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LITERATURE AND THE MIGRATION EXPERIENCE

TWENTY-ONE YEARS OF ITALO-AUSTRALIAN NARRATIVE

(1965-1986)

A thesis submitted in fulfillment

of the requirements for award of the degree of

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from

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by

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Department of Languages

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This thesis is dedicated to my wife Rita, son Felice and daughter Giuliana for the support, patience and forbearance over the years it has taken to prepare this work.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this work has not been submitted for at any other institution for

Department of Languages
University of Wollongong
8 September 1989

ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes to examine how Italian immigrants to Australia have described their experience through the medium of narrative literature. It is the first detailed study of its type and as such it seeks to lay the foundation for further more specific studies. It examines some thirty-five narrative texts, both published and unpublished, comprising novels and collections of short stories plus a number of individual short stories written by some 27 writers over a twenty-one year period (1965-1986), a period which coincides with the most intensive activity in Italo-Australian narrative writing to date.

The first chapter deals with pertinent theoretical and social issues, presents a survey of previous studies on Italian "migrant" literatures in English-speaking countries and provides a brief overview of aspects of "Italo-Australian" literature which are not dealt with in the main body of the thesis. Chapters 2-9 deal with individual authors and works. An analysis appropriate to this stage in the development of the subject is employed which involves an approach combining authors and themes. This approach has been adopted since certain authors are seen as identified with certain sets of major themes. Some overlap has inevitably occurred and this has been appropriately cross-referenced in the relevant chapters.

The conclusion explores the theoretical, sociological and literary implications of the texts examined. Although it is problematical to classify a number of the texts as "literature" in terms of the qualitative criteria generally applied, there is no doubt of their value as sociological documents presenting a view of Australia and of Australian society which is unique. "Italo-Australian narrative", as defined by the present study, is characterised by themes linked to the migrant experience although there are some exceptions to this general pattern. The writers are in the main first generation immigrants who relate their feelings for and reactions to the new environment and their attitudes towards their place of origin.

The thesis is complemented by a comprehensive bibliography of the works consulted and referred to as well as four appendices which lie outside the area of the defined topic but which are relevant to it insofar as they deal with some of the broader issues related to Italian "migrant" literature.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND ELEMENTS

The investigation of the way in which the migrant experience is reflected in literature raises a number of questions of a theoretical, sociological and methodological nature. In this initial chapter these questions are discussed and a selection is made of those that will receive particular emphasis in the main body of the thesis.

THEORETICAL PREMISES

In Western society the question of what literature is has been dealt with from a multiplicity of perspectives and has produced a multiplicity of answers. An important and recurrent feature in much of contemporary literary theory is the examination of the relationship between literature and society. This feature provides a useful framework for the consideration of "Italo-Australian" literature since it posits a close correlation between the personal experience of the individual, his/her relationship with society and literary expression.

Theoretical considerations of particular interest and relevance are to be found in French studies on the sociology of literature produced over the last twenty or so years. Robert Escarpit and the group which formed around him at the Institut de Littérature et de Techniques Artistiques de Masse (ILTAM) at Bordeaux proposed the study of literature as a social phenomenon rather than as a category or genre (Escarpit 1970: 10). Escarpit, taking up Sartre's notion of a dialectic relationship between writing and reading, proposed the study of the book as a social object, positing that there is an interaction between the book and the economic system from the moment of production (writing/ publishing) to the moment of fruition (distribution/reading). In an examination of the phenomenological aspects of the literary work its qualitative/intrinsic elements can be (and in Escarpit's case sometimes are) excluded. Thus (and this is a point of particular interest to the category "Italo-Australian literature") a valid literary work can be one which is successful in commercial terms with respect to its designated audience (Escarpit 1978: 63-71). For Escarpit a valid literary work is also one which meets the expectations of its readers who feel that they have had the same ideas, impressions, experiences as those enunciated by the writer: "il ne peut y avoir de littérature sans une convergence d'intentions entre l'auteur et le lecteur ou tout au moins une compatibilité d'intention [...] Quand l'écrivain et le lecteur appartiennent au même groupe social, les intentions de l'un et de l'autre peuvent coïncider. C'est en cette coïncidence que réside le succès littéraire."

(Escarpit 1978: 110). Escarpit defines the audience as a particular social group or as a component of such a group.

This coincidence and compatibility between writer and reader would seem to imply that the literary work and hence its conceptualisation is closely correlated to its socio-historic ambience, a factor which is most relevant in the consideration of "Italo-Australian" literature.

Jacques Dubois has sought to link certain intrinsic (textual analysis) and phenomenological (sociology of the book) aspects of literary criticism. He investigates the relationship between literature and the social structures which exert a determining influence on it, claiming that "L'analyse d'institution fait découvrir qu'il n'y a pas la Littérature mais des pratiques spéciales, singulières, opérant à la fois sur le langage et sur l'imaginaire et dont l'unité ne se réalise qu'à certains niveaux de fonctionnement et d'insertion dans la structure sociale" (Dubois 1978: 11). If it is society which determines what literature is, then literature, in a sociological sense, must be considered as a social institution which is influenced by and reacts with the other social institutions. Literary phenomena should thus be studied not statistically but in terms of their dynamic interaction with other social structures (for example the socio-economic factors which influence the circulation and consumption of literature). Dubois examines the writer's relationship to the socio-economic

structure, pointing out that where literary activity does not provide a living for its practitioners the writer must resort to other expediencies in order to ensure economic survival. Indeed some writers publish at their own expense in order to ensure the continuation of their activity as writers. This "self-financing" of literary endeavour is of particular relevance when applied to the Italo-Australian context where none of the writers obtain complete economic support from creative writing and most do not obtain any. Italo-Australian writers are found in a wide variety of occupations and at least one depends mainly on unemployment subsidies. Those who are retired depend on the age pension or on some sort of superannuation. Dubois also considers the category of "paraliterature", which Gramsci had defined in terms of class, and broadens its definition to include not only "folk" and "popular" literatures but also literary works produced by minority and marginal groups[1], labelling this second category "littératures minoritaires" (Dubois 1978: 22). "Minority" literatures are defined as those not recognized institutionally and which are consequently ignored, excluded or considered as peripheral to the mainstream. In presenting a typology of marginal literature (censored and prohibited literature, regional literature, "mass" literature, informal or unofficial literature - <<"littérature sauvage"?!>> - which includes "Sunday poets" and "dilettante novelists") Dubois does not contemplate the case of a "migrant" literature produced by an ethno-linguistic group whose members are permanent immigrants from another country and who possess a different

cultural and linguistic background from that prevalent in the host society. However in his discussion of regional literature (based only on the situation pertaining to the French-speaking world) he does include literary works in French produced outside Metropolitan France (Switzerland, Belgium, some African countries, Québec - where Québec French literature has gained institutional acceptance within its geographical confines).[2]

Dubois calls those marginal literatures which manifest a reaction against the dominant social system contre-littératures (Dubois 1978: 152). However Bernard Mouralis[3] includes under this heading all those categories which Dubois had included under "paraliterature", adding also folk and oral literatures. Claiming that there is no clear distinction between the institutionally recognized "high" (cultured) literature and other types (contre-littératures), Mouralis argues that they are really two sides of the same coin. The fundamental distinction is not so much one of quality, form and readership but rather one determined by society: literary works placed in the "high" literature category "hanno uno statuto maggioritario perché conferiscono a chi le conosce (o si ritiene che le conosca) un potere; le altre hanno uno statuto minoritario perché chi le conosce non ne trae alcun particolare potere" (Mouralis 1978: 58). Mouralis does not consider the specific case of "migrant" literature although some of the characteristics of "colonial" literature (he dwells at some length on the literature of some African countries and of American

negroes[4]) have much in common with this category. Although negroes have been present as a social group in the United States for several generations their literature still reflects the uprooting experienced by the immigrant slaves and the subsequent experience of the perpetual ghetto. Negro African literature is pervaded by a sense of protest (both in content and language) against the suffering brought on by the colonial experience and the aspiration to a life free from all bondage. Another significant aspect of black African literature is the reappraisal of the indigenous cultural and historical heritage which the white invader had ignored or systematically underrated, considering it in effect a "tabula rasa" (a mecnanism which in the Australian context has been applied both to Aboriginal and to migrant cultures by the dominant anglo-celtic group).

Dubois and Mouralis do not provide an explicit definition of "minority group". It would seem reasonable to assume that they have in mind a concept of "minority" as a social group having particular "physical or cultural traits which are held in low esteem by the dominant segments of society" (Tajfel 1978: 3) and constituting "subordinate segments of complex state societies" (Tajfel 1978: 3). In terms of institutional recognition it is perhaps worth adding that minority literature which is specifically "ethnic" or "migrant" has been generally rejected by publishers on the grounds that there is a lack of demand for these works and that they are hence unprofitable:

> Yet against this background the silent voices of Australia are still legion in terms of finding an outlet for their creative works. Many Australian publishers and the branch offices of international book firms have not only been disinterested in works in any language other than English but they have even gone so far as to reject works on the ground that they deal with people whom they quaintly designate "migrants"." (Grassby 1979: 4).

The concept of "minority literature" specifically applied to the Australian context has been discussed by Judith Brett[5]. "Ethnic writing" is seen as a category analogous to the writings of other minority (non dominant) groups such as women, blacks and workers. While the existence of minority categories is a recognized fact of life, Brett argues that the tendency within the institutional framework to provide special vehicles for such categories can be counterproductive. She also argues that in the Australian case "migrant writing" has the potential not only to enrich the mainstream but to add to it. However in this there may be a contradiction in that the constitution of a distinct category of "minority" or "migrant" literature may be seen as negating the idea of Australian writing as a complex incorporating the creative efforts of different types and groups within Australian society.

PROPOSALS FOR PARAMETERS OF "ITALO-AUSTRALIAN" LITERATURE: CATEGORY, CODE AND CONTEXT

While it may be questioned to what extent constituting a category "Italo-Australian literature" as a separate and discrete entity may be possible or, indeed, desirable, it is nevertheless a useful exercise in defining the topic and determining its appropriateness. In terms of its thematic aspects the category is generally perceived as a marginal one with respect to both the Australian and Italian linguistic-cultural contexts[6]. Moreover both its status as a category and the qualitative value of the works which may comprise it have been questioned. However in attempting to examine the constitution of this category the theoretical framework discussed above leads to the formulation of a number of propositions which may prove useful in defining its parameters:

That "Italo-Australian" literature is a marginal literature in terms of its thematic content (migrant experience), cultural referents (not located in the mainstream), and its relationship to social institutions (publishers, the education system, etc.). To what extent would this apply to <u>all</u> literary production and to what extent does it apply to first and second generation immigrants?

If in "Italo-Australian" literature the values, norms, traditions derived from the originating culture are maintained, to what extent does this occur? Are they modified? If so, how are they modified (eg through influence of host society culture) and to what extent? Can/should a distinction in this sense be made

between first, second (and possibly successive) generation writers?

What are the parameters which define the writer? These might include:

(i) short or long-term visitors from Italy who write (in Italian) on Australian themes;

(ii) Italian writers who have not visited Australia but have written on Australian themes;

(iii) Italian immigrants in Australia writing in Italian (and/or English) about the migrant experience;

(iv) Italian immigrants in Australia writing (in Italian and/or English) on themes not connected with the migrant experience;

(v) The Australian-born descendants of Italian immigrants in Australia writing in English (and possibly Italian) on the migrant experience;

(vi) Australian-born descendants of Italian immigrants writing on themes not connected with the migrant experience;

(vii) Anglo-Australian writers writing (in English) on the Italian migrant experience;

(viii) Anglo-Australian writers writing about Italians.

What are the parameters which define the reader? The following groups might be considered:

(ia) Italian immigrants in Australia;

(ib) The descendants of Italian immigrants in Australia;

(ii) Italians in Italy;

(iii) Australians not of Italian origin.

The choice of code in relation to the culture text.[7] If the writer does have a choice of code (Italian/dialect or English), what does the choice imply in relation to:

(i) the reader;

(ii) the social context;

(iii) marginality or centrality of the code. Eg.: How is the Italian used in Italo-Australian literary texts received in Italy? Why are Italo-Australian writers writing in English sometimes accused of "incorrect" English?

Within this range of considerations the corpus of texts produced to date would lead to the categorization of "Italo-Australian" literature as the writings produced by first generation immigrants in either Italian or English, published either in Italy or Australia, on themes and topics generally related to the migration experience. At present little seems to have been produced by the second generation which would lead to the formulation of a separate and discrete category substantially differentiated from the mainstream, although there are instances of particular works by some second generation Italo-Australians which do in fact fit this category.

For this reason it is proposed in the thesis to examine, with few exceptions, works by first generation immigrants. Hence in the main body of the thesis particular emphasis will be given to parameters (i), (iii) and (iv), to the relationship between the personal experience of the writer, his/her interaction with society

and the production aspects of the literary work. The period 1965-1986 has been chosen since it represents the period of activity of the bulk of writers who came to Australia with the post world war II migration wave and can thus be seen as providing a socio-historically coherent picture of the immigration and settlement experience.

ITALIAN MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA AND THE PRODUCTION OF LITERARY WORKS

Italian writing in Australia can, to a large extent, be correlated to the patterns of migration from Italy to this country. The period 1840-1880 was characterized by the migration of individuals who were educated, articulate and had left Italy for other than economic reasons. They were either missionaries (Confalonieri, Mazzucconi, Salvado), political exiles (Carandini, Carboni, Cattabeni, Cilento), individual professionals (Cattani, Fiaschi, Zelman) and businessmen (Gagliardi, Meyer, Maggi - from the Canton Ticino in Switzerland) who landed in Australia through curiousity or the spirit of adventure. Among them we find Ricciotti Garibaldi who, having decided to leave Italy because of family opposition to his intention of marrying an English girl, was a shopkeeper in Melbourne for some years. His son Peppino served as an officer with the Australian contingent in the Boer war. Chain migration from the Isole Eolie began in the 1850s although it did not become significant until the final years of the century while the first coherent group of some 200 contadini from the Veneto arrived in

1881, survivors of De Ray's ill-fated attempt to settle Port Breton in New Ireland. In 1891 the Queensland government recruited 335 contadini as cane cutters to replace the Kanaka labourers.

From 1880 to 1930 (and particularly after 1921 when the United States placed severe restrictions on immigration) Italian labourers and contadini reached Australia in ever increasing numbers. The 1891 census enumerated 3890 Italians in Australia while between 1922 and 1930 35,684 Italians entered the country (although nearly 10,000 returned to Italy). The years 1930-1945 saw a much more limited intake due to the depression and, later, to the second world war, although the late 30s saw the arrival of political refugees.

Calwell's 1946 immigration policy, which initiated an immigration programme of unprecedented proportions, saw nearly 357,000 Italians enter the country between 1947 and 1978, although some 28% ultimately returned to Italy. According to Heiss 1966 some 85% of Italians left their native land primarily for economic reasons. The guarantee scheme which operated in 1924-25 was re-introduced in 1948. Non-relatives could also be sponsored and this substantially increased the number of Italians emigrating to Australia. An additional impetus to migration was an assisted passage contract scheme which was available to single male immigrants from 1952 to 1963. The initial arrivals in the 40s and early 50s were mainly labourers or contadini with, at most, a primary education (although skilled workers were not

entirely absent). According to Zubrzycki (1960) Italian male immigrants in 1954 were predominant in agriculture (especially in Queensland), mining and quarrying (especially in Victoria and South Australia), industry and electric energy production (especially in Tasmania) and in the building industry, while few were employed in business and in the transport industry and very few were professionals. Females were generally employed in factories. In Queensland 60% of Italians lived in rural areas, nearly 40% in Tasmania, 38% in Western Australia (employed mainly in mining, forestry and potato growing), 20% in NSW (the main area being the MIA where by 1947 Italian settlers owned 27% of the horticultural farms; in 1969 they owned 85%), 17% in Victoria and 15% in South Australia. In the cities there was a marked tendency for Italians to live in the inner suburbs. However by the early 60s Italians had begun to spread to other areas in the cities as well.

The 1961 census revealed little change, Italian immigrants being employed mainly as labourers and in the mining and building industries while significant numbers worked as shopkeepers, farmers or market gardeners. 45% had been in Australia for less than 7 years, 41% between 7 and 14 years and the rest for more than 14 years. The overall male to female ratio was three to one with considerable variation in different areas ranging from 10:7.4 in Victoria to 10:2.3 in the Northern Territory. Most Italians were in the 25-34 age bracket. The year 1963 marked the arrival of the 250,000th Italian immigrant to enter the country after the war. By

this time the post-war enclaves had been firmly established with Victoria and NSW taking the bulk of Italian immigrants and the flow into Queensland being much diminished. In time Italian immigrants were to concentrate in the state capitals rather than in other urban and rural centres. Indeed by 1976 69% of Italian born immigrants lived in Victoria and NSW and of these about100,000 in Melbourne and 70,000 in Sydney. However, substantial Italian communities were also formed in places such as the MIA, Wollongong, Newcastle, Whyalla.

The succeeding years saw a steady increase in the numbers of Italians migrating to Australia as well as a spread of both their educational and occupational base and a levelling out of the male to female ratio. The 1971 census in fact marks the peak point in the number of Italian born residents in Australia with successive censuses establishing a downward trend. Italian migration in the late 70s and in the 80s seems generally restricted to skilled, professional or business people, with varying proportions under the Family Reunion Plan.

Although the initial arrivals were mainly labourers and contadini with little if any education, successive waves, as a result of Italy's post-war education programme, were in general better educated and oriented towards skilled and semi-skilled occupations. In fact, according to Wares' 1980 analysis of the 1976 census data (pp36-39), 66% of Italian-born men held no trade or other qualifications obtained since leaving school while 84% of

women were without post-school qualifications. Some 21% of the men and 15% of the women had completed secondary school. More than four-fifths of all qualifications held by Italian-born men were trade qualifications and this was also the case for 44% of Italian-born women. However less than 2% of Italian-born men had a degree or diploma, compared to just over 1% for women.

Italian immigrants have made substantial contributions to the Australian economy, not only as workers (a stereotype perpetuated in O'Grady's 1957 novel They're a Weird Mob) but also in the entrepreneurial field through the founding and development of companies such as Transfield, which have achieved substantial importance at a national level. Their contribution, however, has also been other than economic. The most evident one is perhaps gastronomic through the change brought about in Australian eating habits, and in sport through the development, along with other "migrant" groups, of soccer. Sporting activities in fact were largely responsible for the growth of the Italian clubs such as APIA (Associazione Polisportiva Italo-Australiana), Marconi and the Fraternity Bowling and Recreation Club, which through their social, sporting and recreational activities provide substantial links between the Italo-Australian and the wider Australian communities. The strengthening links between the two communities have led to the establishment of closer ties between the two countries through official visits of heads of state (the first one being by Italian president Giuseppe Saragat to Australia

in 1967), the establishment of trade links, the 1975 cultural agreement (signed by Gough Whitlam and Aldo Moro) and the 1986 social security agreement (signed by Bob Hawke and Bettino Craxi).

The presence of large numbers of Italian immigrants in Australia has led to the formation of a complex community structure with aspects which cover not only social and sporting activities but also religion (with religious orders such as the Cappuccini and Scalabrini), welfare, culture, education and language. As well as the above-mentioned big clubs there are, in NSW alone, some 110 Italian clubs and associations of which about eighty are in the Sydney Metropolitan area. These cover functions pertaining to welfare (CoAsIt, FILEF), religion (FCI), the Italian armed forces (Alpini), the various regions of Italy (Associazione Isole Eolie) and cultural activities (Italian Writers Association). The various clubs and associations constitute perhaps the more formal and visible element of the non-economic aspects of the Italo-Australian community. The fact that they exist is an articulation of the desire on the part of immigrants not to lose their unique social, cultural and linguistic identity and perhaps a confirmation that the aspirations of the immigrant group do not run to bread alone. Among these aspirations may be noted that of giving literary and artistic articulation to the migrant experience. It is an activity which is undertaken by a very small minority but nevertheless one which has its place and importance in the totality of endeavour by the community.

In some respects the development of Italian writing in Australia follows a pattern analogous to that of the development of writing in English: an initial concentration on the description of the physical and social environment followed by creative writing. However, some element of creative literature was present in English writing almost from the beginning (if we accept the early songs and ballads as part of this category). In the case of Italian writers in Australia there is a time lag (the first recorded instances date from the 1840s) and a relatively long period (to the late 1920s) during which several accounts about various aspects of Australia (travel, environment, history, commerce) were produced, but where creative writing is very much in the minority. If, during those 70 odd years, Italian immigrants produced ballads, poems or other creative writing, nothing is known about it today.

An attempt to quantify this phenomenon in relation to parameters (i), (iii) and (iv) discussed above is presented in tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 which provide statistical data on the production of works of pure and applied literature by Italian-born residents in or visitors to Australia.

Table 1.1 Numbers of works in volume form published by Italians in Australia (long or short term residents)

	1851-1914[a]		1928-1938		1946-1966		1967-1987	
narrative (novels & short stories)	1[b]	(1)[b]	1	(1)	1	(1)	18	(11)
theatre	3	(1)	}				4	(3)
poetry			} 1	(1)	15	(9)	34	(21)
memoirs & chronicles	3	(3)			3	(3)	3	(3)
biography	1	(1)					5	(5)
history/society travel geography	4	(3)	2	(2)	2	(2)	17	(16)
other[c]	1	(1)	1	(1)	2	(2)	22	(23)
anthologies[d]			2	(2)			16	(17)

[a] As far as can be ascertained no works in volume form were published between 1788-1840, 1915-1927 and 1939-1945.
[b] Number of volumes in left hand column; number of authors in right hand column (in brackets). In some cases a book is by more than one author.
[c] Includes religious and philosophical treatises, studies, grammars and dictionaries, collections of correspondence and essays, translations.
[d] Includes anthologies of Italian literature (1928-38) and anthologies of Italian and Italo-Australian literature (1967-1987).

Table 1.2 Books published by Italians resident in Australia

	1851-1914	1928-1938	1946-1966	1967-1987
Total no. of books	12	7	23	119
Ave. books per year	0.190	0.700	1.150	5.950
Census figures at mid period	1,880	26,756	119,325	280,154
Books per annum per 100,000 Italian-born residents	10.1063 [a]	2.6162	0.9637	2.1238

[a] However if the 7 April 1881 figure of 2,075 is taken, the book per annum figure becomes 9.1556.

Table 1.3 Works in volume form published by Italian visitors to Australia

	1851-1914		1928-1938		1946-1966		1967-1987	
narrative (novels)			1 [a]	(1) [a]			1	(1)
history/society travel geography [b]	12	(7)	2	(2)	4	(2)	9	(8)

[a] Number of volumes in left hand column; number of authors in right hand column (in brackets). In some cases a book is by more than one author.
[b] Includes government reports, trade relations, the Italian community in Australia, emigration, accounts by explorers and missionaries.

Most works produced between 1851 and 1914, with the exception of Carboni's poetry and theatrical pieces, dealt with personal memoirs, the social, historical and physical aspects of Australia, the possibilities of trade with Italy and the question of Italian migration to that country. Migration was particularly important to the Italian government of the day which saw migration abroad as a panacea to the country's social and economic ills. This period also coincides with the publication of the greatest number of books per capita, most books being published in Italy. While none could be classed as bestsellers, they must certainly have provided information on the new land and aroused some interest in it among the emerging Italian middle class. There may perhaps be some correlation between books published, the presence of some 50 Italian companies at the Sydney exhibition of 1879 and the migration of Italian businessmen such as Oscar Meyer. As far as the Italian community in Australia is concerned, its major publishing effort during this period lay in the production of Italian language newspapers, which had a significant role both in dealing with issues of interest to the community and in keeping it in touch with events in Italy.

As far as Australia is concerned the most important publication in this period is Carboni's Eureka Stockade. Initially suspected of being an inaccurate and partisan chronicle, Carboni's account of the Eureka incident has now been fully vindicated. Carboni's competency as a writer in English has, however, continued to be the

centre of some controversy. In his introduction to the 1942 Sunnybrook Edition of The Eureka Stockade (the first since the original one!) H. V. Evatt enthusiastically compares Carboni to Conrad, although one wonders whether a comparison with Joyce might also have been appropriate. Evatt's judgment was obviously swayed by current trends in political nationalism but there would nevertheless seem to be some genuine sincerity in Evatt's appraisal of Carboni as a writer. H. M. Green, in his history of Anglo-Australian literature, finds himself somewhat at a loss as to how to classify The Eureka Stockade for the purpose of literature and, although remarking favourably on Carboni's gift of sarcasm, claims that much of what he wrote was broken English. In his introduction to the 1975 Melbourne University Press edition Geoffrey Serle also finds difficulty in appraising Carboni as a writer, claiming that the book is "so unusual and so little susceptible to most canons of criticism, that only a small part of any judgment can be objective" (Serle 1975: xv) although "Raffaello does, in his agony, rise here and there to great narrative heights" (Serle 1975: xv). In a detailed analysis of the language of The Eureka Stockade, Rando[8] argues that the text, while drawing on various registers of the English language as well as incorporating elements from other languages (Latin, Italian, French, Spanish and German) does, on the whole, constitute a polyglot mosaic which is effective for its purpose and genre. Some of Carboni's literary works written after his return from Australia contain references and themes related to his Australian experiences. The melodrama

La Santola (Carboni 1861) presents the theme of Australia as a fabled land of faraway riches which however does not live up to its promise. The protagonist Pastorello's experiences as a digger do not meet with material success nor, on returning to Rome, does he succeed in marrying his sweetheart Concetta, while his *Risorgimento* patriotism and anti-clerical sentiments remain unmitigated. Gilburnia, a ballet-pantomime in eight scenes complete with an "antarctic vocabulary", represents the Eureka episode as well as the story of the love of two white men for an Aboriginal girl. The protagonist of Schiantapalmi (Carboni 1867) is Professor Nazzareno Schiantapalmi, forced into exile because of his participation in the Roman insurrection of 1848-49 and lately returned to Italy from the Australian goldfields where he had managed to accumulate a modest fortune. The account of Nazzareno's Australian experiences provides one of the central themes of the play. The characters compare Italy's past glories and present plight with a Carbonian vision of Rousseau's noble savage living a simple life down under.

The first book on Australia to be published in Italy is probably Salvado's Memorie storiche dell'Australia. Nearly 400 pages in length, it provides an exhaustive and encyclopedic account of Australia in the late 1840s, an account which must have proved fascinating to European readers of the time with its extensive description of people, places and things so alien to their experience. To the modern reader parts of the book (omitted in

Father Stormon's eminently readable English version[9]) may now seem uninteresting and dated, but the description of the flora, fauna and people of the New Norcia area (he even includes an Italian glossary of the local Aboriginal dialect) is both effective and accurate as well as a valuable source of information on those aspects of the natural and human habitat which are today extinct. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the Memorie is Salvado's account of his voyage out to Western Australia, the founding and early years of the New Norcia mission, his impressions of Perth and his experiences in the bush where he initially shared the nomadic life of the natives, thus gaining an intimate knowledge of their customs and outlook.

Subsequent to Salvado's Memorie a number of diaries and memoirs were produced by visitors to the country such as in the report of the visit by the Italian naval ship Magenta in 1867 or in the Australian section of Carlo de Amezaga's account of the circumnavigation of the naval vessel Caracciolo (de Amezaga 1885-86). These voyages, sponsored by the government of recently unified Italy, were undertaken partly through scientific curiousity and the desire to show the flag, partly because of the Italian power élite's expansionist ambitions both in terms of finding somewhere to dump its outcasts and of opening up new markets for Italian products. In fact during the 19th century eleven Italian naval ships visited Australia and their captains all wrote reports on the country. Journals such as the Gazzetta d'Italia, the Bollettino della

Società Geografica and the Giornale delle Colonie published many accounts of travel and exploration in Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea and Polynesia. In the mid 1870s a Cav. Briaghi had been sent by the Italian government on a fact-finding mission to Australia and New Zealand while Ferdinando Gagliardi, for many years resident in Melbourne, was an enthusiastic promoter of trade and other links between the two countries. A significant proportion of Gagliardi's promotional efforts went into the production of reports and letters, many of which were published in the Gazzetta d'Italia (Florence), with a collection subsequently published in volume form (Gagliardi 1881). Several of these letters deal with economic, political and commercial issues but Gagliardi often ranges more widely, presenting his views and impressions of life in the colonies (including a long letter describing the Melbourne Cup!). In some letters he depicts the small Italian community which had begun to form in Melbourne and which counted among its members persons who had become prominent in the cultural life of the city (the musician Zelman, the opera singer Majeroni) and in the professions (the engineer Checchi).

There are no publications in volume form between 1915 and 1927. In part this would seem due to the war, in part to the nature of Italian immigration to Australia in the first thirty years of the century. There was, however, considerable activity in the publication of newspapers, which had been published sporadically between 1885 and 1913. Between 1922 and 1940 they were

published on a regular basis and were of substantial importance as a means of information and communication for the Italo-Australian community as well as an important vehicle for the publication of literary texts (poetry and some brief short stories) written by immigrants. Some newspapers also carried material written in English. This aimed at informing the Australian reader on the position of the community on various issues as well as on social, historical and cultural aspects relating to Italy. With one exception (Giliberto's Raggi d'idealismo) books published between 1928 and 1938 were all published in Italy. Books on Australia published by either residents or visitors provided the Italian reader with a detailed and fascinating picture of Australia and particularly the Italo-Australian community in the 20s and 30s. They did not, however, appear to enjoy wide circulation. The collection of short stories by Gino Nibbi and the novel by Filippo Sacchi were well received by Italian critics. The latter in fact would seem to be the most significant book published in this period, as it achieved a second edition in 1954.

Filippo Sacchi, an Italian journalist of some renown, visited Australia in 1925 on assignment for the Italian national daily Il Corriere della Sera. As well as the newspaper articles which resulted from his travels in this country, a few weeks' sojourn in Ingham provided him with both the data and the inspiration to write a novel on an Italo-Australian theme La Casa in Oceania which was published by Mondadori in 1932 and met with modest critical

success.[10] Although not the first novel on an Australian theme by an Italian writer[11] Sacchi's work may be considered the first known fictional account by an Italian with first-hand knowledge of the country. A somewhat rocambolesque story of the vicissitudes of the protagonist Giorgio Breglia and his transition from scion of a middle-class Piemontese family to North Queensland sugar cane farmer, the novel provides a lively and fascinating, although at times rose-tinted picture, of the Italian community in North Queensland in the mid-twenties.

A detailed account of Gino Nibbi is postponed to chapter 4. Here it is intended to deal briefly with his first collection of short stories and factual accounts Il Volto degli emigranti, (Nibbi 1937). This collection presents a rather wide panorama of Italians and Australians in the 30s. Each of the nine stories and three brief travelogues is set in a different location - 8 in North Queensland. Nibbi does not hide his dislike for certain aspects of Australian life, especially its pragmatism, its materialism, its rough and ready attitudes, its anti-cultural outlook, a dislike which is carried over in the consideration of similar aspects of the Italo-Australian community which Nibbi observes somewhat sardonically from on high. Although Nibbi does deal with the Italo-Australian environment his main concern is with his observations and comments on Australia and the Australians. Perhaps to the modern reader these stories may seem somewhat dated in both language and content. Yet they present a rare view from the periphery of

Australia in the 30s. What interests Nibbi are the unusual, prurient, complicated, aspects of life "down under". In his stories Nibbi presents a series of reflections on a society which prudishly bans the display of nudity in art and the circulation of erotic literature, leading to the question of what cultural values such a society can have. For Nibbi Australians are also a race lacking in sentiment or emotion, to the point that they consider Italians "too emotional" (Nibbi 1937: 31). It is a society which segregates, old people having to live separately, sick people being sent straight to hospital, landladies not bothering to inform their lodgers' friends even when the lodger is on the point of death, as happens to the Swiss Italian Roberti ("Melbourne", Nibbi 1937: 7-40). The death of a Yugoslav miner and the disappearance and probable death of another in the rugged mining country of South Western Tasmania, cause no interruption in the work, which is carried out in all types of weather and is not accompanied by song as it is in Italy and other South European countries ("Tasmania", Nibbi 1937: 67-86). In this story which is tinged at times by melodramatic tones but is, nevertheless, effectively told, Nibbi expounds the theme that the sad and tragic fate of the immigrant worker who has no one to mourn him when he dies far from home is compounded by the absence of humanitarianism in Australians and their relentless pursuit of material gain.[12]

Factual accounts of Australia were written not by the immigrants but by visitors such as Giuseppe De Scalzo, who wrote a somewhat unmemorable and overly journalistic account La Terra dei fossili viventi (De Scalzo 1938) of his travels in Australia over a brief period in the mid-thirties. This gives an overview of the physical characteristics of the country, its current political and social climate as well as the Italo-Australian community, its history, its relations with the wider Australian community and its contributions to Australian cultural life. A more lively but schematically comprehensive account is provided in Il mio viaggio in Oceania (Cipolla 1928).

Again it is the war and its associated upheavals which bring about an interruption in publishing activity (1938-1946 for books and 1941-1943 for newspapers). Newspaper publishing revived immediately after Italy signed the armistice. With one exception Italian language newspapers in the immediate postwar period aimed at supplying the social, information and settlement needs of the new arrivals. The major Italian language newspapers were founded and enjoyed their heyday in the peak years of Italian immigration to Australia, the most significant ones being *La Fiamma* (published in Sydney) and *Il Globo* (published in Melbourne). In recent years circulation has declined and some newspapers have ceased publication. Attempts to publish Italian language or bilingual magazines in this period, particularly between 1968 and 1984, have not met with any long term success.

The production of books displays an inverse trend with respect to the newspapers and seems in part to be correlated to the progressive urbanisation of Italian immigrants. Relatively few were published in the period of peak migration, partly due to the relatively low education levels of the bulk of immigrants but also because in their initial years in the new country immigrants had little time to devote to writing. Numbers of books published increased substantially over 1967-1987, particularly in the later part of this period and despite a decline in the total number of the Italian born population. In fact in the four years between 1984 and 1987 seventeen volumes of creative writing (poetry, narrative, theatre) alone have been published as well as three anthologies. Until 1973 creative literature in volume form was published solely in Italian but after that date works have been published also in English. Six authors have published solely in English, 24 in Italian only and three in both languages. The most significant book to date in terms of reaching the non-Italian reader is perhaps Rosa Cappiello's novel, which was published in English translation in 1984 and is also the contemporary Italo-Australian literary work most favourably received by critics in Italy.

As in the interwar period poetry has continued to be the mainstay of creative writing by Italian immigrants in Australia. Since 1947 twenty-six writers have published forty-seven volumes of poetry while many others have seen their works published in anthologies or in the Italian language newspapers. Most volumes have been

published at the expense of the writer although in the last few years some writers have been able to publish with the assistance of Literature Board grants. Unlike narrative, poetry produced by Italian writers in Australia is not necessarily tied to migration-related themes. Indeed much of it is preoccupied with "universal" issues. Some poetry however does deal with the social realities observed and commented upon by the writer and it is perhaps this aspect which provides its particularly distinctive characteristics. Among the more prominent poets are Luigi Strano, Mariano Coreno, Lino Concas and Enoe Di Stefano. A distinctive characteristic of Strano's poetry is the way in which it relates in an incisive and striking manner the personal "inner" story of the migrant experience (nostalgia for the mother country, the slow and suffered acceptance of the new land) universalized to embrace that of all those who have the undergone the same process. Mariano Coreno deals with the universal themes of love and death, the quest for the answers to the meaning of life, the feeling that time is slipping by. Forced to live away from his native land, he can only find happiness in its memory, in the time that came before the confined isolation of exile. Australia does not represent a new life but a fatality which is destructive in its melancholy. In his first volumes of poetry Lino Concas writes of nostalgia for his native land (Sardinia) and the feelings of isolation and exile provoked by his migration to Australia, which must always remain a strange land since there is no hope of assimilation. These latter themes are re-presented in a more critical vein in his subsequent volumes of

poetry Ballata di Vento and Uomo a metà (Concas 1977 and Concas 1981) where the native land is seen not only through the nostalgic eyes of the exile but in terms of the conditions which had impelled the poet to leave it. Australia is seen as less alien, particularly because of its acceptance of the various manifestations of the Italo-Australian community which Concas describes in some of his poems. Enoe Di Stefano's poetry also proceeds from a position of nostalgia for her native shores to that of the evaluation of the adopted land. A particularly sensitive poet, Di Stefano is concerned with the exploration of the feelings and reflections which are produced by the migrant experience, especially that of the woman immigrant: the disruption in the sense of time caused by the air journey from Italy to Australia; the strangeness of the new land, both in a physical and in a spiritual sense; the cultural and age gap between the immigrants and their Australian-born children; the reaching back towards pre-emigration places and experiences. While these elements form the more salient aspects of her first two volumes of poetry, her third and latest volume explores the concept that while time has tended to weaken the ties with the native land, the reality of the adopted country, although positive and satisfying, does not completely fulfill all the spiritual needs of the immigrant.

Although numerically fewer than the poets - some 8 narrative writers in the post-war period have published 15 volumes of novels and short stories while a further twenty-two have seen their

works printed in anthologies - prose writers seem more directly concerned with the migrant experience. The preference for poetry would seem in part due to a cultural concept, reinforced by the traditional Italian education system that poetry is the highest form of creative writing, in part because for these spare-time writers it is usually more satisfying to produce the relatively shorter poetic text than to engage in the longer-term enterprise of writing a short story or a novel. Further it easier to have poetry published (also in economic terms) than it is to have prose works appear in print. A detailed discussion on the narrative works will be the subject of the following chapters.

The staging of Italian plays (particularly Verga, Pirandello, De Filippo and Dario Fo) has been a regular feature of Italian cultural activities for at least the last thirty years. Only in the last seven years or so have Italian community amateur and semiprofessional groups included in their repertoires texts by local authors and most of such activity seems so far to have taken place in Melbourne. To date the only instance of a performance of a play by an Italo-Australian author by an Australian group has been that of Nino Randazzo's Victoria Market (translated into English by Colin McCormick) which was adapted and staged by Tony Mitchell in Canberra during the Australian National Playwright's Conference in April 1986. Although playwrights such as Nino Randazzo and Osvaldo Maione have been quite prolific, few Italo-Australian plays are available in published texts. Usually conceived as comedies or

farces, their overriding theme is that of the cultural, social and linguistic contrast between the world of the Italo-Australian immigrant on the one hand and the host society on the other.

In the post-war period the first book-length works in prose which begin to emerge at the end of the 50s are non-fiction works which narrate the writer's experiences as an immigrant or, in one case, before coming to Australia. Curiously enough it represents the revival of a genre which, as outlined above, was particularly in vogue among Italian writers in Australia in the mid-1800s (who were intent in describing the new environment) but had subsequently died out. The various accounts of Australia produced by Italian writers in the 1920s and 30s were written by visitors and not immigrants. The new wave of memoirs are the personal accounts of immigrants, such as Italians as they are (Luciano 1959), A Migrant's story (Bonutto 1963), Da qui a lì (Achia 1982). Having lived thirty or so years in Australia, they have felt the need to write about their experiences. Initially written by persons who have achieved material success, it is not until many years later, for example with the publication of With Courage in their Cases (Loh 1980), that it is possible to obtain a direct account of the immigrant worker experience.

At the beginning of the seventies Italo-Australian writers begin to evaluate the history of and the contributions made by the Italian presence in Australia, almost as if, at the end of the post-war

wave of mass migration, there is a felt need for reflection and appraisal. The most comprehensive account written to date is Non siamo arrivati ieri (Cecilia 1985) while Blood, sweat and guts (Bosi 1973) is a somewhat tongue-in-cheek account (as the superheroic pop group connotations of the title tend to suggest) written in a journalistic if not racy and sensationalistic style which recounts the more common myths and stereotypes regarding Italians in Australia.

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSION

Although in a sense it provides a link or contact point between two cultures and two different social realities, Italo-Australian literature, as defined by the parameters chosen for consideration (viz. (ii), (iii) and (iv)), is seen as marginal to the "mainstream" from both the Italian and the Australian viewpoint. "Mainstream" language and literature (and culture in general) are seen as constantly attempting to establish a basis of authority located at the centre which relegates what is different to a marginal position located at the periphery.[13] The "authorised" culture texts operate to exclude alternative modes of ordering and unifying cultural phenomena by equating "authorised" with order and locating any contradiction to this order to the dimension of chaos. "Italo-Australian" literature could hence be seen as providing a view of the migration experience, the host society and its culture which is distinct and possibly "different" from that provided by the

"mainstream" and which, to a greater or lesser extent, is not "recognized" or accepted by the mainstream insofar as it is perceived as lying outside the range of authorized culture texts.

Jean Martin provides an illustration of this appositional distinction between centre and periphery in her examination of the relationship between mainstream and marginal ("ethnic") groups. This has interesting implications for the relationship between the "ethnic" writer and the institutional structure:

> "the dominance of some parties implies their capacity to define interests and identities; to monopolise access to knowledge and its construction and to assert that certain knowledge is valid, irrespective of whether it has been validated in the way claimed, or not. To the extent that certain parties dominate the construction of knowledge to the exclusion of others, the knowledge so produced is ideological." (Martin 1978: 23)

In a sense it is the centre (the mainstream) which, through its dominant position, can dictate what may or may not be acceptable:

> "Part of the capacity to dominate the construction of public knowledge is the capacity to decide what will happen to new private knowledge that arises in a limited domain - whether it will be permitted to become "public" knowledge and in what context, or whether it will be ignored or suppressed." (Martin 1978: 23)

In these terms the question of minority ("ethnic") writing can be seen as an integral part of the wider, multifaceted, question of the relationship between centre and periphery. It constitutes one of the many examples of the ethnic/mainstream opposition.[14]

It is here perhaps that a fundamental paradox can be identified at the base of Australian society and hence of Australian cultural identity. In theory Australian society is egalitarian and classless. In practice this is not the case. On the one hand the (currently official) multicultural model, filtered through the codes of "original-natural" boundaries of nation state and producing further categories such as "culture shock" and "culture-identity crisis", assumes that the most potent way of overcoming the negative effects of migration is contact with elements of the immigrant's original culture. On the other hand the assimilation model (officially "dead" but nevertheless very much alive) views plurality of culture codes as unnecessarily prolonging the transition of the immigrant to becoming a "well-adjusted" Australian. Delay in the assimilation process not only generates tensions and conflicts but serves to perpetuate the "identity crisis" whereas a well-assimilated migrant would be one accepted by his workmates as "one of the boys" and freely admitted into peer group relations (see They're a Weird Mob). The multicultural model would thus advocate a plurality of culture contexts although some elements (cooking and dancing) seem to be more acceptable than others to the host society. Where language use assumes a primary function such as in community language newspapers and creative writing in the community languages the barrier between the migrant group and the wider community is an unbridgeable one except through translation or, possibly, the learning of community languages. At an official level society, through its government

institutions, encourages such activities. The assimilation model, on the other hand, would advocate that both writer and reader abandon the community language and adopt English as soon as possible. From the creative writer's point of view the practicalities of the situation suggest that the community language is the most effective vehicle for communication with his own speech community while English is the compulsory vehicle for communication with society at large. However, even if the writer opts partially or totally for English, he runs the very real risk of being considered as being at the periphery rather than at the centre (Australia has yet to reveal a Joseph Conrad), a consideration reinforced by Richard Conway's observation that "contrary to what might be believed, Australians are not a tolerant people. They cannot accept richness and diversity of outlook without some anxiety and resentment..." (Conway 1978: 314). The "new" Australian can be put on an equal footing with the "old" Australian only if he exhibits those discriminatory characteristics which would be compatible with the established Australian traditions of social hierarchy based on notions of work, success, power, prestige. This may help to explain why Italian success in the entrepreneurial field seems highly acceptable while in culture and the arts it seems rather less so. In many ways cultural conservatism (and an important aspect of this constitutes community attitudes towards language use and language learning[15]) remains deeply entrenched in Australian society and is operating at variance with the situation of cultural diversity which is the

reality of Australia today. How this has influenced the Italian writer in Australia and how, in turn, this has influenced the writer's view of Australia is one of the matters which will be addressed in the following chapters.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Although in the last two years research has been actively pursued on the literature written by Italian immigrants in Canada, the United States, Belgium and Switzerland, the pioneer and, to date, most authoritative work on the topic is Rose Basile Green's study of the Italian-American novel[16] which, in an exhaustive and masterly analysis of writers and themes, traces the development of the category from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. Her concept of "Italian-American" literature is defined by two criteria - that of examining works written only in English and that of selecting only those writings which have earned some critical attention. The criteria adopted by Green are both restrictive and restricting in that they tend to cut out the whole body of writing in Italian (surely important in assessing the literature of the migrant group) and those writings in English which, although they may not meet Green's undefined ideas of what literature is, do nevertheless have a valid contribution to make to the topic in hand.[17] Although she deals with the writers she has selected as a group sharing a common cultural origin, she treats them as a group virtually in isolation. There is no reference

whatsoever to the Italian literary context (either "high" or "popular" culture) and scant reference to English American literature, although many Italian American writers had obtained degrees at American Universities (a few in Italy) and some had gone on to teach English or creative writing. Methodologically speaking, her procedure is sound enough, providing a brief biographical introduction for each writer and then a detailed analysis of their writing which deals with the sociological, symbolic and literary values of the text. The symbolic interpretation does however lead to the odd error. Despite these problems Green's observations on the phenomenon are interesting and may contain some parallels to the Australian situation, particularly when she argues that this literature represents an interaction between two cultures and that "the Italian-American writer is a depicter in realistic fiction of a segment of American life [and] gives to that fiction a distinctive interpretation" (Basile Green 1974: 19).

While Basile Green's study presents a coherent, although, limited analysis of Italian American fiction, attempts, generally taxonomic, to deal with Italian Australian literature have been at best fragmentary and have been limited almost exclusively to first generation writers. The most comprehensive general descriptive survey of the phenomenon to date has been provided in "From Great Works to Alcheringa: A Socio-Historical Survey of Italian Writers in Australia" (Rando 1983: 1-80). This constituted a first attempt

to provide an general overview of the phenomenon, taxonomic in approach and without substantial analysis, but nevertheless presenting extracts from difficult to obtain texts and including not only literary production but also autobiography, memoirs, books on Australia and writings from the Italo-Australian press. Despite its drawbacks the publication did bring together a substantial body of hitherto unobtainable information and has provided material for further studies on the topic. A case in point is the tesi di specializzazione "Intorno alla letteratura italo-australiana: autori e testi", presented by Gabriella Bianco at the University of Urbino in 1984, which draws substantial (and often unacknowledged) material from this publication.

Other general surveys of Italo-Australian literature have been provided in articles by Genovesi 1983, McCormick 1973, Rando 1984 and Rando 1985 as well as in a paper by D'Aprano 1982, while Gorlier 1983 has written on Italian characters in Anglo-Australian literature. Articles and papers have also been produced on individual writers and these will be dealt with in the relevant chapters.

