migrazioni, non poteva che condurre al permanere dei flussi in uscita dal nostro paese. Il numero degli espatri, che nel decennio 1911-20 era stato pari a 382.807 unità (media annua), si attenuò soltanto nel decennio successivo (255.064 emigranti), diminuendo poi vistosamente fra il 1931 e il 1940 (70.265 emigranti). Giova ricordare che a partire dal 1921 gli Stati Uniti avevano accentuato fortemente la politica restrizionistica nel campo delle migrazioni (è di quell'anno il famoso "Quota Act" che limitò l'immigrazione, per ogni anno, al tre per cento degli stranieri della stessa nazionalità residenti negli Stati Uniti al censimento del 1910).

Per quanto riguarda il nostro paese, in un primo momento continuò a produrre effetti l'importante legge del 1901, la prima e più importante legge organica a carattere sociale sull'emigrazione, con la quale prese avvio una fase di politica migratoria più dinamica e responsabile, contrassegnata dal coordinamento tecnico da parte del Com-

missariato dell'Emigrazione, organo dotato di relativa autonomia politica e gestionale. Con l'avvento del fascismo, "la politica migratoria fu in parte la continuazione della precedente politica liberistica, di cui sperimenta i limiti e le potenzialità, particolarmente verso una valorizzazione economica e politica dell'emigrante. All'insegna del prestigio furono portate avanti alcune iniziative da tempo prospettate, quali la convocazione di una Conferenza internazionale dell'emigrazione e dell'immigrazione nel 1924 e la creazione di un istituto per il sostegno finanziario del lavoro italiano all'estero. La soppressione del Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione ad opera del regime, nel 1927, ebbe il significato non tanto dell'eliminazione di una struttura a carattere tecnico di cui si temeva l'autonomia, quanto piuttosto di un rigido accentramento politico, di un assoggettamento del fattore emigratorio alle esigenze di grande potenza, di una involuzione concettuale, dovuta alla matrice ideologica" (Sacchetti, 1978). Fu in ogni caso sempre nel 1927, in coincidenza non casuale con il lancio della politica ruralistica e con il passaggio dall'esaltazione delle grandi metropoli all'antiurbanesimo che fu inaugurata la lotta contro l'emigrazione all'estero (Treves, 1976).

Sui flussi migratori che dall'Italia si diressero verso l'Australia nel periodo fra le due guerre, fanno luce i dati riportati nella Tav. 5. Il confronto quelli esposti nella Tav. 3 mostra che, superati gli anni del primo conflitto mondiale, è soprattutto a partire dal 1922 che si registra un sensibile incremento degli espatri che tocca punte mai raggiunte nella fase esaminata in precedenza. Solo dopo il 1928 si verifica un certo assestamento con flussi in linea con quelli registratisi fra il 1910 e il 1914.

Tav. 5. Espatri dall'Italia verso l'Australia negli anni dal 1916 al 1945

Anno	N. espatri	Anno	N. espatri
1916	167	1931	695
1917	14	1932	887
1918	4	1933	1.226
1919	347	1934	1.324
1920	697	1935	1.664
1921	1.468	1936	1.174
1922	4.226	1937	2.358
1923	963	1938	2.705
1924	4.498	1939	1.800
1925	5.182	1940	415
1926	4.783	1941	-
1927	6.900	1942	-
1928	2.346	1943	-
1929	1.435	1944	-
1930	1.715	1945	-

Fonte: Istat, 1975 (per i dati dal 1916 al 1925 che riguardano l'Oceania); Istat, 1976 (per i dati dal 1926 al 1945).

A certificare l'aumento della presenza italiana in Australia, sono i censimenti demografici svoltisi in quel paese: la rilevazione censuaria del 1921 fotografa una comunità forte di poco più che 8 mila componenti mentre quella del 1933 registrava il superamento di quota 26 mila unità (Bacchetta e Cagiano de Azevedo, 1990).

Qualche cenno va riservato alla situazione dell'Australia negli anni ora considerati. Poco prima che l'Europa scivo-

lasse verso l'abisso della prima guerra mondiale –siamo nel 1913 – fu posta la prima pietra della capitale che si era deciso di istituire a Canberra. Nel 1914 l'Australia aveva quasi 5 milioni di abitanti; 419 mila si erano arruolati volontariamente e 330 mila combatterono su vari fronti (Turchia, Francia, Belgio e Palestina) avendo il paese deciso di entrare nel conflitto in aiuto della madrepatria. Lasciò sul campo ben sessantamila morti creando "una leggenda fatta di coraggio, di tenacia e di volontà di dimostrare la propria identità di paese indipendente che non fosse solo l'appendice del grande impero" (Bini, 2007).

I primi anni dopo la fine della guerra mondiale videro il risorgere delle attività economiche in Australia sulla spinta di una nuova richiesta di materie prime: la lana, i minerali, il frumento, i prodotti agricoli in generale.

Con l'*empire settlement scheme*, che ho già richiamato, migliaia di immigrati giunsero nel paese almeno sino al 1929, l'anno della crisi economica mondiale.

È proprio in questo periodo, come si è visto più sopra, che si irrobustisce la presenza italiana favorita da due successivi accordi, siglati nel 1923 e nel 1927, che limitavano però l'entrata nel paese a chi poteva dimostrare di avere in Australia parenti o garanzie di lavoro (Audenino e Tirabassi, 2008). Per gli anni che vanno dal 1916 al 1925, si tratta di un'emigrazione in netta prevalenza maschile (quasi il 70 per cento)¹²⁷. Su come essa si sia ripartita sulle base dell'età, negli anni nei quali i flussi sono stati più consistenti, fanno luce i dati della Tav. 6. È pure interessante soffermarsi su quelli esposti nella successiva tabella (Tav. 7), la quale classifica i nostri emigranti secondo la professione esercitata in patria, prima cioè della partenza. Per cogliere alcuni tratti salienti della situazione italiana di quegli anni, si può fare riferimento ai risultati del censimento demografico svoltosi nel nostro paese nel 1921: il 55,7 per cento della popolazione attiva apparteneva all'agricoltura; elevato era ancora il numero degli analfabeti nella popolazione di oltre sei anni (il 24,4 per cento fra i maschi, il 30,4 per cento fra le donne).