While nearly all writings on the topic take the category of "Italo-Australian" literature as a given and proceed to explore various aspects of the phenomenon, Piero Genovesi's brief but interesting article questions the constitution of such a category and its relation to both the writer and the reader. Most writers

prefer writing poetry to theatre and fiction. Their cultural preparation leaves something to be desired. Only relatively few writers manage to have their works published. The potential reader is by and large not interested in what is produced by his fellow immigrant. Although Genovesi does not develop what seems initially a promising thesis he does introduce a justifiably cautionary consideration regarding the editorial success of publications such as Voci Nostre and Australia Cane by pointing out that they are directed at readers belonging to the period of mass migration (50s and early 60s) who do not tend to be as critical as the younger generation. He could well have added that the "editorial success" of these two books is also in no small way due to their adoption as textbooks for some school and University coursesl Genovesi also sees as problematical the qualitative evaluation of the category which can boast of few texts of "true" literary value (Genovesi 1983: 303).

In fact, it is basically as a sociological "document", as the way in which these texts reflect the migrant's experiences in and attitudes towards Australia, that Rando's 1984 article on Italo-Australian fiction attempts to give an outline of developments in narrative writing in the 60s and 70s, although not all writers active in this period are included and nothing is said about prior narrative writing.

McCormick's article, written at a time when debate on the topic was just beginning to emerge, is the first attempt to give a general overview of the phenomenon and it is interesting to note that he proceeds from the autobiographies and memoirs through Nibbi to the poets and narrative writers of the post-war period. Pointing out (perhaps in a somewhat overly apologetic manner: "Non credo che sarebbe esatto o utile cercare di convincere [...] che l'Australia ha gran ricchezza di scrittori italiani" McCormick 1973: 299) that there are few writers who work in a context linguistically and culturally cut off from their roots, McCormick argues that the themes of their work are predictable and limiting, dealing as they do with migrant experience in the new country and the nostalgia for the homeland, a thesis which even today still retains some truth, even though the latest crop of writers such as Emilio Gabbrielli show signs of breaking out of these confines.

D'Aprano categorically divides "letteratura italo-australiana" into "(1) La letteratura dei non Italo-Australiani" and "(2) La letteratura degli Italo-Australiani" (D'Aprano 1982: 1). It is a puzzling division since his first category really refers to "Italo-Australian" themes in mainstream Anglo-Australian literature. He deals with his second category by examining the works of selected Italo-Australian writers but is somewhat uncertain as to how to evaluate them. In fact, he oscillates between apologizing for the scarce literary quality, the antiquated and grammatically incorrect Italian, the sectarianism and pessimism found in this literature

which has a precarious existence and his claim that it has a profound sociological value. He concludes by saying that its future development, if any, lies in the development of an Italo-Australian literature in English.[18]

Both Green and D'Aprano provide succinct statistical information on Italian immigrants in the respective countries they deal with. While Green comments on the implication of these statistics in terms of the literary production and its themes, D'Aprano provides no such discussion beyond stating that many of the 33,000 Italians who entered Australia between 1947 and 1951 were illiterate. D'Aprano thus does not consider the socio-cultural and, in particular, the linguistic factors which are likely to influence the literary activity both of the individual as the *producer* of a literary work and of the social group as the *consumer*. The demographic aspect is nevertheless an important one, both in determining the reader/writer nexus as well as in terms of its relationship to the themes of the literature concerned. A detailed discussion of this aspect is provided in Rando 1985 (included in this thesis as Appendix I) which, through an examination of the underlying social, demographic and linguistic factors attempts to explain why a substantial proportion of Italian immigrants are cut off, a priori, from literary activity with which they can identify (although a very small number produce some oral literature) because such activity is perceived in terms of the forms, structures and language related to or derived from the high

cultural context. Creative writing is thus practised by those relatively few individuals who possess the necessary linguistic (Italian or English) and cultural tools and would seem to be triggered, in part, if not in whole, by a felt psychological need on the part of individual writers to communicate experience, their attempt to come to grips with a new socio-cultural environment through the use of familiar forms, structures, language, a desire to maintain individual and/or group cultural experience. Their audience may be more or less hypothetical but then, as Escarpit concedes, one reader alone may constitute an audience.[19]

CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion deals with background and general issues considered pertinent to the study of the migration experience as filtered through the narrative writings of Italian immigrants over a twenty-one year period (1965-1986), a period which coincides with the most intensive activity in such writings to date (35 texts by some 27 writers). In the following chapters an approach combining writers and themes has been adopted since certain authors are seen as identified with certain sets of major themes. Both published and unpublished texts have been examined. This was to give as complete a picture as possible of Italo-Australian narrative over the period under consideration. It can be argued that generally speaking there clearly exists a hierarchical difference between published and unpublished literary texts in that it can be claimed that published material has more weight. This

hierarchical difference is perhaps diminished in the case of non-mainstream literatures given their blanket rejection by the institutional framework. Unpublished texts cited were presented (either in part or in whole) at writers' meetings and seminars or at literary competitions. This would imply that they have had some circulation, albeit of a very limited nature. Wherever possible writers were interviewed or contacted. Critical material consulted was also both published and unpublished. The use of unpublished critical works proved necessary due to the serious dearth of scholarly works on the subject.

The foregoing discussion suggests that "Italo-Australian" literature may well be seen as belonging to the category of marginal and/or contact literatures. This concept will be further dealt with in the conclusion, after the detailed examination of the corpus of texts. There are other theoretical considerations such as that of code and context, centre and periphery, which, however, will not be treated. The dominant characteristic of "Italo-Australian" narrative is posited as being the very close correlation between the migrant experience and the literary expression of this experience, often presented in terms of social realism and the "different" (peripheral) way in which the host culture and society are viewed by NES[20] immigrants. It is these characteristics which will provide the main basis for the analysis of the texts in the following chapters.

The present thesis is an attempt to produce the first systematic and detailed general study of an important aspect of Italo-Australian literature and one which seeks to lay the foundation for further studies of a more specific nature. Consequently an analysis suggested as appropriate to the present stage of development is employed. Such analysis being correlated to the investigation of this literary expression of the migrant experience - the act of writing itself being an important sociological aspect of that experience - and its relevant socio-historical context. Specifically the main body of the thesis deals with the post-war migrant experience as reflected in the narrative produced by Italian immigrants. Three appendices are also provided which present some of the broader issues relating to Italian "migrant" literature. Over a period of 136 years Italians who have emigrated to or visited Australia have produced some 190 works of pure and applied literature of varying significance which provide a literary perspective both of the migrant experience and of the country itself. Little, however, has been done to examine the complex personal, social and cultural experiences and contrasts which have served as background to the production of this type of writing and to appraise the results which have been achieved. Each aspect is worthy of examination in its own right and it is the purpose of the following chapters to examine the perspective provided by narrative fiction. Although at times the approach taken by the writer is substantially (auto)biographical it remains essentially a literary perspective and it is from this point of view that it will be examined.

Notes

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE Abbreviated bibliographical references are provided both in the notes and in the body of the thesis by the surname of the author and the year of publication of the book or article referred to. Full details of the reference are provided in the bibliograhpy (pp393-417).

1. Dubois 1978: chapter 5, 123 passim.

2. Dubois 1978: chapter 7, 153 passim.

3. Mouralis 1978. See also Butor 1969.

4. Mouralis 1978: chapter 5, 165 passim.

5. Brett 1984.

6. Although three writers have obtained some degree of acknowledgment from mainstream critics in Italy this does not seem to alter substantially the inherent marginality of the category. Cappiello's novel, although published by a "mainstream" publisher (Feltrinelli) and a critical success achieved this status because of the protest expressed in both its content and language. Sacchi's novel, also published by a "mainstream" publisher (Mondadori) was considered a "romanzo coloniale" - an adventure yarn set in exotic places (North Queensland). Nibbi's writings, although known to some of Italy's major literary critics, were considered outside "mainstream" literature - Tristano Nibbi reports that although Gino Nibbi was on friendly terms with Enrico Falqui, Falqui did not seriously consider Nibbi's literary production. A discussion of the thematic marginality in mainstream literatures is provided in Appendix II.

7. Although it is not proposed to deal with the question of code in the thesis this does lead to a number of interesting theoretical considerations in relation to the use of language by the "migrant" writer. The question of code can also include textual analysis, a matter very much of concern to the sociology of literature (particularly in terms of the relationships between code and tradition, code and social structure, code and marginality) but which draws its main impetus from semiotics, structuralism and sociolinguistics (eg. Bernstein's opposition between socially restricted and socially elaborated codes; Douglas' thesis that language reinforces social structure while tradition becomes a means of isolating that language and making it continue to reproduce the social structure).

8. Gaetano Rando 'Great Works and Yabber Yabber: some considerations on Carboni's language', unpublished paper.

9. Stormon 1977.

10. Much of the information about Sacchi is obtained from Bettoni 1983 who also provides some interesting comments on the critical reaction to the novel both in Italy and Australia. However Bettoni fails to mention that Sacchi died in 1971. Further while Bettoni refers to some of his non literary works she claims that La Casa in Oceania was Sacchi's only novel (p286) while Sacchi wrote at least two more novels but not on Australian themes: La Primadonna, [Milan or Verona], Mondadori, 1943 and Il Mare è buono, Milan, Garzanti, 1946. The first novel is an adventurous romance about an opera singer in 19th century Milan which is very much in the style of La Casa in Oceania.

11. At the end of the 19th century Emilio Salgari had published Il Continente misterioso, a fanciful, at times inaccurate, tale of adventure in the Australian desert, which follows the pattern of Salgari's other adventure novels set in exotic places. Salgari never travelled outside Italy and obtained the information for his novels through books.

12. Although not strictly within the bounds of the defined parameters it is perhaps worthwhile mentioning the novel No Escape (Ercole 1932) by Velia Ercole, daughter of an Italian doctor born at White Cliffs (NSW) in 1910. It is the story of the efforts made by an Italian doctor and his wife to settle in the small country community of Banton, NSW. Leo Ghererdi from Campli in the province of Teramo, a socialist activist, was forced to flee Italy at the turn of the century in order to avoid arrest. He is accompanied by his wife Teresa and their small son Dino. Although Leo gains acceptance as a doctor at a superficial level in the small country community where he sets up practice, the first few years of his Australian experience are characterized by what may be described as a sort of upper middle class intellectual angst (a state somewhat reminiscent of Henry Handel Richardson's Australian "emigrants" to Europe) as Leo and Teresa live in the hope of being able one day to return to Italy. Teresa, sensitive, vibrant and impulsive, wishes to preserve her Italian identity, to return to Bologna and complete her training at the conservatorium. She does not attempt to assimilate into the community and indeed rejects the very few lukewarm overtures of friendship made by the wives of the local professional men. Alone and desperate, she finally commits suicide, an act which, although presented in a sympathetic if not over melodramatic light, is nevertheless judged as the ultimate price which must be paid for the failure to assimilate. By contrast Leo's gradual acceptance of the new country and its people, evidenced by his marriage some years after Teresa's death to Olwen Ferrar, the widow of a local farmer, symbol of the new land, and his participation in the Gallipoli campaign, is presented as a successful if not entirely happy conclusion thus setting the seal on the novel's substantially assimilationist message. In this the conclusion is in contrast to that presented in Eric Baum's Burnt Sugar where assimilation is seen in negative terms. Ercole's second novel Dark Windows (London. Butterworth, 1934), although in some ways complementary to No Escape in that it relates the story of an Australian girl's vain attempt to adapt herself to life with her relatives in Brittany, can be seen as continuing the themes enunciated in the first through the assertion of the superiority and strength of the new Australian cultural mores over the slightly decadent and restrictive customs of the "old" (Latin) country.

13. This apposition is based on Shils' model of centre and periphery which articulates a process by which pragmatic constraints serve to legitimate a socially constituted tradition. The centre and periphery continuum becomes a mechanism for the production of commonsensical either-or precepts that locate the focus of authority in the intersecting textual systems of pragmatic efficiency and empirical physicality. Foucault argues that the diversified themes of continuity provide the ideologically legitimising function for the sovereignty of the subject, and in particular he suggests that "in the endless search for origin, tradition enables us to isolate the new against a background of permanence and to transfer its merit to originality, to genius, to decisions proper to individuals" (Foucault 1972: 21). The individual who learns and accepts without question the discursive modality of the mainstream is capable of capitalising on socio-genetic advantages and of manipulating the culture text of upward social mobility. Development of the human condition or "of any culture consists as much in inventing new items (synthesising activity) as in the selective "forgetting" of the older" (Bauman 1973: 93). Change or development is thus blocked "by the tremendous role played by tradition - by the delays in cultural "forgetting"" (Bauman 1973: 93).

14. Allied with a realist perspective, centre and periphery as continuum becomes the dimension of immanent truth requiring the applied technique of the "expert" to reduce error, bias and prejudice (Adorno 1976: 242). Reality is thus mirrored in the theory/practice opposition, legitimating notions of centrality existing in the world with the journalist of popular media reporting the periphery as deviant while the WASP centre is generally left as undefined (Adorno 1976: 244). The "hidden" expert subject cannot present "reality" from the viewpoint of the periphery. There are no "ethnic" sociologists or historians, nor "ethnic" journalists in the English-speaking media in that persons of "ethnic" origins who enter these fields invariably find that to a large extent they have to sublimate their "ethnic" identity and outlook. It is, however, a role which the "ethnic" creative writer can and often does assume, that of presenting a "reality" which is different from if not in contrast with that of the centre.

15. Al Grassby's confident prediction that the last monolingual Australian will meet a natural demise by the year 2000 (Grassby 1980: 4), might well be countered with the observation that only some 4% of "non ethnic" Australians regularly use a community language other than English (Rando-Teh 1981:65).

16. Basile Green 1974. Other works are: Peragallo1949; Istituto Italiano di Cultura 1976.

17. A similar criteria of selecting works in English only is adopted by Lumb and Hazell 1983. However their purpose is not that of analysis but of providing a selection of "ethnic" literature accessible to readers outside the particular communities. The criteria (listed on p2) adopted in selecting their list of short stories, novels, biographies and autobiographies are: 1) Works need to be published; 2) Works need to have reasonable public accessibility; 3) Authors of works need to be born outside Australia in a country where English is not the first language; 4) Works need to be published at least in English; 5) Works need to deal with, at least in part, the lives of Australian ethnic minority characters.

18. "Questa letteratura, tanto la poesia quanto la prosa, è spesso triste. I racconti in particolare, hanno un carattere introspettivo; gli scrittori sono ancora vittime di una tristezza eterna che affligge tutti gli emigranti, di tutti i tempi e di tutti i paesi. Spesso questi racconti non sono altro che raccolte di brevi momenti nella vita dei personaggi rappresentati in essi e spesso anche la lingua italiana non segue le regole grammaticali perché viviamo tanto lontano dall'ambiente naturale di questa lingua [...]

E questo non per cattiveria ma per pura mancanza di arte; gli scrittori sono operai, piccoli negozianti, insegnanti con poca esperienza artistica, con poca pratica nel forgiare assieme parole in modo accettabile, in modo che siano accettate come letteratura. Eppure questa letteratura esiste in questo italiano di parole povere mentre cresce una nuova letteratura degli Italo-Australiani in inglese." (D'Aprano 1983:19-20).

19. "Le public-interlocuteur peut se réduire à une seule personne, à un seul individu. Combien d'oeuvres universelles n'ont-elles été à l'origine que des messages personnels?" (Escarpit 1978: 99).

20. The abbreviation NES is used throughout the thesis to refer to persons of non English speaking background. However the derivative created from this acronym (nesbian) will not be used.

CHAPTER 2

NARRATIVE AS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AS NARRATIVE

Many narrative works by Italo-Australian writers from Ercole to Cappiello are based more or less explicitly on biographical or autobiographical experience. Although in Andreoni's Martin Pescatore and Cappiello's Paese fortunato, for example, the protagonist can to a certain extent be identified with the author and some of the other characters can also be identified with living people, both the characterization and the thematic presentation tend to transcend a strict adherence to the (auto)biographical genre, thus making this element less central to the development of the work. In this chapter it is proposed to deal with those works by Tedeschi, Cozzi, D'Aprano, Di Stefano, Costantino and some of the short story writers which may be considered as having an overt or transparent autobiographical basis in theme, characterization and structure.

PIETRO TEDESCHI AND THE PRE-MIGRATION EXPERIENCE

The most substantial autobiographical novel published to date is Senza Camicia (Tedeschi 1986) which presents an account of the pre-migration experience. Born in Reggio Emilia in 1925, Pietro Tedeschi completed primary school and then obtained trade qualifications as a fitter. He collaborated with the resistance movement during the war, being active in liaison and in the distribution of posters, and at its end joined the left-wing

organization F.G.C.-F.d.G. Interested in theatre, he participated as an actor and organizer in various local amateur drama groups. When the Officine Meccaniche Reggiane closed in 1950 he became unemployed. He participated in the worker occupation of the factory (which lasted at least two years) but before this came to an end he decided to leave his native region because he had become sick and tired of the day-to-day struggle for survival. Wishing to go as far away from Italy as possible he emigrated to Australia in 1952 where he initially found employment as an unskilled worker at the Port Kembla Steelworks, subsequently passing to EPT as a skilled worker upon recognition in Australia of his Italian trade qualifications. Until 1972 Tedeschi was very active in local Italian community cultural and sporting organizations. For several years he was sports correspondent for La Fiamma and he was one of the founders of the International Centre. On his retirement from active social life in 1972 Tedeschi began to write his novel and to dedicate his time to his activities as a sculptor in metal and as a photographer. He was able to turn to his "hobbies" on a full-time basis, and also to include travel among his activities, when, in 1979, he won a substantial prize in the NSW State Lotto.

Ever an avid reader, he has read everything he could come across. Among his favourite writers he cites Pirandello, Flamarion, Guareschi, Gotta, Bacchelli, Hemingway and the early Cronin. Bertrand Russell is "his" philosopher. Tedeschi has always been interested in writing for his own internal satisfaction, the written word holding for him a sort of liberating therapy although, paradoxically, "attraverso voli di fantasia pindarica, più o meno

creativa o valida, mischiando futuro e passato, allegorie, situazioni immaginarie riprendevo contatto con la realtà del vivere quotidiano."[1] Emigration to Australia interrupted this activity for several years since in the new situation "non era più attraverso la lettura di un libro che la mente si apriva e si arricchiva di nuove conoscenze".[2] However as the migration experience matured Tedeschi felt a new and stronger desire to write:

> "Di fronte a questo spettro universale a questo fascio di nuove impressioni, dal fondo della mia mente a barlumi, riprendeva forma il desiderio, l'urgenza di registrare di cronicizzare questi fatti, queste nuove esperienze irripetibili. Il desiderio di far partecipe anche i "non presenti" a queste nuove sensazioni. La descrizione dell'ambiente, il momento storico di questo grande paese, di questa nuova frontiera aperta al mio e al futuro di tanta gente. E qui ancora la frustrazione, l'ostacolo della mia impotenza a tradurre il pensiero, le sensazioni in parola scritta in maniera idonea comprensibile: scervo, il discorso, dalle banalità di una retorica fin troppo facile."[2]

In time Tedeschi decided (1972 circa) to embark upon writing as a disciplined activity and to relate in fictional form his experiences as a young man in Italy in the two years prior to emigration. Originally this was envisaged as an activity "per uso interno", not to be published. The purpose of the exercise was to "practise" his skills as a writer in order to be able to produce a second novel on his experiences of the first few years as an immigrant in Australia. He is currently writing this novel in English. Its provisional title is 53B, the number of the hut at the Unanderra migrant camp where he spent his first few years in the Illawarra and, judging by the first draft of the first part of the novel it seems to have some interesting parallels with the film Silver City (transmitted on SBS TV on 26 January 1987).

As well as several articles published in La Fiamma over 1986-88 on issues relating to the Italio-Australian community, Tedeschi has written two short stories 'L'Esca' and 'Company's Man' (the latter published in Rando 1988).

Senza Camicia, the novel initially not intended for publication, was, published nevertheless. It is somewhat early at this stage to judge the critical reception it has received in Italy although a review which appeared in a Reggio newspaper (Cavandoli 1986:10) hailed the novel as a "breath of fresh air" description of Reggio in the immediate post-war period, pointing out that the author's memory of places and people has not been in the least dulled by a 35 year absence in Australia. A review published in Carlino Reggio also stressed the way in which Tedeschi depicts the city of Reggio and concludes that "Tedeschi sa scrivere con vivacità e rivela anche la capacità di creare immagini di notevole intensità" (Serra 1986). Despite a promising critical reception sales of the novel have proved disappointingly slow, having reached a total of 50 by mid-1988.

As "romanzo di provincia" (the definition is not intended in a derogatory sense) it is certainly vivid. It is somewhat reminiscent, for example, of the "Urbino" novels of Paolo Volponi both in its thematic approach and in its presentation of the proletarian intellectual character, while the rootless orphan protagonist recalls Anguilla in Cesare Pavese's novel La Luna e i Falò. Although the various themes are intertwined throughout the novel each of the ten chapters presents a central theme: the move to the city; childhood and adolescence; the factory; the boarding house; Piazza San Prospero and

the café; the puppet theatre; a brush with the law; the light opera company; the warehouse; emigration.

Senza Camicia is the story, over a $2^1/_2$ year period (1949-1952), of Morcia, who, after a somewhat unsettled childhood and adolescence - without parents, he has lived with a succession of uncles - finds himself unemployed after the closure of the factory (Gioresi - a major employer in the area, somewhat like BHP in Port Kembla) where he works as a fitter. His retrenchment heralds the beginning of a period when, both in socio-economic and in existentialist terms, he finds himself cast adrift, isolated and alone, in the sub-proletarian ambience of one of Italy's most politically active regions. Although Reggio Emilia was then undergoing, together with the rest of Italy, a period of economic and social crisis, it would, with the economic boom of the 60s, become one of Italy's richest provinces. Even before his retrenchment Morcia finds himself in considerable metaphysical travail due to the lack of having a "real" family, a condition which causes much emotional and social instability in the character since in the Italy of that period the family was the only viable social support structure available.

The novel is basically about the city of Reggio and the various inhabitants who relate in some way to the protagonist, a provincial environment and a traditional way of life where little is known about the outside world. This "little world" (very much in a Guareschian sense) becomes discontinuity in the protagonist in the act of leaving although Morcia decides to emigrate only when all other avenues for a

dignified existence in his native town seem closed to him, when emigration becomes an alternative to living on his friends' charity and an escape from police suspicion due to his unemployed status:

> "per la legge ero ormai considerato un candidato al passo-falso [...] prima o poi avrei dovuto 'impilaccherarmi' in una delle numerose pozzanghere di cui la mia strada era cosparsa." (p278).

The migration theme threads its way through the novel, at first almost imperceptibly (it is not central to nine out of the ten chapters) and then rising to a crescendo in the final sad and traumatic chapter of the departure. Emigration is seen by the local power structure - exemplified by the banker Burlotti who suggests that Morcia should emigrate "for his own good" (p129) and by comments such as "presto il paese avrà una bocca in meno da sfamare" (p353) - as an immediate solution to the city's social and economic problems in that it can be an important factor in alleviating unemployment as well as in getting rid of "undesirables". For Morcia and his two friends it is, initially, hardly a serious consideration. Zannini jokingly suggests they should join the Foreign Legion. Emilio proposes, in an idealistic/facetious manner, clandestine emigration to the Eastern Block countries where "c'è lavoro a vita perché "quelli", con la ricostruzione e i piani quinquennali non scherzano" (p135). But in the end it is only Morcia who emigrates. Zannini finds work and Emilio goes to do his compulsory military service. Morcia decides to go to Australia, a country about which he and his friends know nothing (in fact even its geographical location is a mystery to most), because it is the only country which will accept him. His trade skills are not in demand in other countries while for the Australian post-war "populate or perish" immigration programme of Calwellian inspiration

Morcia (young, single, healthy and - thanks to the intervention of the Vice Pretore - non politicized) was just the type needed. There is, however, no mention that his trade qualifications will be recognised. Although Morcia rationalizes his decision to emigrate in a positive sense, some of his friends attempt to dissuade him by pointing out the very real negative aspects of the migration experience:

> "una mezza dozzina di persone che, nel tentativo di dissuadermi dall'espatriare, mi hanno dipinto l'emigrazione coi soliti luoghi comuni del sacrificio, delle umiliazioni, delle culture, lingua, usi e costumi diversi.
>
> C'è stato qualcuno, addirittura, che m'ha accusato di vigliaccheria perché, emigrando, diserto ... Mi sottraggo alle mie-responsabilità-sociali, mi arrendo nel momento critico, tradendo, in un certo qual senso, i miei compagni di lotta.
>
> Tutto ciò ha reso ancor più ardua la mia decisione alimentando un senso di frustrazione. Di natura non sono un nomade. A me piacerebbe vivere dove son nato fino a novant'anni, e i viaggi farli con l'immaginazione. Ma come si fa: dov'è l'alternativa?" (pp351-2)

While his erstwhile workmates from the still-occupied factory articulate in no uncertain terms the leftist-inspired populist antiemigration argument:

> " - Questa è proprio una merdata! - protesta Trolli. - Le energie migliori della nazione che se ne vanno; è come un'emorragia... Abbiamo dei governanti del cazzo per permettere una cosa del genere... - commenta amaro.
>
> - Non solo lo permettono - rinforza Celestino. - Ma lo favoriscono: tantemila bocche da sfamare in meno... interessa un cavolo se costringono una massa di gente a strappare le radici e muoversi nei quattro punti cardinali del pianeta. Oltre tutto a loro interessa la grana che verrà dentro con le rimesse... Una maniera disgraziata per far quadrare il bilancio a spese dei soliti "pitamicche"... Importiamo ferro, lana, carbone... Bestie a quattro gambe ed esportiamo quelle a due" (p364)

Morcia's overriding sentiment is that of excitement at the prospect of a one-month ocean cruise, foreign ports and a new land. By contrast sadness pervades the numerous friends who go to the bus station to see him off while Emilio, who had been his constant companion over the past year or so, is distraught at the parting:

> "nei sorrisi, nei gesti, in quelle esortazioni a cui pongo orecchio, c'è una venatura di mestizia... No! Non è per il vuoto che lascio: grazie al cielo, non lascio nessun vuoto io!
>
> La loro tristezza è per me: sono io che vado verso l'incognita e in loro c'è apprensione, i timori per il "fratello", per l'amico che si accinge a superare, forse per sempre, quella linea di demarcazione tra il mondo conosciuto, familiare, protettivo, e quell'altro che non ha forme ben definite: che permane nella mente dei più come un'astrazione geografica." (p362)

But perhaps the most moving farewell comes from Nicoletta. She is not there to see him off because she hates farewells. But his suitcase of pressed cardboard - eternal symbol of the migrant status - is full of the new clothing, a symbolic anti-dowry, which she had given him.

In its language and style the novel sits somewhat uneasily. A pervasive overriding verbosity, particularly felt both in the text and the dialogues, when social, political or economic issues are dealt with, is only partly alleviated by a few fresh and original expressions and the use of many dialect words and phrases. The presence of popular/dialect elements which appear both in the text and the dialogues and which include nicknames (the name of the protagonist, Morcia, is the dialect word used for the ubiquitous grime found in the machine shop; lo Zoppo, in Italian means 'the lame one' - in fact the puppeteer is described as a hunchback who walked with a limp) - an

important feature of the "paesano" ambience - as well as a number of words (bugnin 'money', ragazzol 'kids' - p46; garullo 'nut', rusco 'rubbish, grime' - p48) and phrases (noi "brisa" vogliamo la luna 'it's not as though we're asking for the moon' - p46, così ci verranno le ragnatele al culo, literally 'this way we'll get cobwebs on our bums' - p47, me car ragass 'my dear fellow' - p348) are quite effectively used, especially in the dialogues, in relation to the local colour and the linguistic realism of the novel. The influence of the dialect may also be felt in the syntactic structures and in the cadence of Tedeschi's prose, a feature which only the reader from his native province will be able to fully appreciate. There is also the odd anglicism (capigliatura alla marines - p224, round - p278, scout - p187, doyliano - p247) used for literary or expressive effect. A number of italo-australianisms are also present (quotazione 'quote' - p58, arrangiamento 'arrangement' - p214, determinato 'determined' - p217, non fa senso 'it doesn't make sense' - p245) which are due to the author's long period of residence in Australia.

Tedeschi uses the ingenious device of the "quattro consiglieri occulti" - four "inner voices" or "inner characters" - as a vehicle for interior dialogue in the protagonist. These "inner voices" are: il "Razionale" a font of homespun wisdom who makes Morcia "see reason" especially in moments of crisis; il "Patetico" who appears when Morcia is in situations when he feels sorry for himself; il "Cupo" who is heard when Morcia is desperate or depressed; il "Maligno", the most developed of the four, who takes on the elements of a real character, being somewhat of a gossip and a sarcastic/ironic commentator on events. This device is somewhat unusual in the

modern novel, although it is somewhat reminiscent of the Pirandellian interior or "mirror" dialogue. It allows Morcia ample opportunity to comment on and discuss the varied experiences he goes through as well as to formulate views and opinions on the people and the society around him. While at times the four "inner voices" allow insights into the multiplicity of Morcia's personality, it is not developed in the sense that Senza camicia does not have the depth to become a psychological novel.

Despite some stylistic weaknesses (mentioned above), the discourse on politics and on society as well as the lengthy comments to the dialogues which at times become long-winded and boring, and some structural weaknesses such as the inconclusive nature of some of the episodes related, the novel is nevertheless a vivid evocation of life in Italy in the years immediately following World War II. It is a time of material hardship but also an eventful one in which so much happens to the protagonist and his friends in a very short time. Despite (or perhaps because of) the many problems which beset Morcia, life is intense and is lived to the full. It is a life lived out in the open, in the piazza, which is a hive of activity and social intercourse and which, by contrast, makes the Australian reader conscious of the relative monotony of the Australian lifestyle. Nothwithstanding an ironic element which often creeps into the narration, perhaps in Tedeschi, the author, there is also an underlying hint of nostalgia as he recalls the relative freedom of the active, stimulating albeit problematical life of those pre-migration years. One wonders, in fact, how, in his second novel (currently in preparation), he will deal with the Australian migrant experience.

Although in Senza Camicia the migration theme is not a central one until the final chapter, the novel, in a sense, is a detailed exposition of the reasons why so many Italians left the Italy of the late 40s/early 50s, the war-torn and poverty-stricken country so aptly depicted in neorealist cinema, to seek their bread elsewhere. And who, after all, had more reason to emigrate than Morcia, progressively marginalized by his society, "orfano, nullatenente, celibe, disoccupato, senza fissa dimora" (p316), for whom life had no silver spoons in store.

GENNARO COZZI'S "AUSTRALIAN SAFARI"

Some 80% of Gennaro Cozzi's light-hearted though stylistically heavy-handed Cronaca del progetto e della realizzazione dell'avventuroso viaggio di due aspiranti emigranti in Australia (Cozzi 1981) is, according to the author,[3] based on "things which really happened" during his first visit to this country in 1972 while the remaining 20% is pure invention inserted to liven up the account which was written, presumedly, for an "Italo-Australian" audience. Born in Naples in 1936 Cozzi worked for several years for Alitalia in Italy before emigrating to Australia in 1980, after having visited the country three times.

In this brief novel (if novel it can be called) the first person narrator and his friend (both of whom remain unnamed) decide to travel to Australia on a sort of exploratory expedition in order to determine whether it would be worthwhile emigrating there with their respective families. The reasons for such a proposal are not the

traditional purely economic ones, although some mention is made of the worsening economic conditions in Italy (p14), but are rather tied to the appeal of exotic places and things (pp14, 89, 90), the better quality of life (p89) and the possibility of a better future for the children. The narrator is rather less enthusiastic than his friend and points out the problems they and their families will have in adjusting to the new way of life. These range from the differences in traffic conditions and weights and measures to cultural and language differences.

The observations on language differences constitute one of the central themes of the novel as well one of the mechanisms used to generate humour. However at times the humour is decidedly heavy-handed and the digression on the pronunciation of English (p86) as well as other comments on the language detract substantially from the flow of the narrative.

The narrator also provides a commentary on certain aspects of Australian culture and customs. While he has relatively little to say about Australians who appear only fleetingly in his account he does present impressions on those aspects of the Sydney landscape which he finds most striking: cars are both large ("un transatlantico vestito da taxi", p52) and very much in evidence ("macchine in vendita in padiglioni [...] che avevamo scambiato per parchi di divertimento" "giuro che non avevo mai visto in vita mia tante macchine in una sola città con lo stesso numero di abitanti", p100); Sydney is described quite vividly both in terms of the urban landscape (like Cappiello, Cozzi does not fail to contrast the beauty of the harbour with the

monotony of the "inland" suburbs) and of the weather ("una bella mattinata di luglio, frizzante come lo sono quelle di Sydney", p59).

The language of the novel presents a somewhat odd mixture. On the one hand the writer adopts a syncopated and often abrupt style which lacks spontaneity. On the other he uses a number of antiquated words and expressions ("desta", p23; "anglosassone gente", p24; "cerbero", p26; "novelli Ulisse", p90; "conoscenza de "lo dolce stil novo"...", p92; "affettuoso arembaggio", p107) which are decidedly out of place for the genre and cliches ("Bastian contrario", p20; "né vincitori né vinti", p58; "marcia su Auckland", p94; "apriti cielo", p105) which subtract from the spontaneity and originality of expression.

Similar themes and, to a certain extent language, may be noted in Cozzi's poem on the same topic 'La commedia non divina di un povero emigrante Canto I' (Rando 1986: 38-42), a parody of the Divine Comedy which sets out the vicissitudes and perplexities of a person contemplating migration to Australia:

> "E la guida de l'auto ancor non pensi
> ch'è fatta in tal maniera che l'andare
> è contro al nostro, sì ch'a li tui sensi, [...]
> Ancor, lo stil nel prender le misure
> ch'è reso non col nostro metro antico
> ma usa con le dita i piedi pure"
> (Rando 1986: 40, 41)

Cozzi's brief novel is a humorous and light-hearted though superficial account, constructed on a set of commonplaces, perhaps too common and too general in terms of the migrant experience to be very interesting or original, and lacking any "serious" evaluation either of the narrator's own experience or of the host society. Characterization is not developed (indeed the narrator and his friend remain nameless caricatures and other personages appear only very briefly) and the language is at times somewhat odd in relation to the genre. Although it brings together a number of commonplace elements of the migrant experience it does not seem to have gained much acceptance with the "Italo-Australian" reader despite the fact that, because of its language and its "local" appeal, it has been adopted as a text book for Italian courses at the University of New England.

CHARLES D'APRANO AND THE QUESTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Charles (Pasqualino) D'Aprano's novel The Swallow [4] is the story of Stefano Romano who emigrates to Australia with his father Armando in 1937 at the age of 14. The plot of the novel can be briefly described as follows:

> "While Armando remains set in his Italian ways, Stefano - renamed Bill by his uncle - becomes more and more absorbed in his Australian environment; he prefers Australian to Italian friends; he feels the need to learn English and endeavours to do so; he joins the Australian army during the war and marries a [Greek] Australian girl. All this leads to constant conflict with his father. As the years pass, the two men accept each other's personality but it is Bill who undergoes the changes of attitudes. During this period of struggle with his Italian past, he tries to

> become as Australian as possible, at times even denying his Italian origin. As he matures he realizes that he cannot deny his cultural background. This realization is helped by a number of visits to Italy which give him glimpses of what Italy really is and he becomes proud of his Italian heritage just as he is proud of the Australian side of his character. In this long cultural conflict, the new character of the Italo-Australian comes into being and Stefano/Bill Romano becomes quite adjusted to the realization that he is a person of two cultures and of two worlds; like,the swallow, he shifts from one hemisphere to another without emotional problems." (Rando 1983: 181)

D'Aprano was born at Ventosa (Castelforte) in Central Italy in 1923 and emigrated to Australia in 1937. Before graduating in Arts at the University of Melbourne and obtaining teaching qualifications he worked at a variety of jobs from painter to factory hand. Until his retirement in 1987 he was Senior Lecturer in Italian at the Swinburne College of Technology (Melbourne) and has published in anthologies a number of short stories in Italian and in English about migrant life in Australia, a collection of short stories in English (D'Aprano 1986) and a book (English/Italian text) on contemporary Italian political events (D'Aprano 1979). Written in the aftermath of the kidnapping and slaying of Christian Democrat minister Aldo Moro by the Brigate Rosse, D'Aprano 1979 examines from a pro-leftist stance the socio-political situation in Italy at the end of the 70's. D'Aprano's basis is a Marxist structuralist approach (ie. all aspects of society are based on the economic structure). He posits that "the workers and the landless and poor peasants [...] are the classes with the potential to change the power structure in the country" (pp2-3) and argues that the Italian Socialist Party wishes to establish a democratic socialist

society (but of which type, how and when are clearly unponderables) but that this is opposed by the groups of the extreme left. He concludes that although Italy currently exists in a continuous state of uncertainy it will eventually become a new and more socially conscious nation.

Some of these attitudes as well as the underlying political and philosophical beliefs are introduced in the last third of the novel - in fact Stefano/Bill gradually, and to a certain extent inexplicably, undergoes a transformation from a pro-Italian (and hence not anti-fascist) politically naive Italian immigrant to a committed left-wing Italo-Australian activist. However, the main thrust of the first two thirds of The Swallow deals with Stefano/Bill's experiences as a migrant in Australia in the late 30s and in the 40s.

The novel, in fact, presents almost every conceivable theme on the migrant experience, so much so that at times the characters seem to be clearly subservient to the theme, becoming less convincing and spontaneous as characters.

D'Aprano deals with the fear, misery and wretchedness of the immigrant who is an unskilled labourer. Armando experiences the pain of parting from the native village, his feelings as one of the "cast-away sons of Italy" (p87), the desire to return home rich, exploitation by his own countrymen. Australians display animosity towards him (Armando and Stefano are often called "dago bastards" and other names) and he views all Australian men as drunks, all Australian women as prostitutes. However he appreciates the natural

setting, saying about the Victorian countryside that "this must be beautiful country in the summer " (p60). Stefano, too, experiences nostalgia, exploitation, animosity and emargination but he appreciates the Australian work environment of the urban proletariat, good wholesome Australian food (especially butter), those Australians who are friendly towards him and expresses curiosity about the desert and the Aborigines. The (conservative) father / (progressive) son relationship is widely explored. Armando regards himself not only as *padre* but also as *padrone* . He expects Stefano to fetch and carry for him, expects him to help him with language difficulties, indulges in obsessive attempts to control Stefano's actions and sometimes his thoughts, forbids him to have Australian friends, is devastated when Stefano joins the Labour Corps during the war. Stefano is engaged in an initially passive and later overt rebellion against his father since since he wants to achieve independence of action and an autonomous identity.

Another set of themes is related to the Italo-Australian environment: the migrant work ethic (which seems almost more intense than the protestant one), immigrants who have achieved economic well-being and those who have not, the Italo-Australian wedding, the food, culinary practices and cooking utensils, and the various peasant cultural and folkloric elements (traditional Italian views on women, Sicilians cutting off ears, church-dominated political attitudes). D'Aprano also depicts the surprise of the Australians at some aspects of the Italo-Australian community. Although they quickly come to appreciate Italian food they are surprised at the odd cooking utensils, and at Italian customs. The

Italian immigrants are perceived in terms of stereotypes (knife-wielding dago bastards) although there is general amazement, and sometimes envy, at their capacity and willingness for hard work. The theme of the migrant work ethic is one which is consistently found in Italo-Australian narrative. One of the main justifications for emigrating is that of achieving a more favourable economic status than in the country of origin and the immigrant will work very hard indeed to achieve this. This theme is dealt with by different writers in different ways. D'Aprano, however, does not give it any particular emphasis. In fact, neither Armando nor Stefano seem to achieve any substantial material success while those immigrants who do so acquire it through exploitation of their fellows and are hence not presented in a positive light.

Yet another central set of themes are of a politico-historical nature. Some seem to be present mainly as background (eg. the post-war immigration debate) but others (conflict of loyalties during the war, assimilation) are closely tied to the experience of the protagonist. The political theme is subject to substantial development setting an initially anti-fascist note (Armando had contracted malaria while working on the Fascist-promoted Pontine Marshes project in Italy) and developing into a leftist ideology. The political episodes, which take up approximately the third quarter of the novel and tend both to slow its pace and to side-track from the main thematic thrust, nevertheless provide some very interesting discussion on the historical/political condition of the Italian immigrant, on the feelings of being rejected both by the home country and by the host society, on the concept of political multiculturalism.

During his political activist phase as a leader of Italian immigrants, Bill's many efforts to convince the unions (in the mid 50s) that they should cater for their non-English speaking membership do achieve one small but positive result when the Railway Workers Union decides that its immigrant members should be taught English.

The themes are often underscored by a symbolism which is used in quite transparent ways. For example the Romanos arrive in Melbourne "early one cold misty July morning" (p1) and when Armando returns to Melbourne from working in the country it is drizzling, damp and cold (p60). Melbourne weather aside, the setting clearly underscores the feelings of despondency expressed by the characters on these occasions. The Australianization of Italian and Greek Christian names and, in Roula's case, of surnames, (a very common practice at the time) provides a clear example of assimilationist conditioning imposed by the host society.

Most of the symbolism, however, centres on the central character. Bill/Stefano's relationship with women, for example, can be seen as assuming important connotations. Young Stefano's failure to make love to his Australian girlfriend Linda (p133) is clearly linked to the derogatory attitudes of her family towards him (the mother and elder sister openly call him "dago") and to his feelings of not being entirely accepted by the host society despite his desire to achieve complete assimilation. On the other hand his success with the Greek-Australian Roula (p209) is linked to the fact that she too is living between two cultures, although the subsequent difficulties which manifest themselves after their marriage are also linked to

cultural factors in that Roula becomes completely Australianized while Bill/Stefano does not. During his visit to the Vienna Peace congress (1952 circa) Bill meets and has a brief affair with a blond 26 year old German woman Eva Klepner, who speaks fluently five languages, a fact which causes the partially Australianized Bill considerable amazement. This affair is symbolic both of Bill's transient "international" phase and the growing awareness of his intellectuality. On his return to Australia and his subsequent separation from Roula from whom he had "grown apart over the years", Bill has affairs with two other women. The blond Marina Boyle, a fellow teacher of mixed Italian (mother)/English (father) descent, who in a sense encompasses the three previous women, seems a symbol of Bill/Stefano's cultural duality. But she eventually leaves Bill in order to return to Italy with her Australian husband and to rejoin her mother, a return from which Bill is excluded. The much younger Australian fellow student Sue Copeland, after an affair which is as much a meeting of minds as a meeting of bodies, leaves Bill to marry her Australian fiancé, Jim, who returns from a period of working in Darwin. Hence, in a sense, Bill is excluded from becoming fully identified with Australia. Finally it is in the Australian Margaret Morgen, like Bill a divorcee with children, that Bill/Stefano finally finds both lover and soulmate through her willingness to meet him culturally half way. She is his constant companion on his many trips back to Italy to renew his cultural and linguistic roots and she encourages him to keep alive the old family traditions at home in Australia, thus becoming a symbol of the new multiculturalism.

The voyage undertaken to the Vienna Peace Congress, his first trip back to Europe after fifteen or so years in Australia, can be seen as Bill/Stefano's personal rite of passage, that need which, according to the sociologists, is felt by migrants to make at least one voyage back home before finally settling down in the new country. For Bill it is a rite of passage both as an immigrant and as an intellectual. Although the first and subsequent visits to Italy serve to recharge his energies and to reconfirm the strong attachment to the land of his birth, there is never any thought of abandoning Australia to return permanently to the land of his birth. Through his relationship with Eva Klepner and his observation of how people in other countries can and have come to terms with cultural and linguistic plurality Bill, after an initial phase as an internationalist, is able to come to terms with his Italian/Australian duality. On the last visit to Castelvento, by now abandoned by most of its inhabitants[5], Stefano states to his wife, his daughter by his first marriage and his cousin Gianni (one of the few not to have emigrated):

> "No, I haven't changed really. And yet in some ways I have changed. I suppose there was a time when I was Italian and refused to be anything else. And then there was a period when I was the all-assimilated Australian. Now I have a much better idea of what I am. I am much more willing to accept my dual cultural heritage and my place in the world." (p370)

Having come to terms with this duality he is able to posit at the end of the novel the concept of a new identity, that of the Italo-Australian.

Perhaps because of the substantial thematic elaboration, most of the minor characters tend to come across as stereotypes. Armando is the traditional "Italo-Australian" father. Although he and Stefano

continually quarrel since they can never agree about anything, in the end Stafano realizes that there is a strong bond between them (p358) and that they are really two of a kind, "dogmatic" and "righteous" (p296). Teresa is the "typical Italian" mother. Several Australians are typical "dago haters". Roula is the Australianized girl of immigrant family. Stefano himself, however, comes across with a considerable amount of conviction. This is despite some unconvincing elements such as the transition into and out of political activity which does not seem to follow any precise ideological orientation, his capacity for articulating his thoughts and the fact that although he probably did not have much schooling he can teach "proper" Italian to Dr McKean's wife in exchange for English lessons. He is rather more alive and interesting, for example, than Judah Waten's Italo-Australian protagonist, Paul Avanzo (Waten 1971). It is particularly the identity conflict which makes Stefano/Bill Romano a three dimensional character. The desire to belong to the new country yet the feeling that he cannot be completely Australian coupled with the realization that he is fully accepted neither by Australians (who call him a "dago") nor Italo-Australians (who call him a "canguro") give the character considerable depth. The realization of being caught between two cultures; the conflict of loyalties during the war (could he stand aside from the war effort and claim his Australian friends' friendship afterwards?); his gradually acquired ability to think in both languages and his pride at having mastered English make him feel superior to other immigrants; the development of "Australian" attitudes such as his amazement that people can speak many languages fluently or at the skill of the simultaneous interpreters at the Vienna Peace Conference. These elements create a dramatic

tension within the character which is finally resolved by his final acceptance that "I am neither Australian nor Italian and yet I am both. I am really an Italo-Australian" (p378).

The style of the novel, in the second (not definitive) draft form falls somewhat uneasily between a realist and a Stefano-subjective orientation. The language of the English version, a little less lively if compared to the chapter in Italian, does need more polishing and does present the odd antiquated expression - matters which are likely to be resolved in the current revision. Nearly all of D'Aprano's immigrant characters speak good colloquial English (although Armando speaks broken English), apart from the rare introduction of an Italo-Australian form (la messessa, la resa) or migrant English form (orright). It may be queried to what extent this detracts from the realism of the novel, although it can also be pointed out that the immigrant characters in the novels of David Martin and Judah Waten, for example, speak good English too. Language aside, there is perhaps too much detail, too much reiteration and repetition, which tends to draw out the novel to the point that there is at times a lapse in the interest on the part of the reader.

All in all the novel presents itself as a work of considerable human interest, spanning as it does the life story of an immigrant protagonist from his arrival in the new country to the final achievement, after some 45 years, of a psychic and psychological equilibrium without compromises through the reconciliation of the many struggles and tensions which have marked his existence. Notwithstanding its imbalances it has excellent potential to turn into

a good novel in its final form. One may wonder to what extent D'Aprano's conclusion, which posits the formation of a distinct Italo-Australian cultural identity separate and distinct from the rest of Australia, runs the risk of implying the formation of a cultural ghetto. This is an idea which has caused considerable debate and to this debate D'Aprano's novel is certainly a substantial contribution.

D'Aprano has also published a short short story, 'La Bottega' (Abiuso 1979: 46-47), on an old-style Italian barber shop in Melbourne. It is lively slice of life which presents the atmosphere of the Tuscan Poldino's barber shop, a sort of unofficial club for the local Italians, and the characters who frequented it. In chapter 11 of The Swallow it is the Tuscan Poldo's barber shop which in the mid 50s is the meeting place for the Italian Migrants Association although its main function is that of a forum for political discussion rather than just a meeting place.

His first published volume of creative writing Old wine in new bottles (D'Aprano 1986) seems somewhat less vivid and dramatic than the novel. The collection contains some stories drawn from drawn from The Swallow as well as accounts set in both the Italo-Australian and the general Australian communities. These latter stories will be examined in the following chapters.

ENOE DI STEFANO: THE EXPERIENCES OF AN IMMIGRANT WOMAN

Enoe Di Stefano's L'Avventura australiana, completed in its currently available typescript version in July 1975, relates the story of Nica (a primary school teacher from Northern Italy) and Enzo (a lawyer from Southern Italy), who emigrate to Australia in the early 50s. Di Stefano has been attempting to have the novel published either in Australia in an English translation or in Italy in its original Italian version.

Enoe Di Stefano, born at Rovereto (Trento) in 1921, trained as a primary school teacher before emigrating to Australia in 1949 soon after her marriage to Alfio Di Stefano, born in the United States of Sicilian parents, and who had qualified as a lawyer in Italy. During her time in Australia Di Stefano has published three volumes of poetry and has written a number of short stories which have been published in Italian womens' magazines such as Bella. She has won a number of prizes in Italy for her poetry and short stories. The story 'L'Ultima nave' was awarded second prize for narrative by the Dante Alighieri of Bari in December 1985 as the result of a world-wide competition "La Dante Alighieri e l'emigrazione italiana nel mondo". 'Il Debito' was awarded third prize at the 1987 Campania Felix competition held by the Accademia Internazionale di San Marco di Belle Arti Lettere e Scienze.[6] These stories were subsequently published in La Fiamma. For several years in the 50s Di Stefano wrote a column for La Fiamma ("L'angolo di Gianna") and, after 1959, for Il Globo which provided advice, comments and short stories for the women readers of these papers. The material prepared for these columns provides an

interesting insight into the condition, experiences and aspirations of Italian immigrant women in Australia in the 50s. Di Stefano has continued to write occasionally for the Italo-Australian press. In La Fiamma of 1 August 1985 she published a moving article on the township of Stava (in the Trentino) when it was hit (19 July 1985) by a mud slide which killed 300 people. In La Fiamma of 20-2-86 she published an account of a trip to Italy undertaken in December 1985 - January 1986 and in Settegiorni she published an extensive account of a trip to Russia undertaken in 1981 in a number of issues over the period January - June 1986. A lesser-known but important artistic activity has also been painting and Di Stefano has several completed paintings to her credit. Until quite recently she has also been active in various community organizations, having been responsible for the direction of the CoAsIt schools for several years (1968-1982) and having been involved in a number of fund-raising activities on the occasion of natural disasters in Italy, the latest one being the organization of aid to the victims of the Stava avalanche (over $15,000 raised). For a period of three years (1976-1978) Di Stefano was a member of the Multicultural Education sub-committee of the Australian Council for Ethnic Affairs.

Whereas D'Aprano deals with the experiences of the unskilled immigrant worker who eventually obtains professional qualifications in Australia (but remains substantially "working class" at heart), L'Avventura australiana is a sensitively told and sometimes moving novel about Nica, an artist in her own modest way, who arrives in Australia in 1950 with her husband of three months standing, Enzo, and has to come to terms with a society which recognizes neither her

training nor her aspirations. Although this situation was not relevant to the bulk of unskilled Italian immigrants who entered the country in the 1950s it nevertheless was a very real problem for a small proportion of professionals and skilled workers who emigrated to Australia and found that they virtually had to start from scratch. Nica and Enzo are quite dismayed when, a week or so after their arrival, they begin to look for work and are advised by the "old" immigrants that the most they can aspire to is a job in some factory. Hence for these educated people Australia, far from being a land of opportunity, becomes, at least in the initial phase of immigration, a land of disillusionment. Nica and Enzo, who had emigrated partly because of the aftermath of the war in Italy and partly to secure a better future for their yet unborn children, never quite lose their initial optimism, an optimism shored up by Nica's finding employment as a decorator of statuettes for a manufacturer of Catholic religious objects in the city. Enzo stoically accepts his lot as a sorter in a local bottle factory and works extra shifts in order to set aside money to buy a house.

The couple's contacts with the Italo-Australian community are also something of a disappointment. Their distant cousin Jack, who had acted as sponsor is a market gardener on the Northern outskirts of Sydney. He leads a life restricted by the price of vegetables at the markets and an overabundance of food on the table on Sundays and feast days. Their landlords, Frank and Giordana, are engrossed in accumulating money and buying properties. Nica realizes that these crassly materialistic attitudes are values imposed by the host society where success and hence the justification for emigration is

measured in materialistic terms. By contrast the four artists who are Nica's fellow workers feel misunderstood and "erano molto soli, avevano i problemi di tutti gli emigrati [...] Non si erano abituati né al modo di mangiare, né alla vita, né alla lingua di quel Paese" (p37). More sensitive beings than the ordinary immigrant worker, they seem to suffer their condition more intensely. Enzo finds his job at the factory vaguely reminiscent of a dantesque inferno, both physically fatiguing and soul destroying

> "in mezzo a gente inasprita, violenta, esasperata, un mondo di dannati davanti all'implacabile ritmo delle macchine e di quel vetro bollente che scottava le mani. [...] L'unica consolazione era la paga a fine settimana." (p35).

Enzo in fact makes his raison d'être for emigration solely that of earning money and has doubts about leaving the factory when he is offered a better job as cashier in one of the city's best restaurants[7] because his pay is three pounds a week less that what he earns at the factory. Enzo's insistence on material success, to the point of sublimating/playing down intellectual aspirations is a common motivation to be found in the immigrant. In this he can be compared to the other characters in the novel who glory in material success whether real or imagined. In the case of Giordana, their landlord's wife, this obsession leads to psychological imbalance. The achievement of material success thus becomes a justification for the often traumatic act of emigration, a syndrome which might be labelled "the psychology of success".

Hence in this respect migrant attitudes have become coincidental to the host society's expectations. In its attempt to achieve rapid industrialization in the post-war period, Australia imports

immigrants as factory fodder and materialistically encourages them to work in order to earn money while ignoring any other needs they might have.

Although basically optimistic, Nica is somewhat reluctant to fully accept the new country, partly because her materialistic aspirations are less intense than Enzo's. The couple had agreed not to start a family until they could afford to buy a house but before this can happen Nica finds that she is pregnant. Although Nica feels isolated and alone without the family support structure she would have had back in Italy, Enzo makes up for this lack by being very supportive of Nica during the pregnancy and when the baby is born he is a pleased and proud father. But for Nica the birth takes on a deeper and more symbolic meaning since she feels that she now has a definite commitment to the new country:

> "Un onda di pace, di deliziosa tranquillità invadeva il suo cuore. La grande esperienza era fatta. In Australia Nica aveva messo al mondo la sua creatura. In quello strano, nuovo paese, era diventata madre per la prima volta.
> Ora l'Australia le apparteneva un poco di più, o essa un poco di più all'Australia, e non poteva essere che una terra buona perché era la terra di suo figlio."(p73)

This commitment is reinforced at the basically optimistic conclusion of the novel when Nica, finally settled into her own home (thus having quickly achieved one of the goals of the great Australian dream) and with her brother about to arrive from Italy, finds that she is pregnant again:

> ""Sarà facile per voi, figli miei" pensò con un grosso nodo in gola, riferendosi al suo bambino ed alla creatura che portava in sé "sono certa che per voi sarà molto facile."
> Pensò per un attimo alla casa. Una casa che aveva bisogno di molte riparazioni e di molte spese per renderla più accogliente. C'erano voluti tre anni di

lavoro per possederla, e c'era un grosso debito da pagare, prima di poter dire: è proprio nostra.
Bisognava aver coraggio e salire, andare avanti.
Aveva venticinque anni.
Un giorno, si disse, avrebbe guardato indietro e si sarebbe resa conto che ne era valsa la pena.
L'Australia doveva essere l'avventura a lieto fine, che Enzo le aveva sempre promesso.
Si alzò. Ormai non c'era molta strada per arrivare a casa.
Prese Robby in braccio, le due borse nell'altra mano, e riprese lentamente la salita." (pp131-2)

Despite the hot weather at Christmas/New Year, the feeling of melancholy and nostalgia brought on by the festive season[8], the hint of menace in nature with the mention of the floods, the natural setting, especially Sydney Harbour, is one which is appreciated by Enzo and Nica. Nica had been somewhat taken aback at the aspect of Sydney houses, in particular the backyard toilets (an aspect also commented upon by Cappiello), but once they have purchased their own home in Marrickville, she finds the layout of Sydney houses, which is described in a very effective and striking manner, quite fascinating:

"Poiché il terreno su cui la casa era costruita, saliva dietro abbastanza rapidamente, dal confine del loro recinto di tavole vecchie si vedeva lontano. Oltre la discesa della strada, oltre i tetti di tegole, coperte di muffa verdastra, si stendeva davanti a loro un mare di case, di palizzate tra l'una e l'altra, fili di pali della luce nella distanza si assottigliavano nel cielo come stuzzicadenti, ciuffi di alberi sbucavano sopra i tetti interrompendo con il loro verde vivo l'uniformità dei colori e delle case." (p125) "La strada era larga e dritta. Le case, una a fianco dell'altra, sembravano come due muri che la dividessero dal resto del mondo. Guardate da giù, le punte dei tetti, si intagliavano nel cielo, via via sempre più piccole, finché in alto, sulla cima, si confondevano e c'era solo un rettangolo di cielo azzurro, come infilato tra due muri e la terra." (p131)

Conversely, a negative impact with the host society occurs not so much because of the settlement difficulties (Enzo and Nica accept quite willingly the fact that they must master English in order to "get on" in Australia) but because of the animosity displayed to them by some Australians when they speak Italian in public. However the couple realizes that not all Australians are like this since their English teacher, who had fought in the Australian army during the war (Enzo had been in the Italian army) states that they then were enemies but implies that they now are friends and does all he can to help them.

Economic conditions also appear as a theme in the novel. When Australia entered a slump period in 1952, Italian immigrants, who had been arriving by the ship-load, were among the hardest hit. There were riots at Bonegilla (the army had to be called in) and demonstrations at the Italian consulates. Through the character Matteo, who is something of a hothead, (he is highly dissatisfied with Australia and eventually returns to Italy, a decision also influenced by his unrequited love for Nica) Di Stefano describes the immigrants' discontent which culminates in the demonstration at the Italian consulate in Sydney.[9] Matteo is arrested and it is Enzo, finally able to put his legal training to some use, a matter which causes him some pride and satisfaction, who is able to arrange to have him released on bail.

The main interest of the novel lies in its presentation, in some considerable detail and with feeling, of the condition of the Italian woman immigrant in the 50s, perceived by Di Stefano as a simple and

basically religious being intent on following and generally supporting her husband, creating a home and rearing children in the new country. In exploring the husband - wife relationship of Nica and Enzo it comes dangerously close to the more commonplace effects and techniques (based on Di Stefano's previous experience as a short story writer) of romantic fiction of the Mills and Boon variety. This feature is also reflected in some aspects of the novel's language - eg.: "il cuore batteva libero d'ogni peso" (p54), "Il sole, un sole tenero e pallido, incominciava a farsi strada tra le nubi del mattino [...] In quello strano, nuovo paese, [Nica] era diventata madre per la prima volta." (p73), "E chi ti dice che io non sia la donna più ricca, la più fortunata del mondo?" (p98), "Per la prima volta nella sua vita, nonostante due uomini l'amassero e la volessero così fortemente, si sentì tremendamente sola e vulnerabile." (p128). There is moreover a certain superficiality, again reminiscent of the romantic fiction technique, in the way in which difficulties are overcome. The novel contains little conflict or tension both in relation to plot and characters and is somewhat bland in its creation of atmosphere - this is due perhaps in part to the length of the work. By contrast Di Stefano's short story 'L'Ultima Nave',[10] which relates the fears and hopes of a band of Italian women on a migrant ship in 1940 (the last one to leave Italy before the outbreak of war) who are sailing to Australia to join husbands and sweethearts, is a much more compelling tale packed with tension and with a quite identifiable atmosphere while at the same time dealing with a little known aspect of the way in which the war affected the immigrant woman. In fact in conferring the award (see p167) the judging panel motivated its decisions on the grounds that it was:

> "Una narrazione efficace e svelta che denota impegno letterario ed equilibrio stilistico. Lo sfondo dello scoppio del secondo conflitto mondiale costituisce un aspetto non certo marginale della capacità descrittiva di questa scrittrice che è riuscita ad inserire, con una articolazione agile, una vicenda sentimentale in un contesto avventuroso e drammatico."

In this short story and in the later 'Il Debito" - a interestingly told tale of an ingenious solution found by two immigrants who had to find the money to pay for the passage out for their wives and children - Di Stefano shows a clear ability to move away from the autobiographical and to deal with more varied issues in relation to the Italo-Australian community.

MRS COSTANTINO'S NOVEL

A highly personalized account of the migrant experience is found in In Nome del Padre - Diario di una Famiglia[11] by Turchina Caporale (pseudonym of Mrs Costantino) which relates with considerable insight the story of anti-fascist activist Pasquale Caporale (from Canossa di Puglia) who, having emigrated to Cairo and been vilified by the fascists there, meets his end in an Italian prison. The attempts of his daughter to clear his name after his death resulted in rejection on the part of her family and in her ultimate decision to emigrate to Australia. Although only the very last part of the novel relates specifically to Australia, the story does deal with an important factor which was responsible for a small but steady stream of immigrants who left Italy in the late 30s and in the years immediately following the second world war because of political considerations. Already in the mid 1800s a few Italians had come to Australia (among them Carboni), either directly or indirectly,

because of their involvement in political activity at home. Some of the present Italian emigration to Australia is also due to the Italian political situation through businessmen who decide to transfer their assets to Australia or elsewhere for fear of the possibility of a communist takeover in Italy.

THE SHORT STORIES OF GIUSEPPE ABIUSO

Six short stories by Giuseppe (Joe) Abiuso have an autobiographical basis.[12] Born in Frosinone in 1933, Abiuso, in 1956, emigrated to Australia from Rome where he had frequented the circle of writers formed around Pier Paolo Pasolini. He experienced a number of typical "migrant" jobs, from carpenter to cane cutter, and travelled widely over Australia before obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Queensland. He subsequently found employment as a teacher with the Victorian Education Department, taught in a number of state schools with a high concentration of "immigrant" pupils, was one of the first teachers to introduce Italian into Victorian schools, and obtained a Bachelor of Education degree at La Trobe University in 1974. He is currently Principal of the Saturday School of Languages in Melbourne. Abiuso writes both in English and Italian although his published work is predominantly in English. Although susceptible to criticism with regard to dialogue technique and characterisation (see, for example, Myers 1985), Abiuso is an effective enough writer in his adopted language. Most of his stories are well told and present an interesting blend of both Italian and Australian literary influences. He has been compared to Italian writers such as Pasolini and Moravia and to the Australian writer

Lawson. In fact in some of his short stories (for example "The Male Model" - Abiuso 1984: 9-24) Abiuso adopts a Lawsonian style of "yarning" technique.

Three of Abiuso's "autobiographical" stories deal with the author's pre-migration experience as a young man in Rome in the years during and immediately after the war. In 'Persimmons' the Tarquini family, who lives in an outer working class suburb near the fashionable villas of Montesacro, is facing starvation during the winter of 1943. In order to survive, the older brothers and sisters go out on nightly food foraging expeditions. One night the narrator, with one of her brothers, Hugo, goes into the garden of one of the villas at Montesacro to gather persimmons and finds the body of the sergeant of the local Fascist militia, the proprietor of the villa. Hugo takes the sergeant's gun and belt and wears it on liberation day, thus earning for himself, quite unjustifiably, a decoration as the youngest partisan of the suburb. 'The Indian Meal' is set in Rome in the immediate post-war period during the allied occupation and relates the efforts of a gang of working class neighbourhood kids who survive by obtaining food from the soldiers of the occupying forces, usually by procuring for them the sexual favours of some of the local women. In their efforts to obtain food from the soldiers of an Indian regiment camped nearby, the gang turns on one of their members, Matteo (presented to the Indians as a "big boy [...] half woman and half man") and delivers him into the hands of the soldiers in exchange for bread and stew. 'Before the Revolution', described by Abiuso as a little bit autobiographical, is set in the Italy of the early 50s. Malatesta, 22 years old, lean and hungry, a builder's labourer by trade and a

revolutionary trotskyite by political conviction, is a member of an Action Cell dedicated to the overthrow of the bourgeois-based political and economic system. The rather grandiose plans dreamt up by the young idealist are not put into effect. Malatesta's friend Bertagna commits suicide out of despair brought on by the failure of the revolution. Malatesta, who in the meantime has been seduced by Carla Scarponi, parliamentary member of the Italian Communist Party, decides to go with her to London and Paris while waiting for a time when the revolution can be brought into effect.

Two of the other three "autobiographical" accounts deal with the migrant experience. 'To the Sugar Cane' tells the story of a group of young Italian immigrant men who are disappointed with their first work experience in Australia. Although they find acceptance among their Australian work mates, who willingly learn 'O Sole Mio' and other songs, their jobs with the Victorian Railways net them fifteen pounds a fortnight after deductions. They decide to pool their savings so as to buy a second hand Vanguard in which they can undertake the 3,000 kilometre journey north to cut cane which, as they have heard, is a much more remunerative occupation. One of the characters, Gabriele, nicknamed "Teach", is the autobiographical element in the group of choral protagonists. Although he is weaker than the others and thus not likely to withstand the rigours of the cane cutters' life, they want him to come with them because of his ability in English. He accepts but only on condition that he will leave the group if he is not able to do his share of the work. 'Railway Palace' is the story of a socially concerned but eccentric Italian immigrant worker, Giovanni Tochesato, nicknamed Big John, told through the eyes of the narrating

character who is an Italian immigrant studying to become a teacher. The two meet during the university vacations when the narrator goes to the inland Victorian town of B... to work as a joiner in a caravan factory where Big John is also employed. Years ago Big John, who had been an activist in the Italian Socialist Party, had been committed to the local asylum because he had stood on a fruit box and made speeches in Italian about the right of the unemployed to protest. The narrator is instrumental in ensuring his social rehabilitation and his marriage to Colleen, the landlady of the Railway Palace, a rather run-down boarding house where both John and the narrator were staying. Twenty years later the narrator returns to B... to find that Colleen had died in a motor accident shortly after their marriage and that Big John had spent all his earnings on the production of 100,000 copies of the first issue of a socialist magazine "Humankind Adrift" kept meticulously stored in a room at the Railway Palace.

In providing a grim but realistic picture of the material, spiritual and intellectual misery rampant in Italy in the final years of the war, Abiuso establishes in quite graphic detail a reason if not a justification for the emigration of the Italian protagonists of many of his stories. Some thematic connections can also be made between his "Italian" and his "Australian" stories. The gang behavior described in 'The Indian Meal' parallels that of the Maribynong River Gang described in 'Steerah' (Abiuso 1984: 66-86). The political hypocrisy and cynicism which underscores the sub-proletarian setting of 'Before the Revolution' is found in equal measure among the socialist trendy lefties of the Australian upper middle class in 'Socialists gather in Melbourne' (Abiuso 1984:175-185).

The Australian autobiographical stories also present a somewhat pessimistic outlook on life. The group of young immigrant men who had come to Australia full of hope for material success find that they are forced to undertake further migration and to engage in back-breaking labour in their pursuit of higher wages. The characters who as young men had envisaged social revolution and the betterment of mankind find that with the passing of time the dream fades, perhaps in part because of the intellectual apathy which is an intrinsic aspect of Australian society. However, unlike Malatesta, these erstwhile Australian political activists have no place else to go, and remain without further horizons to contemplate.

There are autobiographical traces in some of Abiuso's other works - for example the teacher of Italian in Diary of an Italo-Australian Schoolboy. With respect to the other "autobiographical" writers Abiuso brings a much broader perspective to this category of Italo-Australian narrative.

OTHER WRITERS

Michele Giglio's short story 'Nascita di un giornale' (Abiuso 1979: 130-134) is directly related to the writer's real life experience. Giglio (born Rome 1943) arrived in Melbourne in 1969 after having obtained a degree in Political Science at the University of Rome. Because by the late 60s the Italian communities in the large cities were able to readily offer professional type employment to "educated" Italians, Giglio did not go through the manual labour experiences which was that of nearly all Italian immigrants who had arrived in

Australia in the previous twenty year period. Initially he was able to find employment as a teacher and as a journalist with the Italo-Australian press. He eventually obtained Australian tertiary qualifications and entered the teaching profession on a permanent basis. This short story is based directly on his experience during his early years in Australia when in the early 1970s Nino Randazzo had decided to leave Il Globo and launch a new Italian language newspaper in Melbourne.[13]

As a short story writer Giglio concentrates on the Italo-Australian community and delights in narrating the humorous aspects of the situations he describes although, humour notwithstanding, this account also presents some interesting reflections on the Italo-Australian press.

The editorial policy of the new paper is to provide higher standards and broader horizons but the protagonist, Remo, an amateur journalist recruited at the last moment, has a more pragmatic view of its function. Most of the news from Italy involves the cutting of articles out of Italian papers which are reproduced without change, an advantage offered by the new offset process. Italo- Australian readers want "cronaca nera: furti, rapine, rapimenti, omicidi, storie di corna, stupri, truffe" (p131). They are far less interested in articles on the political and economic situation in Italy because:

> "E' sempre la stessa pappa. Il governo che si dimette, che si riforma, i ministri, gira gira sono sempre gli stessi, il paese è sull'orlo di un crollo finanziario, c'è il pericolo di un colpo di stato, sono sempre le stesse cose, basta leggere i titoli." (p131)

What interests the readers above all is the sports news from Italy and the paper, which comes out on Monday, must have the accounts of all the important Sunday games. It is Remo, the least experienced of the group, who is given this very vital task. The only way that Remo can obtain the necessary information is to listen to the short wave sport broadcast from Italy early on Monday morning. He is joined by all his colleagues but, because of technical difficulties, they are able to comprehend only the names of some of the players and the scores. Remo nevertheless invents exciting reports of the four most important soccer matches, which the editor finds highly satisfactory and after a 5 am rush to the printers, half way across the city, the first edition of the paper rolls off the presses.

Another autobiographical story by Giglio is 'Buono premio' (Abiuso 1979: 44-46). In this story Giglio deals with a very characteristic aspect of the Italo-Australian scene: the numerous functions, dances and entertainment events put on by the many Italo-Australian clubs and associations and the even more numerous raffles and lucky door prizes which are an ubiquitous feature of such events. As a journalist with an Italo-Australian paper the protagonist is invited attend a considerable number of functions. Although he does not have to pay he feels obliged to buy vast quantities of the raffle tickets. On one occasion he wins second prize: a raincoat donated by Gerolamo Carrisi Pty Ltd but when he goes to collect his prize he is given a coat several sizes too large for him and consequently unwearable. Some years later the coat is donated by the protagonist as raffle prize at another function and on that occasion it proves useful to the rather large wife of the winner. Although interesting from a sociological

point of view in that it illustrates a common feature of Italo-Australian life, the story is somewhat disappointing as a literary piece in that a rather banal subject is treated in a banal sort of way. The humour is somewhat crude and lacks the finesse found in 'Nascita di un giornale' which has also more interest and appeal.

Nino Randazzo (born in Val di Chiesa, province of Messina, in 1937) emigrated to Australia in 1952 after having completed secondary school studies in Italy. He has worked mainly in the area of Italo-Australian journalism and is currently managing editor of Il Globo. His main activity as a creative writer has been in the field of theatre, although he has also published a volume of poetry.

His short story 'Un mese a Bonegilla' (Abiuso 1979: 7-12) relates the experiences of a twenty-five year old immigrant from Sicily who arrived in Australia in 1952 and spent over a month (July / August) at the Bonegilla migrant camp. It is a graphically told and dramatic story set in a difficult period (the 1952 economic downturn - also dealt with by Di Stefano) when Italian immigrants kept arriving by the ship-load only to spend extended periods in the camps because there was no work for them. The effect of this experience on the protagonist and his companions is devastating. Angelo, also a Sicilian, commits suicide out of desperation because he had left a wife and young children in Sicily who were depending on him to send money back home. His dreams of earning money are cruelly shattered and when he receives letters from home in which his wife tells him that she has had to borrow money in order to buy food, Angelo feels that he has been an utter failure. Of a different disposition the

protagonist (who in any case is not married) deals with the situation in a positive way and decides to go and work for an Italian farmer at Wangaratta in exchange for his keep and very little wages. Life in the camp was beginning to get him down to the point where he, too, had begun to contemplate suicide. In fact he had even drafted a suicide note:

> "Muoio perché la mia vita è un lungo sogno d'amore. Vado a raggiungere le care ombre per completare tutta la mia felicità terrena. Lascio il mio cuore all'Italia (portatecelo ben conservato sotto spirito in un'urna); all'Australia lascio le mie interiora (contenente e contenuto) lubrificate dal grasso di montone delle cucine di Bonegilla". (p12)

The note is intended as a joke, albeit a rather macabre one. The idea of bequeathing parts of one's body is probably borrowed from a famous Italian song of World War I 'Il testamento del capitano' which Randazzo here turns into a jokingly symbolic statement of the migrant condition: with nothing left to give but his own body, Italy receives sentiment and spirit (the heart) while Australia is left with the crass material remains (the gut and its contents).

An extract from a longer, as yet unpublished, work (Appunti di un emigrato) Valerio Borghese's 'Partenza Viaggio Arrivo' (Rando 1983: 146-148) could be considered a "straight" autobiographical account were it not for the evocative element of memory introduced at the beginning and the reflections made by the protagonist on his experience.

Born in Trieste in 1925, Borghese, after an activity as a journalist and a writer, emigrated to Australia in 1960. He initially found employment with the Victorian railways and, later, with Australia

Post. Although he has actively participated in the Italo-Australian intellectual life of Melbourne and obtained an Arts degree in 1975, he has preferred to remain with Australia Post as a mail officer and to teach Italian on a part-time basis. As well as his narrative production[14] he has also published a small and somewhat inaccurate glossary of Italo-Australian terms (Borghese 1980) and a study of the regional literature of Trieste (Borghese 1982) derived from his B.A. honours dissertation.

A writer who employs a fundamentally simple, condensed style, Borghese nevertheless manages to evoke, even with few words, the mood and atmosphere of the moment such as when he describes his six year old daughter as the family is about to leave Trieste:

> "In braccio tiene un orsacchiotto (lo conserva ancora) grande quasi quanto lei, tutto vestito da sembrar vivo; verrà battezzato da medici, funzionari e controllori come 'il clandestino'. Non siamo allegri. Tiziana, mia figlia, di tanto in tanto piagnucola, non è contenta di partire.
> Io non ho lacrime, almeno non agli occhi, ma sento che una parte di me sta piangendo. Forse provo più collera che tristezza." (p146)

or when he describes their first night and morning in Australia as, having completed the disembarkation formalities, they are driven to his sister's house where they are to spend the night:

> "Notte. Un'auto pubblica ci porta a casa di mia sorella, che è venuta assieme al marito a prenderci. Dal finestrino della macchina cerchiamo di vedere qualcosa ma è buio fitto. All'arrivo si beve in po' di caffé, si fumano molte sigarette, si fanno molte domande, si danno molte risposte. Quindi a letto. Siamo stanchi morti. Facciamo una lunga dormita.
> Come sarà la nostra vita in Australia? Mia moglie è abbastanza ottimista, come al solito; io no, come al solito. Ma non lo dico. Alla mattina dopo, spinti da curiosità, andiamo ad "esplorare" il sobborgo dove abitiamo." (p148)

Borghese's brief narrative deals effectively with a universal theme in the migration experience: the emigrant's sorrow at leaving his home and his apprehension on arrival in the new country, sentiments which are manifested in different ways by different people. It is also worth mentioning in passing that Borghese's simple style and language produce texts which could usefully be adapted as reading material for upper primary and lower secondary Italian courses. Tied as they are to the Italian migrant experience in Australia they would probably provide some students of Italian with readings which are also directly relevant to their experience as well.

Another condensed story narrated in fairly simple though stylistically monotonous terms is 'Così pensai all'Australia' by Seconda Giuliani (Abiuso 1979: 139-145). Little is known about the author except that she was born in Rome and emigrated to Australia with her husband and children in 1961. After a month or so at Bonegilla she settled in Melbourne with her family where she has worked as a journalist with the Italo-Australian press. Giuliani's story relates through the central character, Mirella, the migration and settlement experience from the woman's point of view. Sick and tired of struggling to make ends meet, Mirella, who has good secure employment as a stenographer with the Rome City Council, two children (a third on the way) and an unemployed husband, decides to emigrate to Australia after having heard glowing reports from the sister of a woman who had gone there. The family goes through the usual arrival and settlement difficulties although Mirella and her husband do not subscribe to the materialistic orientation of their fellow immigrants. At the conclusion of her account, after many

years in Australia, Mirella, not without a hint of nostalgia, "si sente australiana e vive come la vita va vissuta: casa, lavoro e divertimento. Ormai troppi anni sono passati per poter solo pensare di ritornare nella sua bella Italia." (p145). The story suffers from the basic defect of attempting to cram too much into too little space, thus making it difficult to develop the many themes posited or to give any real depth to the central and only character Mirella. It invites some interesting parallels with Di Stefano's account in that the women characters in both stories share the same basic optimism about their adopted country. The main difference is that, unlike Nica and Enzo, Mirella and her husband are not caught up in the home ownership anxiety syndrome. However Giuliani does not manage to give any real impetus to the thematic aspect while her technique, both in terms of style and structure, remains very patchy.

In this chapter nothing has been said about some of the short stories by Gino Nibbi which have an obvious autobiographical basis. This is because Nibbi is not so much concerned with relating "his" story but rather concentrates his views and reactions in relation to what he observes. Indeed the autobiographical element tends to a large extent to be sublimated to his role as observer.

Italo-Australian autobiographical narrative thus presents, when taken in its entirety, a fairly full and complex picture of the migrant experience from the social realist perspective. In Tedeschi's novel there is a detailed exposé of the factors and circumstances which prompted so many Italians to leave their native country in the immediate post-war years, a period which saw the beginning of mass

Italian migration to Australia. D'Aprano and Di Stefano, the former from the point of view of the working class immigrant of contadino origin, the latter through the eyes of a middle-class professional couple, deal with the migrant experience in Australia and the aspiration to upward socio-economic mobility. D'Aprano's protagonist achieves this through cultural and educational (but not economic) development. For Bill/Stefano Australia has been a land of opportunity in this sense (as in fact it has been for a very small minority of Italian migrants). Di Stefano's professional couple aspire to regain their former standing and aspirations in Australia but there is a contrast in that D'Aprano's Stefano is concerned with "spiritual" seeking (hence the migrant lives not by bread alone) while Di Stefano's Nica and Enzo sublimate their intellectual aspirations to some extent in order to achieve the material success which is their prime justification for emigration. Cozzi's light-hearted tale is about the experience of the white collar or professional Italian who has decided to emigrate to Australia after the mass emigration wave and usually for other than economic reasons. Costantino, as far as can be judged from what little is known about her work, deals with the theme of the political refugee which accounted for a small but steady stream of immigrants from Italy in the period between the two wars and in the few years immediately after the second world war. Abiuso presents the immigrant (or potential immigrant) character who, both in the old country and in the new, is concerned with political commitment and social issues,sometimes to the point of transcending economic and material considerations. In many of the "Australian" stories much is said about the Italo-Australian community and it this aspect which will be addressed in the following chapter.

Notes

1. Typewritten autobiographical notes supplied by Pietro Tedeschi, p3.

2. Typewritten autobiographical notes, p4.

3. Interview with Gennaro Cozzi, 16-3-86.

4. The novel is written in English and the author has kindly made available the typescript of the second draft. D'Aprano is currently working on the third draft. A condensed version of chapter 1, written in Italian and containing dialogues which are linguistically more lively than their English counter parts, was published in Abiuso 1979: 104-109. Chapter 3 (2nd draft English version) was published in Rando 1983: 181-194. The English versions of chapters 1 & 3 were published in D'Aprano 1986: 1-27.

5. In fact there are more people from Castelvento in Pascoe Vale than are left in the old village.

6. In her poem 'La Favilla' Di Stefano states that she had always had the urge to write, but that emigration had first interrupted this urge and then had inspired it partly as a defence against the loss of linguistic and cultural identity:

"Un tempo l'insegnante d'italiano
diceva che dovevo scrivere,
c'era una promessa.
Non sapevo che sarei andata
lontana dalla terra mia,
tra gente straniera,
discordante di suoni e di maniera.
Priva d'ogni goder, d'ogni passione,
m'assecondai alla partita
che competevo senza convinzione.
E dopo m'adattai. Capii che
vivere è una lotta in uno
od altro posto e fui più forte,
più in pace con la vita.
Cercai allora la penna abbandonata
e nel fondo dell'anima sfiorai
frammenti del discorso incominciato
che il fato al primo volo
avea atterrato." (Di Stefano 1985: 6)

7. The Romano Restaurant (p50) actually existed in Sydney (first York St then after the war in Castlereagh St) from the 1870s until its closure about 25 years ago. The founder and original proprietor Azzalin Romano originally from Friuli had managed a similar type of Restaurant in London before emigrating to Australia. Something of a socialite, he mixed with Sydney's best society and it is reputed that he had a fondness for horse races and that he also was an owner of race horses. The restaurant, one of the most luxurious in Sydney (Di Stefano describes it on p48-49), was frequented by the city's high society. Among its refinements it had a kiosk, usually run by an Italian immigrant,

which sold collars, ties, cuff-links, shoelaces etc. to those guests who had to upgrade their standard of dress in order to be able to enter the restaurant. In an interview of 12 May 1986 Enoe Di Stefano confirmed that her husband actually worked at Romano's in the early 50s although she did not state in what capacity. Padre Eufrasio in the novel was in real life Padre Anastasio, one of the founders of La Fiamma, and was a frequent visitor at the Di Stefano house since they lived virtually next door to the Parish church of the Cappuccini. Tom was really an uncle and not a cousin. Of the other characters Fedele had the same name in real life and so did La Piccola; some names relate to real life people but have been changed (eg. Rossi changed to Bianchi) while Matteo is a completely invented character. The Di Stefanos arrived in Australia in December 1949 and bought their house within 18 months of arrival.

8. The theme of the Italian Christmas is also present in her account of a trip back to Italy 'Impressioni di un viaggio', La Fiamma, 20-2-86, p26: "Sì, il Natale 1985 è il mio vero Natale, quello della mia infanzia nel Trentino, quello che ha tutto ciò che di più bello e di più caro è rimasto nei ricordi dei miei Natali italiani purtroppo ormai tanto lontani nel tempo, quello che desideravo di esperimentare ancora, forse chissà per l'ultima volta, un Natale bianco."

9. The demonstration took place on 30 October 1952. See Sydney Morning Herald, 31-10-52, pp1,5 and 1-11-52, pp1,2,3; La Fiamma, 7-11-52, p1 and 14-11-52, pp1,4.

10. Published in Un Debito che si chiama Emigrazione, Bari, Bracciodieta Editore, 1985.

11. Unpublished typescript held at the Australian National Library, Canberra. Little is known at this stage about Mrs Costantino who passed away in Canberra in 1983 or 1984. Her son, Mr R J Costan who lives in Canberra seems reluctant to speak about his mother's activities as a writer. Nor has he to date given the necessary permission to consult the typescript since he does not think that some of the material is strictly "truthful" and he consequently wishes to read it before granting access. The matter is further complicated by the fact that he is not able to read Italian very well and he consequently would require someone to read the typescript to him. Details concerning the novel were obtained from Julie Docker of the Australian National University. The National Library has confirmed both its existence and its inaccessability. While it is a pity that such a potentially interesting document is currently inaccessable it may well provide an interesting topic for future research once it becomes available.

12. In an interview of 6 May 1986 Abiuso identified the following short stories, published in The Male model and other stories (Abiuso1984), as having an autobiographical basis: 'Persimmons' (pp25-31), 'Before the Revolution' (pp 49-65), 'Railway Palace' (pp75-86), 'The Indian Meal' (pp87-93), 'To the Sugar Cane' (pp161-166), 'Sunday Football' (pp167-174).

13. In a telephone conversation of 2 May 1986 Michele Giglio confirmed that the story is autobiographical. The newspaper was Il Corriere which commenced publication in June 1970 and ran for 5 or 6 years in its original form. The foundation editor was Nino Randazzo and Zeno Dardo was co-editor.

14. 'Il Poeta Pugliese', 'Biglietti e Lacrime', 'Andata e Ritorno', 'L'Italo-Australiano', published in Abiuso 1979: 29-32, 114-117, 126-128, 136-138; Borghese 1984.

CHAPTER 3

GHETTO OR STEPPING-STONE: THE ITALO-AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY AS A THEME IN ITALO-AUSTRALIAN NARRATIVE

It is perhaps stating the obvious to say that one of the main themes in Italo-Australian literature is constituted by the various aspects of the Italo-Australian community and the individuals which comprise it. It is the purpose of this chapter to deal with narrative works, novels and short stories by Bosi, Abiuso, Bertozzi, Andreoni, Giglio, and some of Gino Nibbi's short stories where the "Italo-Australian community" may be considered a predominant theme. In this context it is proposed to deal with those narrative works which contain as predominant or main themes the Italo-Australian community as a social group, its relationship with mainstream society, the immigrant character in terms of his social reaction with the Italo-Australian and/or Australian community. A number of narrative works present as a main theme more personal aspects of the Italian immigrant character / experience. These will be discussed in chapter 9.

PINO BOSI: THE "LITTLE WORLD" OF THE ITALO-AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY

The most prominent writer, at least in quantitative terms, is Pino Bosi, whose narrative works in Italian are almost exclusively preoccupied with this theme. A prolific writer, Bosi has published a novel in Italian (Bosi 1971), a collection of short stories in English

(1973) and one of poetry in English (1973b) as well as three non-literary works in English.[1] He has also had a play, Windows (on the "communist menace") performed by the Stage Company, Adelaide 1978, has written three other plays (What now Jesus Christ; Five minutes before or five minutes after on a given day; Masks) and is currently writing another. Two other works are shortly to be published[2] and a number of others are either ready for publication or in progress.[3] As well as pursuing his activity as a creative writer, Bosi has worked for many years as a freelance journalist for the English language press and has been also involved in the Italo-Australian press. Among his other activities he has founded two magazines for the Italian community: Roba Nostra (1977) which ceased publication after about a year and Australia ieri oggi domani, written mainly in Italian and published every 2/3 months. It contains articles and other materials of Australian or Italo-Australian interest. Because of these, and other, activities Bosi is perhaps the Italo-Australian writer who is most identified with the community.

Born at Tolmino [Gorizia], of an Emilian father and an Austrian mother, in 1933, Pino Bosi emigrated to Australia in 1951 after having completed all but the final year of the Liceo in Italy.[4] Although he had learnt English at school, his impact with the spoken variety of Australian English made him realize that he had to learn the language all over again. Consequently he not only "picked up" spoken Australian English but, especially as his children began attending school, he systematically re-learnt the language from scratch. He realized that, having learnt English as a "foreign" language at the Liceo in Italy, he had missed out on all the stages of

linguistic development from infancy to 13 years or so. Bosi spent his first few years in Australia working at all sorts of manual jobs in all sorts of places. In 1955 he won a literary competition sponsored by Il Corriere d'Australia for a short story 'Cose da Pazzi' and as a consequence was offered a position with La Fiamma in Sydney. He accepted this position since it was "qualcosa di diverso di mescolar cemento". He subsequently worked for a number of years with the Italo-Australian press, with La Croce del Sud in 1956, was NSW editor for Il Globo from 1959 to 1964 and subsequently passed to the editorship of Settegiorni in 1964. From 1965 to 1968 Bosi worked as a journalist with the Sydney newspaper Daily Mirror, subsequently (1968) becoming Public Relations Officer for the Lloyd Triestino Shipping Line. During the 60s he also worked on a freelance basis for Channel 2 and Channel 9, and between 1958 and 1975 he broadcast Italian programmes for (successively) stations 2CH, 2UW and 2KY. In 1970 Bosi decided to go entirely freelance and also founded a publishing house, Kurunda, in order to publish a number of his works. When in 1975 the Ethnic Australia experimental broadcasts were initiated in Sydney, Pino Bosi became coordinator of the Italian language programme, a position which he held until 1981 when he was dismissed following a controversy with the Special Broadcasting Service. During the period spent with 2EA he virtually ceased all creative writing activities. Since then he has worked as a freelance writer and journalist (he has never liked "working for a boss"), has been the recipient of a writers' grant (1984) from the Australia Council and in 1985 obtained a Literature Board grant for teaching writing skills to Fairfield youth. Over 1986-87 he hosted afternoon childrens' programmes on SBS-TV. A very well-known figure in the

Italo-Australian community, Bosi has for over 25 years often been Master of Ceremonies at festivals, weddings and other functions.

As a creative writer Bosi discovered, at an early age, that "le parole avevano tutta una loro forma" and felt a "sensazione di piacere fisico scoprire il significato delle parole."[4] Feeling an almost subconscious desire to do something with these words, he wrote his first poems at the age of five and a half or six years and until the age of 19 or so his major production was poetry. At about 14 or 15 years of age he began to write essays. The first twelve months in Australia were a time of spiritual crisis and a very sad period. Bosi found he lacked the stimulating discussions on all subjects which were so much a feature of the Liceo scene in Italy. By contrast young people in Australia had no interest at all in these discussions and consequently Bosi found that he had no one to talk to, although he says that Australian girls were a little bit better than the boys in this sense. When he was employed by La Fiamma in 1955 he noticed that the little fiction published by the paper was all imported from Italy - the Italo-Australian press, then as now, did little if anything for the local writer. He consequently proposed a series of stories with an Italo-Australian setting and during 1955 he published in the paper, under the general title Australia Strapaese, ten stories which were to form the nucleus of Australia Cane. Not wishing to present problems, points of view and feelings which were identifiably his, Bosi concentrated on stories which could be considered characteristic of the "typical" Italian migrant experience in Australia at that time. Rather than concentrate on a "profondo esame psicologico" he aimed to present "la realtà come la conoscevano loro". Written at time

which was a peak period for Italian arrivals to Australia (26,000 in 1956) the stories, although prepared in great haste (sometimes only two or three hours before going to press), were popular with the readers.

The writing of Australia Cane was interrupted when from La Fiamma Bosi passed to La Croce del Sud. For this paper Bosi produced a series of ten stories under the general title of Tre Case e un Campanile.[5] Set in the rural farming community of a small Italian village in the Val Padana, these stories are a departure (the only published one) from Bosi's usual Italo-Australian theme and one wonders whether they were written before emigration. Somewhat superficial and often faulty in plot and characterisation, they seem an unsuccessful attempt at imitation of the Italian humorous short story writer Giovanni Guareschi[6] who was very popular at the time. In fact Bosi is rather more successful at imitating Guareschi in the Australia Cane stories which he began publishing again in 1964 when he was editor of Settegiorni. Bosi's insistence on publishing original narrative (but only his own) in the Italo-Australian press was due in part to the fact that he liked to publish

> "prosa originale [...] nata qui, sentita qui, concepita qui, realizzata qui. Che la gente potesse capire che c'era una realtà anche qui"[4]

and not material imported from Italy. Bosi was also interested in bringing his novel to the attention of the non Italian reader and he had submitted an English version of Australia Cane to Angus and Robertson. Although it was accepted for publication the publishers decided not to proceed when Nino Culotta's [pen name of John Patrick O'Grady] best-seller They're a Weird Mob was published by Ure Smith

in 1957. Thus Australia Cane was destined not to appear in volume form until 1971. In view of the initial print run of 5000 copies which was sold out over a period of ten years, it can be said that the novel, destined for an Italo-Australian reading public which reads little (the best-selling Italian writer Giovanni Guareschi sold some 8000 copies of his works in Italian in Australia), has had a relative success,[7] although in part its "success" must be attributed to the fact that it has been adopted as a textbook in a few schools and universities. In his article on Italo-Australian literature, McCormick 1973 compares Bosi to Guareschi both for the way in which he tries to enter into the world of the "ordinary worker" (p303) and for the way in which the characters are used to displays "typical" attitudes without any real depth of characterization (p305). In a sense McCormick's evaluation tends to agree with what Bosi himself says about the novel (see note 7) and McCormick concludes that it is

> "un libro di assoluta attualità [...] qualunque possano essere le nostre riserve per quanto riguarda certi aspetti letterari del libro, Australia Cane è un documento di alto valore come fonte di informazioni sui principali temi della vita di tanti italiani in questo paese." (McCormick 1973: 305)

However it could be further argued that Australia Cane presents a pseudo-populist style and conception rather than a truly populist one. There is a superficiality about the novel, which derives in part from its humorous orientation. It does not give the impression of the "view from inside" which, for example, we have in Cappiello's Paese fortunato. For Bosi the "migrant microcosm" of the Italo-Australian environment in the 50s is one where all issues are presented in black and white terms and the many problems which beset the immigrant find all too facile solutions.

Australia Cane, which in its final (1971) version is comprised of 32 more or less interconnected brief episodes, relates the story of Giovanni Carrano's arrival in Australia in the early 50s and of his initial experiences both in terms of the natural and human environment and of the work situation. The title of the novel is an ambiguous one: Cane can be interpreted either as the Italian word meaning 'dog' (hence 'Australia is a dog of a place') or as abbreviation of [sugar] cane. Bosi says this was not deliberate. The "typicality" of the situation and of the protagonist, a device which seems to detract from the literary value, is embodied in the introductory chapter. The year is "millenovecentoequalcheannofa", the place, "Happy Vale" (probably somewhere in NSW), and the protagonist, Giovanni Carrano, is most probably from somewhere in Southern Italy. The language barrier and lack of knowledge of local laws create a number of problems with the police. In the first four chapters (pp3-20) Bosi introduces "typical" themes and situations at an almost dizzying pace. The novel proceeds this way as Giovanni finds work, repays Councillor Jackson the twenty pounds fine imposed by the judge, goes North to cut cane etc. In the succeeding chapters a large number of other "typical" themes and situations are introduced: the mafia and vendetta; generation and culture conflicts both between Italians and Australians as well as within the Italo-Australian community; the resentment of Italian immigrants towards an Italy which forgets them and leaved them to fend for themselves in a strange and alien land.