Tav. 6. Emigranti italiani partiti dai porti del Regno per l'Australia negli anni dal 1921 al 1926 per classi di età (percentuali)

Classi di età	N. emigranti
Meno di 5	3,4
5 – 9	2,1
10 – 15	2,8
16 – 20	10,3
21 – 25	28,5
26 – 35	32,1
36 – 45	15,0
46 e più	5,8
Totale	100,0

Fonte: Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione, 1926.

Tav. 7. Emigranti italiani, di età superiore ai 15 anni,

¹²⁷ Se si fa riferimento ai risultati dei censimenti australiani (persone nate in Italia), si può osservare per il 1881, il 1891 e il 1901, che per ogni 100 uomini sono state censite meno di 20 donne; questo valore poi progressivamente cresce sino al 1976 quando per ogni 100 uomini sono state censite quasi 85 donne (Favero e Tassello, 1983).

partiti da porti del Regno per l'Australia negli anni 1921-1925, secondo la professione esercitata in patria (percentuali)

Professione	Percentuale
Addetti all'agricoltura	54,6
Braccianti, giornalieri, terrazzieri ed altri operai addetti a lavori di sterro, di scavo, ecc.	17,9
Attendenti alle cure domestiche	7,0
Altre professioni	20,5
Totale	100,0

Fonte: Istat, 1927.

Questi sintetici richiami ci aiutano forse a comprendere meglio i motivi della non facile assimilabilità da parte degli immigrati italiani in Australia in quegli anni, della quale scrive uno studioso che trae spunto dai risultati del censimento del 1921 (quello australiano in questo caso): "Poco più di un terzo degli italiani residenti in Australia aveva accettato la naturalizzazione, mentre degli svizzeri eran naturalizzati i due terzi e degli scandinavi e tedeschi i tre quarti circa. Degli italiani meno di una metà avevano mogli britanniche, e pur queste erano in gran parte figlie di italiani, mentre due terzi dei tedeschi, tre quarti dei francesi, degli svizzeri, degli scandinavi avevano sposato cittadine britanniche. Tutto ciò in parte risponde al ritardo avutosi nell'immigrazione italiana in Australia, per il quale molti immigrati non avevano i requisiti per assumere la cittadinanza britannica; mentre, in parte, e non lo nascondiamo, risponde effettivamente agli stretti vincoli che legano i nostri tra loro" (Milone, 1933).

Un'ultima considerazione va riferita alle aree di provenienza dell'emigrazione italiana in Australia. Nel periodo fra le due guerre sono state in particolare Veneto, Sicilia e Calabria, nell'ordine, ad alimentare i flussi in uscita dal nostro paese e diretti in Australia (Lancaster Jones, 1964). Fra il 1926 ed il 1934 a guidare la graduatoria delle Province è Reggio Calabria che, su un piano più generale, già a partire dal 1901 aveva fatto registrare una media annua di espatri per 10 mila abitanti, intorno alle 300 unità (Nobile, 1977). Una buona posizione è pure quella occupata, da un lato, dalle Province di Messina e Catania e, dall'altro, dalle Province di Vicenza e Treviso¹²⁸.

4.3 Il secondo dopoguerra

L'emigrazione italiana ha assunto nelle varie epoche aspetti alquanto diversi sia sotto il profilo dell'intensità del movimento, sia sotto quello della direzione prevalentemente prescelta dagli emigranti.

Dal 1876 alla grande guerra, gli espatri, come ho già ricordato, sono oltre 14 milioni (7,6 milioni di persone emigrano nelle Americhe, oltre 6,1 si recano in Europa) e si è infatti parlato per questa fase di *emigrazione di massa*. Nei primi dieci anni la maggioranza dei nostri emigranti si dirige verso l'Europa, dal 1886 prevalgono le partenze verso le Americhe, soprattutto quella meridionale. All'inizio del XX secolo, a causa delle crisi economiche locali, il

movimento migratorio privilegia il Nord America. Dopo il 1901, quando ogni anno espatriano mediamente 500 mila italiani, quattro su dieci si dirigono negli Stati Uniti.

Dopo la battuta d'arresto causata dalla seconda guerra mondiale, l'emigrazione italiana riprende una graduale ascesa fino al 1948 per assumere poi un andamento caratterizzato da oscillazioni ripetute di intensità con un minimo di 200 mila espatri circa nel 1950 ed un massimo di quasi 300 mila espatri nel 1961; inizia negli anni successivi una lenta diminuzione con gli espatri che, a partire dalla metà degli anni Settanta, scendono sotto la soglia di 100 mila per anno.

In questa fase che vede il prevalere dei flussi diretti verso l'Europa, prende corpo una robusta emigrazione italiana verso l'Australia che non a caso è stata considerata una delle nuove "Americhe". Con la rilevazione censuaria del 1947, per la quale rinvio alla Tav. 8, sono state censite in Australia 33.632 persone nate in Italia (22.506 maschi e 11.126 femmine) (Borrie, 1964). È sufficiente considerare i dati riportati nella Tav. 9 per rendersi conto della vera e propria esplosione dell'emigrazione italiana verso questo paese; solo a partire dal 1969 inizia una celere diminuzione¹²⁹ (è in altri termini soprattutto nel secondo dopoguerra che prende corpo l'importante comunità italiana in Australia dei nostri giorni). Lo certificano in particolare le percentuali sul totale degli espatri dall'Italia: nel 1952 si arriva quasi al 10 per cento.

Tav. 8. Italiani censiti negli Stati australiani con la rilevazione del 1947^(a)

Stati	Numero
Nuovo Galles del Sud	8.721
Victoria	8.305
Queensland	8.541
Australia Meridionale	2.428
Australia Occidentale	5.422
Tasmania	64
Territorio del Nord	151 ^(b)
Totale	33.632

(a) Si tratta di "persone nate in Italia"; (b) Dato ottenuto per differenza.

Fonte: Baggio, 2004.

Tav. 9. Espatri dall'Italia verso l'Australia dal 1949 al 1976

Anno	Valori assoluti	% sul totale degli espatri dall'Italia	Anno	Valori assoluti	% sul totale degli espatri dall'Italia
1949	10.939	4,3	1963	11.535	4,2
1950	13.516	6,7	1964	10.888	4,2
1951	17.453	6,0	1965	10.320	3,7
1952	26.802	9,7	1966	12.523	4,2
1953	12.865	5,7	1967	13.667	6,0
1954	16.960	6,8	1968	14.505	6,7
1955	27.689	9,3	1969	8.740	4,8
1956	25.631	7,4	1970	6.362	4,2
1957	17.003	5,0	1971	6.128	3,7

¹²⁸ A Griffith, cittadina con più di 20 mila abitanti dell'entroterra australiano, a metà strada tra Melbourne e Sydney, i "trevigiani" sono ancora oggi circa la metà della popolazione (Paganoni e O'Connor, 1999).

¹²⁹ L'esodo verso destinazioni oltreoceano va esaurendosi, assorbito dalla crescita economica europea e italiana e dalle nuove prospettive di mobilità continentale e interregionale.

1958	12.375	4,8	1972	4.435	3,1
1959	14.149	5,3	1973	3.419	2,8
1960	19.606	5,1	1974	3.773	3,4
1961	16.351	4,2	1975	2.531	2,7
1962	14.406	3,9	1976	2.709	2,8

Fonte: Istat, 1986.

Su un piano generale, sono diverse le cause che nel secondo dopoguerra hanno prodotto effetti su intensità e direzione dei nostri flussi emigratori.

In primo luogo occorre nuovamente ricordare che gli Stati Uniti, che avevano rappresentato nei primi decenni del secolo il più importante sbocco per l'emigrazione italiana, avevano in seguito parzialmente chiuso le frontiere. Il *Bracero Program* del 1942, il *War Bride Act* del 1945 e l'*Alien Fiances and Fiances Act* dell'anno successivo, non produssero cambiamenti sostanziali. "Sebbene Washington fosse tornata a propugnare con particolare energia il principio della libertà di commercio e di accesso alle materie prime fin dalla sottoscrizione della Carta Atlantica nell'agosto del 1941 e avesse promosso l'abbattimento delle barriere economiche protezionistiche nel secondo dopoguerra, la liberalizzazione dell'immigrazione non rientrava nei progetti del Congresso. Anzi, il *McCarran-Walter Act* del 1952 ribadì il sistema delle quote nazionali e le rese addirittura ancora più restrittive che in passato" (Luconi e Pretelli, 2008). Solo dopo il 1958 c'è una ripresa dei flussi verso gli Stati Uniti perché proprio in quegli anni viene di fatto disapplicata la norma che fissava, all'interno delle quote, un livello molto basso all'immigrazione dall'Italia. Va poi aggiunto che la situazione economica dei paesi dell'America Latina non era più tale da incoraggiare grandi ondate di immigrazione e che in Europa la ripulsa per il fascismo aveva chiuso agli italiani molte porte.

È stato rilevato che il periodo di maggiore emigrazione non fu l'immediato dopoguerra, quando più drammatica era la situazione dell'occupazione e più grave il peso della miseria, bensì quello a cavallo degli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta, ovvero gli stessi anni del massimo sviluppo dell'economia italiana, quelli del cosiddetto *miracolo economico*¹³⁰. "Nel corso degli anni Cinquanta – si è osservato – i fenomeni migratori registrano una continua intensificazione giacché si determinano contemporaneamente un rafforzamento dell'effetto di *richiamo* (in rapporto alle nuove prospettive dello sviluppo industriale di alcuni paesi europei e alle richieste di forza lavoro non qualificata) e una perpetuazione dell'effetto di *spinta* dovuta al persistere di aspetti di sottosviluppo nel Mezzogiorno, legati a loro volta a una mancata politica di industrializzazione e alla ovvia incapacità dell'agricoltura di sopportare il suo carico demografico, nonostante le pur notevoli trasformazioni" (Pugliese, 2002).

"Dall'Italia si va via – secondo altri studiosi – perché non c'è lavoro e il paese è distrutto dalla guerra, perché ci si è rimasti bloccati durante la guerra e gli anni precedenti (è il caso di tanti figli di emigranti con passaporto estero),

perché si proviene da aree che hanno cambiato di statuto nazionale (le ex-colonie, ma anche i territori italofofoni dell'Adriatico balcanico), perché si è bollati come fascisti e si teme per la propria vita oppure perché si è bollati come socialisti e comunisti e si sa di non aver più possibilità di lavoro dopo la sconfitta elettorale del 1948 e il fallimento dell'occupazione delle terre. Negli altri paesi si arriva perché questi sono bisognosi di manodopera, oppure perché accettano *profughi* per motivi umanitari o politici" (Prencipe e Sanfilippo, 2009).