As posited above, this myriad presentation of themes and the devices and machinations used to introduce them detracts from the literary value of the novel. Despite this it does, on the whole, present itself as a lively and humorously told narrative which, although neglecting the more "serious" consequences of the migrant experience (in a few cases tragic elements are present) does nevertheless at times go somewhat beyond its apparent "shallowness". Giovanni Carrano, although not the others, does take on the aspects of a "full-blown" character, not educated but equipped with a remorseless sort of native logic, a little shy and a little aggressive, thoroughly confused in his encounter with the various aspects of his Australian experience, and aspiring to the achievement of material well-being if not upward social mobility. And there are scenes which are presented in a quite amusing way, although their message may go beyond the superficial such as when, returning South in the train at the end of the cane cutting season, Giovanni and his friends, after a good-natured song contest with a group of Australians in the next compartment (each group singing songs in their respective languages) make a bet with them that they will be able to get a case of bananas across the border without having the fruit confiscated by the agricultural inspectors. They in fact do so by eating all the bananas!

The acceptance of the novel by its intended reading public (and its rejection by "educated" or "cultured" Italo-Australians) can be explained in terms of ethno-cultural identification on the part of the Italo-Australian immigrant reader. In its structure and language the work may be seen as responding to certain popularized expectations regarding the concept of the novel (episodic, humorous, somewhat

sentimentalist). In fact a surface humour, usually satire, sometimes delivered in a somewhat heavy-handed manner, constitutes the main characteristic of Bosi's narrative writing. In contextual terms Australia Cane draws heavily on elements of popular/folk culture such as in the episode where St. Anthony's picture is nailed to the chicken coop or when Giovanni, Gerolamo and some of the other characters sit in Gerolamo's living room discussing what, to them, appears the imminent end of the world. Giovanni's exasperated outburst when, just arrived in Happy Vale, he knocks on a door to ask for directions to his brother's house only to have it slammed in his face by the little old lady (though not before she pulls her dog into the safety of the house) may be taken as a case in point: "Australia Cane - sbottò Giovanni [...] - Tengono dentro le bestie e lasciano fuori i cristiani!" (Bosi 1971: 5). The effectiveness of this remark relies heavily on signifiers located in a specific cultural context. Cristiani in Standard Italian means 'Christians' (ie believers in or followers of Christ). In a number of Italian dialects (both Northern and Southern) it means 'people' as opposed to 'animals'. This apposition anticipates the remark made by Dottor Antonio Cocozza, a graduate in Commerce and Political Science, in the concluding chapter. At the International Ball organized by the "Società per l'Amicizia verso gli Emigranti" Giovanni is awarded a medal for having saved the life of il Biondino. As the evening proceeds he overhears Cocozza telling the anti-migrant ex-mayor that people like Giovanni are used to living like beasts and keep animals in the house. The same set of signifiers (in "high" culture terms) are used to dissociate Cocozza from his less "educated" compatriots as are used by Giovanni (in a "folk" context) to construct a metaphor about his first (negative) Australian experience.

In the altercation which develops Cocozza attempts to assert his superiority as an "educated" English-speaking Italian and Giovanni insists that his manual labour is equally if not more useful to Australia than Cocozza's hot air arguments. In this highly personalized version of the brains versus brawn debate which was one of the dominant themes of Australian immigration policy, it is Giovanni to whom Bosi gives the last word in a sort of Guareschian inspired "contadino" finale:

> ""Voi volete le belle chiacchere ma la terra vuole la punta della zappa e le case vogliono mattoni. Gente come lui volete?"
> "Badate a parlar bene" cercò d'interrompere Antonio Cocozza. "Voi zappate e io faccio la mia professione".
> "Sparlare dei connazionali per farvi bello, è questa la vostra professione?"
> "Io sono dottore" ribattè Antonio Cocozza confondendosi sempre più nel circolo di curiosi che andavano pressandoli, e cavò da un taschino un biglietto da visita. Ma Giovanni continuò ad incalzare:
> "Anch'io sono dottore, lo sapete? Io sono dottore in canna e ho già messo la caparra per il negozio, per quando diventerò dottore in fruttologia, come compare Gerolamo". (Bosi 1971: 157)

The perception of ethno-cultural differences both as a determining and determinant factor influencing the relationship not only between the immigrant group and the host society but also between different stratifications or castes within the same immigrant group provides one of the central themes in Bosi's novel, and one which is resumed in the sequel to Australia Cane, Australia paesana.

Whereas the first novel presents the contrast between Italian immigrants and Australia, the second examines the same immigrants in the Italo-Australian "ambiente paesano", the "little Italy" both in a

geophysical and in a spiritual sense, which they have created as part of the settlement process. Australia paesana is a sort of Australia Cane revisited some twenty years later in which our hero Giovanni, happily integrated in his proper station within the Italo-Australian ghetto, is now a wealthy fruit shop proprietor and one of the community leaders in his capacity as President of the Associazione Sant Eustacchio.

Only two chapters of this novel have, to date [June 1987], been published.[8] The novel, which, like Australia Cane, appears to be episodic in character, begins with a somewhat artificial coincidence. On a hot somewhat empty Sunday in an Australian city (Sydney?) a newly arrived immigrant knocks at the door of the Veneto Bepi. The stranger is lost and Bepi gets out the car and takes him to the address he was seeking. It turns out to be the house of Giovanni Carrano with whom Bepi had worked twenty years ago when both were cane cutters. Their reunion is a moving one and the two part promising to keep in touch and to meet up with il Biondino. This initial fortuitous meeting provides a mechanism which enables the construction of a whole series of reminiscences of the "good old days" and the new encounters which make up the various episodes of Australia paesana.

One of these encounters[9] takes place at an Italian Club where the various community leaders and other interested persons had been called to a meeting by the cultural attaché Dottor Emilio Corri. The meeting follows a report written by two sociologists, according to which over half of Italians and Greeks not only do not speak English but do not even speak their own language. The purpose of the meeting

is to create a basis for the new Italo-Australian cultural reality. The theme of the story is the problematical relationship between Italian culture and the Italo-Australian ambiente in a situation where the "official" (or "high") Italian culture is not accepted by the majority of Italian immigrants while their folk culture is institutionally rejected. In fact the seventeen or so persons present at the meeting cannot come to a common consensus on what is Italian (or Italo-Australian) culture. This is symptomatic of two commonly perceived characteristics of the Italo-Australian community: its socio-cultural diversity and its inability to come to a consensus over anything:

> "l'altro delegato della A.M.I.C.E.F. [...] disse che bisognava istituire corsi di italiano per tutti gli emigrati italiani perché "[...] finché rimarremo ignoranti saremo sempre miserabili ed avremo sempre i lavori più bassi".
> A questo punto fu Giovanni a reagire: "Io non ti conosco" disse saltando su "ma tu parla per te [...] Io non mi sento neanche un po' miserabile e, grazie a Dio, anzi al mio sudore, neanche lo sono [...]"
> "Intendo dire i lavoratori[...]" fece quello dell'A.M.I.C.E.F. come per spiegarsi.
> "Perché" fece Giovanni "Io me la faccio coll'eredità di mio padre?"
> "Siamo tutti lavoratori qua [...]" fece Bepi "e forse anche più di te."[10]

Although thematically interesting, this story comes across as somewhat less lively than many of the other episodes which comprise the Australia Cane / Australia paesana series. The humour is rather more heavy handed than usual while the intrusion of a number of cultural stereotypes and the attempt to be all-embracing in this sense seems to load the story with too many elements to make it easily manageable. As a consequence the characterization suffers and even the indomitable Giovanni tends to stay somewhat in the background.

Linguistically Bosi's Italian stories are written in a fairly simple although traditional style. In the dialogues he often uses elements of popular Italian and Italo-Australian in order to give linguistic realism to the speech of his characters. Some traces of Italo-Australian may also be found in both the vocabulary and the syntax of the narrative such as rapporto 'report' or era deciso conquistare la casetta rosa. One wonders how conscious he is of this. In fact Bosi seems much more inclined to the use of Italo-Australianisms in the non dialogue portions than any other Italo-Australian writer. Now and again he is able to come up with quite innovative expressions in order to describe people and things in the Australian setting such as when he describes the puzzlement of Giovanni Carrano, just arrived in Happy Vale, as having "la faccia a punta di domanda" or someone who is obviously an immigrant as having a "faccia di italiano da esportazione". A lone eucalyptus tree is described as an "assetato eucalipto".

As stated above, Bosi has also published a collection of 24 short stories in English[11] on a variety of themes, not all humorous, and featuring various immigrant characters. Six of the stories have Italo-Australian settings and characters, five an "Australian" setting (but two refer to marginal social groups - tramps and dropouts), a further five deal with East European immigrants in an Australian setting, two relate to the Australian Greek environment and one each refer to Aboriginals, Irish, English, German and Egyptian immigrant characters. One story deals with the Vietnam war ('Vietnam - Five Dialogues and an epitaph', pp72-80) and one ('That ... thing in Via della Topaia", pp145-152, the only story with a European setting) is about

Gordon Samuel Pipps, an Australian professor and honorary president of the Canberra Anglo-Italian Cultural Society. On a visit to Rome Pipps is taken to court for urinating against the wall of a church because he did not want to use the nearby urinal (sculptured in 1552 by a well-known but unnamed artist) since he considered it a work of art. The stories are slanted from a somewhat "catchy" angle (clearly influenced by Bosi's journalistic experience) and, to a certain extent, seem to have been written to cash in on the then novelty interest in multiculturalism. This impression is confirmed by the Hodja decision to republish them.[12] Written substantially from an "Italian eye view" they deal with the more unusual aspects of "immigrant" or marginal group behaviour.

The "Italo-Australian" stories deal with the confrontation between the Italian immigrant and Australian society. This aspect is accentuated in those stories which are re-written from Australia Cane in the sense that in their original version the confrontation aspect was generally not so evident. One story has an autobiographical basis. In 'The Lecture' (pp118-121) Giulio, an 18 year old student who comes to Australia from Italy with his family, finds that he cannot continue with his studies. This is due to his lack of proficiency in English but also to the fact that his father's earnings are insufficient to support the family (father, mother and five children). Partly because of the factory work, but also partly because of the general environment Giulio experiences "a sense of futility at the dreariness of what he was doing. No intellectual stimulation; no involvement of his faculties [...] He felt degraded." (p118). When he is invited by his English teacher at night school to

give a lecture on Italy to some suburban cultural organization he sees this as a golden opportunity to enlighten Australian minds to the greatest civilization of the Western world. His lecture, delivered to a polite but unstimulating and unstimulated audience is well received on the mistaken assumption that Giulio is an exchange student from Italy and not an immigrant. But the audience's attitudes to Italian immigrants are somewhat different:

> " "We haven't had the time to acquire your sophistication. But we are trying. Please remember we are only a young nation." [...]
> Then the president's husband came to shake hands. "Yes, I've always told my friends Italians are good people after all. My gardener Giuseppe is a very good man. Does a wonderful job. And his wife is an excellent cook. She makes wonderful spaghetti. Yes, I think we could do with a few more of your countrymen."" (p121)

The story touches upon two significant culturally-oriented themes: the aspirations of those Italian immigrants who had had some education (and who thus did not emigrate just for economic reasons) and their frustration at finding a cultural wilderness in Australia; the Australian "cultural cringe" towards Italian (and generally European) culture; and their patronising attitudes and feelings of superiority towards the common or garden Italian immigrant. Another possible autobiographical story (but much more vaguely so) is 'The Writer' in which Emile Rossi, a bearded, idealistic and not yet recognized writer who is struggling to complete his masterpiece in the midst of genteel poverty, finally succumbs to his wife's continual complaints about their financial difficulties and accepts a well-paid job writing witty sayings for printing on toilet paper. This ingenious and sardonic tale with a tragi-comic ending story does not have an "ethnic" context as such (except in the name of the protagonist) although it is clearly a comment on Australian cultural values.

The other "Italo-Australian" stories, five in all, are re-writings from Australia Cane.[13] The basic plots are identical although the emphasis and some details have been changed to bring them into line with the cultural contrast theme. The English versions are generally less specific in their detail than their Italian counterparts. In some the names of the characters have been changed and the reason for this is not always apparent. In 'One's Land', the story of the Italian construction worker killed while working at a dam site, Zio Giovanni [Giovanni Carrano] becomes Uncle Antonio, the widow, Maria becomes Lucia and the name of the dead worker (Pietro) is not stated. This is perhaps deliberate, since by remaining anonymous he becomes a symbol of all Italian immigrant workers who have lost their lives in work-related accidents. The postcards of Italy stuck to the wall of Pietro's sleeping quarters become "postcards of Italian and Australian cities" (p28) in the English version, thus underscoring more closely the conclusion that Australia belongs to Italian immigrants as well as Australians since Italians too have sacrificed their lives for Australia's economic progress. In the Australia Cane version Zio Giovanni speaks good Italian while Zio Antonio speaks slightly broken English (a feature in common with the Italian characters in the other rewritten stories). 'Red Poppies' is another story which presents the Italian immigrant's desire to create a sense of belonging to this country, in this case by transposing some of their traditions to the Australian context. Both versions of this story are presented through the protagonist Giovanni who, at dusk on Anzac day, notices Il Biondino, Mario Donati (an unnamed young man in the English version) attempting to chisel his father's name on the local war memorial. His reason for wishing to do so is given in the story's poignant finale:

> "My father [...] he was killed at Bardia [North Africa] in the last war. At least we think he was killed there. I don't even know if he's got a cross on his grave. Or if he's got a grave at all. He was a stone-mason, my father. I learnt from him, when I was a little boy. Now my mother is dead and I mean to settle here. That's why I wanted to chisel my father's name among those of other soldiers killed at the same place. It was just an idea. I thought it would do no harm. I could come here like one goes to the cemetery to offer his respects to the dead." (Bosi 1973: 155)

The story also provides some comments on Anzac Day as an Australian tradition which is incomprehensible to Giovanni, although his reactions to and his considerations on the event are somewhat different in the two versions.[14] Giovanni, the ever-curious observer, initially does not understand what is going on. In fact the significance of Anzac Day does not become fully apparent until he meets Il Biondino. He witnesses the speeches and beer-swilling which are so characteristic of this event. One of the speeches, delivered by the pro-immigrant newly elected mayor Jackson, has been omitted in the English version which is less detailed and more anonymous. Giovanni listens to the speech without understanding it even though Mayor Jackson, in his condemnation of the beer drinking, as well as in his claim that immigrants too should be identified with the Anzac tradition, presents views which the reader later finds out are very close to those held by Giovanni.

Another great Australian cultural tradition, gambling on the horses, is presented in 'Volcano', a story as true to life as any fiction can be. Pasquale (Giovanni Carrano in the Italian version), a "sensible middle-aged father of three to whom life had taught that money was like one's own teeth" (p100), goes to the races for the first time out

of curiosity because his brother is in the habit of betting and sometimes loses a whole week's pay. There he meets an old Australian inveterate gambler who asks him to place bets for him because he had been banned from gambling for six months by the court. When Pasquale sees that the old man keeps winning he too is tempted to place some bets and he too finds that he is on a winning streak. However in the last race, fraught with tension and excitement, their horse, Volcano, just misses out on coming in first and Pasquale who had placed all his money on the horse (although the old man had warned him to be careful), and chewed up his ticket in his excitement, ends up walking the ten miles back home. The two stories have a different ending. In the Italian version the conclusion is somewhat moralistic as we are told that "Giovanni non andò mai più ad una corsa di cavallo." (Bosi 1971:115). In the English version we are left in doubt as to whether Pasquale did or did not indulge in gambling again. The old Australian gambler (old Tom in the Australia Cane version) is one of Bosi's more successful minor characters. Knowledgeable about horses, he backs his judgements with individualistic purpose of mind, taking both his wins and losses philosophically. To him it is the race that counts not the result, as he remarks when his horse just misses coming first in the last race: "He's a great 'orse, you know, a real champ. See the fight he put up? Tell you what, it was worth it all, to the last cent" (Bosi 1973: 107). 'St Anthony and the Chicken-House', in which Giuseppe (Giovanni Carrano in the Italian version) shocks a Jehovah's Witness by nailing a picture of St Anthony (protector of animals) to his back yard chicken coop, deals very superficially with the theme of religious-based cultural maintenance among the Italo-Australian community. These

practices sometimes would provoke negative reactions in the host society such as when Australian Irish catholic parish priests used to ban Italian saint day processions in their parishes. The story is fairly similar in both versions although the English version is less detailed. Giuseppe speaks broken English while Giovanni in the Italian version speaks good Italian although the language shift does not in any way diminish his remorseless native logic which allows him, although unlettered in the finer points of scripture, to put the visiting evangelist to flight.

A shift in the ethnic orientation (from Italian to East European) of the character occurs in 'The Television Set', although the plot and conclusion of the two stories are identical. This tragi-comic story does have an interesting though barely descernible theme viz. that the host society often crushes in a quite cruel way the aspirations of the immigrant.

Yet another story with an Italian connection is 'Winter tale' which is a rewriting in Australian terms of "Dagli! Dagli!" from the Tre Case e un Campanile series.[5] In the Italian story Toldini, a surveyor, who visits on business a small Italian village, is inexplicably chased away by the villagers. The Australian version is more detailed, better structured and articulated. Gordon Jones, a young Sydney architect who has never been to the snow, visits Cabramurra, a small township "nestling on a white, wintery slope of the Snowy Mountains" (Bosi 1973: 93). During his two-day stay Gordon discovers a part of Australia he did not know existed and is favourably impressed both by the place and by the fact that the skiing facilities and the Snowy

River Scheme were being developed largely due to the work of the immigrants. Because of this he finds himself approving of the immigrant presence in Australia albeit in somewhat patronising terms. Gordon's euphoria is rudely shattered when he is chased by a group of irate immigrant workers. After he finally manages to board the outward bound coach he finds out that he had been mistaken for the referee in a soccer match between a Yugoslav and Italian team from the work camp which had been held that afternoon. Although it is an improvement on the Italian version the story is a somewhat banal one and its theme remains obscure. In common with the Italian version it presents the idea of suspicion for the stranger in small rural remote communities (whether in Italy or Australia). Perhaps it also means to say something about the way in which the nicer and more pleasant aspects of what immigrants have to offer Australia are accepted by the host society. However, when relations between the two groups become strained the immigrants become, as Gordon so eloquently puts it, "damned, fucking bastards" (Bosi 1973: 99).

The other "ethnic" stories present common cultural or other aspects of the particular group they deal with. Although the stories lack any real depth, and often any real characters, they are well told and present sociologically interesting if not common aspects of the various ethnic groups in Australia and marginal groups in Australia. The personages encountered are "Poms", Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Greeks, Germans, Aboriginals and tramps. They are united by a common denominator which is that of the clash with the reality of existence in Australia in a society characterized by material and pragmatism which often denies them their aspirations. So in

'Nocturnal (without ghosts)' (Bosi 1973: 29-34) two slightly drunk Northern Europeans walking through an outer Sydney suburban cemetery philosophise on why there are no ghost stories in Australia and conclude that this is because "Australians don't have any respect fot the dead" (p31). "The case of poor Tamas' (Bosi 1973: 122-129) relates the story of Tamas Seidler, a Hungarian post World War II refugee who, after having his jaw broken in a pub for daring to speak his language in public, pretends to be mad because he had heard that mad immigrants were shipped back to their country of origin. However, as a stateless person, Tamas is not sent back but committed to a psychiatriac centre instead. An English immigrant, founder of Motorists Anonymous, kicks a parking policeman in the backside out of frustration over parking problems in Sydney's city centre and ends up in court for his trouble ('The provocation', Bosi 1973: 46-50).

The language of Bosi's English stories is simple but perhaps a little too colloquial in the non dialogue parts. Apart from the odd very rare formal error, his English is morphologically and syntactically correct.

So far Bosi's only published English narrative The Checkmate has attracted some critical attention which, on the whole, has been favourable, although one wonders to what extent Bosi has been understood by his Australian critics. It is difficult, for example, to understand Angelika Fremd's claim that the type of humour presented by Bosi is peculiar to "ethnic" writers while her queries regarding the origin of Bosi's distinctive brand of humour can to a large extent be answered by referring to the influence of Giovanni Guareschi:

" *The Checkmate* is the work of a raconteur par excellence. Bosi's stories are witty, humorous and perceptive. They are stories about all types of people, from all walks of life and nationalities. The ability to 'spin a yarn' with a humorous twist, holding all characters up to ridicule, seems to be a peculiarly 'ethnic' contribution to Australian literature. Whether these stories originate in the literary traditions of the writers' native country or in the obvious humour emanating from situations in which cultures clash, is uncertain. Whatever the reason, it is a literary form to be welcomed. A story of this type crosses boundaries, as do Bosi's stories. Humour becomes the great leveller; migrants and Australians alike are held up to a humane form of ridicule. This collection escapes the tone of self-pity which is characteristic of so much migrant writing. Here, the divine spark of comedy intervenes to make migrants of us all in situations where one set of customs and thought patterns clashes with another." (Fremd 1984: 174)

Of course, those who reviewed the second edition of The Checkmate did not have access to Bosi's Italian narrative and were thus not able to obtain an overall view of Bosi as a writer of fiction. Somewhat too facile and thus prone to superficiality, Bosi comes across as an inventive and varied writer who, to date, has not substantially broken out of the Italian "ghetto" in a thematic sense, an image very much in keeping with the widely held one of Bosi as a "professional Italian". Perhaps as he continues to write and publish, his further production may serve to dispel this somewhat restricting image. Despite its shortcomings Bosi's narrative is interesting in a sociological sense and it is usually well told although his journalistic orientation is too often apparent.

ABIUSO AND THE HARSH REALITIES OF WORKING CLASS MIGRANT EXISTENCE

Bosi's somewhat sugar-coated presentation of the Italian working class immigrant is certainly quite alien to Giuseppe Abiuso who in his novella 'Diary of an Italian Australian School Boy' deals with the dialectic relationship between Australian society and the immigrant. The 'Diary' may well be considered the best piece of the collection The Male Model (Abiuso 1984). It is a story in which "bitterness and farce are intertwined as an adolescent Italian boy is put through the wringer of assimilation" (Myers 1985).

Abiuso transposes in his English writing the concept of linguistic realism evidenced in the works of Pier Paolo Pasolini, particularly in Ragazzi di Vita. Originally written in a very colloquial and somewhat crude English, the 'Diary' was issued in cyclostyle in both a "cleaned up" English version and in Italian under the auspices of the Maribyrnong High School Multicultural Education Project in 1975. Abiuso's object in so doing was to provide students in a school with a high concentration of pupils from non English-speaking families (many of them Italian) with a literary text which would be relevant to their own and their families' experiences. He also wished to build up the reading ability in English of his Italian pupils through the use of the bilingual text.[15] That his project was successful may be deduced from the essays written by his students.[16] Subsequently a chapter of the Italian version was published in Abiuso 1979: 92-98 and the complete revised English version in Abiuso 1984: 100-160.

The exegetical history of the 'Diary' has a somewhat unusual twist. There are some very striking and substantial resemblances between Abiuso's story and the film Moving Out, produced in 1982 by Pattinson Ballantyne Film Productions Ltd. These resemblances, of course, are also to be found in the book version of the film (Garner - Giles 1983) which was reputed to have sold ten thousand copies within six weeks of publication. Although it is difficult to prove plagiarism in a legal sense (so far Abiuso does not seem to have carried out his intentions in relation to copyright proceedings) the fact remains that there are some very obvious resemblances between the two stories. Both contain close similarities in location, main characters (as well as some of the minor ones - eg the deaf and traditionalist English teacher), in their themes and in numerous details. However, the 'Diary' portrays an Italian working- class family caught up in a vicious circle of poverty and misfortune. The illness of Mario's father - his coughing and spitting - and his unemployment are very powerfully drawn as are the family context and the relationship of Mario to school. In Moving Out the Condello family seems to have "made it" through sheer hard work and sacrifice. The family's projected move to Doncaster (from Fitzroy) signifies upward socio-economic mobility. The prospect of leaving his old haunts and friends is one of the two main themes of Moving Out, the other being the embarrassment Gino feels about his family and other "wogs" as he becomes Australianized. The focus on the central character also differs in the two works. Mario's problems at school and the conflict between the two cultures come under close scrutiny in the 'Diary' while in Moving Out the emphasis is on the generation gap, Gino's love affair and his attachment to Fitzroy. While there is psychological

attention to the portrayal of Mario, it does not seem to be as pronounced as it is with Gino. In part this can be explained by the compactness of 'Diary' as compared to the longer Moving Out as well as the difference in format - one is a diary and the other a novel. There is also a difference of interpretation in the themes of the two works. In Moving Out the conflict between Gino and his "more Italian" family is resolved by Gino giving in and going with his parents. He does not leave his family. In the first version of 'Diary' Mario chooses to remain in Australia when his family goes back to Italy. In a sense Mario's family leaves him. In style and language 'Diary' is raw and gutsy while Moving Out is more polished and literary. But it is less evocative and has less of the smell of life about it, thus presenting a somewhat adulterated picture of the migrant working class experience. The authors of Moving out have glossed over the ugly features of immigrant working-class existence, possibly in part to appeal to the mass consumption, largely anglo-australian, market which would find more palatable a story of relative immigrant success in the lucky country.

The protagonist-narrator of 'Diary', Mario Carlesani (called "Mars" by his peers) lives in Fitzroy where the family rents half a house for twenty dollars a week. His mother is pregnant, he has three younger sisters and his father is not working due to illness. Alfio Carlesani has found disillusionment through migration since in Italy he had a secure job as a street sweeper. One of his reasons for emigrating was that Mario would find better educational opportunities in the new country but this too is negated. Mario's school experience is equally disadvantaged:

> "I was shoved into Form3 again. This is my second year there, since I came to Australia three years ago from Italy, when I was fourteen years old. I spent one year in that bloody tin shed called Migrant English Course. In winter it was freezing there and in summer we couldn't breathe. Now I am seventeen and soon I'll be eighteen and I have to be with the little kids of Form 3. [...] I hate the school but my father insists that I go to school, because he reckons that it is my only chance to become somebody. The old man is crackers."[17]

In his rebellion against the constraints placed upon him by society in the form of school and the family, and in his ambivalent attitude towards those closest to him, parents and sisters, Mario can to a certain extent be compared to the narrator-protagonist of Paese fortunato. He drops in and out of school in various unsuccessful attempts to find work in order to resolve somehow his and his family's situation. For them Australia has certainly not been a lucky country, although in the final analysis all they can do is exercise an amazing tour de force of folk logic and pray:

> "On Sundays my mother puts on her best black dress and goes to church followed by all the kids. My father doesn't go to church because he thinks that church is only for women. This Sunday I didn't go to church and I said that I would stay with dad to cook the meat sauce for the spaghetti. My mother insisted that I go because it was a special occasion and we all had to give prayers "alla Vergine Immacolata" so that she would help us to find the thousand dollars we need to go back to Italy.
>
> I said to my mother: "Look Mum, you don't believe that the immaculate Virgin is going to give you a thousand bucks out of the blue like that."
>
> She came up and gave my face a tremendous back-hander and said, "That'll teach you to swear! And don't forget that if no one can help you then l'Immacolata Vergine will. Do you forget, how when we couldn't find the money to come to Australia we all prayed to il Bambin Gesu. and even your father came to church that day. And soon the Australian authorities accepted us and gave us assisted passage."
>
> I said, wiping my lips, "Why do we send prayers to l'Immacolata Vergine, if Jesus makes more miracles than her."

> She said, "By sending prayers to l'Immacolata Vergine, madre di Gesu, we are going to give her a chance to see what a mess we are in here after her son Jesus had made a miracle to send us here."" (Abiuso 1984: 117).

In the end their prayers are answered as it is hinted in the 1975 version that the family is offered repatriation back to Italy. However in the 1984 version it is stated that the family moves to Widefields (an outer Melbourne suburb?) where Alfio Carlesani, having recovered from his illness, finds work in an asbestos factory. Perhaps this aspect of the conclusion in the second version was influenced by Moving Out! However it is in keeping with Abiuso's thesis that the immigrant worker is an object of exploitation since Alfio's work is very much a health hazard. In both versions Mario, who through school and his friends had begun to understand something of the Australian spirit, decides to stay behind in Fitzroy and goes to live with one of his school friends, Geoffrey. The 'Diary' concludes with the exposition of Mario's plan to drop out of school and to go to look for work in the Northern Territory, the last genuine Australian frontier (Abiuso has written other stories on this theme - see chapter 6), where he will join Geoffrey's big brother in the top end's "silent nights all surrounded by those white ghost gums" (Abiuso 1984:160). Thus Mario is to continue his investigation of the Australian spirit, a search both initiated and inspired by his sometimes Paul Hogan-like reflections on Australian cultural concepts:

> "I start my essay this way: "The real Australian, not the Australian of this city, not even those people like my father or Mr. Ali Taki, and myself and the women folk like my pregnant mother, who all live in a city which is in Australia but is not the real Australia, is something especially grown in the hardship of this land. The real Australians are those blokes who hide in the big bush country waiting in the sweltering heat for a bushfire to start so they can put it out in a couple of minutes. The real Australians sit near the Murrumbidgee, killing a

> few blow flies, waiting for the river to flood, so they can put up banks of sugar bags full of sand, and control the flood and save all the crops of the man on the land." (Abiuso 1984: 128)

Although schematic, a factor which does not allow full development of characterisation (many of the characters may be seen as stereotypes) and which leads to some puzzling transitions in the story line, Abiuso's story is a powerful one. In many ways it parallels a number of themes and issues also dealt with in Cappiello's Paese fortunato even if in the 'Diary' these lack elaboration and the central character, Mario, is not as complex, in psychological terms, as Rosa. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, to which must be added its pedagogical orientation, the text has not met with the success it deserves. It does raise some provoking questions about the nature of Australian culture/society and It is effective in dealing with the dialectic relationship between the "ethnic" group (mainly the Carlesani family but there others as well: Turk, Greek and Yugoslav) and mainstream society.

The relationship between Australian and "immigrant" individuals is largely a positive one. Although Mario at school is treated as a "no hoper", "dumb, stupid and Italian", this seems to come about more as a result of the inherent characteristics of the education system, with ethnicity providing just one more negative factor in the whole process. In fact one of the major themes dealt with is the relationship between the education system and the underprivileged. The school, situated in a lower working class inner city Melbourne suburb has inadequate resources, is overcrowded and has to cope with

considerable discipline problems. A number of the immigrant students, like Mario, are two or three years older than their class mates. The home environment is not conducive to study and some of the families, like the Carlesanis, cannot afford to buy uniforms and textbooks. Collectively there is a "them and us" division between the teachers, middle class white collar professionals, and the pupils who come from poor working class families. At a personal level, however, relationships across class and ethnic barriers are more positive. The Deputy Principal punishes Mario for breaking the school rules, and sometimes bullies him, but also attempts to give him some good advice. Mr H., the deaf English teacher who is the continual butt of student pranks, pays the Carlesani's power bills when the family has the gas and electricity cut off. The history teacher encourages Mario in his somewhat unarticulated search for the spirit of Australia (not to be found in the big cities). Miss K. the politically active left-wing teacher who sometimes and unofficially teaches sex education instead of mathematics, attempts to instill in Mario some political awareness. For her the power élite - capitalists and politicians - is responsible for the problems faced by poor migrants but both the problems and their causes are similar to those which beset poor Australians. Through his experiences Mario moves from a position of feeling alienated from all aspects of Australian society to that of class solidarity (active participation in the activities of the Victorian Secondary Students Union) and an appreciation of the "true" spirit of Australia.

The "ethnic's" relationships with other aspects of mainstream society are, however, less fortunate. The students who reject the school before it can fully aid them in the transition process either fall foul of the law (Nick) or take to prostitution (Rodenka). Both seem to be acting in protest against a hostile host society. The medical and welfare systems also provide negative experiences. The clerk at the local CES office is patronizing and displays an attitude of superiority towards these immigrants who, according to him, are doomed to perpetual unemployment. The reception Mario and his father are given when they attempt to obtain assistance from the Comitato per l'Aiuto agli Italiani Bisognosi leads Alfio to refuse to fill in the form. Hence the Italian community and its various organizations are of no help at all. His attempts to find a cure for his illness only lead the doctor (who speaks a little Italian) to make snide comments about "Italian gut ache" (p131). Italian immigrant workers are looked upon as shirkers and the doctor's suggestion that Alfio should take a holiday is both inappropriate and irrelevant, given the family's dire financial circumstances. Health interpreter services are nonexistent so Mario is forced to interpret for both his mother and father, a matter which causes him some embarrassment. Mario's mother falls pregnant because the family is too poor for his mother to afford the pill. When the crisis comes at the climax of the story and both father (who is having a breakdown) and mother (who is having a baby) are hospitalized, their lack of knowledge of the health system (they did not book a maternity bed, nor are they subscribers to the ambulance services) creates a number of problems which are resolved only with the help of Rodenka and an Australian taxi driver who manages to have them both admitted to the respective hospitals.

In the final analysis the 'Diary' poses the question: what is Australian identity and how can NES immigrants relate to it? Society as a whole, through its various institutions, has a negative function in that it alienates and excludes the immigrant. Individuals have a positive function in that they can offer the immigrant practical help (the English teacher or the taxi driver) or they can lead the immigrant to an understanding of the Australian spirit. Mario's parents fail to achieve this (and at least in part this seems to be one of the basic causes of their plight) because of their isolation brought about through lack of English but also through their adherence to traditional Italian peasant values and their unwillingness to participate in and to accept the positive aspects of the new land. They can only think of Australia in negative terms (eg. Mario's mother: "Santa Maria madre di Dio aiutami tu in questa terra dove ti fanno morire come cani", p118). In Mario's case this is brought about through his contacts with the history teacher (assignments on Australian history/culture), Miss K (political commitment to issues of immediate concern), his school friends (Mario will not dob on his class mates) and Geoffrey's big brother. Through these contacts the immigrant (Mario) is led to become an active participant in Australian society even if he may not fully accept it.

Some of Abiuso's autobiographical stories (see Chapter 5) also relate to the Italo-Aust community or specifically to individuals within it. One story which deals with the relationship of an Italian immigrant to the Australian union system is 'An Italian Joins the Union'.[18] A light-hearted story set among Melbourne Victoria Rail workers, it nevertheless presents a number of reflections on

unionism and Australian workers. It is a send-up of both Australian attitudes to work and the immigrant work ethic. Peppe (nicknamed Pacioccone), an easy-going Roman who would much rather sit in the sun and eat than work, decides to emigrate to Australia lured by the tales of easy earnings. When Ernie, the local Secretary of the Victorian Railway Workers Union is declared the winner in a contest to discover the biggest loafer, Pacioccone, who had bet his entire pay packet on him, decides to join the Union since he has now become really fond of Australians.

Bosi and Abiuso, the two writers who have concentrated on the Italian community as a major theme, present two quite differing philosophical standpoints. Bosi is inward-looking, exploring mainly the relationships within the community and positing, implicitly, the formation of an Italo-Australian society as an almost autonomous enclave within the host society. Of course Bosi also examines, but it is less important, some aspects of the relationship between the enclave and the host society. Abiuso, on the other hand, presents a more dynamic and dialectic rapport between the Italo-Australian community and the host society. If either the individual or the community group do not make the effort to participate in the social, cultural and political ambience of the mainstream they are pushed to one side, ignored and deprived, becoming "emarginati". According to Abiuso the solution to the vexed question of the relationship between immigrant (group) and host society is that of participation in the mainstream. It is the only way in which the group/individual can emerge with a unique cultural, social and political identity.

THE ITALO-AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY VIEWED BY A VISITOR FROM ITALY

The Italo-Australian community is also one of the main themes presented in a short, somewhat schematic and commonplace novel Oltre il Mare (Bertozzi 1984) which relates the story of an unnamed thirty year old woman who leaves her isolated hillside village in Italy to travel to Australia in order to get married. However, once she arrives there she finds that her way of thinking is quite different from that of her relatives, who cling to the old traditional ways. As a result the marriage is called off and she goes back to Italy but not before she has had the time to make a number of comments on Australia and the Italo-Australian community as embodied in her relatives. In emigrating, her relatives and paesani have maintained a number of social and personal values and characteristics which have disappeared in the home village. The dialect spoken by her aunt and the comare is to her almost incomprehensible "simile a quello che sentivo parlare da mia nonna ma mescolato di strane parole inglesi" (p38). Concepts such as family honour (p30), the patriarchal figure and the marked differentiation between male and female roles are maintained. This atavistic view of Italo-Australian society is exemplified by Rosario, son of the comare of the protagonist's aunt, who is suggested as a possible alternative husband for her and who looks like "un uomo delle caverne" (p35) whose eyes "emanavano una luce sospettosa e insignificante allo stesso tempo (p35).[19] Money and the migrant work ethic (p48) are the overriding social and personal values while the cultural and language barriers which exist between parents and children further accentuate the isolation of the immigrant (p34). Their life in Australia is thus one which is

"metodica e di scarse relazioni sociali" (p34). In the eyes of the protagonist this contrasts with life back in the paese where, despite the material poverty

> "la vita sociale era piena di umana comprensione che la rendeva viva e varia e ricolma di piccole soddisfazioni impossibili a trovarsi in una massa di gente anonima" (Bertozzi 1984: 35).

Hence emigration for these people has meant the loss of the best values of the old society, the retention of the more retrograde ones and a lowering of the quality of life which in Melbourne, despite the material well-being, is much more monotonous than back in the hillside village. The reluctance of these immigrants to understand and to amalgamate with the new environment condemns them to live in a ghetto (p59) which isolates them not only from mainstream society but from their own children as well.[20]

GINO NIBBI: THE ITALO-AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY OBSERVED

In the short story writers the "Italo-Australian" theme is more varied, if only because there are more writers and short stories written on this theme than novels. It is one of the main elements in Gino Nibbi's two collections of short stories, although Nibbi substantially presents the "Italo-Australian" element as part of the varied and multifaceted observations he makes through his fictional, factional and travelogue type accounts of Australia and Australian society.

Nibbi's second collection of 26 essays and short stories Cocktails d'Australia[21] provides six stories with a specific and predominant Italo-Australian theme while a further seven contain "Italo-Australian" elements though not as predominant theme. Six non-fictional accounts are based on historical or sociological aspects of the Italo-Australian community.

In this group of stories Nibbi relates aspects of the Italo-Australian community of the 50s and early 60s, when the community was relatively young, the bulk of immigrants were newly arrived, dynamic and not yet fully settled. Compared to Bosi's Australia Cane Nibbi's tales are related with more depth, have a more verbose (at times too verbose) style and more convincing characterization. Both writers tell their tales in a humorous vein although Nibbi's humour is often veined with sardonic and ironic tones which are lacking in Bosi. In fact, if Bosi invites comparison with Guareschi, Nibbi, to a certain extent, might tend to remind one of Moravia. Nibbi does not attempt to cover the whole range of the migration experience nor does he attempt to deal with universals as Bosi does. Rather he focuses on a few salient aspects presented from a subjective and highly individualized point of view.

'Atto di Richiamo' (Nibbi 1965: 5-18)[22] presents the tragi-comic tale of Santina Famularo from Matera who had become engaged "by correspondence" to Carmelo Sciutti. She has acted as sponsor for him and has paid for his passage to Australia in the expectation that he will marry her. However, when the ship docks, Santina's family discovers that Carmelo has had an affair with one of the other

passengers and Santina finds herself left in the lurch. The story presents an important aspect of the Italo-Australian community of the time, that of proxy engagement or marriage. It has an odd twist in that it was much more usual for men to arrange proxy engagements or marriages with girls in Italy, given the predominance of Italian born men with respect to Italian born women present in Australia at the time. In a sense Nibbi is commenting, in a somewhat derogatory manner, on the way in which Southern Italian families cling to traditional values (eg. the old adage "mogli e buoi dai paesi tuoi"), something which is also taken up by Cappiello. The daughters (described by Nibbi as "fosche saracene", p14) may achieve some degree of emancipation (eg. in education and employment) but their choice of husband is guided if not dictated by the family. There is a happier though ironic ending in the story of Lelio Poggio ('Procura', Nibbi 1965: 265-278) who marries by proxy Lucia Spina of Isernia and prepares for her arrival by decorating and furnishing the house with the help of two Australian "flames" Joyce and Peggy.[23] Although this story presents a somewhat commonplace stereotype relating to perceived traditional Southern Italian patterns of male and female behaviour, it is wittily told and it does depict the trials and tribulations which the somewhat unnatural practice of proxy marriages caused the parties involved. In particular the meeting of Lelio and Lucia, the emotionally charged atmosphere during the drive to their home in Fitzroy, Lucia's reaction on seeing her future home for the first time and her surprise at the presence of Joyce and Peggy (although Lelio manages to convince her they are just neighbours) are told in a vivid and compelling manner.

The Italo-Australian marriage feast constitutes the central theme of 'Sposalizio'[24] (Nibbi 1965: 218-227) in which the daughter of a Calabrian fruit shop proprietor (an important personage in Melbourne's suburbia) throws a party complete with a thousand guests, green tagliatelle and and three hundred pounds worth of photographs which will go to "emozionare i cugini e i compari disseminati nelle frazioni di Catanzaro e Cosenza" (p219). Nibbi presents in vivid detail the various aspects of this theatrical ceremony whose true protagonists are the parents of the bridal couple. Among the immigrants it has become a tradition to vie with each other in order to produce a bigger and better ceremony, a form of conspicuous consumption reinforced by the crass materialistic values inherent in Australian society, something to which Nibbi does not subscribe since the description of the ceremonial is presented in tones of somewhat amused condescension.

The Italian male's reputation as a "Latin lover", an important cultural stereotype, constitutes the theme of three of the "Italo-Australian" stories which have a somewhat Boccaccian quality: "gli italiani in Australia sono di moda: si vuol dire con le donne, che ne sono più o meno infatuate" (p202). In 'L'Ospedale' (Nibbi 1965: 112-125) Coletti, admitted to the Mercy Hospital when suddenly taken ill, spends his convalescence trying to flirt with the nurses and ends up kissing a French Canadian nun, much to her indignation. Celestino Fiorenzo ('Pompe funebri', Nibbi 1965: 177-199), an accountant from Cava dei Tirreni is unable to exercise his profession in Australia and ends up working for an undertaker. He finds that he cannot ward off the rather insistent advances of Ruby and becomes

involved in an amorous adventure tinged with the macabre. One of the status symbols for the residents of Toorak is to have an Italian gardener ('Giardinieri di Toorak', Nibbi 1965: 200-217).[25] Toni, a Friulano, finds that not just his gardening talents are in demand and although his English is rudimentary his services are contested by two neighbours, Mary and Betty. When Betty's husband discovers him in the bedroom he is promptly sacked without so much as a reprimand, behaviour which Toni finds quite difficult to understand and which he probably finds more offensive in cultural terms (being treated as a mere object) than if the husband had made a fuss.

Snippets of the Italo-Australian environment are present in other short stories such as in 'Cortometraggi di un sobborgo' (Nibbi 1965: 126-149)[26] which presents the figure of Artemisia (pp130-135), a recently arrived Abruzzese mother in law. She is a virtual storehouse of folk wisdom and a close observer of the goings on in the vicinity (despite her total lack of competency in English) to the point that she acts as an oral neighbourhood newspaper. Notwithstanding her age and her "contadino" background, Artemisia is able to take Australia in her stride, even to the point of replying in Abruzzese to the pensioners who wish her "good day" as they walk past her house. The only aspect which leaves her at a loss is her inability to always distinguish between male and female from the way most Australians dress. In 'Emigrati senza nostalgie' (Nibbi 1965: 164-176) there is a brief appearance of a Friulano who goes to the Department of Immigration office to have a letter written to his fiancée in Italy, one of the government services provided for the assistance of new arrivals!

The six non fictional (factional) accounts constitute a set of writings, presented in a discursive mode somewhat reminiscent of a type of style employed in feature articles in Italian newspapers. A vivid description of Melbourne's "Little Italy" is provided in 'Italiani di Lygon Street' (Nibbi 1965: 228-238).[27] This piece also provides Nibbi with the chance to insert an Australian-eye-view comment in Italian immigrants: "Gli italiani sanno godersi la vita [...] noi cosa siamo?" (Nibbi 1965:238). The activities and attitudes of some members of the small Marchigiano community is presented in 'Marchigiani di Melbourne' (Nibbi 1965: 239-254).[28] An aspect of the activities of the Melbourne Dante Alighieri Society[29] is outlined in 'Romagna spaesata' (Nibbi 1965: 255-264) in which a reading of a poem by Pascoli is attended by a number of Australians who have never heard of the poet. The meeting is also attended by a few "saraceni arricchiti" and their non Italian speaking daughters who come to the Dante "per mantenere alto il nome d'Italia" (p262) but who sit through the proceedings in silence. This comment on the rather odd cultural values to be found in both Australians and Italo-Australians is also taken up by Giovanni Andreoni in a short story "I.C.S." (Andreoni 1978: 77-81). Andreoni touches upon the activities of the Dante (which he calls "Italian Cultural Society"), which he sees as a vehicle for assimilation and for the propagation of "official" Italian classical culture to both Australians and Italo-Australians. A succinct but interesting account of three Florentines, Ettore Checchi, Pietro Baracchi and Carlo Cattani, who arrived in Melbourne in 1874 and made considerable contributions to the development of Victoria (Checchi as a surveyor, Baracchi as Director of the Melbourne Observatory[30] and Cattani as Director of

Public Works) is told in 'Tre Pionieri'[31] (Nibbi 1965: 290-299). In this story Nibbi abandons his usual position of superiority and writes of the three with obvious admiration because their achievements had been outstanding. As Condell 1983: 107 points out, perhaps there is some hint of self-identification on the part of Nibbi, a Marchigiano, with these Toscani, whom he regards as the quintessential Italians. Less famous but widely known picaresque personages in the community are presented in 'Il Trattore Giovanni' (Nibbi 1965: 45-56) and 'Il Bardo di Innisfail' (Nibbi 1965: 300-313). The first relates the long and distinguished career of Giovanni, a master waiter whose restaurant, from humble beginnings became one of the most popular in Melbourne. The fame acquired by the restaurant is seen as an example of how ravioli, gnocchi and other Italian dishes have insidiously seduced Australian palates.[32] The second account is a lengthy but lively pen portrait of Gerardo (in real life most likely Gaetano De Luca[33]), a restaurant proprietor who supplemented his income by writing occasional verses for Italians in the area and whose services as a versifier were very much in demand.