Era il "prezzo della ricostruzione" come recita il titolo di un libro assai interessante pubblicato di recente (De Clementi, 2010). Nel 1946 i consumi pro capite erano pari al 90 per cento del 1913; nel 1947, con la disoccupazione sempre alta, l'inflazione toccava il 50 per cento. Al progetto migratorio la classe politica al governo devolveva la soluzione di tre problemi: la decongestione del mercato del lavoro, messo alle corde dai drastici tagli alla domanda, il contrasto alla mobilitazione comunista alimentata da una impressionante disoccupazione di massa e un afflusso di rimesse utili a coprire il dieci per cento delle importazioni. L'Europa però, che avrebbe dovuto far suo lo smaltimento dell'esuberanza demografica e del deficit occupazionale italiano, era ancora lontana dall'idea di liberalizzare la mobilità degli uomini¹³¹.

Guardando ai flussi dal versante dell'Australia, va detto che il dopoguerra trovò il paese in condizioni tali che permettevano di guardare al futuro con una certa fiducia per quanto riguardava lo sviluppo delle proprie risorse e capacità. La guerra aveva prodotto un'espansione industriale per sopperire ai bisogni delle forze armate, ma ora si poteva tranquillamente pensare ad una riconversione per la produzione civile. La gestione dell'economia da parte del governo era stata oculata; la guerra non era stata finanziata da enormi prestiti, come era accaduto nella prima guerra mondiale, ma in gran parte dalla imposizione diretta. Come era capitato alla fine del primo conflitto mondiale, l'Australia si trovava inoltre in una posizione di grande vantaggio; era una grande produttrice di materie prime in un mondo affamato di prodotti agricoli dopo le distruzioni belliche. Le esportazioni sono alla base dello sviluppo economico, soprattutto manifatturiero, del paese sino alla fine degli anni Sessanta (Bini, 2007).

È in questo contesto che maturò la decisione da parte del governo australiano di promuovere un ampio programma di immigrazione. Tra il 1947 e il 1968 – ne ho fatto già cenno – quasi due milioni di immigrati arrivarono in Australia, metà dei quali non di lingua inglese (quasi 350 mila erano italiani¹³²). "In una nazione la cui popolazione era al 95 per cento di origine inglese e irlandese, questo nuovo flusso di popolazione rappresentava un evento veramente rivoluzionario. La società australiana ne fu gradualmente influenzata, rinvigorita ed arricchita" (Bini, 2007).

In realtà per l'emigrazione italiana, specie all'inizio di questa nuova fase, gli ostacoli da superare furono molti.

¹³⁰ Tra il 1958 e il 1963 i quattro quinti dell'emigrazione transoceanica hanno origine nel Mezzogiorno (Ascoli, 1979). Tenendo conto di "ingressi" e "uscite", è stata calcolata per l'Australia una "net migration" di 204 mila unità per gli anni 1947-61, di 73 mila per gli anni 1961-71 e di 1,6 mila unità (questa volta valore negativo per il prevalere dei rimpatri) per gli anni 1971-81 (Price, 1983).

¹³¹ Fu lo stesso De Gasperi nel 1948 a consigliare agli italiani di imparare le lingue e di andare all'estero (Bergami, 2010a).

¹³² Accanto alle professioni agricole va segnalato un maggior numero di operai qualificati con una, seppur minima, presenza di liberi professionisti e impiegati.

Vi era in Australia, ove si registrava fra l'altro un calo del tasso di natalità, un'incontenibile ansia popolazionista ma si voleva che l'immigrazione fosse rigorosamente limitata alle isole britanniche, e comunque al Nord Europa. La memoria delle vicissitudini belliche comportava un pesante pregiudizio nei confronti dell'immigrazione italiana. L'orizzonte si rischiò davanti alla constatazione che i nordeuropei non erano molto intenzionati a trasferirsi nel paese. Il 29 marzo del 1951 venne stipulato fra il governo italiano e quello australiano un accordo per la cosiddetta "emigrazione assistita"¹³³ e nello stesso anno il Lloyd Triestino inaugurò una linea diretta che collegava il porto di Bari all'Australia¹³⁴. L'ingresso avveniva a scaglioni per gruppi ben definiti. Inizialmente vennero preferiti maschi celibi tra i 18 e i 35 anni: sembrava una scelta perfetta per un soggiorno che si voleva esclusivamente temporaneo. Già all'inizio degli anni Cinquanta comunque non è irrilevante il numero degli espatri per "atto di chiamata" riservato a coloro che desideravano riunirsi a congiunti (Istat, 1955). In una ricerca di diversi anni fa (Borrie, 1954) è stato evidenziato che per un lungo tratto – il riferimento vale soprattutto per gli anni Trenta – l'emigrazione italiana aveva riguardato uomini giovani senza famiglia al seguito provenienti per lo più, almeno nel periodo che precede il secondo conflitto mondiale, dalle Regioni settentrionali. Questa circostanza avrebbe determinato un temporaneo ritorno in Italia ed una seconda emigrazione con moglie e figli nel rispetto dello schema classico delle catene migratorie¹³⁵. Nel secondo dopoguerra comunque il governo australiano approvò quelli che divennero noti come matrimoni per procura (*proxy marriages*) e che dettero in seguito luogo a migrazioni per "ricongiungimenti familiari".

Fra il 1950 e il 1962 ad alimentare i flussi verso l'Australia sono soprattutto le Regioni del Mezzogiorno (un posto di rilievo spetta in particolare ad alcune Regioni: Calabria, Sicilia, Abruzzi e Molise, Campania nell'ordine)¹³⁶. Fra le Regioni settentrionali va comunque segnalata la buona posizione del Veneto e del Friuli-Venezia Giulia. A questo proposito si deve ricordare l'esodo di almeno 250 mila italiani da Zara, da Fiume e dall'Istria (Puopo, 2000) per i quali il governo italiano dovette allestire più di cento campi profughi. Si calcola che circa un terzo di essi scelse la via dell'emigrazione. Una quota non trascurabile, imbarcatasi a Trieste, optò per l'Australia approfittando del particolare favore che questo paese accordava ai profughi (Donato e Nodari, 1996), avendo, già nel 1947, aderito all'IRO (International Refugee Organization)¹³⁷.