Thus one of Nibbi's main themes in his narrative is the presentation of a selection of odd and curious aspects of the Italian migration experience in Australia presented from the point of view of one (Nibbi the author and in some stories the narrator) who, although an immigrant, himself does not consider himself one of the community. This technique of the "outside observer" is also adopted in those stories which deal with what is probably the most important theme in Nibbi's narrative, viz. the critique of Australia in both its physical and social characteristics.

ANDREONI AND THE ITALIAN IMMIGRANT ON THE LAND

The theme of the "Italo-Australian" community does not seem to be an important one in the novels of Giovanni Andreoni. Although the protagonist and some of the other characters in Martin Pescatore are Italian immigrants, other aspects of Australia are investigated. Similarly in Cenere the small community of Sardinian tobacco farmers provides the springboard for an examination of Australian attitudes and values and a discussion on multiculturalism.

In some of Andreoni's short stories, however, the Italo-Australian element does constitute a main theme. In 'La Farma' (Andreoni 1978: 28-33) an old contadino, who had arrived before the depression, had worked hard and had managed to buy his own farm, finds himself isolated alone and alienated when he reluctantly sells his land to go and live in the city with his Australianized son.[34] 'Pasquale e Giovanni' (Andreoni 1978: 44-46) is a short short story about two men who make friends when they go to Queenstown to work as miners. Giovanni dies in a mining accident and after five months Pasquale, who could not stand the work since his friend's death, decides to leave, determined never again to work for a boss. This somewhat sketchy story, told with sparse detail, nevertheless manages to strike some similarity with the more expansive Nibbi's 'Tasmania' (Nibbi 1937: 67-86) in that it accentuates the harsh conditions of the work which goes on despite the death of a worker ("Due ore dopo, partita la squadra di soccorso, ripresero a lavorare", p45).

Filippo/Philip Montefiore, the Italian-born protagonist of 'La Giornataccia di Montefiore' (Andreoni 1978: 50-57), who gives everyone to understand that he is born in Australia, is pleased when the bank sends him to manage a branch in the New England area, away from the Little Italies and the various Italian small businessmen with whom he has had to deal with in Sydney. However, despite his important position and his entirely Australianized ways, he is still considered a dago by the highly conservative rural community (it is very much Country Party territory). This story, one of Andreoni's longer and perhaps more successful ones, allows some psychological development in the main character, whose tragedy, epitomized by his inability to hold his liquor, is that he wants to be what the others will not let him be. His attempt to fully assimilate is thus a failure and his Italian origins cannot be hidden, forgotten or forgiven. At the same time Andreoni presents an interesting sketch of the rural upper class with their traditions (the formal dinner party) and their prejudices against socialists and immigrants.

'Australia Felix' (Andreoni 1978: 69-76) is the story of Bruno and Tony who are tired of working in a stereotyped environment and occupation. Both are waiters in small Italian restaurants and are called "Gino" by the Australian customers who consider that all Italian waiters have this name. They decide to try their luck in the outback in the wake of the mining boom only to find a landscape devastated by mining, dead kangaroos, old and sick Aborigines. On returning to the city Bruno goes back to working as a waiter, Tony finds employment at the Italian Consulate. There he is confronted by the ambivalent attitudes of the Consular officials towards the Italian

immigrants. On the one hand they praise them for their good work and behaviour, on the other blame them for not keeping abreast of developments in Italy. At the same time they do nothing about the fact that Italian immigrants do not have the right to vote. Despite the piles of paper wasted by both Australian researchers and Italian Government officials in writing reports about the immigrants, Tony feels that the real issues are being ignored. The story attempts to present two themes, that of the spiritual and political limbo in which the Italian immigrant often finds himself and that of the rape of the outback by the white man (anglo, not Italian), without really coming to grips with either. An interesting though not entirely successful technical feature of the story is the way in which quotations from research reports and the Italo-Australian press which cite the qualities of the Italian immigrants and their contribution to the economic development of Australia are contrasted with the personal story of Bruno and Tony. These lengthy quotations, however, tend to slow the pace of the story and detract somewhat from the development of the plot.

'Tabacco' (Andreoni 1978: 82-90) is set in the rural area around Bonshaw settled by tobacco farmers, mostly from Sardinia. It is a somewhat nondescript story which relates some of the commonplace themes regarding the experiences of Italian immigrants on the land, the backbreaking toil, which takes its toll of health, and their obstinacy in making things grow under difficult conditions, even when economic circumstances would dictate that the farms be abandoned.

Perhaps rather less important than in Nibbi, the "Italo-Australian" theme in Andreoni is often subordinated to a discussion of the Australian cultural and/or political context. The Italo-Australian community, rather than a separate enclave within the wider Australian community, is seen in a dialectic relationship with it. Further the community is seen as a specific example of the general case relating to the relationship of the various "ethnic" communities with the Australian context. This relationship is not an easy one, since the prejudices existing within mainstream society do not permit the Italian or indeed other immigrants to achieve full social and political participation in a country which is as much theirs as it is the Anglo-Australians'. To a large extent Andreoni's view of the community coincides with that of Abiuso. But there is an important difference. Andreoni seems to propose participation in mainstream society without loss of linguistic/cultural identity while Abiuso's position seems to be that of advocating a closer integration which would lead to a partial if not total loss of identity.

OTHER WRITERS

Some of the "autobiographical" stories examined in the previous chapter also present aspects of the Italo-Australian community. These are Seconda Giuliani's 'Così pensai all'Australia', Charles D'Aprano's 'La Bottega' and the two stories by Michele Giglio. One further story by Giglio, 'L'Intervista'[35], also features this theme. Like the other two, this story is written in a humorous vein which sends up the sometimes frenetic social and cultural activity which takes place within the Italian community. It also makes fun of the persons

who organize it, always on a voluntary basis. The occasion is the organization of a visit to Adelaide by famous Italian cinema director Sonia Fermueller (an obvious reference to Lina Wertmuller). The central character is Remo, a civil servant whose profession is a hobby and whose real occupation is that of general organizer cum ethnic radio broadcaster for the Italian community. Due to a series of misadventures Remo misses the meeting with the director, a matter which is made even more annoying by the fact that he had intended interviewing her for his radio programme. The story is a lively one especially since a number of the characters (or rather caricatures) are recognisably related to some of Adelaide's Italian Community leaders. It does have its more serious moments as well. Remo questions why he and others like him are so fanatically involved in their voluntary efforts on behalf of a largely unappreciative Italian community:

> "Forse era l'orgoglio, quell'orgoglio che cresce smisuratamente quando si emigra. Quel desiderio a tutti i costi che fa compiere sacrifici sovrumani. Esso si traduce in case a due piani, in blocchi di flats [...] e, nel caso di Remo, in una dedizione assoluta, incontrollabile, che rasentava l'assurdo, per una causa, quella della comunità che in fondo egli sentiva di disprezzare. Spiegatelo voi a questo poveraccio, che a vederlo sembrava un uomo insignificante, ma che, seduto ad un tavolo di riunione o davanti a un microfono, si trasformava in un gigante." (Rando 1988:110)

Hence the Italo-Australian community may be considered a major theme of Italo-Australian narrative both in terms of the relationships within the community itself and in its relationship to mainstream society. For different writers it represents different things: a comfortable and self-justifying ghetto for Bosi, a self-created prison

ghetto for Bertozzi, a stepping-stone to the wider Australian community for Abiuso, a means of contrasting and comparing Italian and Australian cultural values (Nibbi). Its presence cannot be ignored and sometimes there is no escaping it (Andreoni).

Notes

1. Bosi1972 - a controversial analysis of Australia and Australian society from the point of view of a non-English speaking immigrant who is considering leaving Australia to resettle in his home country. Bosi attempts to explain a number of foibles by reference to Australia's past - eg. he discusses copious beer swilling and a somewhat trite attitude to life and death as a result of the power structure and the nature of existence in convict settlements, people and cities are seen as lacking substance, vision and identity yet Australia is seen as having changed and suffered in the changes wrought by mass immigration. Bosi 1971b - a popularized and somewhat tongue-in-cheek history of Italian immigration to Australia which retells some of the more evident and well-known stories such as the claim to Matra as the "Father of Australia", the possible presence of an Italian (Tusa) among the first fleet convicts, the New Italy episode, the "Fighting Fiaschi", the black hand incidents in the 30's and mass immigration after the second world war. Bosi1986 - a socio-historical survey of ethnicism and multiculturalism in Australia which deals with themes such as dual citizenship, culture, language, his controversy with SBS, etc. Bosi has also published some 10 stories in Italian under the general title of Tre Case e un Campanile in the Italo-Australian paper La Croce del Sud over 1957-1958 and Requim for a Migrant Father, a biographical piece which was published by the Reader's Digest in 1974.

2. During an interview on 13 May 1986 Pino Bosi stated that the following were about to be published: Revolution in the Coup, Sydney, Kurunda [probably 1987] - a satirical novel in English on feminism written in the style of Orwell's Animal Farm (the novel had been written in 1975 on the occasion of the International Womens Year but had not been published at the time due to Bosi's commitments to Ethnic Radio). Mi sono scocciato, Sydney, Kurunda [probably 1987] - a collection of recently written poetry in Italian.

3. Australia paesana [former title: Australia strapaese] a novel in Italian intended as a sequel to Australia Cane (20 years later) will probably be published before the end of the year; Il Casimondo, a satirical novel in Italian on Italy's current socio-political dilemmas is ready for printng. Other novels completed or in progress are: Ciccio and the Demon Opal - a humourous novel about the Australia Wild West, Coober Pedy style; The Florentine - a historical novel set in 14th century Florence; Days - a historical novel dealing with five generations of an Italian family in Australia from the first world war to the present; Who says Balmain Boys don't cry? - a humourous novel with a political theme; Ethnic off: uncosmopolitan - a novel with an ethnic theme.

4. The following biographical and other information has been obtained from a tape recording of a seminar given by Bosi to the Euro 372 class (Italian Australian Studies) at the University of Wollongong on 29 September 1983.

5. Dagli! Dagli! (13-9-57, p7), Il Povero Dio (18-10-57, p7), Odio (15-11-57, p7), Suo Figlio (24-1-58, p7), I Topi del Convento (14-2-58, p7), Bortolo e i Cani (21-3-58, pp7-8), Le Calze di Lana, Piazza dei Martiri, Il Cavallante, Lo Sposalizio (the last three have not been published).

6. Giovanni Guareschi (Roccabianca [Parma] 1908 - Cervia 1968), who seems to have been particularly influential on both Pietro Tedeschi and Pino Bosi, was journalist and editor of various humoristic magazines. His tales of Don Camillo, which he began to publish in volume form in 1950 brought him wide renown as a humorous writer both in Italy and abroad. The Don Camillo stories have formed the basis for a number of films and a television series produced by the BBC. Guareschi has another interesting Australian connection. Giulio Montagna, currently managing editor of La Fiamma, is reputed to be an illegitimate son.

7. It is interesting to note what Bosi himself has said about Australia Cane - the comments are taken from the tape recording of the seminar (see note 7 above).

"il valore del libro era proprio quello che non si dava nessuna aria di fare della letteratura. Non cercava di presentare un italiano incomprensibile. Era fatto dell'espressioni comuni d'ogni giorno. Avevo rispettato il discorso del tagliacanna veneto come avevo rispettato quello del tagliacanna calabrese. Non avevo cercato di farli parlare in maniera sofisticata [... ma] con le loro espressioni perché portavano il sentimento che riuscivo a tirar fuori. Quel che volevo far capire era qual'era la vera e profonda intelligenza naturale di questa gente anche se non educata. Anche se non istruita. Tant'è vero che alcuni di questi racconti non sono poi scritti in modo tanto superficialmente come sembrano. Ci avevo pensato. Ma qui si doveva riflettere quest'intelligenza naturale, questa spontaneità d'animo, questa generisità, questa schiettezza. Questo diverso modo di concepire le cose dagli Australiani [...]

[...] Se volevamo dare [...] significato al discorso di cultura italo-australiana, letteratura italo-australiana, bisognava andare a cercare quello che c'era e bisognava valorizzarlo, bisognava metterlo ben in evidenza, farlo conoscere [...]

[...] Eccomi qui oggi, a distanza di [...] 28 anni, a parlare di un lavoretto che mi nasceva così, illuminato nella testa mentre giravo l'Australia facendo tutti i mestieri, raccogliendo le impressioni tra questi emigrati e cercando di buttarle giù perché non si dimenticasse quello che era successo [...] non si dimenticasse le loro ansietà, i timori, le ossessioni. E anche per cercare di far capire che molto spesso l'incomprensione tra Italiani e Australiani non era frutto du una cattiveria innata ma proprio di mancanza di contatto."

8. 'La Riunione culturale', Rando 1983: 152-156; 'Vent'anni dopo', in Australia: ieri oggi domani, vol. 1, no. 6 (September 1984), pp58-62.

9. 'La Riunione culturale' - see note 8.

10. 'La Riunione culturale', p154. In this story the title A.M.I.C.E.F. (Associazione Migranti Italiani Contemporanei e Famiglie) is a transparent play on the left-wing organization FILEF.

11. Bosi 1973. It is interesting to note what Bosi had to say about this book during the seminar (see note 4):

"Molti anni fa avevo scritto un libro, dopo Australia Cane, negli anni 70, chiamato The Checkmate, una collezione di racconti di tutte le razze qui in Australia. E anche quello ha fatto le sue 5000 copie.

[...] Il fatto che ne abbiano fatto una seconda edizione qua mi ha fatto piacere [...] [soprattutto] perché è stato fatto per le scuole. Quando ho scritto queste cose avevo questo grandissimo desiderio che questi libri potessero proprio servire a capir qualcosa [...]

Alcuni dei racconti di Australia Cane li ho riscritti in inglese. Li ho tolti dal contesto di Australia Cane [...] pubblicati precedentemente in antologie non tanto traducendo ma riscrivendoli in un'altra lingua [...] sapendo che chi leggeva Australia Cane era l'italiano [...] chi leggeva The Checkmate sarebbe stato un anglo-australiano quindi con una percezione di una cultura diversa."

12. Hodja Publications of Melbourne produces "multicultural" literature in English mainly for use in schools.

13. These are:

Australia Cane	The Checkmate (1973)
La disgrazia alla diga (pp97-100)	One's land (pp25-28)
Vulcano (pp108-115)	Volcano (pp100-108)
Sant'Antonio e il pollaio (pp116-119)	St. Anthony and the chicken-house(pp114-117)
Papaveri rossi (pp125-128)	Red poppies (pp152-155)
La Televisione (pp134-139)	The Television set (pp130-134)

14. Cfr. Bosi 1971: 125 and Bosi 1973: 152.

15. The following typewritten notes supplied by Abiuso explain when, why and how the Diary was written:

"The 'Diary' was written during 1972 and it took eight months. The time span included a little of Summer, Autumn, Winter and a little of Spring. It was completed in a larger format than the present school adapted edition.

WHY [sic] it was written. In the late sixties and the early seventies controversy was very high on the relevance of the educational programs and educational facilities to the largely non-English speaking pupils. Teachers were suffering a lot in dreadful conditions trying to teach to 'new type of students' programs which were suitable to 'Australians of the forties'. Two types of views were expressed then. The 'do goodie view' - help those migrant kids, be kind to them, bring to them left over clothes and books, do what you can, but don't hold any hope, they are not up to it. So encourage them to leave school.

The Reformist view. Programs must be changed because they are irrelevant to these children. Since they never made it [sic] to university, shape programs which can help them to be happy at school - Abandon the traditional disciplines and introduce other more relevant subjects.

Of course migrants were never consulted, teachers were then, not aware of aspirations and desires of their pupils and migrant parents.

I thought at the time, having observed so much suffering by both pupils and teachers, to write a novel seen from the vew [sic] point of a recently arrived student. I chose the main character to be Italian because of my background and also because work I was doing in those days setting up the first Australian Ethnic Parents Council.

HOW DIARY WAS WRITTEN

I thought that a book of this kind should be as realistic as possible both in form and content. So the English of the first draft was what one may call Migrant's English. The period should not be too polished and the vocabulary while large enough to be able to express 'abstractions', it should not be wide enough to contrast with character.

The content should be what really happened to a recently arrived young person to Australia who couldn't speak English, his parent's ambitions, how events and institutions can sometimes be cruel to individuals.

So I decided that a diary form should be used keeping in mind certain themes - irrelevance of Education programs, attempts by kind and innovative teachers to change programs such as Maths teachers who instead of teaching Maths taught Sex Education, contrasted to the kind English Teacher whose programs were belonging to [sic] other times, the same applies to the History Teacher. Other themes: conflict with parents, lack of interpreting facilities in doctor's surgeries, lack of accommodation, peer groups behaviour, student's aspirations. How teachers saw their pupils.

Characters were all fictional, some similarities were with living people were just coincidental - Mario was based from students. His family was another boy's family, but it had to be realistic enough to fit in with the aim of the book, e.g. English and History Teacher representing the do-gooders-conservative trend in education. The Maths and Migrant Teachers, the more progressive trend, the D. P. the human, kind, but professional teacher typical Victorian Department of Education.

The Setting had to be also realistic and it was centered aroung [sic] Ftizroy High School, North Fitzroy: 'Diary' never mentions the school. The fictional name of the Author was a combination of Mario Condello and Frank Carlesi.

The manuscript was first jotted on a log-exercise book every afternoon at the Rushall Railway Station, on the train to the city. It was then typed on foolscap at home, usually early in the morning at 4.00 a.m. The original manuscript is twice the size of the present book."

In fact by the late 60s teachers in direct contact with immigrant children in the classroom had abandoned the somewhat optimistic bland image of the highly-achieving and unproblematic immigrant child which had arisen in the 50s and had begun to insist on the need for more information and for recognition of the special needs of immigrant children. Martin 1981: 39 in reporting the results of a survey among immigrant and Australian youth undertaken in Geelong and Melbourne in 1967 points out that:

"Among the main sample of 1017 young people, the overesas-born were shown to have significantly lower educational qualifications than the Australian-born, the most disadvantaged being the Greeks and Italians. [...] While only two per cent of the Australian-born had only primary education, the corresponding figure for the migrant-born was substantially higher. There was therefore a higher proportion of the educationally underprivileged among the migrant-born, and the question which arose as to what extent those groups constituted a lower class, indeed possible a lower caste, in the community, was one which required further consideration."

16. The Italo-Australian children could, of course, relate to the situation quite directly. Although they were aware that most immigrants found what they wanted in Australia (job and financial security) they were also aware that some did not. For the non Italo-Australian, non immigrant, reader the contact with realism was also there. As one young critic put it: "This book reveals much of this migrant boy's feelings and the feelings of the people that he writes of. They are realistic people, I have met many like them, for they do not only enter Mario's life but everyone's life. Anyone not knowing of these people would find Mario's diary unrealistic, for realism is what you yourself encounter". In terms of language it was commented that it was "realistic" and "interesting", that it "actually showed how the grammar was used" and that it led to a better understanding of the story.

17. Abiuso 1984: 102. This theme is poignantly elaborated in Skipping Class, a television drama transmitted by SBS TV on 22 November 1986. Set in Melbourne it recounts the story of Stefan a 16 year old Macedonian who hates school and is doing badly. His teachers predict that he will not obtain his HSC but his father is sternly insistent that he continue since this will justify all the sacrifices he is made in emigrating to Australia. Stefan however ends up leaving school and joining his father as a labourer in the factory mush to the latter's disappointment and humiliation.

18. Abiuso 1984: 32-41. Previously published as 'Pacioccone s'iscrive al sindacato, Abiuso 1979: 49-54, the English version has appeared in two anthologies of "ethnic" literature.

19. It is interesting to note that Rosa Cappiello, a vastly different writer with respect to Bertozzi, makes a similar observation about the man proposed in marriage to the protagonist of Paese fortunato: "Rassomigliava a un porcospino riccioluto, il sigarone in bocca come simbolo del benessere acquisito, il cappello poggiato sulle ginocchia. Fin lì, niente da obiettare. Furono gli occhi a spaventarmi. Non mollavano una scintilla di intelligenza" (Cappiello 1981: 20).

20. Again a parallel with Cappiello who comments very briefly, almost en passant, on the ethnic community as an isolating ghetto: "il vento spirava un fiato pietrificato dalle comunità etniche. Come nuovo membro ero irremovibile. Ci sputavo sopra, in quanto non stirpe o elemento positivo che significava razza o costume, bensì pretesa di creare piccoli universi separati e nemici tra loro. Non volevo né dovevo sacrificarmi" (Cappiello 1981: 10).

21. For a more detailed analysis of this collection see chapter 4.

22. An excerpt of this story was published as 'Un atto di richiamo', Il Globo, 12-4-60, p3.

23. The subject of proxy marriages also provided material for 'Soffrono di nostalgia per la loro ragazza', Il Globo, 18 May 1960, p3; 'Nozze per procura', Il Globo, 7 March 1961, p3. On the subject of the shortage of women in Australia there are the articles 'L'Australia senza donne', Il Resto del Carlino, 1 October 1959, p3, 'L'Australia ha bisogno di donne ma non sa come né dove trovarle', Il Resto del Carlino, 21 June 1958, p3 and 'L'Australia deve importare almeno ventimila ragazze', Il Giornale d'Italia, 4 February 1958 (one wonders whether these instigated an increase in the number of Italian women emigrating to Australia).

24. An excerpt of this story was published as 'Tagliatelle a Melbourne per un pranzo di nozze', Il Giornale d'Italia, 11 July 1959, p3.

25. An excerpt of this story was published as 'Di moda giardinieri italiani per la cura delle ville di Toorak', Il Globo, 19 March 1960, p3.

26. Excerpts of this story were published as 'In ventiquattro ora da Manoppello la suocera Artemisia arrivò a Melbourne', Il Giornale d'Italia, 11 March 1960, p3 and 'Spizzica l'interessante', Il Globo, 29 June 1960, p3.

27. An excerpt of this story was published as 'Il sabato sera a Lygon Street l'inglese cede il passo all'italiano', Il Resto del Carlino, 29 July 1958, p3.

28. Excerpts of this story were published as 'I Marchigiani emigrati in Australia parlano sempre del loro paese', Il Giornale d'Italia, 15 July 1960, p3 and 'Marchigiani d'Australia', Il Globo, 6 July 1960, p3.

29. An excerpt of this story was published as 'Trecentocinquanta persone a Melbourne ascoltano e applaudano "Romagna solatia"', Il Resto del Carlino, 1 April 1959, p3 and 'Eletrizzata la "Dante" a Melbourne intorno ad una famosa poesie del Pascoli', Il Giornale d'Italia, 1-2 September 1960, p3. Further writings on aspects of Italian culture are: 'Umberto D piace in Australia', Il Giornale d'Italia, 7 September 1958, p5; 'I lettori australiani sono in attesa di un grande romanzo italiano', Il Resto del Carlino, 9 August 1957, p7; 'Detestano D'Annunzio perché trattò male la Duse', Il Tempo, 4 September 1956, p3; 'A Melbourne la biblioteca è ricchissima di libri italiani', Corriere Triestino, 8 May 1949, p3. In addition Nibbi wrote numerous articles on Italian art.

30. An interesting detail is that in 1908 Baracchi was a member of the commission which designed the Australian flag.

31. An excerpt of this story was published as 'L'Australia deve molto a tre pionieri fiorentini', Il Resto del Carlino, 21 May 1956, p3.

32. An excerpt of this story was published as 'Grazie a Riccardo, cameriere idealista, Melbourne conobbe i classici spaghetti', Il Resto del Carlino, 2 November 1957, p3. Other articles on Italian cusine in Australia are: 'Varie specialità gastronomiche italiane sulla mensa di un anfitrione del N.S.W.', Il Globo, 14 February 1960, p3; 'Le specialità della cucina italiana hanno conquistato gli Australiani', Il Giornale d'Italia, 11 March 1958, p3.

33. See Chapter 4, pp92-93. An excerpt of this story was published as 'Per cinque sterline con i nomi e le rime faceva poesie per nozze e compleanni', Il Giornale d'Italia, 23-1-1958, p3.

34. This story has some interesting parallels with Luigi Strano's poem 'U Pappu a l'Australia' (Strano 1964: 39) in which the old contadino finds that the generation and the cultural gap, exacerbated by the language barrier, make him feel alienated isolated and unwanted and to rue the day he decided to leave his Calabrian village to join his sons in an Australian city.

35. The story was awarded first prize for the narrative category in a competition held by the Multicultural Writers Association of South Australia in 1983. It was subsequently published in Rando 1988:98-110.

CHAPTER 4

AUSTRALIA REVISITED
GINO NIBBI'S *COCKTAILS D'AUSTRALIA*

In chapter 1 mention was made of Il Volto degli emigranti, which was the result of the author's first encounter with Australia in the 30s. His second collection of short stories Cocktails d'Australia (Nibbi 1965) is an offering to the Italian reader of his experiences in Australia in the 50s and early 60s. It is the first volume of Italo-Australian narrative to appear for nearly thirty years and as such marks the beginning of the period under consideration.[1] In the preceding chapter the Italo-Australian community as a theme in Cocktails d'Australia was discussed. However, although an important theme in Nibbi's work, it is not the predominant one. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine Nibbi's views on Australia and Australians as well as to provide details of his biography and of his contribution to Australian culture.

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Gino Nibbi was born at Fermo in the province of Ascoli Piceno on 29 April 1896.[2] His father, Pasquale, was a carpenter who specialized in the manufacture of wooden barrels, an item in particular demand by the fishermen of nearby Porto San Giorgio. Nibbi attended primary school in Fermo and then the Istituto Tecnico Umberto in Ascoli Piceno where he obtained the "Diploma di Perito

Commerciale e Ragioniere" [Diploma in Commercial Studies and Bookkeeping] in 1915. After completing his schooling he was called up for military service and it appears that he served for most of the war as second Lieutenant in an artillery regiment. He was decorated with the "Croce di Guerra" for a courageous action which he undertook on 30 June - 1 July 1918 on the Altipiano di Asiago. In 1969 he was further awarded the Cavaliere di Vittorio Veneto. The end of the war found Nibbi a committed pacifist although he had also developed a healthy respect bordering on admiration for the discipline and efficiency of the Germans. After leaving the army he found employment with the Società Mulini e Pastifici of Porto San Giorgio as a bookkeeper. In the meantime he had been courting Elvira Petrelli. This was a somewhat protracted courtship since her parents were not favourable to the match, and the two were not married till 3 August 1922. A daughter, Alessandra, was born on 30 June 1923 and a son, Tristano, on 12 May 1925.

Little is known about Nibbi's education and his cultural activities at Fermo / Porto San Giorgio. Later events confirm his knowledge and appreciation of French, Spanish and German (as well as Italian) art, literature and culture. The tantalising references to Schopenhauer and Hegel in his short stories, possible clues to his philosophical orientation, form yet another fragment of the uncompleted mosaic. Lack of resources nothwithstanding, there was considerable cultural activity in the small provincial town. A theatre had been inaugurated at Porto San Giorgio in 1817 and visiting troupes regularly performed there. Recitals of music by contemporary composers were also given. For opera lovers there was the nearby Teatro dell'Aquila in Fermo.

Pasquale regularly attended opera performances and inculcated a love of opera in Gino. The name Gino was later to give to his son, Tristano, was due to his love of Wagner. A number of the local inhabitants were actively engaged in the pursuit of art, music and literature. Gino was part of this group. His many friends included: Acruto Vitali local poet and a relatively accomplished tenor; Gildo Catalini a teacher of Italian; Osvaldo Licini a teacher of art and design and an active anti-fascist who had lived for some time in Paris and kept in touch with contemporary trends in art. Gino himself was a voracious reader and had such an excellent memory that his friends could not understand where he found the time to read all the books he spoke about. He had an ambition to become a first class bookseller and he began publishing a small, extremely highbrow, literary magazine which soon collapsed for lack of subscribers. He was particularly fond of Geography and of accounts of travel, an interest which was to last throughout his life. It is also likely that in the 20s Nibbi had begun contributing articles to newspapers and periodicals, another lifelong activity, but there is no direct evidence of this. Although his formal education was in the commercial field it must be remembered that the Italian education system of the time had a strong traditional humanistic bias and that consequently subjects such as Art History and Italian Literature would also be studied. In fact a number of Italian bookkeepers who emigrated to Australia became journalists with the Italo-Australian press.

Clearly Gino must have thought about emigrating. Perhaps this was because of his interest in faraway places, perhaps because the Fascist regime was beginning to place limits on the activity of

journalists and writers. Gino was not a political activist but some of his friends were, and there was a tradition of Republicanism (which meant anticlericalism, antimonarchism and antifascism) in the family. He had received several threats from local Fascist elements. Having decided to emigrate, he asked a friend, Vincenzo Serroni, who had settled in Melbourne in 1925, to act as sponsor. There was, however, some difficulty in obtaining the necessary papers from the Fascist authorities of Porto San Giorgio and Gino resolved this difficulty by writing directly to Mussolini, affirming his Republican convictions and stating that he wished to emigrate for the economic betterment of his family. Permission was granted immediately. Given this situation it is difficult to understand either Cordelia Gundolf's claim that it was the Italian Government which had offered him the possibility of establishing a bookshop in Australia (Gundolf 1971: 98) or Desmond O'Grady's[3] claim that Nibbi obtained backing from the Italian handicrafts association to open a shop in Melbourne. Moreover, according to information obtained from persons who were Italian community leaders in the 30s it would appear that: (a) such bookshops were not established in this country and (b) Nibbi was not considered "uno dei nostri" by Fascist groups in Australia at the time. This certainly would have been the case if Nibbi had obtained Italian government sponsorship for his activities in Australia. In any case Nibbi invariably placed the advertisements for his bookshop with Il Giornale Italiano and not with newspapers which were organs of the Fascist party.

In April 1928 Gino Nibbi set sail for Melbourne. Initially he shared a house in Carlton with Vincenzo Serroni and later, after Elvira and the two children had joined him in 1929, the two families shared a house in Fitzroy. In 1934 the Nibbi family moved to Hawthorn, where they remained until their departure for Italy in 1947.

Shortly after his arrival in Melbourne Nibbi wrote to Acruto Vitali (4 July 1928) telling him that he had opened the Leonardo Art Shop in Post Office Place. His first impressions of Australia were that "si vive una vita riflessa" but one which was more "alive" after the "ozio" and "indifferenza" of Porto San Giorgio. Despite this Australia was a culturally impoverished place. True creative activity was to be found elsewhere: "se qualche cosa di grande crea e compie la forza spirituale dell'uomo, devi ricercarlo sul parallelo di Parigi, Berlino e New York".[4] The types of book most in demand were novels and "manuali di tutte le arti e mestieri".[5] He had already sent Acruto a vivid description of his visit to Colombo where the ship had stayed a day or so and later (1929 - 1930) he was to urge him to visit Australia for a singing tour since "qui un cantante celebre è un beniamino del pubblico". In his early letters to Acruto, Nibbi stresses the point that Australia was a place where it would be difficult to succeed in his proposed endeavour, a difficulty compounded by the economic climate of the time. Nevertheless Nibbi certainly did succeed (and this despite the fact that initially his English was not very good), not so much on a financial level but rather as a promoter of ideas in art and books through the Leonardo bookshop, as a lecturer and as a journalist for various Italian newspapers and magazines. One of his first articles on Australia,

'Gita nella Campagna australiana' appeared in La Fiera Letteraria of 31 March 1929. An animated raconteur with a highly retentive memory, Gino Nibbi was also attentive to the precise use of language and would often consult his Palazzi dictionary.

His drive and enthusiasm coupled to his cheerful disposition, not without the odd tinge of pessimism, meant that the bookshop became not only a place for the sale of books from Italy, Germany, France, Spain and Argentina and works of art. It was also a place where one could browse and indulge in discussion. And it was also where Elvira gave Italian lessons, beginning as early as March 1930 "pur non conoscendo una parola d'inglese".[6] Nibbi was able both to carry a stock of foreign language books and to provide an efficient service for those of his clients who wished to order from abroad at a time when very few foreign language books were available in Australia. Thus Nibbi and his bookshop soon became known to the intellectuals and artists of Melbourne. According to Gundolf 1971: 99 his importations, as far as Italian books were concerned, included Quasimodo's translations of Greek poetry, the first Vittorini books, Montale, Ungaretti, Leopardi's Canti, a rather rare 1927 edition of Salvatore di Giacomo, Poliziano. He was also the first bookseller in Australia to introduce the famous Argentinian Espasa Calpe editions. Nibbi was a familiar sight in the Melbourne intellectual circles of the time and he was remembered by many for a long time. Years later, John Sinclair could describe him as follows:

> "That young man of middle height Melbourne knew in the 1930s was round in the well-fed Italian way, had dark expressive eyes [...] and fluent hands that, with his smile, compensated for any limitations in English."[7]

Although Nibbi's competency in English was never to reach the same level as that in his native language his lectures on modern art and other topics were willingly attended, not only because of the information imparted but also because his Australian audience loved to see the way in which he expressed himself.

As well as selling books Nibbi engaged in the occasional publishing venture. The Italian-English reader and the magazine Stream which apparently survived for only four issues. On 2 April 1931 he wrote to Ezra Pound seeking a poem or an essay for the magazine and in August of that year the magazine announced that "Ezra Pound, in a letter to the editors, has granted Stream the Australian rights of publishing any of his new works". In fact Pound's 'Credo' appeared in the September (and final) issue.

However it was as a promoter of art and not as a bookseller that Nibbi made his mark.[8] At that time very few books on modern art were available for sale in Australia and there was hardly any direct knowledge at all of modern European painting. Through the importation of prints and reproductions of works by artists such as Modigliani, Kisling, Soutine, Picasso, Utrillo, Matisse, Renoir, he was the first to give Melburnians interested in art a view of these artists. In fact "Nibbi's was [...] the only inlet through which the sunlight of post-impressionists and the then outrageous jazz records could enter Melbourne"[9] and Gino Nibbi gave "to the Melbourne art of his time [...] an international vitality and exuberance".[10] It was an activity which, at times, caused problems with the law. In 1929, the police told him to take a Renoir nude out of his showcase and in 1937 a Modigliani

nude was impounded on arrival on the grounds of obscenity. These aspects of his activity were to provide material for his short story 'Tasmania minore' (Nibbi 1937: 87-110). Tristano Nibbi believes that Evatt (a collector of art objects in his own right), who frequented the Nibbi household in the 30s, bought a Modigliani. Gundolf 1971: 100 mentions that among the frequenters of Nibbi's shop were John Reed, George Bellows, Norman MacGeorge, Arthur Boyd (who at the age of 13 used to come into the shop and browse), Russell Drysdale, Eric Thake and Albert Tucker. Other habitués were Max Dunn, Sydney Nolan, Arnold Shore and Keith Murdoch. Gino Nibbi gained recognition as an art expert with an eye for new talent, becoming one of the driving forces in Australian art. He contributed an illustrated article on De Chirico to a 1934 issue of George Bell's Art in Australia. In 1933 he launched Ian Fairweather by selling twenty of his paintings in one day. Fairweather had turned up at the Leonardo looking like a tramp, clothes in tatters and broken shoes. Nibbi was also the first to recognize the talent of John Perceval. When in 1938 the Contemporary Arts Society was formed as a counter to the very traditionalist Academy of Australian Arts Gino Nibbi was not only one of its foundation members but one of its main promoters. The Society was to become one of the leading bodies in all Australian States for the fostering of modern art and sculpture. He donated items to the Gallery of Modern Art when this was formed at the National Museum of Melbourne.

For Nibbi the 30s was also a time of travel. He visited Tahiti in 1933 (hence his book Nella Isole della Felicità) and in 1937 he went to Italy to visit family and friends, to arrange for the publication of

Il Volto degli emigranti, for business, and also to visit Germany. After his return from Europe he was planning, with others, an expedition to the jungles of Borneo and Sumatra but this did not come about. Little is known about Nibbi's activities during the war years. Having become an Australian citizen in 1939, he was not interned, but it must have been for him a time of difficulty both in economic and in spiritual terms. Immediately after the war the Nibbi home offered hospitality to refugees from the former Italian territories and Tristano recalls that it was a time when there was much music in the house, Gino's tastes running especially to symphonic and operatic music.

Throughout his years in Australia Nibbi had always retained his attachment to Italy. Italian eating habits had been preserved to the point of importing what was not available locally. The difficulty in obtaining some ingredients was compensated by the abundance of fresh fish which Gino particularly liked. Porto San Giorgio was and still is a fishing centre. There was an insistence that the children should speak Italian at home, especially at mealtimes. This resulted in the children speaking Italian with their parents but English among themselves. Mealtimes were somewhat silent. Elvira tried to inculcate a love of Italian literature in the two children. Tristano recalls that more than one of Gino's Australian friends commented that "his face beams when you talk to him of Italy". Perhaps because of homesickness, as Gundolf 1971: 101 claims, perhaps because of his experiences during the war years, perhaps for other reasons, Gino Nibbi closed the Leonardo art shop in 1947 and returned to Italy.

In Rome he opened a combined bookshop and art gallery, "Ai quattro venti", situated in via della Scrofa, which became a meeting place for Australians abroad and the home of several important exhibitions of Australian art. In 1950 it housed the first exhibition of Sydney Nolan's Ned Kelly series to be held in Continental Europe. In 1953 there were exhibitions of Nolan and Tucker. However, although the shop provided the family with a modest but steady income and allowed him time to pursue his writing, Nibbi decided to sell out in 1954. Because of its location it carried mainly religious materials. Nibbi made friends with the more liberal-minded of the many clergy among his clients but he missed the daily contact with intellectuals he had so much enjoyed in the Melbourne bookshop. Since Tristano had indicated his intention of settling in Italy, Nibbi had hoped that he would eventually take over the business and thus be able to support himself. But Tristano had other ideas. He became a teacher of English with the British Institute in Rome. The realization that Tristano had little inclination to join him in the shop, the strain in commuting from Grottaferrata to the centre of Rome and the news that Alessandra, who had remained in Melbourne, was expecting her first child, were all factors which prompted him to sell the business and to return to Australia. In his typewritten notes Tristano Nibbi has provided an interesting reflection on this episode in Gino's life which constitutes an example of how Gino would follow through on his proposed activities:

> "Independently of the bias of "Ai Quattro Venti" (a name incidentally suggested by the then literary editor if Il Tempo, Enrico Falqui) there were few readers among the passersby. Italy's reading public is regrettably even today among the lowest in Europe. Statistical figures for 1984 show the average Italian as purchasing one book a year. Historically, the situation might be thought to

reflect Engels' law which sees culture as a capitalist phenomenon since it is the product of leisure which in turn is the product of profit. Italian tradition indeed, as far back as the Renaissance, would seem to indicate literature as a courtly and elitist phenomenon, a preserve of the well-to-do. It is only in recent years that other directions in writing have emerged, reflecting and representing the broader aspects of an emerging middle class.

In retrospect, I feel it must have taken father just as much courage (or recklessness) to open a bookshop in a Rome still suffering from the disasters of war and where books were a luxury few readers could afford, as in a country like Australia on which he could have had little information (and which, as he realized afterwards, was just then moving into a depression)."

Nibbi returned to Australia in September 1954, residing in Wattle Road, Hawthorn, this time earning his living as a correspondent to newspapers such as the Bologna daily Il Resto del Carlino, the Rome daily Il Tempo, Il Giornale d'Italia,[11] and magazines such as Idea, Mondo Tessile, Domus, as well as by contributions to Australian art magazines and broadsheets. He was back in Italy in 1956 and on that occasion also visited Spain[12] (which he revisited in 1963), being particularly impressed by the vivacity of its people as well as its art and architectural treasures. His return to Australia in 1958 was not without mixed feelings. Despite interviews on radio and television, an invitation to lecture on the Etruscans, and the fact that "pochi ma buoni quattrini mi sono arrivati da parecchie provenienze"[13] the return was very much a disappointment:

"Questa volta la mia disillusione è stata completa. Ho ritrovato un paese primitivo, spiritualmente più morto che mai. Non so quanto rimarrò in Australia ancora."[13]

He was to remain in Australia for some years yet, although in 1958 he visited New Guinea[14] and over 1961 - 1962 he visited Japan where he contributed articles on art to the Tokyo English language newspaper

The Japan Times. His interest in Japan had probably arisen in Australia and he was in correspondence with Giuseppe Vaccari, a Marchigiano married to a Japanese woman who had been living in Japan for many years.[15] Nibbi's impression of the country was "un paese di un idealismo disinteressato". At the beginning of September 1963 he left Australia for Italy. He was never to return because ill health was to prevent any further extensive travel. He had been operated for an ulcer in Australia and was suffering from diabetes. He spent the final years of his life living partly in Rome where his son had an apartment, partly at the house he had bought at Grottaferrata some 22 kilometres from Rome in the Castelli Romani, often visiting his beloved Porto San Giorgio to meet old friends and their descendants, working at his writings. A fire at the Grottaferrata home on 26 January 1956 destroyed, among other possessions, the manuscript of a biography of Modigliani which Gino had been able to compile from information obtained through friends in Paris - mainly Kisling - and of which only an imperfect English translation has survived. In his final years his basically cheerful disposition gradually gave way to a pessimistic outlook on life, a situation partly brought on by his failing health, partly by the realization that life is short. He maintained that man was incapable of solving his problems and that life was a tragic affair. One of his favourite quotations was the Shakespearean "out out brief candle". Nevertheless his connection with Australia continued and we find him in 1967 sending regular items of correspondence to Settegiorni ("Lettera da Roma ... dal nostro corrispondente G. Nibbi").

He passed away at Grottaferrata on 17 December 1969. In the brief and uncompleted 'Oasi nel silenzio', probably his last piece of writing, which was found in the drawer of his desk, he expressed the desire to be buried in his native town. This desire was fulfilled on 30 September 1986 when his remains were transferred to the cemetery of Porto San Giorgio. The final return of the nomad had been foreshadowed on 11 February 1984 when his native town, in the course of an impressive ceremony, honoured him with the dedication of Via Gino Nibbi, a street which links Fermo to Porto San Giorgio.

CRITICAL REACTION TO NIBBI'S WORKS

Critical reception of Nibbi's literary works has been somewhat mixed. In Europe his publications in the 30s seem to have received a better reception than Cocktails d'Australia. A review of the Newest Italian English Reader[16] praises Nibbi's efforts in promoting language and culture in Australia and the importance of the Reader in this function. A French reviewer of Nelle Isole della Felicità saw Nibbi as a writer who deromanticises the tradition of Stevenson and Gauguin:

> " [Nibbi] a pu saisir cet accord secret entre les êtres et les choses qui échappe le plus souvent au touriste pressé. Sans romantisme, mais non sans poésie, il a peint cette terre [Tahiti] et ses habitants, non pas en journaliste avide d' "actualité", mais en observateur patient et qui sait dégager avec beaucoup de pénétration les traits essentiels d'une expérience humaine, d'un souvenir, d'un paysage."[21]

The Italian critic Sergio Solmi was also favourable in his review which praised Nibbi's ability to express fineness of detail and to convey the exotic aspects of the Polynesian setting.[18]

To date it has not proved possible to find any reviews of Il Volto degli emigranti either in Italy or in Australia. Oracoli Sommessi was considered by Giuseppe Cassieri as having merit for its

> "liricità assoluta, nell'architettura (che può sembrare contorcimento e non è) d'un pensiero, nel groviglio delle immagini che emergono una per una, a guisa di perle"[19]

as well as for the enunciation of Nibbi's feeling for his native Marche. However Cassieri also argues that Nibbi is not a professional writer but has developed in a somewhat heterodox manner. Nibbi's books, published by relatively unknown publishing companies and in rather limited numbers did not have the opportunity of reaching many readers.

Although Nibbi's works were known to Enrico Falqui, one of the most famous Italian literary critics in the mid 1900s,[20] Tristano recalls that Falqui did not think much of Gino Nibbi as a narrative writer. In fact in relation to post world war II developments in Italian prose fiction Nibbi's language and style could be considered as somewhat dated and rather representative of the first two decades of the century. A few of the short stories which were to constitute Cocktails d'Australia were published in literary magazines and numerous excerpts were published in Italian newspapers throughout the 50s and early 60s, some in the Melbourne Globo in the early 60s. However when the book appeared in 1965 it did not seem to attract much critical attention. It was only in the post-1968 climate of cultural pluralism that some recognition was given to Nibbi at a regional level as a minor regional ("Marchigiano") writer[21], although some prior recognition had been given to him as a cultural journalist (Boneschi 1966: 56). On the one hand we have Antognini's view of Nibbi as a writer of fiction where "lo spazio letterario proprio dello

scrittore [...] è piuttosto limitato"[22] but whose literary horizons become somewhat more broad when he writes about his native Marche. On the other there is Luzi's 1984b view of Nibbi as a writer on Australian themes which are "distant" both in a geographical and psychological sense for his intended Italian reader. There is a distancing on the part of the author who, having emigrated to a faraway country remains a detached and critical observer and does not become part of the system. But then Nibbi is also an obsessive traveller, a nomad, not a migrant who puts down roots in the new land. Significantly enough, Luzi avoids qualitative considerations and concentrates on a global textual analysis which explores the relationship between Nibbi's narrative and the society it describes. A similar line to Luzi's is followed by Bianco 1984[23], although her treatment is less articulate and there is some confusion between the two collections of short stories which tends to make her analysis somewhat misleading.

Australian criticism has tended to give a perspective that is different, although not free from the type of basic error which characterizes Bianco's analysis. For example Gundolf 1971: 102 states that the publication date of Cocktails d'Australia is 1967 and that the the book deals mainly with the Italo-Australian setting. Thompson[23], perhaps influenced by Anglo stereotypes of "the Italian gardener", states that the protagonist of 'Giardinieri di Toorak' is a Calabrian Youth where Nibbi explicitly says that he is a "giardiniere friulano" (Nibbi 1965: 204).