¹³³ L'emigrazione assistita costava 17.500 lire per ciascun adulto con l'obbligo di una permanenza minima di due anni in Australia, altrimenti l'emigrante avrebbe dovuto pagare alle autorità un prezzo equivalente alla tariffa intera del viaggio di trasferimento. Subito dopo la guerra, tutti gli emigranti non britannici che arrivavano con il cosiddetto passaggio assistito, dovevano firmare un contratto di lavoro e poi passare per Bonnegilla, la Ellis Island australiana (Bergami, 2010a).

¹³⁴ Si seguivano due rotte, una (Trieste-Bari) e l'altra (Genova-Napoli-Messina) che poi proseguivano per Porto Said (il canale di Suez era stato aperto nel 1897), Aden, Colombo, Giacarta, Fremantle, Melbourne e Sydney.

¹³⁵ In proposito si veda pure Baggio, 2004.

¹³⁶ Per la graduatoria delle prime dieci Province rinvio al Prosp. 2.

¹³⁷ Rinvio pure a Fait (1999) che presso l'Archivio di Stato di Trieste ha recuperato i *nominal rolls* cioè le liste di imbarco delle navi che tra il 1954 e il 1961 portarono in Australia migliaia di cittadini giuliani.

Da ultimo, è interessante richiamare il caso di 18 mila italiani fatti prigionieri in Nord Africa¹³⁸. Su richiesta del governo britannico furono trasferiti in Australia per evitare una loro possibile liberazione se l'Egitto fosse stato invaso. La loro vita nei campi australiani si svolse in generale senza grossi traumi: ai soldati fu permesso di lavorare come agricoltori nelle fattorie per sopperire all'endemica scarsità di manodopera locale. Alla fine della guerra molti vollero rimanere, ma furono rimpatriati secondo i termini del trattato di pace; ritornarono più tardi come emigranti (Bini, 2007).

Prosp. 2. Graduatoria delle prime dieci Province italiane che hanno alimentato l'emigrazione verso l'Australia nel 1950-1953 e nel 1959-1962

1950-1953	1959-1962
Reggio Calabria	Reggio Calabria
Messina	Messina
Catania	Catanzaro
Treviso	Catania
Catanzaro	Chieti
Udine	Treviso
Vicenza	Benevento
Chieti	L'Aquila
L'Aquila	Campobasso
Pescara	Udine

Fonte: Lancaster Jones, 1964.

5. La comunità italiana in Australia

Come è accaduto in altri paesi, pure in Australia l'emigrazione italiana ha dovuto fronteggiare, specialmente in talune fasi, non poche difficoltà.

Nel 1887, un giornale australiano titolava un articolo sugli immigrati italiani "I Cinesi d'Europa": l'epiteto era volutamente offensivo e ben evidenziava il clima di discriminazione e pregiudizio che riguardava la piccola comunità italiana. Va tenuto presente che verso la metà dell'Ottocento gli immigrati cinesi in Australia furono oggetto di feroci attacchi razzisti da parte della stampa locale che li accusava di inciviltà, di mancanza di igiene e di tendenza alla criminalità. La pressione dell'opinione pubblica portò il governo coloniale ad adottare severe restrizioni migratorie nei loro confronti. A pochi anni di distanza, la medesima campagna denigratoria venne sferrata contro gli italiani (Cecilia, 1985). Negli anni Venti furono organizzate pubbliche assemblee al fine di evitare che gli agricoltori italiani si stabilissero nella zona irrigua di Murrumbidgee nel Nuovo Galles del Sud (Cresciani, 1984).

Ancora qualche cenno per ricordare che dopo la prima guerra mondiale, il nazionalismo ed il corporativismo di stampo fascista informarono le menti del nuovo contingente italiano arrivato in Australia. Nacquero associazioni che guardavano con favore al regime fascista e che furono però contrastate da altre associazioni che si costituirono quando un buon gruppo di dissidenti politici, profughi o esiliati, in fuga dal regime di Mussolini, approdò in Australia (Cresciani, 1976b). Gli italiani si ritrovarono im-

¹³⁸ Si trattò di una parte dei 40 mila soldati italiani catturati da una divisione australiana nel corso del contrattacco che portò all'occupazione di Bengasi.

provvisamente all'ultimo posto della lista dei "desiderati" in un'Australia che giudicava con sospetto la conquista dell'Abissinia da parte delle truppe fasciste nel 1936. Dopo che, nel giugno del 1940, ci fu l'ingresso in guerra dell'Italia, i nostri immigrati divennero stranieri appartenenti a nazione belligerante nemica. A centinaia vennero arrestati e reclusi nelle prigioni dove vennero trattenuti per un certo periodo di tempo assieme ai detenuti comuni. In seguito ad alcuni venne concesso di ritornare a casa, mentre altri vennero convogliati in appositi campi di internamento. La discriminazione contro gli italiani ebbe lunga vita. La dicitura "ex nemico" comparve infatti negli atti pubblici almeno fino al 1948.

Grande è stata l'importanza dei mutamenti nella composizione sociale dei flussi migratori che dal nostro paese si sono diretti in diverse epoche verso l'Australia. "Agli avventurieri della prima fase, hanno fatto seguito le schiere di manovali e operai agricoli, i cosiddetti uomini della zappa e del piccone, accompagnati dalle donne dell'ago e delle pentole, confinate in casa ad accudire gli uomini impegnati nei lavori all'aria aperta. L'ultimo contingente, quello degli arrivi degli anni Sessanta, è stato invece caratterizzato da maggior scolarizzazione, maggiore presenza femminile e destinato anche ad un percorso di maggiore accettazione da parte della società australiana, che nel frattempo aveva intrapreso la strada del multiculturalismo" (Audenino e Tirabassi, 2008). È pure da condividere la seguente osservazione: "The adult second generation – those who range in age between 25 and 45 years of age – have become the *cultural brokers*, within the Italian community" (Vasta, 1992).