A more balanced appraisal is given by McCormick 1973: 301-304 who, in what is probably the first detailed analysis of Nibbi's narrative by an Australian-based critic, points out the variety and breath of Nibbi's observations on Australia, Australians and Italo-Australians. For McCormick Nibbi's accounts are not just the "strictly journalistic and autobiographical, personal adventures transformed into amusing short stories" described by Gundolf 1971:102. They are characterised by "un candore che disarma subito" (McCormick 1973: 301), "umorismo sornione" (302) and "[un] certo tono moraviano" (304), which make him a vivid albeit detached depicter of the people and places he describes. This observation is later taken up and expanded upon by Luzi. Like Luzi after him McCormick also does not directly bring up the question of the quality of Nibbi's narrative works. Condell 1983, in a paper which was particularly liked by Nibbi's son Tristano, concentrates on the "Australian spirit" of Nibbi's critique. For Condell, who takes a different stance from Gundolf, although many of these twenty-six "racconti di fatti vissuti o visualizzati e di escursioni effettuati" (Nibbi 1965: 3) are concerned in some way with the Italians in Australia, Cocktails is not, strictly speaking, "a book about the Italian migrant experience" (Condell 1983: 103). It is, as its title suggests, a mixture of various ingredients laced with an irony that is often pungent and even cruel, as Nibbi exposes "features 'un po' ingrati' of Australian life and customs" (Condell 103). Nibbi takes a "supercilious view" (Condell 103) of Australians as well as Italo-Australians and is a "witty and perceptive observer of the Australian scene" (Condell 103). Condell also remarks on some hitherto undiscussed aspects of Nibbi's narrative technique such as

the variations in the use of the first and third persons in the different types of stories and shows how this helps to provide effective contrasts between one story and another and at times within a single story. Generally the first person is used in the "travelogue" type of account and in fiction based on his own life in Melbourne. The third person is used in his vignettes of Italian life in Melbourne as well as in the portrayals of eccentric characters.[24]

THE VIEW OF AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRALIANS IN COCKTAILS D'AUSTRALIA

Unfortunately the drafts of the stories which make up the volume Cocktails d'Australia do not seem to have survived, so it is impossible to trace the genesis of these accounts. However they clearly relate to Nibbi's experiences over a period which ranges from his return in 1954 to his definitive departure in 1963. While Il Volto presents mainly a surface description of places and people, Cocktails is written in a more analytical vein. Continuous observations and asides are inserted in the stories while value judgements are made on Australian society and culture.[25] This is done without ever losing sight of the human aspects, although the six years or so spent in Italy seem to have sharpened Nibbi's perspective on Australia. This time he is less enthusiastic about the country which in the almost quarter century since his first arrival has not achieved any spiritual enrichment. However, as Condell points out, Nibbi, writing at a time when considerable numbers of immigrants from Europe were entering the country, is nevertheless optimistic about its future. For him the answer to Australia's material and spiritual progress lies in "looking to the new immigrants with their fresh new energies, to mould the

future of this land. Being peoples with long and glorious histories, they have the spirit to do this" (Condell 1983: 107).

Although, as discussed in Chapter 3, the Italo-Australian content is an important element in Nibbi's narrative, given Nibbi's own position as an Italian immigrant in Australia, it is not an exclusive one as Gundolf claims. Rather it constitutes part of the mosaic of the various "ethnic" and other social groups and castes which make up the Australia of the 50s and early 60s. An example of this "mosaic" treatment can be found in the story 'Cortometraggio di un Sobborgo' (Nibbi 1965: 126-149) where, although part is dedicated to the Abruzzese mother-in-law Artemisia and her comments and observations (see chapter 3), Nibbi presents a global picture of the setting and people which comprise the Melbourne suburb of Hawthorne. This is from a number of perspectives. There is the spatial one which comprises general observations on Australian cities: "In Australia i cittadini non risiedono nelle città. (Le chiamano città, ma sono piuttosto agglomerati). Vivono nei sobborghi" (p126). A glimpse of the general aspect of inner Melbourne is also presented: "al di là del fiume Yarra [...] si infoltiscono le verdure che accerchiano le casine diradate, e comincia la città-giardino", "Al di qua dello Yarra [...] si estende il "bloody slum" o bassofondo di Richmond" (p126). This way of describing Melbourne is also adopted by Giovanna Guzzardi in her short stories (see chapter 8). Then Nibbi speaks specifically of Hawthorn: "Non che [...] sia una borgata di lusso [...] Ha il vantaggio [...] di situarsi a un tiro di voce dalla City [...] vige un silenzio profondo che concilia gli sbadigli dei pensionati" (p127). His brief description of the suburb prompts a

contrast with Italy through the observation on the inversion in the seasons and the subsequent momentary dislocation it represents:

> "Ma che strana cosa: qui le margherite ottobrine sbocciano di marzo, assieme ai crisantemi [...] Chiedo venia. Qui mi confondo. Di marzo siamo nel colmo dell'autunno australe. E allora le ottobrine e i crisantemi hanno tutti il diritto di sbocciare" (p142).

Changes in eating habits also provide material for comment: "La prima colazione, prima di uscire di casa, [Spizzica] la fa con sei uova al prosciutto. E' un vizio che ha preso in Australia" (p146). The inhabitants of Hawthorn constitute another perspective from which the suburb is viewed. Once the narrator's street, Lisson Grove, was inhabited mainly by Australians "sempre dignitosi e ammutoliti, anche di sabato che rincasano sbronzi" (p127). Now there are Greeks, Italians, Yugoslavs, Hungarians, Poles, Lithuanians "gente eccitabile e loquace che ha finito per avvelenare la placidezza a cui ci eravamo assuefatti" (p127). Hence the narrator (the story is told in the first person) identifies neither with the one group nor with the other but observes both with equal detachment and perhaps some slight superiority. There is Giulia the narrator's wife, Spiros the Greek and the generation conflict with his daughter, the Valkirite Mrs Shore who dyes her hair, Artemisia, of course, the Summonses, newly arrived and somewhat ill at ease amidst so many "foreigners", the Estonian bride, the cockney Mrs Young, the mannish-looking Polish woman Amapòla who goes swimming with a knife stuck in her belt in case sharks are about and many others. Nibbi, as always, is interested in the eccentric aspects of his characters. In his observation of the inhabitants the narrator not only comments on their particular situation but also makes a number of general

comments. Australian girls are compared to their European counterparts in an almost throwaway remark:

> "le ragazze d'Australia sono tutte sature d'amore: in ciò contrastano con le nostre, che d'amore sono soltanto avide, sebbene tale disparità non sia destinata a durare, e le nostre, per aggiornarsi coi paesi progressisti, non mancheranno di ricuperare il perduto." (Nibbi 1965: 126-7)

Similar comments are made in other stories such as 'Le ammutinate di Boronia', 'Pompe funebri', 'Procura', 'Giardinieri di Toorak' and the three "Inquilini"[26] stories while in 'Il Baritono pessimista' Australian women are considered not to be beautiful.

It is also in Hawthorn that the three "Inquilini" stories are set, although this is not explicitly stated. Related in the first person, the stories have as a common theme the vicissitudes faced by the narrator-protagonist and his wife Giulia. Having returned to Australia after a holiday in Italy, they plan to meet their mortgage repayments by purchasing a duplex and renting half. It is an ideal situation for the ever curious narrator-protagonist, interested in the eccentricities of the people he meets, to observe and reflect on both the local customs and the local people. Again the opportunity is taken to make some general observations on Australian society. For example in the remark that "in Australia, chi sta a pigione non è il fiore dell'umanità" (Nibbi 1965: 75) the reference to the great Australian dream of home ownership is oblique but certainly present. The Sunday morning silence which is so characteristic of suburban Australia is described in faintly Leopardian undertones with the phrase "si ode in lontananza":

> "Di domenica mattina, nelle case cittadine dell'Australia, la vita domestica sembra spenta. Il silenzio è più grave e tedioso del solito. Ma è un silenzio

non fermentante, come da noi: è svuotato da presagi. Si ode in lontananza la banda dell'esercito della Salute che suona marce allegre per scuotere dal letargo gli animi intorpiditi dagli eccessi del sabato. Solo nel pomeriggio le famiglie prendono una risoluzione: salgono in macchina, e vanno a fare delle scampagnate, o delle improvvisate agli amici." (Nibbi 1965: 95)[27]

In a sort of *ante litteram* multicultural narrative context the narrator presents three sets of tenants who are of quite varied backgrounds. The first are a Welsh couple, the Seddons, who turn out to be not married to each other and who have frequent and loud altercations. When the woman abruptly leaves Seddon, he threatens to poison himself but does not do so, thus drawing the sardonic comment from Giulia: "Quell'imbecille la pozione non l'ha nemmeno assaggiata" (Nibbi 1965: 88). The second tenants are Mr Reed, a sanguine Scotsman and a faded blond he had picked up in a Sydney bar. They get behind in their rent, are very fond of drink and, when drunk, of fighting.[28] The situation provides Nibbi with an opportunity, which he often takes in other stories, of commenting on the Australians' propensity for alcoholic drink, one of the great Australian cultural identifiers. In common with Rosa Cappiello, Nibbi sees the resort to drinking as an attempt to blot out the existentialist anguish of individuals who are spineless, sluggish and culturally amorphous.[29] The Reeds' stay comes to an abrupt end when one night they load some of the flat's furnishings on to a truck and drive away, leaving the narrator and his wife watching terrified from behind the fence. It is only the third set of tenants who manage to strike a cord of empathy in the narrator. John and Mary work on the trams and are also active unionists. Much to the consternation of the narrator and his wife they use the flat as headquarters during a tram drivers' strike. Despite

this, the narrator can admire their commitment since it makes them seem less apathetic than the usual inhabitants of the lucky country. In commenting on the "Inquilini" stories, McCormick sees the narrator and his wife as fearful and suspicious of their lodgers, not knowing "come parlargli, come prenderli" (McCormick 1973: 303). However, according to Condell, this behavior is due not so much to "cross-cultural incomprehension, but to the understandable concern of the landlord for his property" (Condell 1983: 105), particularly given the already stated opinion of the narrator about people who rent lodgings in Australia.

Another important set of observations and comments covers the cultural aspects of Australia and the question of Australian cultural identity. In an almost throwaway remark Nibbi states that Australia is a country without history.[30] The concept is one which is recurrent in Australian literature (eg. Marcus Clark) and is found in a poem by A D Hope ('Australia', 1939). Since Hope lived in Melbourne for 5/6 years in the 40s it may well be that Nibbi knew him personally. But with Nibbi it may be a case of the convergence of his philosophical interests in that the comment also brings to mind Hegel's theory of historyless people.[31] What little can be gleaned of Nibbi's philosophical orientations would seem to point to a penchant for nineteenth century German philosophers such as Schopenhauer and Hegel, whose sometimes contrasting theories seem to provide Nibbi with a basis for his comments on and appraisals of Australia.

The lack of an Australian cultural and historical tradition is elaborated in the second story of the collection 'Il Baritono pessimista' (Nibbi 1965: 19-31), which contains a somewhat long and rambling catalogue on the general theme of what is wrong with Australia. Condell 1983: 105-106 sees the baritone as serving "very well as a mouthpiece for the delivery of Nibbi's critique of Australia in terms of stereotypes". In a sense the baritone's critique does air some of Nibbi's own views in that there are elements common to the way in which all immigrants educated in a Western European cultural tradition perceive Australia. The Englishman too is "oriundo di una civiltà antica" (p24) rich in history and culture. At a surface level, we seem to have before us the classical case of the "wingeing Pom" but it goes deeper than that since it is this story that sparks off a debate on Australian culture and society which is continued in some of the other tales such as 'L'Annuncio economico', 'Mostra d'arte', 'Le Balene di Stanley', 'Vanno in Europa'. As a result of a chance encounter in a Melbourne tram, an unnamed Italian immigrant, who speaks "un inglese aprossimativo ma discretamente intelligibile" (p20), meets Mister Burt, an Englishman from Lancashire, whom he had known during the depression when both were new to the country. The fortuitous meeting prompts them to go and drink a few beers in a pub ("in birra veritas"!, p30), during which Burt recounts what has happened to him since they last saw each other some twenty years before. During this time he has led a somewhat precarious existence as a singing teacher in Melbourne and other places in Victoria where "la vita è impeciata di ruralità [...] è pigra, culturalmente; scorre senza entusiasmi" (p23).[32] Burt is a somewhat mediocre singer who nevertheless has an excellent knowledge of music. This provides the

opportunity for one of his comments on Australia as a country where Choral Societies can produce magnificent performances of Handel oratorios but where the choirs are made up mainly of octogenarians who "cantano per entusiasmo, anche se sono incapaci di commuoversi" (pp26-27). In fact mediocrity pervades all aspects of Australian intellectual life (p24). Australia, then, is no longer the country which Nibbi, some thirty years before, had enthusiastically described to his friend Vitali as one which welcomes good singers. But Burt's comments and observations are even more wide-ranging than this as he enunciates a long and all-embracing discussion on what is wrong with Australia: materialism[33]; Australia's economic, political and cultural servility to the United states (pp23, 25);[34] maintenance laws (p28); the tasteless local dress style (p26): the architecture of Sydney and Melbourne which he finds quite vulgar (p26).

'Mostra d'Arte' (Nibbi 1965: 57-72) is a first person account which, through the representation of the somewhat vague and varied chitchat at the art exhibition where the participants get tipsy on sherry, exposes what Nibbi sees as the spiritual and intellectual poverty of those Australians with pretensions to culture. In a carry-over of the views already presented in Il Volto, Nibbi posits the thesis that in art Australians' tastes are traditional, especially in Melbourne which is "una città di gusto cautamente conservatore" (p71). For him Australia is conventional and retarded, unaware of the new ideas and developments going on in Europe, and tinged with a prudish attitude to the erotic despite the considerable liberalization of the censorship laws which has taken place in the intervening years. Furthermore, those Australians who buy works of art do so with an

overriding consideration of the material value of their purchase: "Non sono amatori veri e propri; piuttosto degli affaristi d'indole sbrigativa." (p66). This is perhaps so because in Australian society there is a distinct division between those who are truly able to appreciate art and those who have money. In fact one of the habitual buyers, Sutton, a company director, had declined to come to the exhibition because his friends, other businessmen, "sbottano a ridere quando vedono i suoi quadri così bislacchi" (p70) when they visit his house. This account also contains an interesting reference to the short story 'Sydney' (Nibbi 1937: 41-65). He meets Mrs Clarke who still remembers

> "quando le recai in dono nel suo appartamento di Sydney [...] una copia dell'Ulisse di Joyce, la cui circolazione era severamente interdetta [...] Allora il gusto delle cose proibite era irrefrenabile. Ora che tutto è permesso, si è affievolito." (Nibbi 1965: 59-60)

There is yet another aspect to the Australian cultural cringe. According to Nibbi <u>all</u> Australians want to visit Europe.[35] Nibbi is obviously talking about the Australians he knows best. They are the "cittadini più consapevoli e evoluti" (p342), middle class intellectuals, school teachers, artists who, "decisi a rompere l'isolamento imposto dalla geografia, si dirigono [...] verso la culla della civiltà, dove assolvano al loro perfezionamento culturale" (p326). These argonauts in reverse resort to all sorts of stratagems in order to finance their trip: from taking out loans at high rates of interest; to trafficking in foreign exchange; to selling their blood; or sending begging telegrams to friends and family back home when they run out of money. Their motivation is that of "sganciarsi da quella

gora dilettantesca che è l'Australia" (p342), since it a country which does not provide "quella vita intensa di cui si vorrebbe farneticare" (p337). On their return their cultural experiences overseas become the subject matter for lectures. In Il Volto there is no mention of this nonconformist mass of educated, middle class Australians who culturally choose to vote with their feet, albeit in a temporary fashion. In any case it is an exodus which substantially began to manifest itself after the second world war. Perhaps this greater and more widespread awareness of the cultural values of the old world is another change (this time for the better) which Nibbi noticed on his return.

There are also those few intellectuals who go to the opposite extreme and opt for an alternative life-style in remote rural areas. This is the theme of 'Le Balene di Stanley' (Nibbi 1965: 314-324),[36] a poignant first person account which, as Condell 1983: 106-107 rightly points out, is "more personal in style than the others, affords a glimpse of Nibbi's feeling for the land itself and its creatures, as well as a rare warmth towards a character, Susan". The months of December and January are a time of "ferie obbligate" (p314) and the narrator and his wife decide to holiday in Tasmania where in summer "l'aria è più fresca" (p314). Just before leaving, the narrator receives a letter from Susan, a poet and once a member of his Melbourne circle of artistic friends. She had married three years ago and is now living on a farm in a remote corner of Western Tasmania. They decide to spend a few days there and find that Susan who had been "una poetessa smilza e colorita" (p318) has been transformed into "una casalinga docile e laboriosa" (p319) with two children. In fact

Stanley is a place where "si vegeta stupendamente" (p317). Nature also is present in its basic primordiality with the deafening night song of the cicada, the nocturnal gallop of the kangaroo, glimpses of the shy duck-billed platypus which makes camping in this dark green isle particularly "ricreativo" (p315). This primordiality is accentuated in the second half of the story where Nibbi poignantly describes the fate of 27 stranded whales who die on the beach at Stanley, a not uncommon occurrence in these parts. For the somewhat inarticulate locals the phenomenon is a curiosity, a marvellous sideshow provided by nature. The narrator's expressions of dismay at Susan's intellectual inertness in her marriage with an unlikely husband match his poignant regret at seeing the whales stranded and dying on the beach. Susan is seen as being just as much out of her milieu as the whales. Just as their death is a waste so, in intellectual terms, is Susan's existence in this remote corner of Australia. There is an ironic twist to the tale in that while this is the narrator's opinion, Susan, although conscious of her intellectually barren existence, does not seem to have any regrets.

The introduction of "ethnic" cuisine and its impact on Australian gastronomic culture is the main theme of 'L'Annuncio economico' (Nibbi 1965: 32-44) in which the eccentric and elderly Istvan Donhanyi, formerly a major in the Hungarian cavalry, wishes to open in Melbourne a grand Hungarian restaurant. An advertisement for staff which he places in the paper is answered, much to the consternation of the proprietors of the small seaside hotel where he is staying, by a crowd of young men anxious for work. Unaware "che la gioventù di qui rifugge dagli eufemismi europei" (p37) he treats his

captive audience to a longish dissertation on how the proposed restaurant will transform the gastronomy of Melbourne with its authentic goulash and tokay. However when he finally reveals to his audience that the jobs will not be available for some months, since he first has to raise the necessary capital, he is thrown into the surf. With the dye running out of his hair he inveighs against a policeman who has come up to see what was happening and is dragged off to the local asylum. There is a contrast in the story between the Hungarian pensioner dressed in his fancy army uniform and his imaginative ideas and the somewhat pragmatic drabness of the anonymous crowd of young men. The Hungarian's discourse is introduced by considerations on Hungarian culture as well as a hint of politics. The young men, one of whom thinks Hungary is one of the new African Republics, are interested only in the job and the money it will bring them. The discourse on gastronomy and culture is continued in the following story 'Il Trattore Giovanni' (Nibbi 1965: 45-56), which mentions the pervasive invasion of Australia by Italian cuisine and the success of one particular Melbourne Italian "trattoria" which became an institution in that city.[37] Mention of Italian cuisine also occurs in 'Sposalizio' where the rich Italian food served at the wedding feast upsets the stomachs of the Australian guests:

> "Qualcuno si alza e si avvia verso l'uscita. Sono tutti australiani puri quelli che escono. Avvezzi alle marmellate, le creme, i cibi teneri, non dovevano abusare. Le tagliatelle hanno la possanza, anzi la grevezza del calcestruzzo. Così si recrimina da ogni parte." (Nibbi 1965: 223)

The tendency of Australian society to segregate the various groups and castes which comprise it according to any criteria which may provide a basis for differentiation such as age, gender, ethnicity, constitutes the theme of 'Il Club dell'amicizia'.[38] It is a pensioners' club exclusively for over sixties, one of those institutions "concepibili solo nell'ambito di un'atmosfera provinciale anglo-sassone, com'è quella australiana" (p279). This was certainly not one which would have been familiar to Nibbi and other Italian immigrants of the time, since aged peoples clubs are not a traditional feature of Italian society and only recently (1980s) have they become a feature of the Italo-Australian community. The narrator had stopped in front of the club and had been invited to enter by one of the members, perhaps because he seemed an eligible candidate. He had accepted the invitation "per pura curiosità, non con l'intenzione d'iscriverci al Club dell'Amicizia" (p281). He is thus able to witness some of the club activities, including the ritual taking of tea and biscuits after a discussion on atomic radiation. The many rules which regulate the functioning of the club are considered by the narrator to restrict the freedom of its members "in quell'apparente libertà, erano più i sottintesi di non fare, che di fare." (p281) However, in the final analysis, the club does serve an important function since "in questa terra persino la vecchiaia è una diga contro il pessimismo" (p289). Another story on the segregation theme, this time not exclusive to Australia, is 'Le Ammutinate di Boronia' (Nibbi 1965: 279-289). At a reformatory for juvenile female offenders at Boronia, a "village" on the road between Melbourne and the Dandenongs, the inmates stage a riot which is quelled only through the use of fire hoses. The aftermath of the riot is somewhat surprising and unexpected. Two of

the firemen fall in love with two of the inmates and they eventually marry. The final paragraph of the story comments on the different interpretations given to the incident by the Australians and the "migrants":

> "Questa fiaba realistica si è svolta esattamente come abbiamo tentato di ricostruirla. A rifletterci, noi stranieri ci siamo limitati a commentare che la natura, per essere così bizzarra, vuole le sue anomalie. Invece la gente di qui, con la sua saggezza magari importata, ha preso la palla al balzo per reiterare che la natura è ricca di compensazioni." (Nibbi 1965: 163)

The story also contains in its opening paragraph a brief description of Boronia set in "una pianura soleggiata cosparsa di eucalipti contorti" (p150) and a longish aside on the Boronia, a sweet-smelling flower "oriundo dal deserto occidentale" (Nibbi 1965: 150) - obviously it is not found at the village - which according to Tristano Nibbi held a special importance for Gino.

In fact the description of the Australian wilderness constitutes another important feature of the collection. Unlike Andreoni and Abiuso, who seek to establish a rapport with the bush, Nibbi remains simply an observer who views the wilderness from the point of view of the tourist. We find this not only in 'Le Balene di Stanley' but also in two of the "travelogue" stories.

'Troppi Fantasmi' (Nibbi 1965: 342-352)[39] is another account with a Tasmanian setting. Apparently Nibbi was a frequent visitor to this island "nuova di zecca [...] senza storia, e tanto meno evidenze di preistoria" (p343) and yet scattered with ruins and mysterious presences. As well as visiting towns such as Strahan, "paesino situato sulle sponde di una vasta laguna: semideserto e dalle vie

silenziose" (p352), the narrator delights in going off the beaten tourist track. He visits the ghost towns which in Tasmania "si ritrovano intatte perchè l'uomo vi ha meno bazzicato che altrove" (p344) and comes across an isolated "osteria" (pub?) in the woods run by an affable and loquacious elderly Englishwoman who tells the visitors a ghost story. After dark she sometimes hears galloping horses in this place where there have not been any horses for a long time. The discussion leads her to comment that "in Australia siamo decisamente a corto di fantasmi, come pure di esperienze psichiche e di telepatia" (p350), a surprising statement since English popular culture is full of ghost stories. This also contrasts with the rich psychic culture of the Aboriginals, a topic which Nibbi does not discuss in his stories although it does constitute the subject of some of his newspaper articles.[40] Later the narrator implies that this is due to a lack of imagination and sensitivity on the part of the Tasmanians (and by implication Australians in general). The inhabitants of Strahan are described as having "un aspetto ottuso, stordito" (p352), have difficulty in understanding the speech and the mentality of the outsider while their vocabulary consists of "poche parole obbligate" (p352). For these people the strange and mysterious noises heard in the forest at night are due to the nocturnal animal life, a pragmatic albeit unimaginative explanation. In this respect Nibbi differs from Bosi. Although both have remarked on the lack of ghosts in Australia, Bosi's explanation is that this is due to lack of respect for the dead (see Chapter 3). Cappiello presents a contrasting and innovative view on this theme, most probably inspired by her Neapolitan culture base, in her short story '10/20 cani sotto il letto' which will be examined in the next chapter.

The final story of the collection, 'Nella Terra di Arnhem'[41], is an account of travel in the North. It is an interesting tale as far as it goes with its description of a station the size of Belgium, the unnerving climate, the torrential rains and the wildlife. There is a dramatic description of a duel between a crocodile and a shark (the croc wins) and an ironic comment on the poor Aborigines who are hunted by the buffalo, introduced into the area in 1924. Yet the story contains little by way of comment and observation, apart from the inhabitants' propensity to the heavy drinking mentioned above.

The examination of the accounts contained in Cocktails d'Australia bears out the view of Nibbi as an ever-curious traveller (Luzi), an observer and critic of Australia and Australian society (Condell), a lively teller of tales (McCormick). However despite his close connection with the country and those of its people who were culturally more aware, he always felt very much an "outsider", a point reiterated in the premise to the collection:

> "Oggi l'Australia è in una fase infervorata della sua ascesa [...] Nondimeno, devo confessare di non essere mai riuscito ad acclimatarmi in un paese ancora così geologico e impersonale. Non vorrei, a proposito, farmi udire dagli amici, ma in 35 anni non sono riuscito ad assimilarmi." (Nibbi 1965: 1)

He nevertheless admits that if, when in Australia, his nostalgia for Europe is "acuta" and "tormentosa", when in Europe he is taken by a "nostalgia a ritroso" for Australia's stormy seas and the undulating green of its forests. Nevertheless this feeling of being extraneous does not detract from his ability as a raconteur. Extrapolating from the arguments presented by McCormick and Condell regarding the literary/technical aspects of the texts, it can be concluded that perhaps the most interesting aspect of Nibbi's accounts is the

vividness with which they are related. According to his son Tristano this vividness was also present in Nibbi as an oral teller of tales and anecdotes. To a large extent it is this vividness and incisiveness of his narrative which compensates for flaws in style, plot and structure, a sometimes too "journalistic" approach leading to superficiality, the tendency to be overly verbose and, by post WWII narrative standards, linguistically somewhat dated. In fact while McCormick quite rightly points to Moravian undertones in the content, linguistically Nibbi is perhaps closer to turn of the century writers such as Papini and Panzini. Despite this he is the only Italo-Australian writer to date to have achieved some long-term recognition as a writer in Italy, albeit on a relatively modest level. His position as a writer has not gained its due recognition in Australia.[42] It is certainly less important than his contribution to the development of art in this country, but it is important nonetheless. If nothing else it would serve to present a more rounded and complete picture of the substantial contribution to the development of Australian culture given by a bookkeeper from Italy who was able to combine his business training and humanistic education with his talents in the field of art and literature.

Notes

1. As stated in chapter 3 Pino Bosi had begun publishing chapters of Australia Cane in La Fiamma in the mid-fifties. Gino Nibbi had published some of his stories in Italian periodicals in the early 60s eg.: 'Emigrati senza nostalgie', L'Osservatore politico letterario, VIII, 7 (July 1962), pp98-103; and 'Sobborgo d'Australia' (in Cocktails 'Cortometraggio di un sobborgo'), Ibid., IX, 9 (September 1963), pp48-60. excerpts from a number of other stories were also published in various newspapers. These will be identified in the relevant footnotes below.

2. The biographical and other data relating to Gino Nibbi were obtained from three principal sources: (a) a series of interviews with his son Tristano conducted in Rome over May - June 1985 and typewritten notes provided over 1986/87. Tristano's reminiscences of his father have been recorded on audiocassette which has been deposited in the University of Wollongong Library; (b) Gundolf 1971; (c) letters from Gino Nibbi to Arcuto Vitali over the period 1928-1963 kindly supplied by Tristano Nibbi. Useful information and interesting observations were also obtained from discussions with Alfredo Luzi of the University of Urbino who is a resident of Porto San Giorgio (March / June 1985) and from Vincenzo Serroni of Melbourne. Subsequent to the writing of the final draft of this chapter a brief biography of Nibbi ('Sincerely - Gino Nibbi') by Desmond O'Grady was published in Overland, 111(June 1988), pp2-8. Based on the same sources it however presents some puzzlingly inconsistencies: O'Grady's claim that Nibbi qualified as an accountant in inexact since the "Diploma di perito commerciale e ragioniere' is a secondary qualification in bookkeping and commercial studies; according to Tristano Nibbi his father did not contact Margherita Sarfatti but wrote direct to Mussolini when he could not obtain permission to leave Italy; the Nibbis returned to Italy for the second time in 1956, not in 1957; in dealing with Il volto degli emigranti O'Grady does not distinguish between the factual and the fictional accounts.

3. 'Far away from the Leonardo' - the article was published in an Australian newspaper, probably in 1965 or 1966.

4. Letter to Acruto Vitali, 26 July 1928.

5. Letter to Acruto Vitali, 4 July 1928. The letter contains an incisive but laconic comment on Australian educational philosophy: "qui uno studente per cominciare a dipingere ha bisogno di un metodo; per diventare architetto ha bisogno di un metodo; per fare il cuoco ha bisogno di un metodo etc."

6. Eg. the brief account given in Triaca1985: 132: "Mrs [Elvira] Nibbi was the wife of Gino Nibbi, the owner of the Leonardo Bookshop in Little Collins Street. While his wife taught Italian upstairs, downstairs in the shop her husband was busy introducing Australians to modern European artists. Before long the tiny bookshop became a landmark and focal point for a generation of students, artists and the public who made pilgrimages to Little Collins Street to buy reproductions, postcards and prints from the jovial Italian or simply to talk and look at the books and magazines. He stocked everything from magnificent Italian and French prints to novels and art books, not just in Italian and English but in other languages too."

7. John Sinclair, 'He sold books ... now he writes them', The Herald, 12 July 1957 [page number missing on photocopy].

8. In Australian cultural circles Nibbi is still remembered for his influence on art and artists in Melbourne in the 30s and 40s. He is mentioned in a number of standard references on Australian art (see, for example, McCullock 1968: 413; Smith 1982: 194-5 passim). His writings on art included contributions on Australian subjects such as an article in Aboriginal art for an Italian newspaper ('Un gruppo di pittori impressionisti discendenti dei ferocissimi Arunta', Il Giornale d'Italia, 23 February 1958, p3) and paragraphs on Boyd, Nolan, Kemp, French and other artists published in the Spanish magazine Goya (34, January-February 1960, pp251-2 and 37, March-April 1962, pp265-8). In addition he wrote extensively on Italian art, contributing a number of articles on the subject to Australian publications and Melbourne broadsheets and among his unpublished papers (copies of which have been placed in the University of Wollongong Library archives) are to be found a monograph on Modigliani as well as a collection of essays on one hundred European artists, both classical and modern, which provide interesting insights into Nibbi's perception of art as well as the stimulus this must have provided to the Melbourne art circles of his time.

9. Quoted in a report of an opening of an exhibition of Picasso Ceramics by Evatt which appeared in The Age, 13 April [year and page number not on photocopy].

10. Alan McCulloch, 'Nibbi - a true pioneer', The Herald, 26 August 1970 [page number not on photocopy].

11. Between 1954 and 1963 he wrote, as far as is known, nearly 200 articles of which about 120 on Australia.

12. He published an account of his travels 'Dall'Australia alla Spagna', in L'Osservatore, III, 8 (August 1957), pp45-57.

13. Letter to Acruto Vitali, 4 April 1958.

14. Articles on Nibbi's New Guinea experiences were published in Il Globo: 'Nella giungla della Nuova Guinea con i coccodrilli e la febbre <<dendy>>', 20 April 1960, p3; 'Un'accetta e un po' di sale per la vita di un guerriero', 6 June 1960, p3; 'Le tribù selvagge della Nuova Guinea vivono come nella età della pietra', Il Giornale d'Italia, 9 February 1962, p3; 'La difficile via della democrazia fra i selvaggi della Nuova Guinea', Il Giornale d'Italia, 13 August 1959, p3; 'Con le conchiglie marine si può comprare una moglie graziosa', Il Resto del Carlino, 3 November 1958, p3.

15. 'Il più grande filologo del Giappone è il marchigiano Giuseppe Vaccari', Il Globo, 12 November 1961, p3.

16. The review was by G. De Scalzo and appeared in L'Italia Letteraria, XII(43), 15 November XV [1937], p3.

17. Le Mois, 1January - 1 February 1935, p173.

18. Solmi 1978: 27-43. The review originally appeared in Pan, I, 1(January 1935), pp132-135. It has not been so far possible to trace another review of the travel account by G. Titta Rosa - 'Due viaggiatori Nibbi e Rossi' - which appeared in Il Corriere Padano, ?March 1935, p3.

19. The photocopy does not show the source which was probably Il Giornale d'Italia.

20. Nibbi's books are to be found in the "Fondo Falchi", the critic's library which the National Library in Rome purchased subsequent to Falqui's death.

21. 'Lo Zio Higuci' from Nibbi's Japanese accounts together with a bio-bibliographical note was included in Antognini1971: 364-376; Luzi 1984b: 251-265 contains an essay on Nibbi, 'Gino Nibbi: uno scrittore tra emigrazione e nomadismo', which had previously been published in Rando 1973: 312-320.

22. A. Antognini, 'Profili di Scrittori Marchigiani: Gino Nibbi', programme transmitted by Radio Marche, 8 July 1970.

23. R. W. Thomson, 'Calabrians in Toorak', The Australian, 25 February 1967 [page number non on photocopy].

24. Condell 1983: 104. The following observation is of particular interest: "A good example of the last-mentioned device, the contrast within a story, is found in "Tre pionieri", where, after a eulogy of the three great Italian pioneering figures of the Nineteenth Century in Australia, Nibbi introduces a first person account of his meeting with one of the pioneers, Cecchi, by that time a sprightly nonagenarian with a mischievous wit who spent his days making guitars."

25. The investigation of the question "what is Australian culture?" is also the theme of some of Nibbi's newspaper articles such as: "<<Sono asiatico o europeo?>> si chiede l'Australiano appena giunto ad una maturità politica e sociale', Il Globo, 18 January 1961, p3; 'Sono un poco europei e un poco asiatici ma temono di diventare un giorno yankees', Il Giornale d'Italia, 20 July 1958, p3; 'L'Australia di Lawrence oggi non è più attuale', Il Resto del Carlino, 30 April 1956, p3; 'Un immaginario cronista piemontese alla scoperta della realtà australiana', Il Giornale d'Italia, 11 October 1958, p3 [commentrary-review on "Nino Culotta"'s They're a Weird Mob]; 'L'Australia aspira a diventare il paese ideale per l'uomo medio', Il Tempo del Lunedì, 21 February 1955, p7; 'Le illusioni e gli affanni domestici dell'intransigente signora <<average>>', Il Giornale d'Italia, 17 October 1958, p3. Certain aspects of Sydney also seem to have interested Nibbi: 'Sydney assolve i peccatori australiani', Il Resto del Carlino, 3 April 1961, p3; 'Gli abitanti dell'intera Oceania trascorrono le vacanze a Sydney', Il Resto del Carlino, 1 August 1957, p7; 'Sydney, famosa città dei gaudenti è cresciuta di mondanità ed industrie', Il Globo, 23 November 1960, p3; 'Magnanima e generosa, Sydney accoglie e occulta gli illusi e i falliti', Il Globo, 1 February 1961, p3. In addition Nibbi wrote numerous articles on Australian art (including Aboriginal art) and a few on Australian literature.

26. 'Inquilini primi', 'Inquilini secondi', 'Inquilini terzi' in Nibbi 1965: 73-111. In addition Nibbi also wrote an article on the sexual mores of Richmond girls, 'Nei bassifondi di Richmond le ragazze sono meno costose', Il Globo, 1 June 1960, p3, two on the emancipated status of Australian women, 'Le donne australiane non sono inchiodate al

focolare', Il Tempo, 25 November 1948, p3 and 'A Perth è il marito che deve seguire la moglie', Il Giornale d'Italia, 1 April 1958, p3 [a very similar one, 'Gli indolenti mariti di Perth sono costretti a seguire le mogli', later appeared in Il Resto del Carlino, 2 January 1961, p3], one on Canberra women 'Le bigliettaie di Canberra sono <<prenotate>> come le infermiere a Melbourne e a Sydney', Il Globo, 4 January 1961, p3, and one on pioneer women who worked in the mines 'Le donne pioniere in Australia andarono a lavorare nelle miniere', Il Globo, 10 August 1960, p3.

27. The Australian Sunday outing was the topic of: 'Gli Australiani di domenica cercano rifugio nei boschi', Il Resto del Carlino, 17 Feb. 1958, p3 and 'Gli Australiani smaltiscono la noia celebrando la domenica in piena boscaglia', Il Tempo, 12 Nov. 1957, p3; 'E' un culto in Australia la scampagnata domenicale', Il Tempo, 22 June 1960, p3.

28. An article on tenants who are fond of drinking - 'Nottate di alcolica esuberanza di una <<ideale>> coppia di inquilini'"- appeared in Il Globo, 3 August 1960, p3.

29. Drink is an ubiquitous characteristic of the Australian social landscape and, according to Nibbi, the hotter the climate the more Australians drink: "In un fiat si vuota una bottiglia di birra, per cui, verso sera, vi sentite intorpidite dalle alcooliche fermentazioni. La gente quassù (gente di ambo i sessi), con la stessa facilità con cui fuma, sorseggia indefessamente gin, rum, kummel, brandy, whisky, ed altre miscele incendiarie. Sembra incredibile che quei combustibili possano dissetare sotto la canicola fiammeggiante. In questi climi, per mantenersi vigorosi, bisogna rifocillarsi di frequente" ('Nella Terra di Arnhem', Nibbi 1965: 360).

30. "E' un illuso che si situa fuori dalla storia; la quale, in Australia, è tutta ipotecata dalla cronaca, e per di più scarseggia di chiaroscuri", 'Sposalizio' in Nibbi 1965: 218. He further reinforces this comment in a somewhat intriguing passage in which moonlight and history are linked: "Superfluo anche il dirlo, di romantico lì [at Hepburn Springs] rimane il decrepito ma inalterabile chiaro di luna, se siete fortunati d'imbroccare una fase di plenilunio. Ma la luna (scusate la digressione) non è mai occorsa a nessuno in Australia. Non ha mai illuminato estasi d'amore, forse perché qui viene a mancare quell'alcunchè di furtivo, e appunto lievitante, come nei paesi ricchi di storia. Ma cotesto può parere un cavillo romantico, e non è detto che non possa applicarsi a un paese ancora geologico e refrattario." (pp225-226). In the same story Nibbi comments on the strange practice that Australians have of spending their honeymoon at a spa (Hepburn Strings)- "In Europa non sarebbe assurdo recarsi in luna di miele ad una stazione termale, proprio in una culminazione della propria esuberanza?" (p225) - but have they anywhere else to go as compared, for example, to Italian honeymoon couples who can choose from places such as Rome and Venice? A further mention of the "lack" of history occurs in 'Troppi Fantasmi' when Tasmania is described as an island "senza storia, e tanto meno evidenze di preistoria" (p343).

31. Hegel maintained that world history was a dialectic of the peoples contributing to the realization of freedom and reason. But freedom and reason are embodied in the State. It follows then that the most progressive people are those capable of State-building for the State expresses the people's will to survive. Conversely, peoples without States cannot contribute to the development of civilization and they would soon cease to be peoples. If a people has proved itself incapable of building a State over a course of time, it will never be able to build one. Hegel's theory is also interesting in terms of another concept expounded by Nibbi viz. that in political affairs Australians do not have effective leaders.

32. Nibbi has commented on the fact that English immigrants too have difficulty in adapting to the country in the article 'Si sentono stranieri gli Inglesi in Australia', Il Resto del Carlino, 7 January 1969, p3.

33. "Questa è una terra di affaristi impenitenti, destinata a divenire più materialista dell'America" (Nibbi 1965:24). One of Nibbi's articles on the theme of Australian materialism was: 'La prosperità in Australia fa trascurare la politica', probably published in one of the October 1963 issues of Il Giornale d'Italia.

34. Nibbi had also published an article on this theme: 'Inglesi dalla testa ai piedi ma copiano gli Americani', Il Globo, 15 June 1960, p3.

35. 'Vanno in Europa', Nibbi 1965: 325-342. Excerpts previously published: 'Basta firmare un documento e ci si imbarca per l'Europa', Il Resto del Carlino, 5 February 1959, p3; 'Il miraggio degli Australiani è un lungo viaggio in Europa', Il Resto del Carlino, 26 July 1957, p7; 'Gli Australiani che vengono in Italia si sentono incompresi dalle domestiche', Il Resto del Carlino, 14 December 1959, p3; 'Tengono una conferenza per spiegare quanto e perché si sono divertiti in Italia', Il Giornale d'Italia, 30 June 1960, p3.

36. Excerpts previously published: 'Le Balene di Stanley vittime della bassa marea', Il Giornale d'Italia, 4 April 1959, p3; 'Le balene vanno a finire al domicilio dei loro aguzzini', Il Globo, 26 October 1960, p3.

37. This story is discussed in Chapter 3. This subject was also the topic of the article 'La cucina italiana in Australia si diffonde a ritmo allarmante', Il Globo, 7 December 1960, p3 and 'Pietanze e canzoni d'Italia stanno influenzando l'Australia', Il Tempo, 12 March 1955, p3.

38. Nibbi 1965: 279-289. Excerpts previously published: 'Gli amori senili e le civetterie degli allegri pensionati di Melbourne', Il Resto del Carlino, 5 September 1960, p3; 'I clubs dell'amicizia di Melbourne vietati ai minori di sessant'anni', Il Globo, 11 May 1960, p3.

39. Excerpts previously published: 'Lamenti e risate di spettri nel boschi della Tasmania', Il Resto del Carlino, 6 June 1960, p3; 'Fantasmi a mezzogiorno in Tasmania', Il Giornale d'Italia, 17 May 1962, p3.

40. 'Vedono orme misteriose e la polizia li utilizza per questo', Il Giornale d'Italia, 17 November 1960, p3? and, in reference to New Guinea: 'Gli indigeni battono i denti ossessionati dalla paura degli spettri', Il Resto del Carlino, 1 July 1958, p3.

41. Nibbi 1965: 353-366. Excerpts previously published: 'Un duello mortale nella Terra di Arnhem', Il Giornale d'Italia, 19-20 January 1960, p3; 'In 35 anni nell'interno dell'Australia i bufali si sono rapidamente moltiplicati', Il Globo, 31 August 1960, p3; 'Mammifero dei tempi primordiali ... divenuto un commestibile soprafino', Il Globo, 24 August 1969, p3; 'Le frecce avvelenate dei negri ai bufali fanno solo il solletico', Il Resto del Carlino, 5 November 1958, p3; 'Anche la caccia ai coccodrilli soggetta alle fluttuazioni della moda', Il Giornale d'Italia, 15-16 July 1959, p3. Another interesting article on the outback, not connected with this story, is 'Cavalcata a dirotto In Australia da Carpenteria ad Adelaide', Il Tempo, 31 August 1948, p3.

42. Although Nibbi's views of art achieved some circulation in Australia both through his writings in English and his activities at the Leonardo Art Shop, his perception of Australia and Australians as presented in his many newspaper articles and in his narrative writings has not been accessible to the Australian reader because they were written in Italian and published in Italy although he may well have expressed similar views in speaking with friends and acquaintances in Melbourne.

CHAPTER 5

ROSA CAPPIELLO AND THE MIGRATION EXPERIENCE OF THE SINGLE WOMAN

Vastly different in style and technique with respect to Gino Nibbi, Rosa Raffaella Cappiello is perhaps the Italo-Australian writer best known and most acclaimed by the Anglo-Australian reading public. An innovative and progressive writer among a group generally characterized by conservatism in both technique and concept, she is, in fact, the only first generation Italian woman immigrant to be mentioned in the latest standard reference work on Anglo-Australian literature. However the brief paragraph dedicated to her novel contains a number of factual errors.[1] The purpose of this chapter is to examine Cappiello's writings, particularly her novel Paese fortunato, in so far as they relate to the representation of the migration experience seen from the viewpoint of the single working class woman of non English-speaking background.

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Of a rather shy and reserved character, Rosa Cappiello does not like to talk about herself. She was born in Caivano, a town near Naples, on 9 March 1942. From the age of two she lived at Secondigliano where she attended primary school. Her education did not proceed beyond the "quinta elementare", the final year of primary

school. This was not so much because of an unwillingness to continue but rather because her mother did not want her travelling alone in Naples to High School. Her sister, also poorly educated, has become a painter. Rosa Cappiello spent her adolescent years at home and it was not until 24 that she obtained her first job as a sales representative for encyclopedias. She later worked as a shop assistant. During her years at home she read widely and voraciously although it was not until she was about 18 that she began to read "serious writers". Her writing grew out of solitude and at 19 she wrote her first novel which was not to be published for several years. Words hold a fascination for her. She likes playing with them, making them fit together perfectly, making them flow.[2] She emigrated to Australia in 1971, leaving Naples precipitately a few months after the death of her father and arriving in Sydney on 24 December. Her decision to emigrate was, in part, due to a sense of challenge and adventure and the desire to throw off old encumbrances.[3] In Australia she found a reality quite unlike her expectations: a country of different worlds living hermetically side by side, where the traditional values of the "old" countries were corrupted by money and materialism, where work was all-consuming and women were unrespected. With no knowledge of English, no specific trade skills or family support (although she does have a brother in Sydney who works in the building trade) she worked in Sydney for several years in a clothing factory, sometimes in restaurants during the evenings, at times experiencing spells of unemployment.

In 1977 she published her first novel I Semi neri which she had rewritten after her arrival in Australia. It is a short novel which relates the problematical love story of a self-taught, instinctual Neapolitan working class girl, Rina, who is suffering from cancer, and a newly-graduated but unemployed young doctor, Sabastiano. Rina to a large extent foreshadows the protagonist of Paese fortunato. Both protagonists, whose names are somewhat similar, represent rage rebellion and rejection. Both are fringe dwellers in their respective social contexts. Rina considers emigration as a panacea to her ills (Cappiello 1977: 48, 91) but is prevented from emigrating by the constraints placed upon her by her illness, her social background and her lack of education. Her situation leads to sometimes hysterical rebellion against the constraints placed upon her by her illness, by her relationship with Sebastiano and by her uprooted social condition which is that of a woman outside the traditionally accepted social framework. The feeling of isolation and the resulting rage constitute the elements of an undefined and unarticulated awareness of the oppression imposed by class and gender which is instinctively but not consciously felt. Structurally it is a plotless, fragmentary and at times incoherent book, while the language, although powerful, does not quite manage to carry the novel. Cappiello herself states that I Semi Neri was just just a way of learning to write and claims that Paese fortunato is her first "real" novel.

The writing of Paese fortunato, Cappiello's second novel, began in 1978 while she was in hospital recovering from a road accident. The first 101 pages were sent to the left-wing publisher Feltrinelli in December 1980 and the novel was published towards the end of June

1981. The English translation of the novel was published late in November 1984 by Queensland University Press whose fiction editor, D'Arcy Randall, had been impressed by a few reviews published in Australia and the reaction of some readers. The slightly altered title, Oh Lucky Country, was in deference to Donald Horne who by then had become Chairman of the Australia Council. Subsequent to the publication of the second novel she has contributed material to literary magazines both in Italy and Australia. A proposal to make a film from Paese fortunato did not come to fruition because Cappiello was not able to come to an agreement with the producer. In the last few years Rosa Cappiello has turned to full-time writing, obtaining financial support from royalties, grants, nine weeks as Writer-in-Residence at the University of Wollongong in 1983, literary prizes, the unemployment benefit and some casual work.