Il processo di assimilazione degli emigranti italiani nella società australiana, per quanti intoppi possa aver incontrato in alcune fasi, può considerarsi compiuto. Volgendo lo sguardo al passato, può ad esempio risultare interessante ricordare le figure di alcuni importanti uomini politici espressi dalla nostra comunità: Giuseppe (Joseph) Lamaro, ministro della giustizia del governo Lang nel 1930; Bartolomeo Agostino Santamaria che arrivò a controllare il partito laburista nel Victoria; Hubert Peter Lazzarini, a lungo membro del parlamento federale, ultimo esponente di una piccola dinastia politica di origine italiana; Morris lemma, premier del Nuovo Galles del Sud, il più popoloso degli Stati australiani; Frank Sartor, sindaco di Sydney... (Bini, 2007).

Oggi la comunità italiana in Australia, che è la più importante dopo quella anglosassone, può considerarsi – lo è da tempo – pienamente integrata¹³⁹. Rilevato che negli ultimi anni – stando ai dati riportati nella Tav. 10 – i trasferimenti di residenza dall'Italia risultano ormai di dimensioni assai ridotte, è su di essa che, nel concludere, mi preme soffermarmi per ulteriori considerazioni. L'intento è principalmente quello di determinarne la consistenza e di co-glierne, per quanto possibile, alcune caratteristiche.

¹³⁹ "Gli italiani hanno portato con loro un forte senso della famiglia, valori religiosi, grandi risorse personali ed un'etica di grande impegno a livello lavorativo ... gli italiani sono riusciti a mantenere un forte senso di identità e di orgoglio, partecipando nel contempo con successo a vari aspetti della vita australiana. Gli italiani hanno avuto un ruolo centrale e critico nella trasformazione dell'Australia nella società multiculturale che è oggi diventata" (Church, 2005).

Tav. 10. Iscritti e cancellati nelle anagrafi comunali italiane per trasferimento di residenza da/per l'Australia negli anni dal 1995 al 2008

Anni	Iscritti			Cancellati		
	Ital.	Stran.	Tot.	Ital.	Stran.	Tot.
95	349	372	721	511	102	613
96	304	199	503	499	98	597
97	312	194	506	426	46	472
98	317	190	507	383	59	442
99	289	149	438	576	49	625
00	362	210	572	491	55	546
01	351	238	589	469	41	510
02	344	234	578	262	64	326
03	495	252	747	405	65	470
04	379	300	679	511	62	573
05	320	312	632	622	70	692
06	396	285	681	813	55	868
07	288	273	561	612	60	672
08	355	249	604	686	52	738

Fonte: Istat.

La prima fonte statistica da prendere in considerazione è il censimento demografico australiano¹⁴⁰ ed in proposito va in primo luogo evidenziato che da classificazioni basate sul carattere "cittadinanza" non si ricavano notizie di un qualche interesse. Gli immigrati naturalizzati, quando anche avessero mantenuto l'originaria cittadinanza, sono infatti compresi fra i "cittadini australiani" e già in anni lontani era comprensibile il desiderio da parte dei nostri connazionali di acquisire la cittadinanza australiana che ad esempio consentiva loro di acquistare delle terre (Pascare, 1930).

La prima idea è perciò quella di far riferimento al luogo di nascita. Gli italiani "censiti" con le prime rilevazioni sono, come si è visto, quelli "nati in Italia". La Tav. 11 mostra la consistenza di questo aggregato dal 1947 al 2006, anno nel quale è stato effettuato in Australia l'ultimo censimento. Ad una iniziale e robusta crescita, sino al 1971, quando è intenso il flusso degli arrivi dall'Italia, segue una progressiva diminuzione delle "persone residenti in Australia e nate in Italia" quando, esauritasi l'emigrazione dall'Italia, è cresciuto il numero degli italiani nati in Australia o comunque naturalizzati dopo il loro arrivo (appare naturalmente scontato il peso dei decessi). Dalla successiva tabella, la Tav. 12, si evince infatti che più del 90 per cento delle persone censite nel 2006 in questa condizione, è arrivato in Australia prima del 1991. "Tra i primi dieci paesi di origine degli immigrati residenti in Australia – il riferimento è sempre ai dati del censimento 2006 – quelli che sono nati in Italia sono i più anziani: la metà di loro (circa 98 mila) ha un'età minima di 66 anni, dal che si deduce che sono emigrati dopo la seconda guerra mondiale" (Bergami, 2010b).

Tav. 11. Persone residenti in Australia e nate in Italia, ai censimenti australiani dal 1947 al 2006^(a)

¹⁴⁰ Rinvio al sito www.abs.gov.au.

Censimenti	Numero
1947	33.632
1954	119.897
1961	228.296
1971	289.476
1976	280.154
1981	275.883
1991	272.000 ^(b)
2001	218.712
2006	199.132

(a) Non è considerato il censimento del 1986. (b) Dato in migliaia
Fonte: ABS.

Tav. 12. Persone residenti in Australia e nate in Italia, censite in Australia nel 2006, secondo l'anno di arrivo nel paese

Anno di arrivo nel paese	Numero
Prima del 1991	181.190
1991-1995	1.246
1996-2000	1.685
2001	419
2001	317
2003	385
2004	486
2005	601
2006 ^(a)	370
Non precisato	12.433
Totale	199.132

(a) Dal 1° gennaio all'8 agosto.
Fonte: ABS.

Per una migliore comprensione del quadro migratorio, nel questionario censuario dei paesi di antica immigrazione compare solitamente una domanda sulla "ascendenza" (ancestry). Dalla Tav. 13, con dati sulla suddivisione delle persone con ascendenza italiana secondo il paese di nascita dei genitori, emerge una fotografia censuaria molto diversa: vi è modo di apprezzare il peso della seconda generazione e, con una certa approssimazione, vi è pure la possibilità di affermare che nel caso di coppie miste prevale il numero di quelle con marito di ascendenza italiana¹⁴¹. La Tav. 14 ci informa che quasi il 65 per cento delle persone di ascendenza italiana censite nel 2006 risiedono nel Nuovo Galles del Sud e nel Victoria (gli Stati che per capitale hanno, rispettivamente, le due grandi città di Sydney e Melbourne).

Tav. 13. Persone con ascendenza (ancestry) italiana, censite in Australia nel 2001 e nel 2006, secondo il paese di nascita dei genitori^(a)

Paese di nascita dei genitori	2001	2006
Entrambi in paesi d'oltremare	446.999	435.338
Padre soltanto nato in paese d'oltremare	95.772	103.264
Madre soltanto nata in paese d'oltremare	34.868	38.466
Entrambi in Australia	195.205	255.226
Non specificato	23.483	20.124
Totale	796.327	852.418

(a) Al quesito poteva essere data più di una risposta.
Fonte: ABS.

Tav. 14. Persone con ascendenza (ancestry) italiana, censite in Australia nel 2006, per Stato di residenza

Stato australiano	Numero
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Nuovo Galles del Sud	231.064
Victoria	308.604
Queensland	103.715
Australia Meridionale	87.006
Australia Occidentale	102.022
Tasmania	6.079
Territorio del Nord	3.308
"Australian Capital Territory" e "Other Territories"	10.620
Totale	852.418

Fonte: ABS.

I dati riportati nella Tav. 13 evidenziano indubbiamente una corposa presenza di persone con ascendenza italiana: 796.321 nel 2001 e 852.418 nel 2006. Dal momento però che al quesito era possibile dare più di una risposta, se si isola il gruppo di coloro che hanno indicato soltanto l'ascendenza italiana, il dato complessivo si ridimensiona. Per il censimento del 2001, ad esempio, si passa da 796.321 a 540.277 censiti. Per il censimento del 2006 è interessante notare che circa il 64 per cento delle persone residenti in Australia si è identificato in una sola ascendenza, mentre il 28 per cento ne ha indicate due. Per quanto riguarda la componente italiana, hanno un certo peso le seguenti combinazioni: australiana-italiana (116 mila), inglese-italiana (95 mila), italiana-tedesca (15 mila), italiana-greca (11 mila).

Se si fa riferimento alla "lingua parlata in famiglia", altro interessante quesito presente sul modulo censuario, si può osservare che la lingua italiana è stata indicata nel 2006 da 320 mila censiti (erano stati 376 mila dieci anni prima, per cui nell'intervallo si è registrata una diminuzione del 15,7 per cento). L'immagine che se ne ricava – torno a ribadirlo – è quella di una comunità attaccata alle radici ma che si è in poco tempo pienamente integrata¹⁴².

Dati statistici sulle nostre comunità all'estero si possono desumere anche da due fonti nazionali. Si può, per la prima, richiamare il D.P.R. 5 gennaio 1967, n. 200, che all'art. 67 recita: "Presso ogni ufficio consolare è istituito uno schedario il più possibile aggiornato¹⁴³, tenuto conto delle circostanze locali, dei cittadini residenti nella circoscrizione. La iscrizione nello schedario, di cui l'autorità consolare può rilasciare certificazione, non costituisce prova dello stato di cittadinanza. Nello schedario è presa nota, oltre che dei dati anagrafici e professionali, anche degli atti o fatti che producono o possono produrre la perdita della cittadinanza o dei diritti civili od una restrizione nell'esercizio dei medesimi, nonché di ogni altro elemento utile ai fini della tutela degli interessi del connazionale".

Per l'altra fonte si deve chiamare in causa la legge 27 ottobre 1988, n. 470 che ha previsto la costituzione, presso i Comuni e presso il Ministero dell'Interno, di anagrafi dei cittadini italiani residenti all'estero¹⁴⁴. L'anagrafe del Ministero contiene dati desunti dalle anagrafi comunali non-

¹⁴² Segnalo nell'occasione che nell'anno scolastico 2008-2009 sono risultati attivi in Australia corsi di lingua e cultura italiana con 61.002 iscritti (Annuario Statistico del Mae per il quale rinvio al sito www.esteri.it).

¹⁴³ L'espressione lascia trasparire lo scetticismo del legislatore – consapevole delle difficoltà esistenti e nello stesso tempo incapace di individuare strumenti efficaci – rispetto all'obiettivo di realizzare uno schedario che sia costantemente specchio della realtà.

¹⁴¹ Questo dato è comunque confermato da Favero e Tassello (1983).

ché “i dati anagrafici dei cittadini nati e residenti all'estero dei quali nessuno degli ascendenti è nato nel territorio della Repubblica o vi ha mai risieduto”. Senza scendere ulteriormente nel merito della legge, è qui sufficiente ricordare che essa individua analiticamente i casi nei quali si deve dar luogo ad iscrizioni e cancellazioni e disciplina il flusso di comunicazioni che deve esservi tra uffici di anagrafe in Italia e uffici consolari per garantire l'allineamento delle anagrafi comunali con gli schedari consolari. Quanto al problema dei controlli, viene suggerito alle rappresentanze diplomatiche e agli uffici consolari di avvalersi della collaborazione delle pubbliche autorità locali per ottenere la segnalazione dei nominativi dei cittadini italiani residenti nelle rispettive circoscrizioni ed è altresì raccomandato a questi uffici di sfruttare l'occasione della richiesta di atti, documenti o certificati per provvedere all'iscrizione d'ufficio di cittadini non presenti negli archivi. Un'ulteriore legge, la n. 104 del 27 maggio 2002, ha in particolare meglio specificato i casi nei quali si deve procedere alla cancellazione d'ufficio degli iscritti all'Aire (l'insuccesso di alcune consultazioni referendarie per mancato raggiungimento del quorum aveva richiamato l'attenzione del legislatore sulla necessità di assicurare che le liste elettorali rispecchiassero la realtà e non riportassero nominativi di persone scomparse per cause naturali o perché del tutto irreperibili) e ha previsto il riordino delle modalità procedurali fissate dalla legge del 1988 per la quantificazione dei cittadini italiani residenti all'estero (Cortese, 2004).