Cappiello is equally reticent when asked about her literary leanings. She is a wide-ranging and voracious reader but admits only to having been influenced by Dostoevsky which she read "da ragazza". However on examining her works parallels with writers as varied as Proust, Kafka, Beckett, Sartre, Runyon, Henry Miller, Mary McCarthy, Helene Cixous and even the type of invective springing from outraged moralism employed by Swift also come to mind. Among the writers she has read most recently feature Céline and Anäis Nin. Cappiello herself is quick to point out that she harbours no particular predeliction for Italian writers and in fact connections with these would seem less obvious, although Pavese, to some extent, comes to mind and also Volponi. She does, however, seem to have come into contact with Volponi and his works only in the last few years.

Possible parallels may also be found in Alberto Moravia (particularly in his later works), Paolo Quintavalle and Pier Paolo Pasolini. However Pasolini uses the dialect of his Roman characters whereas Cappiello never writes in her native Neapolitan dialect apart from the odd word and some structures. Thematically Paese fortunato can also be linked to the contemporary Italian worker novel. An important sociolinguistic influence would seem to be the speech habits of the younger post-1968, Italian generation.

Rosa Cappiello is generally considered an intelligent and perceptive person but as having a closed and difficult character, reluctant to reveal details about herself as though, in some metaphysical way, her strength might be sapped by others' knowledge. She smokes profusely, lives alone in Annandale in fiercely protected privacy, has few friends and can, if crossed, be quick to take offence. Her aggressiveness is perhaps due, at least in part, to a feeling of insecurity in that, despite her lack of formal educational qualifications, her activity as a writer brings her to mix with people who are educationally, if not intellectually, her superiors. Consequently she does not feel at ease with people she does not know. Additionally the lack of formal education has had the effect of not permitting her to articulate easily or fully what she wants to say. This difficulty is most apparent when she speaks. Her Italian is noticeably influenced by Neapolitan dialect and her English very rudimentary. Her face, however, gives eloquent expression to her reactions. She sometimes experiences difficulty in controlling her language when she writes. She is basically an instinctive and somewhat undisciplined writer. It is this instinctiveness and lack of

discipline which excludes her from practising other aspects of the writer's craft. For example, unlike Gino Nibbi before her, she does not write for newspapers. If she could, her perspective and observations on Australia would certainly make for interesting reading. Unable to write her fiction and poetry directly in English she is limited to Italian and has to rely on translation to bring her texts before an Australian audience. Lately she has experimented with self-translation of her writings into English. Despite these handicaps, Rosa Cappiello does manage to come across as an interesting, certainly controversial, writer. Partly because of the content of her novel, partly because of the lack of formal educational qualifications, she has been virtually rejected by Italo-Australian "intellectual" circles. In fact one comment made about her book is that it is written "in un linguaggio da quinta elementare". Since the publication of the English translation of Paese fortunato, she has, however, gained some acceptance by avant-garde Sydney literary circles and she has become a regular participant at readings of prose and poetry, has attended a national drama workshop in Canberra and has been invited to read in Melbourne at the Spoleto Festival.

The publication of the English translation of the novel has led to invitations to publish poems and short stories in translation. The poetry she has written so far seems closely correlated to her novel in that it deals with similar migrant-related or feminist themes and presents similar stylistic and linguistic elements. To a certain extent it seems to be conditioned by the request of the magazine editors who want material in the style of Paese fortunato. The only story published to date is '10/20 dogs under the bed'.[4] It is a

significant one in that it demonstrates that Cappiello can get away from autobiographical migration-related themes and capture something of an "Australian" quality while at the same time retaining traits of the Neapolitan cultural base. It is a whimsical, spirited, punchy, paradoxical story told in the first person by an old man obsessed by sex and death whose existence is plagued by his mate Josse's obsession with greyhounds in yet another vacuous get rich quick scheme. She has completed (August 1987) another story, 'Travels of an urban nomad', for an anthology to be published by Penguin and is currently working on a third 'Confessions of a veteran prostitute'. Cappiello is also preparing a collection of poems and short stories for publication, an activity which has caused her temporarily to suspend work on her third novel.

CRITICAL APPRAISALS

Critical reaction to Paese fortunato in Italy was fairly swift. The Neapolitan daily Il Mattino published a review and an interview with Rosa Cappiello in August 1981.[4] This somewhat enthusiastic review links the novel, perhaps exaggeratedly so, with the author's (Neapolitan) cultural base:

> "Cresciuto e quasi covato come un prezioso segreto nel mondo assurdo dell'emigrazione: dove il legame con le tradizioni d'origine si enfatizza fino a dimensioni di iperrealtà: la gelosia, il culto dei morti, il mito della verginità, quello strano terzomondismo guardato con sospetto (se non con disprezzo) dagli australiani con patente plurigenerazionale e lombi anglosassoni."[5]

Durante also relates the work to Cappiello's experience both in cultural-educational terms and as an immigrant and he comments on its language, countering, in a certain sense, the later criticisms made

in Italo-Australian circles:

> "un libro impastato con una scrittura italiana sofisticata e inconsapevole, frutto di testa per davvero, anche se vissuto in prima persona e sulla propria pelle. E sembra il caso di dover sorprendersi del miracolo. Qui è tutto autodidattico. [...] un parlare sommesso, con discrezione, che esplode di tanto in tanto rivelando interne tensioni, un parlare fatto di convinzioni, con la grinta di chi ha lavorato duro ed ha vissuto soffrendo. Rosa rifiuta la retorica facile dell'emigrante, anche se certi accostamenti sarebbero forse naturali."[5]

A review by Marisa Rusconi[6] which highlights Cappiello's depiction of the condition of the "proletariato femminile internazionale" and the violent hard-hitting aspect of her prose was also largely favourable. However, according to a second article by Durante, not all reviews were favourable since some critics who considered writing by emigrants as a sort of literary sub-species claimed that "la rabbia (di Rosa) non basta a fare un buon romanzo".[7] But the most authoritative critique was to come from Paolo Volponi, currently one of Italy's leading novelists and a committed left-wing intellectual. In the September issue of the literary magazine Alfabeta, which Volponi edits together with, among others, Umberto Eco, he published a review of the novel which praised its linguistic impetuosity and its denunciation of the migrant condition through its linking of language and identity. Volponi also discussed other positive elements of the novel such as Cappiello's magnificent virtuosity as a writer, her irony, the Neapolitan flavour of her language and her Socratic penetration of life. It is indeed true that much of her discourse proceeds along the lines of Socratic dialectic. He further points out that, having been published in summer, the book did not receive the attention it truly deserved. While Volpoini's enthusiastic reception was in part due to his own particular views of what constitutes a

valid literary work, namely instinctiveness, linguistic/clutural contacts with one's roots, avoidance of provincialism, it was also in part consistent with the stance traditionally taken by left-wing intellectuals in relation to the migration issue. His position was nevertheless vindicated when in September the novel was awarded the Premio Calabria which had on previous occasions been awarded to writers such as Heinrich Böll, Roland Barthes, Leonardo Sciascia and Leonida Repaci.

A more detailed critique was provided the following year by Gabriella Bianco, at the time Director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Sydney. She presented a paper on Paese fortunato at the National Seminar of Italo-Australian Narrative and Drama Writers at the University of Wollongong (Rando 1983). The paper was later incorporated in her Tesi di specializzazione at the University of Urbino (Bianco 1984). Bianco's analysis, while not minimizing the migration issue, emphasises the set of themes related to the examination of the condition of the single working-class woman in a society which is in transition from the industrial to the post-industrial phase. It is an interesting and somewhat "classical" if at times not quite coherent application of Lukács' theory of the novel, although Bianco's attempt at classifying the work as a psychological novel is perhaps somewhat simplistic. In fact her attempt to combine a marxist-orientated critique with a psychoanalytic approach seems to fall between two stools. On the one hand the dialectic and antithetical relationship between the individualistic and the collective are not made clear. On the other, the strong feminist stance which emerges in the second part of the

paper appears methodologically inconsistent. Further, her view of "la rabbia" as a limiting technical device in the novel seems to contradict its function as a thematic element in the expression of Rosa's revolt. Bianco, however introduces a number of interesting, if debatable points viz.: (i) "la creazione artistica tenta di esorcizzare i compromessi che la realtà impone, nel tentativo di inserirsi nel mondo reale e di riscattarsi dalla propria condizione subalterna" (Bianco 1983: 288); (ii) "lo scrivere si propone per Rosa come l'unica mediazione possibile fra sé ed il mondo reale" (p288); (iii) "manca in lei [Rosa - the author or the character?] la solidarietà con la sua classe" (p289); (iv) "il suo bisogno di dire è franchezza e nudità assolute" (p292). However Bianco's claim that the novel in Australia has been "osteggiato dai nostri colleghi uomini" (p290) is factually inexact if, as appears to be the case, she is referring to the Italo-Australian ambience. Violent reactions against the novel were expressed by women as well as men.

The Italo-Australian community first heard about Paese fortunato through Durante's article which was reprinted in La Fiamma[7]. The news that an Italian writer resident in Sydney had gained recognition in Italy gave rise to some pleasurable interest. When, however, copies of the novel reached Australia it was greeted with cries of horror and vilification by elements of the middle-class section of Sydney's Italian community. This was particularly the reaction of those who had been in Australia for some time and who did not recognize or refused to recognize themselves in the novel. One reader, the middle-aged wife of a white-collar professional, went so far as to state that she was depressed for three days after having

read the novel. Another middle-aged reader, an immigrant with many years' experience on the factory floor, remarked that reality was, if anything, worse than that depicted in the novel. The reactions were, in part, due to certain disconcerting elements presented in the novel such as the crudity of the language, themes relating to the exploitation of migrant women workers in ethnic-run Sydney factories, the description of the abject living conditions in which these low-income earners exist, the explicit presentation of both heterosexual and homosexual activities. These criticisms were made verbally and Cappiello claims that she was the subject of threats. Written comments have been made by Pino Bosi. In private Bosi will admit that the novel has positive values. However when he wrote about Cappiello in his magazine[8] he echoed commonly-held views of the novel articulated by the middle class "old guard" segment of the Italian community. Bosi claims that the acceptance of the novel by a few left-wing Italian intellectuals was short-lived, despite the fact that Cappiello, like Nibbi, is one of the very few Italo-Australian writers who have seen their work published in Italy. He further claims, somewhat simplistically, that the novel is a rejection *in toto* of the lucky country to which Cappiello had emigrated and goes on to illustrate the Italo-Australian community's reaction to the novel:

> "Se la Cappiello aveva rigettato il mondo italo-australiano (nella finzione letteraria) gli italo-australiani dovevano mostrare la stessa incompatibilità nei confronti della sua opera. Questo non soltanto per il linguaggio ma anche e soprattutto perché il mondo descritto dalla Cappiello non esiste per loro; non l'hanno nemmeno mai sfiorato; per loro gli ambienti in cui si muovono i personaggi della Cappiello potrebbe [sic] essere quello della luna, o di Marte, certamente non quelli dell'Australia."[8]

Bosi's opinions aside, critical evaluation of the novel in Australia has been on the whole positive. Two phases may be discerned. The first was after the publication of the Italian text by those few critics who had been able to read it. This served to arouse interest in the novel, led to a number of articles on Cappiello[9] and to the publication of some translated excerpts.[10] The second and more substantive phase came after the publication of the English translation.

In what may be considered a watershed review, Franco Schiavoni presented the first substantial analysis of the novel to appear in Australia.[11] Adopting an existentialist/symbolic approach, he argues that the "novel presents an unusual and disconcerting side of migrant life in Sydney" (p8) but "does not aim to give a global judgement on migrant conditions and Australian society" (p8). Rather it reveals "subjective truths lived viscerally and agonisingly by the narrating consciousness" (p8). Like Nibbi, Cappiello too invites comparison with Hope, and Schiavoni argues that the "'second-hand Europeans' that pullulate in A. D. Hope's *Australia* have, in Rosa Cappiello's novel, the added Beckettian dimension of living 'in an immense garbage dump', surrounded by excremental imagery" (p8). The novel tends to emphasise the sordid and negative features of the Australian milieu although Schiavoni also admits that it does have "glimpses of positive horizons". He does not develop his argument to deal with the descriptions Cappiello gives of the Sydney cityscape and especially the harbour which in the novel constitute a very positive presentation of an aspect of the Australian milieu. Unlike a number of reviewers after him who concentrated on the "migration" aspects of the novel, Schiavoni gives due emphasis to the universal existential elements by

pointing out that:

> "The main characters appear victims less of their new environment than of the circumstances implicit in all radical changes of conditions, the inevitable discrepancy between dream and reality - and ultimately victims of their own nature, their velleities and their failure to clearly face their existentialist problems. The promised Eldorado has transformed itself into a lethal trap, not so much by virtue of intrinsic inadequacies but because of a flaw at the starting point." (p8)

Schiavoni defines Cappiello's status as a writer as "naive, self-taught, natural, instinctual, uncultivated, isolated, uprooted", a subtly patronising definition which did not please the interested party. However he comments most favourably on Cappiello's language, and is basically in agreement with Volponi in pointing out its impetuous vital qualities and its indebtedness to Neapolitan. In addition Schiavoni also deals with some of the more salient symbolic aspects of the language, although at times he seems to get carried away by his enthusiasm. For example, when he argues that Cappiello's frequent use of the word "incazzato" in reference to the central and other women characters "is semantically contradictory, as we have a feminine adjective based on a phallic image", he may be stating a metaphysical truth. But the reality of linguistic usage tells us that the word is used quite freely in Italy by both males and females of the younger generations. It also seems somewhat odd that he should define the immigrant women at the hostel described in the opening pages of the novel as "cosmopolitan" (p8), a definition which implies a sophistication they really do not possess.

Giampaolo Petrosi's review/interview[8] owes much of its basic precepts to Schiavoni, has a number of points in common with the Graziella Englaro interview and seems to add little which is new or original to an appraisal of either the novel or its author. He claims that the novel sold 70,000 copies in the first month. Feltrinelli is not prepared to state how many copies were sold but the fact that the novel has not as yet had a second printing suggests that sales might be nearer to seven than to seventy thousand.

Subsequent to the publication of the English translation by Gaetano Rando the novel became the subject of a considerable number of reviews, was awarded the Ethnic Book Award (one of the NSW Premier's Literary Awards) in September 1985 and was listed in the 28 July 1986 issue of Time Australia (p68) as Editor's Choice for fiction. Because of its publication late in November 1984 most of the newspaper reviews appeared in January of the following year. The reviews tended to focus mainly on the migration-oriented themes presented in the novel. Some reviewers, perhaps rather patronizingly, queried whether Cappiello would ever write another novel as good as Paese Fortunato. First off the mark was a Perth daily whose reviewer seems to have perceived the novel as an "eye-opening range of greedy, unpleasant characters taking a chance in the lucky country".[12] The reviewer for The Australian, on the other hand, while admitting that the book provides fascinating and quite compelling reading is unsure whether it can be called a novel since it lacks "plot, characterisation, meaningful insights and a theme"[13] although the publisher is to be congratulated for "having taken a chance" on Cappiello since she "overflows with potential". As in the other reviews, emphasis is

placed on the "Australian" content. It is claimed that in the first three quarters of the book Cappiello has unpleasant things to say about Australia because it is not Italy but she eventually comes to terms with the new country. There is also a hint of recognition that more universal themes exist with the statement that "the essence of the book, Rosa's feeling of alienation from the angrifying world around her, is a great starting point for a putative novelist." Nevertheless the reviewer is, in the final analysis, somewhat patronising, while his argument that the novel is incompetent in a technical sense is perhaps due in part to his perplexity when confronted with the text. However it will be recalled that Carboni too was accused of textual incompetence and so, in a certain sense was Abiuso. It would thus appear that immigrant writers of non English-speaking backgrounds are somewhat prone to be dismissed in this manner. The Sydney Morning Herald critic also found that the book provided compelling reading, was very fast paced and aroused "increasing agitation".[14] Stressing the elements of anger, agitation and alienation, the latter as a universal element, not just related to the migration theme, the reviewer is more positive in her evaluation of Cappiello as a writer. She states that Cappiello "has the fierce and singular vision of a faction [sic] writer and is more concerned with reflecting the chaos of migration *per se* than with documenting the process of Italian migration to Australia." Completely noncommittal was the review in The Age[15], which limited itself to commenting on the elements of hysteria, chaos and humour in the novel as well as on its expressionist style. The review in The Canberra Times presented quite negative reactions to the novel, whose images and ideas were found to be "unrelentingly disgusting"[16] and its obscenities drearily

monotonous. It was admitted, however, that the writing had "strength and vitality". Comments on the compelling qualities of the novel and on the strength and vitality of its language also constituted a general consensus voiced in the magazine reviews which were published throughout 1985. Vogue commented that it was a disturbing book but that Cappiello's "gifts as an observer and commentator, together with the subject matter she reveals with such force, create demands on the reader which deserve to be met."[17] The feminist aspects of the novel were accentuated in the Womanspeak review which stated that it "possesses the kinds of qualities, [sic] I think Helene Cixous was referring to when she wrote of how the new feminists texts should be written"[18] while Helen Garner[19] in an enthusiastic but somewhat uncritical review categorizes the fury and the cursing expressed in the novel as fantastic and exhilarating although at the same time she is at pains to point out that Cappiello does present some divergencies from feminist ideas. The novel's status as both a compelling social document and "an imaginative creation transcending its particular time and place"[20] is the theme of a brief review in the Australian Book Review while the "Neapolitan linguistic flavour" of the novel found favour with the reviewer in News and Views.[21]

Paese fortunato thus seems to have caused rather more controversy and puzzlement among its Australian reviewers than their Italian counterparts. This is partly because its themes are of more interest and closer to home for the former, but it may also be because it is a type of book much more unusual in the Australian literary context than in the Italian one. Perhaps Anglo-Australian ears are not prepared for the impetuous pace of a novel which

describes both the migrant experience and the feminist viewpoint without understatements or clichés.

More extensive studies of Paese fortunato were rather more positive than the newspapers reviews and utterly devoid of any hint of patronisation and condescension. In an enthusiastic and well presented review article Manfred Jurgensen states that "*Oh Lucky Country* is one of the most powerful books ever written about Australia" (Jurgensen 1985:243) which offers "a new, exciting and passionate reading of Australian society" (Jurgensen 1985:246) as well as a "precision and persuasion previously unheard of in Australian prose" (Jurgensen 1985:244). An important point made in the article is that Cappiello is to be considered an Australian novelist even though she writes in Italian. In this context Jurgensen's remarks provide a novel and original insight into the concept of multiculturalism in Australian letters. The idiosyncratic stylistic features of the novel which some of the newspaper reviewers saw as a weakness are here considered one of its strong points and the comments on the types and aspects of humour (black, sardonic, outrageous, humane and compassionate) presented in Paese fortunato are not to be found in any of the other reviews. As Jurgensen quite rightly points out Paese fortunato is by no means a comfortable book for those who have a vested interest in the "preservation of a 'pure' anglosaxon literary culture" (Jurgensen 1985:243) but certainly one which will bring readers to a new understanding of themselves and their country.

Sneja Gunew's article presents Paese fortunato as "a new voice within Australian writing, and wickedly parodic at that" (Gunew 1985: 517) and introduces, although embryonically, a discussion on the concept of marginality. It would have been worthwhile continuing the discussion since marginality seems to be an almost automatic category to which literary works by writers of non English-speaking backgrounds are relegated. These works are usually ignored or patronized by the literary establishment but Cappiello's case is somewhat different in that Paese fortunato is a work which is difficult to ignore or to patronize. Gunew cogently and succinctly deals with the relationship of the woman as a marginalized person in society with the migrant seen as occupying a similar position. However her analysis focuses principally on the carnivalesque aspects of the novel conveyed through its caricatures, grotesque exaggerations, the reversal of gender,[22] the presence of "unruly women", the inversion of traditional religious and moral values, the assumption of masks, the positive, celebratory and festive aspects of femaleness which are probably the most feminist features of the novel. Significantly Gunew makes no apologies for the "migrant" status of the work and has a number of criticisms to make about the patronising stance of the Australian.[13] Although interesting and stimulating, the article is susceptible to challenge on a few details. Gunew somewhat uncritically follows Schiavoni[11] in stressing the symbolic importance of "incazzato" (p523). The parallel between caricature in the novel and the *commedia dell'arte* (p521) is somewhat out of place since the only influence would seem to be that of Neapolitan popular tradition. And singling out Dante as a culturally

specific antecedent is puzzling since Dante would not seem particularly relevant in this respect despite the parallel drawn between "I'd like to stick a bomb up Australia's arsehole" (Cappiello 1984:53) and *Inferno* XXXIV, 88-93 (p519). This parallel is nevertheless an interesting one since those Dante scholars who have studied the geographical aspects of the Commedia have come to the conclusion that the exit point of hell more or less matches the geographical coordinates of Sydney.

PAESE FORTUNATO: THE "SOCIAL" THEMES

Both in terms of its content and its technical parameters/aspects Paese fortunato is a work with which it is difficult to come to terms. Critiques of the novel have tended to focus on its "ethnic" characteristics: the "Neapolitan" flavour and the Australian elements for the Italian critics; the depiction of the migration experience for the Australians. In terms of technique both sets of critics have commented on the impetuosity and violence of the language, its successful conveyance of rage and the fundamentally undisciplined nature of the novel's structure which most consider a positive characteristic. True, the "ethnic" elements such as the presentation of the condition of the immigrant woman factory worker or the expression of the Neapolitan character through the protagonist are important elements. But the novel goes beyond these specifics to deal with more universal themes such as the existential condition of the "thinking" working class woman whose horizons are limited by constraints imposed by class and gender or the discourse, albeit fragmentary and often incoherent, on the nature of Australian society.

At a social level the novel describes disconcerting though not unusual aspects of migrant life in Sydney in the early 70s. Rosa Cappiello has bestowed her own name upon the central character, a single woman, without, however, intending to establish a total correlation between the two entities. She experiences the exploitation of the migrant woman worker in ethnic-run Sydney factories, the abject living conditions dictated by the constraints of cheap inner-city working class accommodation. She witnesses the sometimes degrading treatment meted out to the single migrant woman by single (and married) migrant men.

In terms of the social context the two main and interconnected themes seem to be that of feminism (despite Cappiello's unwillingness to be labelled a feminist writer) and the economic structure of the host society. The feminist theme deals with women's individuality in a male-dominated world. It is not specifically related to the migrant condition and is one which Cappiello had already explored in I Semi neri. Hardly an innovation at the beginning of the 80s and possibly even a little dated, it is forcibly presented through the contrast drawn between the protagonist and the other women in the group. Through the use of sex Rosa's companions manipulate men and each other and are in turn manipulated, but despite some cases of role reversal they remain in a subordinate position with respect to the male. Their basic function is to please the male either for material gain (money, presents) or for other purposes (marriage), a function which the narrator considers to be a negative one:

> "Ah, le amiche esercitano e sfruttano parecchi mestieri, mammane, puttane, sarte, pizzaiole, galoppine, banchiere, filibustiere, fruttivendole [...] Vestono da Merivale [...] Vanno dal parrucchiere due volte al mese, pedicure, manicure, peluzzi estirpati, puntini neri strizzati, schiarita ai capelli. Si costano una fortuna [...] Intelletto ancora allo stato embrionale. In cretineria emulano i compagni maschi." (p23)

Sofia the "capostipite" of the group has an insatiable sexual appetite matched by an equally insatiable desire for money and presents. She is introduced as a "troiona in agonia" (p23), eternally chased by her virginomaniac boyfriend Nicola. Later (p176) the group finds out that her real name is Concetta Porchetti, a name symbolic of her intrinsically piggish nature. In Australia, a land where "i porci pretendono il porcile abbellito di rose" (p65), Sofia/Concetta is in her element: "Questo è il paese adatto a una sanguisuga par suo" (p24). Beniamina, who in her hysterical desire for the accumulation of money recycles coffee grounds, extracts tobacco from cigarette butts and cadges small change off all and sundry on the pretext that she collects coins, is the only one of the group to marry. However, her marriage to Ross, the illiterate and drunkard English wharfie, does not provide her with a means of breaking out of the vicious circle of subordination and exploitation. Thus, in terms of the condition of women, the new society is no different from the old. The small band of women of different ethnic backgrounds who have shared the vicissitudes of the first few years in Australia are as poor, disoriented and exploited at the end of the novel as they were at the beginning. An exception is found in the case of the protagonist Rosa, whose equivocal position on gender roles, her refusal to accept male domination and her aloofness from the activities of the rest of the group make her an observer of but not a participant in the antics of

the others. This, however, is achieved at the price of becoming isolated, and the isolation at times causes metaphysical suffering. Paradoxically, though, it is this group of women who, in a bacchanalian-like frenzy, rescue Rosa when she is trapped by a grotesque Abruzzese couple of "old" immigrants who want her to bear the husband's child so that they can revenge themselves on their detestable son in law by leaving all their wealth to the baby. The other exception is the Greek Cypriot Lella Karaposi who leads an intense, active and unpredictable life, has an artistic temperament, teaches Greek in the Saturday morning schools and begins to study medicine at Sydney University. Lella shows some sign of breaking out of the vicious circle in which the others are trapped and of achieving upward social mobility which is attainable only at the cost of distancing herself from her less fortunate companions as well as from her cultural and linguistic roots.

The women of Rosa's group are often unemployed and in any case are not all that keen on working. Only Beniamina seems to subscribe to the migrant work ethic, initially through her desire to accumulate money, ultimately, when she and Ross decide to marry, through the need to purchase a home unit. There is, however, another group of women, anonymous and amorphous, who have become slaves to the work ethic to the extent of sacrificing traditional family values. These are the workers, especially the married ones, with whom the protagonist comes into contact when she works at the J. & M. clothing factory:

> "Le operai sposate avevano una disposizione malsana verso le singole. La superiorità di avere un paio di pantaloni accanto, e poi non importava se i

pantaloni erano vuoti e se le medesime le vedevi all'alba correre come dannate, coi bambini piccolissimi al collo, frignanti e assonnati da far pena. Figli che davano l'impressione di sacchetti di spazzatura e non frutti d'amore. Questa è la donna di fabbrica, moglie del moderno coolie e collie lei stessa, abile nel legare il figlio al letto o al tubo del lavabo per non perdersi la pisciatina di contentezza il venerdì, giorno di paga [...] Particolari amari. Struttura di una società moderna. Bisogna adeguarsi. Mettersi al passo. Chi non possiede non vale. Di moderno, però, c'era soltanto la fatica in parità col maschio, per il resto stavano al Medioevo, con la mente fissa alla verginità, ai calzini del consorte da lavare e al cucinare." (Cappiello 1981: 19)

"La maggioranza pur di procreare dollari si nega la soddisfazione del parto e una esistenza serena. I figli rompono il bilancio. Al lunch, siedono al tavolo un paio di premaman. Non le guardo. Se le guardo perdo l'appetito. Discutono animatamente sul costo dei feti. La donna in stato di gravidanza avanzata è abbattuta e depressa, dice che l'aborto le sarebbe costato solo trecento dollari e che ha fatto uno sbaglio enorme a non sbarazzarsi del bambino."
(Cappiello 1981: 33)

These victims of the industrial system, inarticulate and thus unable to defend themselves, are relegated to the bottom rungs of the social ladder.[23] They are seen by a host society reluctant to accept cultural values different from that of the angloceltic mainstream as objects of fun and derision.[24] Cappiello sees the existence of these women factory workers as being very much dominated by the exigencies of the industrial process while their attempts, not always successful, to achieve material well-being are encouraged by the crass materialism of the host society. Immigrants from countries such as Yugoslavia, Spain, Greece, whose cultures place a strong emphasis on family structure, are forced to sacrifice this tradition and the women have to suppress their natural instinct towards motherhood, sometimes opting for abortion, since pregnancies mean loss of earnings. An almost orthodox interpretation of the Marxist concepts

of structure and superstructure seems to lie at the basis of Cappiello's presentation of the relationship between the immigrant worker and the economic structure of the host society. This interpretation is not presented consciously, since the isolated central character is certainly not one prone to expressions of class/gender solidarity. Nevertheless there is an implicit critique of the economic system of the host society in Cappiello's hard-hitting commentary, often delivered in ironic, angry tones.[25] In one passage where the protagonist is contemplating the street in Newton where she lives and how she would like to paint the scene if she could paint, the initial naturalistic description develops into a fanciful surrealistic contemplation of the worker/economic system relationship:

> "Dipingerei [...] il sangue intasato di cents quando ribolle di vanto e di orgoglio, le budella attorgliate ai macchinari, le lacrime private del sale, le feci stentate da una vita sedentaria, le mani che carezzano amare, le parole assurde che si scambiano quando si riuniscono a cenare. Dipingerei la febbre del guadagno. L'impulso che muta i semplici in boia di se stessi. Genererei il cantico dei cantici della pittura. L'Apocalisse con la sveglia in mano. Non ci sarebbero piú tele, né quadri, né mostre al mio passaggio. Muterei la carne dei workers in carta moneta per la riserva bancaria, il sudore in fettucce di sostegno, gli occhi lustri in diamanti e pepite d'oro dalla grandezza di capocchie di spilli. Con la stanchezza farei il contorno al piatto di minestra, su una tela gialla di due metri per tre e quaranta." (Cappiello 1981: 43)

Hence dehumanization and mechanization occurs in this clash between immigrants whose base is pre-industrial popular culture and the Australian economic system. The popular element is underscored by the narrator's description of the painting which seems to be a sort of surrealistic naïf.[26] While it is possible to agree with Gunew that the writing in this passage, as in much of the novel, is "parodic, excessive, disruptive" (p520), it is difficult to understand how she

can claim that it is "a parody of high or received culture" unless Gunew means that popular painting constitutes such a parody. Further, the pursuit of material success assumes not only economic and social parameters and becomes a differentiator in terms of race but is also a cause of existentialist anguish:

> "Diventare ricchi. Diventiamo [sic] ricchi o, se non ricchi, benestanti, è la meta prefissa da tutti gli emigranti, e se non di tutti la maggioranza e un quarto. Ecco perché il nomignolo wog a noi e ubriaconi rammolliti a loro. Ah, se non fosse per il cielo e il mare . . . " (Cappiello 1981: 70)

The economic argument goes beyond the "social" and takes on a metaphysical dimension.[27] The dismemberment of the body can be seen as a process of dehumanization. The work in the factory is dehumanising and stifles creative activity as the protagonist states that she is too tired to write after a day's work. The economic question also interferes with the ability or even the desire to return to one's home country. Rosa is terrified that if she helps Lella, on the run from the police over an incident involving drugs, she may be sent back to Italy:

> "Ti figuri me, me, la sottoscritta, scortata in Italia per le orecchie. No, in Italia mai, il solo pensiero mi causa l'epilessia. Mai. Devo prima farmi la posizione, il gruzzolo, money, money, chi torna senza money . . . " (Cappiello 1981: 84)

It becomes an existentialist dilemma as she realizes that she has to choose between the spiritual satisfaction of returning to her native land and the material rewards of remaining in Australia:

> "Anch'io, quando mi sento sola e disperata desidero tornarmene al mio paese, profumato di taralucci e vino, risate e amici. Ma ognuno ha la pena che si merita. Non si può avere tutto, o riempire la pancia o nutrire lo spirito. Meglio la pancia. La nostalgia si esaurisce, ammeno che non ne fai una malattia. E a me non importa piú un accidente delle rogne passate. Non ho piú interessi, stimoli, ambizioni, vivo come se non esistessi." (Cappiello 1981: 80-81)

The desire to make money leads to the acceptance of economic and sexual exploitation and the protagonist despises her fellow workers for their passive submission. She eventually rejects the system when, unable to stand the factory environment any longer, she rushes out of the building in a bout of hysteria shouting her resignation ("'Mi licenzio. Mi licenzio', strillo, ma piú che uno strillo è un rantolo di morte." - p110).

The cathartic passage from the claustrophobic atmosphere of the factory to the free open spaces of the park provides a relief, albeit a temporary one, since leaving her job will create a number of material and spiritual problems. It is one of the many passages in the novel where the contrast is drawn between the closed-in claustrophobic and imprisoning aspects of the social landscape and the free open airy qualities of the natural setting. This contrast is also present in the short story 'Travels of an urban nomad', mentioned above. These passages, which, to date, seem to have been largely ignored by critics and reviewers, provide an imaginative, impressionistic and symbolic description of Sydney although some points can, of course, be generalized to the whole Australian urban-coastal context. The contrast is introduced in the opening pages of the novel. One the one hand there is the benign and pleasant natural setting: "Il cielo qui è una rivalsa contro la solitudine. Azzurro annuvolato. Annuvolato azzurro." (p7); "La novità del natale estivo mi incantava" (p8); "Scoprii le spiagge meravigliose." (p9); "Scoprii i parchi immensi. Il latte cremoso." (p9). This contrasts markedly with the strangeness of the social landscape: "Ah, non ammirare un pisciatoio in pietra grigia corrosa dal tempo, negli angoli di piazza." (p7); "casine di mattoni

rossi, asimmetriche, squadrate, asciutte e spersonalizzate come l'anima del popolo." (p7) and the people who inhabit it:

> "I ragazzi e le ragazze a piedi scalzi, svestiti con noncuranza. Gli uomini in brache corte e calzettoni camminare grotteschi e stracchi da bevuti. Niente mi parve piú buffo di quell'abbigliamento da ultimo grido accanto a donne in abito vistoso e lungo. O la donnetta australiana dal profilo di condor, drenata dalla linfa per le lunghe sedute al sole, mentre guidava la macchina o faceva la spesa coi bigodini in testa." (Cappiello 1981: 9)

The contrast between the natural and the man-made elements of the Sydney cityscape is continuously present in the novel and is an integral one in term of its symbolic functions. It is presented impressionistically, subjectively and sometimes incorporates the narrator's visceral reaction to the ambience. Thus the remark about the absence of urinals (p7) may be interpreted as being both symbolic of the narrator's disillusionment on her first encounter with the country and of its lack of civilization and history. Sometimes the description can be a simple incisive though usually ironic one ("i cessi di legno che paiono così decorosi nelle yards.", p112). Generally however it is more complex. The view from the hostel roof consisting of narrow streets, filthy yards, washing on the rotary hoist which is inventively named "ombrello" (p10), glimpses through open windows, leads to considerations on the people who live there. They are "old" immigrants "Primitivi che non chiedevano piú del necessario." (p10) whose life is described as a "lotta ottusa" (p10). The description of the street in Newton (p43) where she lives presents a group drinking beer from cans, a few leafless trees, the smell of fried fish, the cat drinking water out of the gutter, the Lebanese "poofter" and leads, as indicated above, to the positing of the surrealist painting. Maman's

café with its tasteless artificially synthetic Polynesian decor (p45) leads to considerations on the rampant sexual promiscuity which characterizes the area. An outing to Kings Cross, whose main concourse is "l'unico in città affollato notte e giorno, chiassoso, gaio e con quel sentore sensuale che ti dà nostalgia della dirompente vita napoletana" (p47), with a "look in" at one of the more sleazy night clubs in the area, leads to a series of reflections on Sydney night life and the metaphysical implications which it has for the protagonist:

> "La notte si trascina enorme a Sydney. Notti senza fine. Il sole che sorge su questa splendida città per parecchi è quasi una lotta mortale. Lo si guarda con odio e rancore. Lo si guarda con fame maligna ad espiazione di peccati non commessi. Nessuna sorpresa, dunque, se il tizio che ci invita fuori dirotta imancabilmente per il Cross. E' una tappa obbligatoria, la genuflessione alla vita che sfugge di mano, al sesso che inonda di riflesso il cazzetto che ci scorta. Cafoni e villani emancipati in tarda età arricchiscono e rendono incandescente questo puntino sull'immensa, inespressiva, tediosa metropoli.
>
> Dormi, dormi, city, sopra i tuoi inetti omuncoli, che imprigionati nel tuo ventre d'oro nulla vedono, nulla sanno. Non ti svegliare. Mi stai bene come sei, infermo guazzabuglio che ci estranea uno dell'altro." (Cappiello 1981: 48)

The contrast is drawn between the disruptive, sensual, chaotic life in Kings Cross and the rest of the metropolis which is boring and mundane. The city is seen as a female entity which subjugates the male and as an alienating environment for human relationships. This alienating aspect of the city is also conveyed in the many descriptions of the rented rooms in which the narrator and her friends are forced to live: "buio nemico, tetro, maledetto delle camere in affitto" (p48).

But the city centre also has its rare oases such as Taylor Square, a green rectangle where the old men sit in the sun (p52) or Hyde Park with its "venticello primaverile" and "quiete celestiale" (p152). The shut-in lugubrious aspects of the city are transmuted to open, light-filled airy spaces once the protagonist travels by train over the bridge towards Milsons Point:

> "Quando sono nel treno diretto a North e il treno dopo due fermate sbuca dal tunnel e sferraglia sul ponte sospeso su un'infinità d'acqua verde trasparente, i ferry pieni di gente che passano sotto, il Luna Park illuminato che ci viene incontro, le isolette che paiono galleggiare in lontananza, i fanalini accese alle finestre che riflettono le onde impigliate nelle chiome degli alberi, ah, è come se braccia amiche prorompessero ad accogliermi." (p66)

The North Shore with its sea air, luxuriant green, perfumed flowers and chirping birds is a much more congenial place for the narrator. Indeed if stability is to be found in Australia it is in the rare glimpses of blue sky and beaches. For the protagonist the North Shore and especially the harbour is a place which offers contemplative pleasure, a place where it is possible to escape, albeit temporarily, from a troubled everyday existence:

> "Mare piatto. Silenzio puro e piatto. Silenzio statuario, come in un paesaggio da cartolina illustrata. Non lo avresti detto normale. Nemmeno io ero normale. Non avevo tutti i venerdì. Che vi facevo qui? Perché insistevo? Andarmene? Restare? Di una cosa ero certa. Pur pensando spesso a casa mia, all'altra casa mia, veramente mia, e di un ritorno al Viale Agrelli, polveroso e provinciale, intriso di nostalgia e di una crescita irreale, io desideravo crepare qui in bellezza e armonia. Qui o altrove, nulla mi si offriva di piú bello, in un incubo di perfezione e nullità. Le guglie dell'Opera House, bianche, belle. Isolette in miniatura, belle. Mare. Vele. Poesia ipocondriaca." (Cappiello 1981: 193-4)[28]

The passage seems to mark a transition point in the novel, a point of partial reconciliation with Australia, a sort of static rite of passage whereby the protagonist becomes consciously aware that she will

now never go back to the old country. It was, in fact, the natural setting which had served to mark the first dividing point, the "before" and the "after", in the migration process, on arriving by ship in Sydney on 24 December (the only date specifically mentioned in the whole novel) "in una giornata di sole iridescente che mi separò nettamente da un'età, da una cultura, da un'altra vita" (p8). The disruption in nature brought about by geographical dislocation serves to create a tension throughout the novel both in a cultural and in a metaphysical sense. Time is measured according to a cyclic pattern (Christmas, New Year, spring, autumn, summer, winter) not by reference to specific days, months and years. Yet Australian time measured according to this pattern is disorientating since it does not correspond to the concept of time which is based on the protagonist's cultural tradition.[29] The Australian spring (which is the European autumn) is equated to the colour black, the concept of grief (and hence, by implication, death): "Fiorivano le mimose di un giallo più acceso, perché era l'inizio della primavera. Scaturivano le liti, i bronci, le false gelosie. Leggevo. Vegetavo in nero e oro. Vedevo nero." (p167). But in the closing paragraph of the novel when there is a semi-reconciliation with life in the new country the protagonist must also come to terms with this disruption:[30]

> "Adesso, stammi bene a sentire, trotta fin che vuoi, ma una volta giunta a casa, cala il culo sugli scalini sotto il pergolato e respira piano piano quest'arietta dolce di primavera, che primavera non è essendo autunno, tanto fa lo stesso, rilassati col capo contro i rampicanti, addormentati se vuoi che ti svegli l'alba." (Cappiello 1981: 222)

A cultural juxtaposition dependent on the seasons occurs in the brief passage (pp181-182) where the protagonist reflects that summer is a season for living, winter a season for dying because it is the season

for chrysanthemums. She is referring to Australian seasons in an Italian cultural context whereby these flowers are associated with the dead and are placed on graves or before photographs of the departed (especially on 1 November which is All Souls Day). In the Australian cultural context this is not necessarily so. In fact many an Australian-bred child of Italian parents has unwittingly shocked his mother by giving her white chrysanthemums on Mother's Day!

The narrator's first physical and metaphysical impressions of the Australians, observed from afar, are not substantially altered as the novel proceeds. Further comments are added regarding lack of elegance in dress such as the young people who go around barefoot and eternally dressed in faded jeans and T-shirt (p28) or Jack the undertaker and his "pantaloni a saltafosso, giacchetta lustra e corta di una generazione sorpassata" (p60). The backwardness of Jack's dress habits matches his lack of taste and his ignorance - he claims that Italy is a backward country because it has water-driven lifts! Australians are also crass and backward in their behaviour, again an element noted at the beginning of the novel and continued throughout. In the opening paragraph their behaviour is described with: "rutti e scoregge che ti arrivano in piena faccia nella sala di un cinema, a un party"(p7). An alcoholic in Hyde Park who goes about with his trousers permanently unzipped seems to have a vocabulary limited to "fuck", "wog", "bloody" and perhaps three other words. And crass behaviour is not limited to the "lower classes". The rich grazier from Tilba Tilba who attempts, unsuccessfully, to seduce Sofia and Rosa does so without any elegance or finesse. The female scriptwriter, supposedly an intellectual, who draws the protagonist's ire by making

patronising and ironic comments on her aspirations to be a writer, is attacked quite savagely by the narrating consciousness:

> "Te lo do io lo strabiliante fottuta d'una big-nosed, fottuta dai climi torridi. Inginocchiati e baciami lí. Io contribuisco assieme alla massa emigrata a civilizzarti, ad aprirti la visuale che non va piú in là della punta del nasone. Ti strappo la gramigna dalle orecchie. Ti do un tono. Ti insegno a mangiare, a vestire, a comportarti e soprattutto a non ruttare nei ristoranti, nei treni, nei bus, nei cinema, nelle scuole. A te forse è ignoto, ma te lo dico in confidenza, sappi che il tuo paese, e adesso anche mio, si basa su un enorme rutto. Il pennone garrisce al vento spinto dai gas tossici dei vostri stomaci intasati come fogne. Il mito dell'happy and lucky si basa sulle bevute. E bevi. Ci offendi. Non ti piace il vino? Preferisci la birra. Cameriere un bottiglione di birra alla signora" (Cappiello 1981: 183)

The passage, which reintroduces in more forceful terms the "belch" image of the opening paragraph, is an explosive condensation of the critique of Australians through the strong language used and stresses the "civilizing" influence which new immigrants (presumably from non English-speaking countries) have exercised on the "old" Australian middle class. Paradoxically it also announces the protagonist's commitment to the new country in the phrase "il tuo paese, e adesso anche mio" and this is later consummated in the "Opera House" passage. However if there is a qualified acceptance of the country there is a continual critique of the people which can be either specific, as illustrated above, or general. The contrast man/nature is often brought into play. Despite the natural and relatively unspoiled beauty of the country the human presence represents a polluting element: "Sì, lo metto per iscritto, il mare è lo stesso [as the Neapolitan sea], forse piú pulito, la gente difetta, ha un solo occhio nel sedere mezzo cecato" (p91). The reference to the one-eyed Cyclops of the Ulysses legend, which symbolises bestiality and barbarism, is rather apt and one which Gunew has missed in terms of

her discussion of the culture text. Linked to the comment about sticking "a bomb up Australia's arsehole" (Cappiello 1984:53) it does suggest, rather graphically, an antipodean version of the blinding of the Cyclops but since the symbolic blinding does not come about reason and civilization cannot triumph over bestiality. Australians are described as spiritually mean, petty, ignorant and lacking in humanity, a set of observations leading to the question "gli Australiani, possibile non ne venga qualcosa di buono?" (pp109-110). Their only positive attribute seems to be the somewhat easy and uninhibited relationship between the sexes in young people which, for the European male, is quite incomprehensible:

> "Se una coppietta si abbracciava e baciava in strada, l'occhio esercitato del maschietto europeo correva a guardare la patta del maschio australiano e poi ringalluzzito esclamava: "Che uomini! Sbrancicano la femmina e nemmeno gli si rizza."" (Cappiello 1981: 28)

However despite the seemingly less attenuated macho stance of Australian men Rosa and her friends continue to prefer the European type:

> "Io dimetto l'anima mia al servizio di un uomo e in cambio voglio almeno che resti europeo, che usi quelle finezze a cui siamo abituate da secoli" (Cappiello 1981: 69)
>
> "Per distrarmi ho ripreso a scrivere e a uscire con qualche ragazzo raccattato alla piscina. Di solito se sono europei ti abbordano. Ci comprendiamo." (Cappiello 1981: 130)

This remains so despite the often derogatory remarks made about migrant men. Australian women are specially singled out by the narrating consciousness as exemplified in the scriptwriter episode mentioned above and in a number of usually brief passages elsewhere in the novel.