Per diversi anni i due archivi hanno evidenziato comunità italiane all'estero con numerosità assai differenti, ma non è questa la sede per approfondire le cause di tali discrepanze. Essendo stato stabilito, con apposita legge, che le schede costituenti l'Aire siano confrontate con quelle delle anagrafi consolari al fine di pervenire ad un unico elenco dei cittadini italiani residenti all'estero, non v'è che da attendere il completamento di tale operazione. Come è stato di recente osservato, “forse sarebbe tempo di iniziare a colmare quel divario di conoscenza che ci fa sapere tutto o quasi tutto dei nostri connazionali che vivono in Italia e ignorare quasi tutto dei milioni di italiani sparsi per il mondo” (Livi Bacci, 2010).

Secondo quanto riportato dall'ultimo “Rapporto Italiani nel Mondo” (Fondazione Migrantes, 2010), all'8 aprile 2010 risultavano iscritti all'Aire del Ministero dell'Interno 4.028.370 cittadini italiani, 126.340 dei quali (il 3,1 per cento del totale) residenti in Australia¹⁴⁵.

Il dato è sensibilmente inferiore a quello che ci si poteva attendere avendo richiamato le risultanze del censimento australiano del 2006. Identico scarto si registra in altri paesi verso i quali si è diretta l'emigrazione italiana. Tenuto conto del forte interesse da parte dei nostri emigranti ad acquisire la cittadinanza del paese che li ha accolti, è da dire in proposito che per un lungo periodo la naturalizzazione in maggiore età o, per i minori, la naturalizzazione dei genitori, comportavano la perdita della cittadinanza italiana. La situazione è mutata con l'emanazione

zione della legge 5 febbraio 1992, n. 91, ma è da ritenere che molti abbiano rinunciato a riacquistarla anche perché scoraggiati dalla complessità delle pratiche burocratiche da affrontare.

Prendo in esame, nel concludere, i risultati del censimento degli italiani all'estero condotto con riferimento alla data del 21 marzo 2003, precisando che in realtà non si è trattato di una vera e propria rilevazione statistica essendosi più semplicemente proceduto all'elaborazione di alcune notizie tratte dagli schedari consolari.

Sulla base dei dati riportati nella Tav. 15, nella quale viene un po' arditamente operato un confronto con la popolazione italiana residente nel nostro paese alla fine del 2003, di questo specifico universo è possibile cogliere qualche caratteristica strutturale sotto il profilo demografico:

- vi è uno squilibrio fra i sessi a favore dei maschi che si potrebbe far dipendere da una costante prevalenza di questo sesso nei flussi migratori partiti dall'Italia; colpisce in ogni caso l'eccessivo divario che si registra nella classe di età 25-44 anni;
- la percentuale di popolazione di 65 anni e più è nettamente più bassa di quella che caratterizza la popolazione italiana (16,5 contro 19,8 per cento) e in questo caso più che a meno favorevoli condizioni di sopravvivenza, si deve probabilmente far riferimento al tasso di fecondità delle donne del nostro paese che è da tempo ben al di sotto del cosiddetto “livello di sostituzione delle generazioni”; non va comunque scartata l'ipotesi di una sotto copertura delle persone migrate in Australia in anni lontani, da parte dello schedario consolare;
- l'indice di vecchiaia, ossia il rapporto percentuale tra anziani (persone di 65 anni e più) e giovani (0-14 anni) raggiunge peraltro l'anomala quota di 192 anziani per ogni 100 giovani;
- il rapporto di dipendenza tra le persone in età inattiva (0-14 anni e 65 e più) e la popolazione che “teoricamente” si fa carico di sostenerle economicamente (15-64 anni), vede in posizione di vantaggio la comunità italiana in Australia, che non saprei però dire fino a che punto è ben rappresentata dalle persone iscritte nello schedario consolare.

Tav. 15. Italiani residenti in Italia e in Australia nel 2003, per sesso e classi di età

Classi di età	In Italia ^(a)		
	Maschi	Femmine	Totale
0-14	4.023.103	3.808.018	7.831.121
15-24	3.006.322	2.869.630	5.875.952
25-44	8.433.283	8.339.798	16.773.081
45-64	7.016.627	7.318.258	14.334.885
65 e più	4.577.346	6.505.701	11.083.047

¹⁴⁴ Già nel 1969 l'Istat aveva in ogni caso già costituito, presso i Comuni, un'anagrafe speciale degli italiani residenti all'estero.

¹⁴⁵ Vale la pena di ricordare che i maggiorenni iscritti all'Aire hanno diritto di voto nelle elezioni politiche e possono concorrere all'elezione di 6 senatori e 12 deputati tra i candidati presentati nelle varie liste delle circoscrizioni estere.

Totale	27.056.681	28.841.405	55.898.086
	In Australia^(b)		
0-14	5.509	5.164	10.673
15-24	7.686	7.101	14.787
25-44	26.418	23.251	49.669
45-64	14.320	16.327	30.647
65 e più	10.322	10.211	20.533
Totale	64.255	62.054	126.309

(a) Dati riferiti al 31 dicembre. (b) Dati riferiti al 21 marzo.

Fonte: Istat (dal sito ufficiale) e Mae, 2005.

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