The often-mentioned "burps" and "farts" imply certain elemental body functions which in turn are linked to food and eating habits. Gunew 1985: 527 quite rightly points out that food takes on a metaphysical function which defines the relationship between oppressor and oppressed, manipulator and manipulated. Examples of this are seen in the Abruzzese couple who promise food if the protagonist will bear Don Luigi's child and in the grazier from Tilba Tilba who expects sexual favours after treating Sofia and Rosa to a lavish meal. It has a social function as well in that it serves as a cultural differentiator between the immigrants who are seen as being superior in a gastronomic sense and the Australians. Hence in the above passage the narrating consciousness can reflect that she has taught the scriptwriter to eat as part of the "civilizing" process. Conversely Australian food and eating habits are not considered in a positive vein. The thought that Australians eat "pasta e fagioli" out of tins leads to the comment that such fare is really like dog food (p200). The parallel of such food with rubbish is illustrated in the brief but disgusting description of the old woman alcoholic who obtains her meals from leftovers found in rubbish tins (p27). This episode also provides a comment on the way in which Australian society leaves the elderly entirely to their own devices: "In nessun posto avrei mai potuto immaginare vecchi in un cosí totale abbandono" (p28). Lella's practice of having hamburgers for breakfast and eating tinned spaghetti (p27) strikes the protagonist as extremely odd. The break with the traditions of the originating country (in Lella's case Cyprus) also means a break with traditional eating habits. But does Australia have any gastronomic traditions of its own? If anything it seems to be that of the takeaway, an aspect also commented upon -

but in a very superficial way - by Cozzi (see Chapter 2). In a fanciful but powerful passage Cappiello describes the habitués of such places as taking on the somatic features of the food they eat:

> "i clienti dei fish and chips. Beoni che facevano un salto dal pub, sempre alla stessa ora, uomini raminghi, ragazze e ragazzi scalcagnati, tutti coi visi prosciugati, privi di splendore vitaminico. Avevano pupille a prova di patate fritte, labbra screpolate e appiattite a forma di sogliole puzzolenti e infarinate, il naso a hot dog, la saliva frizzante e schiumosa alla coca-cola, guance cascanti, al burro o alla margarina vegetale." (Cappiello 1981: 28)

If Australian cuisine has any saving graces it is the thick steaks, hardly the everyday fare of the immigrant worker. Thus eating habits too take on a surrealistic quality. Among the many vexations which assail the protagonist is that of finding affordable accommodation with cooking facilities since the food at the hostel causes "le uova di piccione sul fondo schiena" (p32)[31] and takeaway fare is physically repugnant. Unlike Nibbi there is no panegyric regarding the popularity of Italian food with non Italians. When the protagonist finds a job as a dishwasher in a "ristorante pizzeria" (p166) in the red light district she remarks that it is always crowded but that its patronage is made up of pimps, prostitutes and homosexuals. Traditional food can take on insidious aspects in the new country correlated to the difficult living conditions with which these immigrant characters have to cope. The fine-smelling minestrone which is the staple diet of the Abruzzese couple turns the protagonist's stomach because of their meanness, the way they treat her and their ritual belching after every meal. A sumptuous New Years' lunch is ruined when Beniamina and Claudia quarrel. Rosa's hunger, aroused by the appetizing smell of the bolognese sauce, dies away after zio Lino (a sort of "protector" to the group) stirs the spaghetti with a fork he had dropped on the floor.[32]

As mentioned above, drink is another aspect of Australian society which fascinates Cappiello. It is an aspect remarked upon by other writers, especially Nibbi, but with Cappiello it transcends the surface level. Although this also occurs to a certain extent in Nibbi, Cappiello transcends the descriptive aspect and makes the drink theme one of the important parameters in the discourse on the metaphysical aspects of Australian society. This is not to say that the descriptive elements are lacking, but these generally constitute a point of departure. The charmingly ironic description of the old men in Taylor Square (one is almost tempted to think of an antipodean *Gray's Elegy*) leads to the conclusion in an almost throwaway statement that drink serves to drown out the Australians' terror of living:

> "Il giorno tramonta. I vecchietti seduti sulle panchine nel rettangolo verde di Taylor Square, con le vene incandescenti dall'aver trascorso la giornata al sole, abbandonano i sedili e si avviano oscillanti al pub. Imboccano la striscia pedonale, uno in fila all'altro, caricando come tori bendati l'odore della stalla. Vanno a fiuto. Fiutano il secco crepito della birra schiumosa. C'è sempre ressa al saloon. Non dichiarerà mai bancarotta. La popolazione intera si sofferma, chi per sete, chi senza sete, ma tutti indistintamente a dimenticare il terrore d'essere al mondo." (Cappiello 1981: 52-53)

This remark may be linked to the narrator's observations of the Scotsman Robert, Sofia's latest boyfriend, who drinks like a sponge in order to drown out "complessi e nostalgie" (p202). Nor are the immigrants themselves immune from this typically Australian cultural characteristic. Rosa's sister factory workers tie their children to the bed "pur di non perdersi la pisciatina di contentezza il venerdi, giorno di paga" (p19). The Yugoslav Ernest lives in an almost permanent alcoholic haze in between looking after the greyhounds

which is his only (part-time) job (pp30-31). The patching up of the umpteenth quarrel between Sofia and Nicola is celebrated, at Ross' suggestion, by the inhabitants of the North Sydney room (in Beniamina's absence and much to her later chagrin) with libations of beer. But despite this it is at the feet of the characters of angloceltic stock that the implications of drink and its effects are laid. The Australian male is presented as "Smidollato. Fiacco interesse per le donne. Tra un bicchiere di birra e una donna sceglie la birra. A quel che si dice, sembra ne tragga lo stesso godimento sessuale" (p15). However he is not to be outmatched by the female counterpart since Australian women "vagolano dalla pubertà alla tomba tra un pub e l'altro alla frenetica ricerca di una scopata che le renda umane" (p110). Hence the addiction to drink becomes a symbol of the lack of humanity in Australian social values. It also symbolizes lack of sophistication: Jack the undertaker prefers beer to Rosso Antico as an *aperitivo*. Drink is also correlated with the woman scriptwriter's lack of intellectual and social finesse, the sexual impotence of the four New Zealand men (p113) and the animal-like behaviour of the drunk (pp153-154).

While the existence of the Australians is interpreted in terms of the terror of living, that of the immigrants is characterized by anguish generated in part by the migration experience, in part by the nature of the people themselves. Gunew's argument that there is in Dante's Commedia (but she really means Inferno) a "shadowy precursor" in terms of the culture text (Gunew 1985: 519) could not be sustained if she wished to extend this to the metaphysical aspects of the novel. The various "inferni" (p10) which exist for single

women, single men, married women and children and which together add up to "un unico inferno prefabbricato. Quello degli emigranti" (p10) are correlated to the demon "che è in ognuno" (p219) which must be fought and conquered in order to attain spiritual survival. The only glimmer of hope is the acceptance of the continuing struggle with this demon in an attempt to reach a rapport with the surrounding often hostile world. In this sense the *inferno,* rather than Dantesque, is Sartrean and existentialist. The protagonist, the other women characters and one of the men, Mariolino, are frequently subject to bouts of depression and rage, only very rarely to brief moments of happiness and tranquillity. Each character seems to have his/her way of giving vent to the depression and frustration brought about by everyday existence, examples being Sofia's frequent threats of suicide and her masochistic relationship with Nicola, Beniamina's obsessive preoccupation with saving money and Lella's obsession with erotic photography. Lella, however, is the only one who in the final analysis seems to be able to channel her energies towards positive goals. Mariolino and Irma turn out to be quite pathological cases and, while it is not clear to what extent migration has brought this about in Irma, in Mariolino's case the cause of his anguish/angst is attributed to his condition as a migrant:

> "egli annusa le tragedie in ognuno di noi e le canta alla città. Canta, seppur stonato, la soledad che è in ognuno di noi. Il suo canto mi stravolge, mi indebolisce, mi affama. E io ho fame, una fame lenta, d'ombra fugace, di cose sconcertanti, di guizzi vitali improvvisi, non programmati. Il suo canto è rotto, stantio, vecchio di secoli di emigrazione. Il cuore è freddo, non ricorda piú il sogno. Non ricorda piú se è un uomo, se ha viaggiato per mare o per terra, se mangia pane bianco o mangia pane nero. Era un uomo senza segreti. Ora ha i nervi a pezzi, ed è solo un povero pazzo." (Cappiello 1981: 156-157)

But it is Rosa the narrator-protagonist who provides the most detailed and most effective picture of a travailed existence. At the concrete level this stems from the everyday struggle and her lamentations sometimes border on the pathetic. The alienating atmosphere at the factory and the continual torments of the dwarf-supervisor (p77) lead her to resign in a flare of hysteria (p110). Economic difficulties brought on by her unemployed status trigger a silent plea for help from her friends: "Compra qualcosa anche per me, Sofia [...] Non ti accorgi, quando usi il mio bagno, che il mio asciugamano è rotto" (p176). The never-ending search for adequate accommodation at reasonable cost is articulated through biting expressions of frustration and despair:

> "Cambio di residenza. [...] E' il terzo, il quarto o il quinto spostamento, ne ho perso il conto. Vivo con il sedere sul bordo di un vulcano. [...] La cosa piú difficile è mettere radici, abituarsi a questa bestie rare che ci affittano la stanza." (Cappiello 1981: 127)
>
> "Perché, accidenti, è una tortura impiantarsi [...] letti chiamati letti e sedie chiamate sedie, e frigoriferi scassati. [...] Muoversi, muoversi. Andate avanti che c'è posto. Prego, tenga, biglietto per la prima, seconda o terza classe? A scelta. Al di sotto della terza, grazie." (Cappiello 1981: 195)

On a more metaphysical plane there are utterances of anguish and solitude which at times can assume a poetic quality:

> "Natale. Piango. In qualche modo c'entra la festività. Il pianto sembra una cascata. Si son rotte le dighe. I pugni serrati sugli occhi a frenare lo scroscio. Piango e rumoreggio come rumoreggia la risacca contro gli scogli. [...] Piango e desidero quietare la ragazzina folle che credeva alla Befana. La vigilia di Natale, Natale, la vigilia del Capodanno. Un anno. Un'assurdità. Io sto subendo il crollo. Per non impazzire vado al Domain ad ascoltare gli speechifiers pazzi, poi vado sulle rocce del Royal Botanic Garden a leggere un libro." (Cappiello 1981: 114-115)

Solitude is, in part, self-imposed due to the protagonist's unwillingness to conform to peer group behaviour. It leads to tears, especially at times of festivity, which are a characteristic of the protagonist although she shows a stoic face to the outside world. At the end Beniamina remarks that she has never seen her cry and that women who do not cry are excluded from all wisdom (p218). For the protagonist tears represent an element of escapism: "un maledetto febbraio [...] piansi fino a stordirmi" (p218). They also constitute a restorative quality: "Di tanto in tanto me lo concedo un piccolo pianto ristoratore" (p219). At other times the protagonist gives vent to her solitude and anguish through vehement expressions of rage which lead to savage parody. The discourse on tears takes such a twist when in the closing sequence of the novel the tears seem to be transmuted into urine, converted from defence to aggression against a hostile society: "Ho accumulato tanto di quel piscio in questi sventurati anni da permettermi di pisciare interrottamente dall'alto della muraglia per secoli e secoli a venire e scatenare un secondo Diluvio Universale." (p220).[33] In the following passage the parody is based on an antithetical inversion of traditional Catholic values present also in other passages in the novel:

> "Tra poco viene Natale. Il mio secondo Natale. Sono ancora sospesa nell'incertezza. Rotta, piú rotta non si può. Scoppia il fegato, gonfi ho i coglioni che mi sono scesi al posto delle ovaie. Cedo in ribasso le feci, la bile, l'inganno che ti frega, la viltà, la pappatoia assicurata. Natale. Proibite la nascita del bambino. Io sono Cristo diventato vecchio, arrugginito sui chiodi. Profeta del male. Cristo sbagliato. Aborto artificiale. Per ripicca elimino la madre, Maria Santissima, la spingo a ribellarsi al Figlio, al Padre e allo Spirito Santo. Le metto la veste con lo spacco, il cui vanto sotto si intravede e non si intravede." (Cappiello 1981: 105)

As Gunew 1985: 525 points out "here we enter a world of complex Catholic inter-textuality" and one which goes beyond the migration-oriented themes. However it may be observed that the disruption in traditional religious values can also be seen in the context of the migration process which destroys the immigrants' traditional base without putting anything in its place. Perhaps Cappiello intends to say that Australia is a country without a God.

The somewhat inconclusive and ambiguous finale focuses on Rosa the protagonist. The group of women with whom she has shared the first two years of life in Australia has disbanded, each member going the separate way. Rosa shortens her hair convict style, putting on what Gunew 1985: 527 defines as a "multicultural carnival mask" and goes out to join the "fiera di paese" (p221) which seems to be just around the corner in Falcon Street. But at the last moment she stops in her tracks and returns to the splendid isolation of her room where in a moment of philosophical contemplation she reaches the conclusion of her Socratic interior monologue:

> "Tu ami le albe e i tramonti, è così, lo so, soltanto elabori pensieri complicati e contrastanti e credi d'essere inciampata in un tunnel di dolore che non debba mai aver fine, e invece finirà, finirà, lo so, e tutto ciò non sarà mai successo, perché quel che successe e continua a succedere appartiene a troppi, e riconoscersi è impossibile." (Cappiello 1981: 222)

It is a finale which transcends the social context and expresses the life experience in terms of its universal qualities. Life goes on despite the desperation of the moment and what really seems to at issue is the protagonist's elemental struggle for survival as a person, irrespective of her social status.

Of the two who may be considered leading writers in Italo-Australian narrative, Gino Nibbi and Rosa Cappiello, we have on the one hand Nibbi who provides a completely detached but minutely detailed observation of Australian society, on the other hand Cappiello who in a sense provides a subjective and visceral view, concomitant with a tension between participation and non participation. According to Cappiello the novel represents the "truth". Not the literal autobiographical truth but the viscerally felt truth behind the migrant reality. It is a tragi-comic interpretation extracted from the primitive and stagnant chaos of the migrant experience. More than a transparent sociological document it is one which goes beyond the surface level to transmute the migration experience in its metaphysical and existentialist dimensions which in turn are correlated to universal aspects of the human condition. Cappiello considers Paese fortunato her first "real" book and only upon the completion of her third novel will she consider herself a writer. Paese fortunato is a novel open to a multiplicity of interpretations as those of Schiavoni, Jurgensen and Gunew demonstrate, and herein lies one of its major strengths. In a sense this tends to offset weaknesses in plot, structure and technique which sometimes come dangerously close to upsetting the coherence of a text often difficult to follow. In this chapter an attempt has been made to provide an integral analysis of the way in which the migration experience is depicted. The novel is, however, also susceptible to other interpretations: feminism, the human condition, style language and technique, characterization and characters, transition to post-industrial society, Neapolitan folk influences and crosscultural juxtapositions, the protagonist's constantly frustrated

aspirations as a writer and as an intellectual, identification in/with the migrant reader, are other aspects which would be worth investigating. Nevertheless even a consideration of the migration-related themes can serve to illustrate the "wider" more universal issues present for the first time in a work of Italo-Australian narrative.

Notes

1. Wilde 1985: "**CAPPIELLO, Rosa,** see ***Paesa Fortunata*** [sic]" (p141); "***Paesa Fortunata*** [sic] (1981, published in English 1985 [sic]), a novel in Italian by Rosa Cappiello who was born in Naples [sic] and came to Australia as a migrant in 1971, won the 1982 [sic] Italian literary prize the Premio Calabria" (p540). The only other first generation writers mentioned are Raffaello Carboni, whose date of birth is erroneously stated as 1820, and Giovanni Andreoni. Velia Ercole is also listed. A similar lack of information is displayed by Pino Bosi who, in a review of the novel in Australia Ieri Oggi Domani, II, 8 (1985), p61 states that Cappiello was born in 1944, that the title of the novel is "Terra fortunata" and that Cappiello was writer-in-residence at the University of Wollongong for one year.

2. "Scrivo perché mi piace. Mi sento portata per questo lavoro. Ne sento il bisogno. Scrivere è l'unica attività capace di tenermi seduta per delle ore. Davanti a una macchina da scrivere e a un foglio bianco do libero sfogo all'immaginazione, all'estro, alla creatività. Mi trasformo nei personaggi. E' mia l'irrequietezza, l'insoddisfazione, la rabbia, la sofferenza, l'odio e l'amore che li anima sulla pagina. Nel trascrivere le loro vicissitudini, i loro sentimenti, intraprendo la ricerca e la loro comprensione del mio essere. Scrivere assume un valore più personale che altro. Devo dimostrare a me e a nessun altro che sono in grado di farlo. Miro principalmente alla soddisfazione, al piacere, alla riuscita personale. Però questo non significa che mentre sto scrivendo non stia attenta ai fenomeni sociali o una verità che potrebbe apparire come denuncia. In fondo ricevo gli spunti dalla vita di ogni giorno con i suoi mutamenti e le sue crisi. E poi, prediligo sbizzarrirmi su esperienze vissute non fittizie". Graziella Englaro interview with Rosa Cappiello published in Uomini e Libri, XIX (96), Nov.-Dec. 1983, p12.

3. "Dodici anni fa l'Australia era per gli Europei un continente sconosciuto e misterioso; simboleggiava avventura e rischio, salvo scoprire una volta arrivata che di solito e di singolare non c'era molto. Non conoscevo nulla intorno al problema dell'immigrazione e degli immigrati, non sapevo nulla sui problemi sociali e morali derivanti dalla mescolanza delle razze. Confesso di aver provato per anni una delusione grande e una rabbia cieca. Ora, invece, sono io a sentirmi riconoscente verso questa società così contraddittoria e stimolante - una società tutta da descrivere." (Englaro, p13)

4. Sneja Gunew - Jan Mahyuddin, Beyond the echo Multicultural women's writing, St Lucia [Qld], University of Queensland Press, 1988, pp42-61. An interesting feature of this anthology is that the original version of all translated stories is also included.

5. Francesco Durante, 'L'ultima America', Il Mattino, 23 August 1981 [page number not present on copy available but probably p3].

6. The review was published in L'Espresso probably in July or August 1981. The version available for consultation was reproduced in Italian Cultural Activities [Sydney, Italian Cultural Institute], December 1981, p21.

7. Francesco Durante, 'Il <<Calabria>> ha colto le occasioni di Rosa', La Fiamma, 9 November, 1981, p31 [reprinted from Il Mattino].

8. Bosi, 61. Cappiello herself realizes in retrospect the reasons for this reaction to her novel: "It is as if I had harmed their self-respect, the dignity of every Italian abroad on the globe. But what is this dignity, this *Italianness* which so often and so inopportunely fills the mouths of the Italo-Australian community? After so many years of close observation, I still can't fathom it. But nothing changes. In the 70s I was considered a bad egg because I migrated by myself; in the 80s I am still a 'bad egg' because I write." - Giampaolo Petrosi, 'The impact of a migrant's anger', The Bulletin, 21 February 1984, pp58-59.

9. Eg. Sarah Walls, "Women were losers in a 'lucky country'", The Australian, 9 March 1983 [page number not on photocopy].

10. Specifically pp7-16, 218-222 of the Italian version published in Meanjin, 42(1) March 1983, pp7-14. The translation was by Oenone Serle.

11. Franco Schiavoni, 'Terror Australiana A cry from the ghetto', The Age Monthly Review, October 1982, pp8-9.

12. Ann Treweek, 'Grabbing for a lucky share', Perth West Australian, 24 November 1984 [page number missing on photocopy].

13. Robert Macklin, 'Coping with the Lucky Country', The Weekend Australian Magazine, 12-13 January 1985, p12.

14. Andrea Stretton, 'Anger, agitation and alienation in the land of the long white burp', The Sydney Morning Herald, 12 January 1985, p36.

15. Myers 1986.

16. Helen Brown, 'Australia seen with fresh eyes', Canberra Times, 6 April 1985 [page number not present on photocopy].

17. Stephanie Dowrick, 'Demanding reads', Vogue Bi-Monthly Magazine, [date and page not on photocopy but probably March 1985].

18. Carolyn Gerrish in Womanspeak, Feb-March 1985 [page number not legible].

19. Helen Garner in Helix, 21-22 (Spring 1985), p111.

20. R. Pascoe in Australian Book Review, February-March 1985 [page number not present on photocopy].

21. M. Brändle in News and Views, 3 (2), March-April 1985 [page number not on photocopy].

22. Gunew 1985: 524, points out that "there are no fixed gender inscriptions in *Oh Lucky Country*, only a fluid ascription of 'male' and 'female' characteristics to the range of 'male' and 'female' characters". This may well be the case for characters such as the protagonist, Lella, the lesbians Irene and Elena, Zio Lino, Mariolino and Irma, but it would not appear so for those women who behave according to perceived social stereotypes.

23. "In terms of status, discrimination on the basis of sex, class, ethnicity, accent, religion etc. or all of these combined puts many immigrant women second to Aboriginal women as the most disadvantaged group in Australian society" (Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Immigrant Women's Issues, Canberra, AGPS, 1986, p9). Particularly the harsh working conditions in the clothing industry where workers are predominantly immigrant women lead to a high incidence of cases of work-related illnesses: "Women suffered from repetitive strain injury, eye-strain, urinary infections, kidney problems and compensation settlements to injured ill immigrant women workers take longer than those for men or for men immigrants" (ibid, p13).

24. "The status of immigrant women of non-English speaking background [...] is seldom enhanced by the media [...] they are usually object of fun and pity" (ibid, p10).

25. Some fascinating contrasts and parallels can be made when comparing Cappiello's "inside" view to what the Anglo-Australian sociologists have had to say about immigrants and work.

One of the first studies on Italian immigrants in the post war period, Hempel 1959, characterizes the Italian male immigrant as an opportunistic person concerned with thrift, hard work and success. According to Hempel "a happy migrant is a migrant who has been placed in employment suitable to the level of his education and skill. Most Italian migrants are young unskilled labourers and, as they are absorbed in industries, public works or agriculture, they are happy!" (Hempel 1959: 47). Hempel contains the contradiction in terminology based on class differentiation of the Italian male by locating him in the culture text of equality of opportunity, the potential for upward social mobility deriving its inertia by the unifying happiness of the job. The happiness of the Italian male immigrant in Australia would, however, seem to be augmented by finding the woman as wife and mother whose national origin is that of Italy or the male's home village. In vivid contrast to Hempel's views on the Italian immigrant Cappiello presents Italian men as not necessarily governed by the totalitarian inertia of the culture text of upward social mobility and Italian women who do work outside the family unit and/or accept not altogether willingly, if at all, their role as wife and mother.

One of the first reports on the situation of immigrant women workers, Centre for Urban Research and Action 1976, points out, among other things, that immigrant women have been "functional in the development of Australian society in that their function has been to work in industrial areas where most Australian born workers would not work, even in periods of increasing unemployment" (p112). This study claims to show "that migrant women bitterly understand their situation of exploitation [... migrants] are only minimally represented in decision-making processes in any institution in Australia. They have few representatives in unions, in political parties, in education, health or welfare structures." (p113). While the report posits a dialectical relationship between the immigrant woman and her underprivileged situation it nevertheless, albeit unintentionally and in contradiction to its aims, reinforces the image of a stereotype. Cappiello presents a more complex picture. On the other hand there is the amorphous, almost stereotype, group of woman factory workers who understand their situation of exploitation but nevertheless accept it, on the other there is the protagonist who rejects the situation both through her dialectical discourse and by opting out of the system.

26. Yet another parallel with Nibbi who sometimes draws comparisons with painting although in his case these tend to be in a naturalistic mode.

27. Gunew 1985: 524 perceives the condition of the immigrant woman worker as "the loss of Symbolic [sic] order and coherent unified identity" while the quest for money is seen as a "search for new coherence". However this new coherence is an illusion since the workers' body is dehumanised and becomes fodder for machinery to produce money while the possibility of achieving a new identity is negated by nostalgia for the materially poorer but happier existence in one's native land.

28. By contrast Andreoni's description of Sydney harbour is more naturalistic: "Le conchiglie giganti dell'Opera House biancheggiavano nel cielo d'un azzurro immacolato, lo smeraldo profondo del mare si muoveva appena, carezzato da una brezza di terra. Lontano l'enorme ponte brulicante di macchine scalcavava la baia" (Andreoni 1982: 32).

29. A similar conceptualization is presented in Di Stefano's poem 'Pasqua australiana" in which the metaphysical disruption brought about by the inversion in the seasons is depicted through the contemplation of an autumn Easter:

Oggi è pasqua,
un giorno benedetto
di luce tersa
e cielo perfetto.
Non è caldo, non è freddo,
non c'è vento, è fin troppo bello.
Mi fa quasi soffrire.
Gli uccelli cantano,
questi uccelli esotici e vistosi
dell'Emisfero Sud
ed anziché fiori di pesco
pendono corolle grevi d'ibisco.
Non si sente tocco di campane
non si vede gente per la via,
è tutto quieto.
Qua e là nella grande metropoli
un gruppo di gente va in chiesa
senza fretta.
Inutile cercare nei ricordi
la Pasqua primaverile,
questa è Pasqua d'autunno,
ricca di frutti, non di promesse.

E allora?
Arrostiremo bistecche all'aperto
all'ombra dei canfori odorosi
e berremo un bicchiere,
ci diremo "Buona Pasqua"
e taglieremo al dolce una colomba,
di mandorle e canditi,
per mantenere quel poco
ch'è ancora possibile
della vecchia tradizione,
del sottile pianto dei ricordi . . .

30. It will be recalled (Chapter 4) that Nibbi had merely noted this disruption.

31. Nino Randazzo has also commented on the nauseating food at Bonegilla (see Chapter 2) and Pietro Tedeschi in his second (as yet unpublished) novel recounts how the immigrants at Bonegilla staged a demonstration because they were not given sufficient bread (by Italian eating standards) and how at the Unanderra camp they would convert the inedible camp food by re-cooking it "all'italiana" on spirit stoves in their rooms, against camp rules. In The Voyage the other immigrants complain about the Italians at Bonegilla cooking in the huts.

32. Disgust caused by manipulation of traditional food is also a major theme in Cappiello's short story 'Travels of an urban nomad' in which a Sydney Italian restaurant proprietor recycles leftover food in order to maximize his profit. The story is somewhat reminiscent of George Orwell's account of his experiences as a waiter in a high-class Parisian restaurant in Down and out in London and Paris.

33. This interpretation is suggested in terms of the social context. The passage is susceptible to other interpretations as, for example, the one given by Gunew 1985: 527: "At the beginning [of the novel] the narrator focuses her disillusionment with the country on the absence of 'a time-worn grey-stone urinal in some corner of a public square', here we encounter the urinal as a grotesque symbol of civilization and history. At the end, disdaining such constraints, the narrator (Rosa's Assumption) becomes the avatar for the Great Whore and releases a second flood".

CHAPTER 6

THE BUSH AND THE OUTBACK AS THEMES IN ITALO-AUSTRALIAN NARRATIVE

With most writers settling in urban areas few have displayed interest in themes related to the bush and the outback. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine works by five authors, Andreoni, Abiuso, Gabbrielli, Monese and Leoni who have dealt with these themes.

GIOVANNI ANDREONI

Giovanni Andreoni was born in Grosseto in 1935. A graduate in Political Science of the University of Pisa he emigrated to Australia in 1962. Having found employment in Italy initially as a commercial traveller and later as a bank clerk, he claims that his decision to emigrate was based not so much on economic factors but rather on curiosity, the "spirit of adventure", love of the wide open spaces. After a brief period of teaching French and Italian in secondary schools he obtained a post in the Department of Italian at the University of Western Australia in 1964. He is currently Senior Lecturer in Italian at the University of New England. He had displayed an interest in writing even before emigrating to Australia and had published a collection of short stories (Andreoni 1962). A brief two act play (Andreoni 1966) on the theme of war and

militarism, based on what seems a substantially Italian situation was published after a few years' residence here. Both works are presented in a vaguely and schematically Kafkaesque manner and in conceptual/cultural terms are somewhat different from his later writings. For example the hunt constitutes the theme of two[1] out of the sixteen stories in the collection but it does not assume the metaphysical aspects which it has in Martin Pescatore. However the structural and technical aspects of the short stories are clearly indicative of the style he will later adopt for his Australian material.

His first "Australian" work Martin Pescatore, a novel (Andreoni 1967), is also his most substantive work to date. It does not seem to have attracted much critical attention, certainly not to the extent which Nibbi and Cappiello have. Fochi 1981 mentions the novel in her survey article on Italo-Australian literature, and these comments are then expanded in a paper on Andreoni's writings (Fochi 1983). Fochi considers Martin Pescatore a complex and dynamic narrative which has parallels with the way in which Western Australian narrative fosters "a deep awareness of the landscape, its individuality and strange influence on the people" (Fochi 1983:46) as well as with writers such as Randolph Stow and A D Hope. However she does not develop her argument and, while it is possible to accept her claim in relation to the awareness of the relationship with the land, the parallels with Stow and Hope are unsubstantiated and seem far-fetched. Andreoni is also one of the few Italian writers to be included in The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature and here too it is emphasised how in Martin Pescatore (erronously translated

as "Martin Fisherman") the West Australian outback has made a "considerable impact on the protagonist's literary development" (Wilde 1985: 26-27).

Martin Pescatore is the story of a young middle-class Italian University graduate cum bank employee who, tired of the restricting and claustrophobic aspects of life in Italy, emigrates to Australia in search of a new and liberating experience, finding an existentialist *raison d'être* in a spiritual relationship with the Australian bush. This Rousseau-like idealization of the Australian bush is also found in Carboni who, strangely enough, also worked as a bank employee. The novel is not autobiographical in the sense defined in chapter 2, although it does contain substantial autobiographical elements. Some of the people portrayed in the novel have recognized themselves in the characters. It is divided into two parts: chapters 1-7 which are set in Europe (mainly Italy); chapters 10-15 which are set in Australia. Chapter 8 deals with the departure from Italy, the sea voyage to and arrival in Australia while there is no chapter 9 as such. The title, which is the name of the protagonist but is also the Italian term for the kingfisher bird, is an emblematic one.

The first part of the novel is set in the urban background of Rome and, briefly, of other cities. Fochi (1983: 46) claims that the urban background produces a sense of incommunicability, alienation and schizophrenia. Rather than schizophrenia there is a strong sense of claustrophobia. Martin feels "shut in" by a routine existence limited by life at home with his younger sister and widowed mother, his secure but humdrum and subservient job at the bank, the occasional

outings with friends, his not infrequent sexual adventures with women. He is often driven to drink in an attempt to blot out his anguish. Although Martin has all the attributes necessary for success he feels that his is an unsatisfying and frustrating life and that he is unable to form any real relationships. The only meaningful relationship was with his father, a "strong" and "real" man, a gentleman farmer, who used to take him hunting. During his first holiday from the bank, in the month of August, a kaleidoscopic twenty day journey from Italy to Scandinavia arouses in Martin a physically expressed nausea towards his present situation and a desire to seek the solution to his existential problems in new places. But he senses that it is not in Europe that this solution is to be found. Postulating that there must be something more to life than this humdrum closed, mapped-out existence from the cradle to the grave, Martin longs for a new country where "la vita degli uomini dipende dalla loro abilità nel sapere vincere i capricci della natura. Dove mettere un mattone significa costruire una casa per difendersi dal freddo" (Andreoni 1967: 69). In a manner vaguely reminiscent of Ayn Rand's characters, Martin argues that social conventions stifle the individual and he longs for a place where "il singolo vale per la sua forza, capacità, coraggio, iniziativa, no [sic] unicamente quale membro del consorzio umano" (Andreoni 1967: 70). In Europe it is impossible to establish a direct rapport with nature. This is forcibly brought out during Martin's journey where the contamination of man is present everywhere and what little pockets of natural beauty are left are captive to the man-made environment. Thus little by little grows the idea of emigration to Australia or Canada which are to Martin's mind the last "natural" frontiers.

Family, colleagues and friends react in disbelief at Martin's decision to emigrate, not understanding the intrinsic nature of his decision. His colleagues think that he is crazy to give up a secure job and a guaranteed, though small, wage. However they are also a little envious of him since he has the courage to attempt something new. He is accompanied to Naples, where he is to board the "Sidney", by a friend, Giacomo, who keeps up an irritating chatter whereas Martin wishes to depart undisturbed and in silence. The other emigrants, contadini, fishermen, mountain folk, are also leaving in silence, although one or two are crying since they have had to leave their families behind. There is a contrast in that their reason for emigrating is primarily a material and economic one: "Non si poteva vivere!" (p82) and they are compelled to emigrate since there was little or no work "at home". Martin's reason is primarily a metaphysical one born out of conscious choice, although he too feels that he can no longer live in Italy. However, there is some inconsistency since later he states that that "Ho lasciato il mio paese per [...] guadagnare di più e vivere meglio" (p154). This lack of identification with the other emigrants is exemplified by the fact that Martin strikes up friendships with some of the officers and middle-class passengers, telling them that he is a "giornalista vagabondo" (p82). Martin's tears come later, upon arrival in Melbourne, when the distance which separates him from his mother, the mundane concern with his economic future and the realization that Melbourne, too, is an imprisoning city give rise to feelings of fear and isolation:

"Ho paura. Quanto costerà la vita in Australia?
Vorrei fuggire, tornare e dire . . . non lo so!
Piango, piango perchè sono lontano, tanto lontano. Davanti a me non ci sono che macchine che corrono su dei lunghi nastri di asfalto, grigi, grigi." (Andreoni 1967: 91)

Tired of the common soul-destroying aspects of the "ordinary" job (in this his attitude surprisingly parallels that of Rosa in Paese fortunato), Martin's desire to become a drover in the outback or a fireman on a train is dismissed by his friends as quaint and impractical romanticism. They point out that he should seek "respectable" work commensurate to his class, education and condition, such as teaching. But work constitutes part of Martin's self-seeking, of his reasons for leaving Italy, of his desire to escape from the constraints of organized society, to come into contact with the elemental aspects of life, to understand its meaning, to become simply a man. Work means money for survival and to this end any work is justifiable but it can also be a means to self-satisfaction:

"Il lavoro, ci sono due tipi di lavoro, uno riempie e soddisfa, l'altro è un mezzo di sussistenza. Il muratore che ama l'atto di porre i mattoni uno sull'altro per costruire la casa, il chimico che prova, fallisce e ritenta un esperimento [...] Tanto il muratore quanto il chimico sono esseri che sanno, che amano e sono veri. C'è più verità in un selvaggio she s'alza la mattina, va a caccia o a pesca, torna a casa col cibo e giace con la sua donna, che in un grande uomo d'affari costretto a cambiarsi cento, mille volte al giorno" (Andreoni 1967: 113)

Since he does not have a clear idea of where to go or what to do, Martin's Melbourne friends send him to Peter King, a retired solicitor of a very conservative disposition living in Launceston and it is in Tasmania "un'isola bella e un po' selvaggia" (p95) that Martin comes into contact with the bush.

> "Gli uomini veri, gli uomini forti. Il polacco non ha rispettato la regola, noi lo abbiamo eliminato. Questa sarebbe la lotta per la vita, questa la risposta di Pasquale, di Jack, degli uomini del Kangaroo Track. Ci sono delle regole che vanno rispettate, chi non obbedisce paga. Riuscirei ad abbattere, a distruggere un altro uomo? Forse non conosco il bisogno; spinge gli uomini a compiere mostruosità, oscenità, brutture che il tempo ammanterà di poesia, e un giorno dei giovani romantici sogneranno quegli esseri forti, quei pionieri." (Andreoni 1967: 124)

This unexpected violent aspect of the pioneer life makes Martin afraid. At the end of the season he leaves and takes up a more bourgeois type of employment as a language teacher at the Christian Brothers College, Prospect.

While the relationship between man in his social context (the group of workers) and nature is seen in terms of man's struggle to survive in a hostile environment, the rapport between Martin as an individual and nature is presented in quite different terms. In rejecting the pioneers' elemental code Martin rejects the conflictual confrontation with nature. His search for a meaningful rapport with nature, which is also seen as an essential clue to the eventual resolution of the question of the meaning of life, takes a different direction. Fochi 1983: 46 claims that "the only example of description" in the novel is to be found in the "passage about Whitmore Wood"[3] where he goes to hunt rabbits. It is not the only one since even in the "European" chapters there are very brief impressionistic descriptions and, after his arrival in Australia, there are impressionistic descriptions of the Australian setting. There are, for example, the description of Launceston (p93), Martin's reflections on contemplating the green hills and the sea (p99) and the concept of the forest as a living entity in which a primeval and

continual struggle for survival takes place: "S'avverte la selvaggia lotta per esistere dei vegetali, che [...] si soffocano, uccidono per sopravvivere in un movimento statico e feroce" (p102). Whitmore is certainly the longest description in the novel and a key one in that it marks the beginning of Martin's personal rapport/contact with nature:

> "La macchia folta si stagliava contro il cielo azzurro trasparente. Fermò la macchina, saltò la bassa siepe, era nel bosco.
>
> Gli eucalipti crescevano alti, uno vicino all'altro, il tronco cangiante, dai mille riflessi, ora chiari, ora scuri; le foglie verdi scintillavano nel sole come smeraldi. Giganteschi alberi di mimosa rompevano, col vivo giallo dei piccoli fiori spumosi, la verde marrone monotonia della macchia. Il sottobosco: un intrico ininterrotto di spinosi cespugli attorcigliati.
>
> Un profumo greve di muschio, di fiori appassiti, di terra, riempiva l'aria; i rami secchi, scoppiettavano sonori, sotto gli stivaloni del cacciatore. Gli alberi finirono.
>
> Il prato, un largo circolo irregolare, racchiuso nella foresta; grossi tronchi semicarbonizzati giacevano qua e là.
>
> Un pappagallo variopinto cantò, tagliando l'aria. Lontano Martin vide due orecchie rizzarsi dall'erba, poi il codino bianco di un coniglio che fuggiva rapido, verso la tana, sotto un tronco nero." (Andreoni 1967: 128-129)

It is one of the very few naturalistic descriptions in the novel. Martin sees the bush for the first time with "European" eyes. However it is also a place cut off from the outside world, a place of proving and initiation, since it is here, after six months of weekend effort, that Martin proves himself by killing the big black rabbit whose cunning had defeated all the other hunters:

> "La botta secca lo colpì in pieno petto.
>
> Rimbalzò in piedi, non sentiva dolore; saltò via in avanti, un po' di fianco, agitando le zampe in modo buffo.
>
> Non riusciva a respirare, corse! Corse! Non riusciva a respirare; il sangue gli invadeva i polmoni, stava affogando.

Saltò in alto, ricadde sullo stesso punto; saltò, saltò, saltò.

Morì nell'aria ...

Partita chiusa con il vecchio coniglio, chiusa e vinta per la prima volta. Adesso avrebbe dovuto mantenere la promessa.

Martin aveva amato il Nero, l'aveva amato di una passione violenta; era stato per sei mesi un appuntamento fisso, la sua intelligenza di essere umano, una lotta ad armi pari. Il vecchio re era morto bene, fino alla fine lottando e la passione di Martin era morta con lui.

Scavò una fossa profonda, vi lasciò cadere l'animale, non voleva che i corvi e gli altri beccamorti dilaniassero quel corpo." (Andreoni 1967: 141-142)

Martin achieves this "victory" over the rabbit (which might be interpreted as a Pan symbol) through a process of seclusion and isolation, his observation and understanding of the animal. It marks Martin's entry into the primeval natural cycle and it is significant that he does not take the rabbit home to eat or that he does not tell his friends about the kill. His weekend hunting forays are in marked contrast to the weekday world and his society-oriented work as a teacher. The killing of the rabbit also marks the approaching end of the school year, a time when Martin must decide whether he will spend his holidays in Europe, visiting his family, or visit the West Australian desert and bush.

In some of the briefer descriptions of the bush there is an interaction between the setting and the protagonist who becomes part of nature. This occurs after Martin begins to delve into Aboriginal culture by reading their myths. The first one is read when Martin begins work at Kangaroo Track. It is the story of the quarrel between two friends Bibba the man and Maira the wind. Maira is angered by Bibba's request that he see his face and turns into a storm

causing Bibba to seek refuge in a hole in the ground and become a sand mouse. The story both parallels and contrasts with the following episode which describes the punishment meted out to the Polish truck driver. Martin's reaction to the violence is to seek a mystical union with nature, thus isolating himself from man/society:

> "Sono uscito stamane e il sole splendeva. Il vento marino ha smorzato il calore, s'è infiltrato sotto la camicia leggera, ha gelato il mio sangue caldo [...]
>
> Le mie gambe giacciono sull'asfalto. Il mio corpo sulla rena erbosa [...]
>
> Uomini sono passati veloci, non mi hanno visto. Sono andati a bere la birra e a cantare.
>
> La notte è scesa. I miei occhi sono spenti. Le mie gambe sono una impronta sull'asfalto. Il mio corpo fili d'erba rossa. La mia voce il sussurro del vento marino." (Andreoni 1967: 126)

Perhaps it is an attempt by Andreoni to conceptualize the Aboriginal dreamtime. Certainly there is a timeless quality about the relationship with the bush, time and wind being the all-powerful elements which paradoxically create and destroy in a natural pattern which is both eternal and cyclic. Man in his intellectual and social development has distanced himself from living nature to a non-life. At the conclusion of the novel, Martin reads the second Aboriginal legend about the two brothers Uispa, spirit of the air, and Onca, spirit of the earth, who lose their freedom because of the social experimentation of their fellow men and are each imprisoned in their own element. The legend enables him to give his quest direction, thus in part resolving the angst he had brought with him from Europe:

> "Non voglio costruire perchè non voglio distruggere. Non voglio avere uno scopo che giustifichi le mie azioni. Voglio essere capace di amore [...]
>
> Amore è accettare la vita senza giudicarla, senza considerarla un mezzo per raggiungere la meta [...]
>
> Sono umano, con tutte le limitazioni che questo comporta; voglio essere umano e basta." (Andreoni 1967: 166-167)

The theme of the bush and the outback is also in an important one in La Lingua degli Italiani d'Australia e alcuni racconti (Andreoni 1978). This collection, together with Cenere (Andreoni 1982), is the subject of a brief but interesting paper by Helen Andreoni, 'From Giovanni to Gio: fighting the stereotype' (Poole 1985: 168-170). In this paper it is pointed out that in giving literary expression to the experience of the Italian immigrant in Australia Andreoni presents the complexities of the Italo-Australian community and in effect argues against Australian-perceived stereotypes of the Italian immigrant, an element which is also found in other Italo-Australian writers. The paper however does not point out that Andreoni substantially deals with the experience of the Italian immigrant in the rural setting.

Five of the stories in La Lingua degli Italiani are rewritings of extracts from Martin Pescatore without substantial changes, although some of the linguistic changes are important in terms of Andreoni's changing ideas of the rôle of language in Italo-Australian creative writing. The concept of the bush, however, appears to be different. In the brief but poetical story 'Australia' (Andreoni 1978: 66-68) Andreoni explores a changed metaphysical relationship with the bush and the desert, alien places which refuse to reveal the secrets of their vast emptiness to the immigrant. They reject him yet paradoxically hold him prisoner, thwarting his thoughts of return to his native land since "Il pensiero di ritornare a casa quando mi viene lo ricaccio giù, perché non è possibile, non è possibile. Più si va avanti, più si diventa vecchi e prigionieri di questa terra" (p68). Gone is the mystical communion, the oneness with nature, the bush

as a place to learn to love, to regain one's humanity. These aspects, however, are retained in Andreoni's poetic writings and a symbiosis between the bush mystique, the hunt and native culture is presented in one of the short stories in the collection 'Totara' (Andreoni 1978: 37-40) which, however, is set in New Zealand. Further in Cenere, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, Peter Canova finds the solution to his metaphysical travail through communion with nature by dissolution in the Australian sea. At a societal level the bush is a place where man reverts to his primeval bestiality as in the story 'Jimmy Smith' (Andreoni 1978: 15-23) which relates the hunting and wanton shooting of a suspected murderer (probably Aboriginal) by the good white people of a small country town. The bush also contains insidious dangers for those who work in it ('Pasquale e Giovanni'). It is a place of struggle for survival both against nature and against men who transgress the solidarity of their fellows ('Kangaroo Track'). Its delicate ecosystem has been destroyed by the white (WASP) man in the extraction of mineral and other riches leaving in his wake rotting carcasses, flies, stench, Aboriginals who are "vecchi malati, sporchi" (p73) and no longer human ('Australia Felix', Andreoni 1978: 69-76).

The collection also introduces another aspect of the bush, or more appropriately the country. The country is the last bastion of Australian conservatism where class distinctions are quite marked. Andreoni is certainly not a subscriber to the Australian myth of egalitarianism. The WASP graziers in 'La giornataccia di Montefiore' (Andreoni 1978: 50-57) jealously guard their privileges and traditions, excluding all those outside their caste, especially if they

are of non anglosaxon origins. Consequently Italian farmers are relegated to the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder, engaging in backbreaking work for very little material or spiritual satisfaction ('La Farma' and 'Tabacco', Andreoni 1978: 28-33, 82-90). In Cenere this theme is developed through the argument that it is the WASP dominated economic and political system which exploits the immigrant farmer, thus shattering the expectations which had caused him to leave his native land.

Martin Pescatore is written in a "telegraphic", schematic and impressionistic style without the impact, verve and depth of Cappiello's novel. Conversely to Tedeschi, for whom emigration is forced and reluctant and to the Rosa of Paese fortunato, for whom emigration is a "funeral" and a change of trap, the protagonist of Andreoni's novel comes to Australia to shed his intellectual sophistication and achieve a potential spiritual rebirth through union with the Australian bush. If, in a sense, Cappiello's is an anti-male novel, Martin Pescatore seems to present some misogynist elements. In the first "European" half women are present as sex objects or in subservient roles; they are virtually absent in the second "Australian" half. Perhaps this is in part inspired by the theme of pioneer man alone in his elemental struggle against nature, an important feature of the Anglo-Australian literature of the past. There is a continual uneasy tension between the mundane and the metaphysical: agitation at the thought of having to earn his living in Australia, asking the gold seeker how to get rich quick, thoughts of bush. Andreoni's "philosophy" is difficult to follow. Nevertheless, despite some minor structural defects, it is a novel of importance

since it attempts to break new ground. It is also the only novel published to date which looks at the "before" and the "after" of the migration experience. Martin Pescatore may be considered Andreoni's best work to date. He is currently writing another novel, Zucchero, based on the kanaka cane cutters in North Queensland in the last century. This may serve to provide other insights into rural Australia as well as views on Australian society.

In Martin Pescatore Andreoni, in contradistinction to Rosa Cappiello, sees the migrant experience as one which may be either positive or negative at an individual level. Those characters who achieve a final form of assimilation/integration [before Cenere] do so by finding their niche in peripheral sectors of Australian society. Conversely the experience of those who attempt assimilation or integration into mainstream society (Montefiore) is presented in substantially negative terms. In Cenere the expectation that the individual should assimilate/integrate is met with refusal. Once Peter Canova rejects the idea that he should conform to the mainstream he can no longer exist.

GIUSEPPE ABIUSO

Although Giuseppe Abiuso's main interest as a writer lies in community and socially related themes,[4] he has displayed an interest in the country and the outback. He has written a play (as yet unpublished) L'Amaro della canna, set in the North Queensland cane fields. It depicts the cane cutters' and the farmers' struggle against nature as well as the economic struggle among the various interests

in the sugar industry. His only published prose work on this theme is a brief trilogy 'Cuore d'Australia' (Abiuso 1979: 151-157), which relates the experiences of three men Giovanni Binetti (an Italo-Australian), Merv and Michael (white Australians) and Jack (an old Aboriginal chief) in the Northern Territory, a place known to few Italian immigrants but which the title itself suggests is the "true heart" of Australia. In this Abiuso seems to pick up where the Diario left off, although the characters and the situation are quite different. The men are partners in the illegal supply of opium to the Aborigines of Alice Springs and of Aboriginal women to the white miners east of Alice Springs. However when Michael beats Bombah, Jack's cousin, causing his death, Jack feels called by the ancestral spirits of the Arunta to defend the honour of his tribe and raise it from the degradation caused by the white men. He stalks the other three men in the black of the night. Since he has only two spears he has to make a choice and kills Michael and Merv. Giovanni is spared because he can speak the Aborigines' language, and had accompanied Jack on walkabout in the MacDonnell ranges. In fact while Merv loathes the Territory and the Aborigines and Michael is there only for the money, Giovanni has developed a rapport with the land. He looks like one of the old explorers or a character out of Henry Lawson. But Giovanni, who can never forgive his father for not calling him John, whose Marist education had eradicated his ancestral language and culture, and who is misogynistic as well, has a dual Italo-Australian nature which makes him "cupo, solitario e introverso" (p151). His is a split personality which in a sense is placated by the vast emptiness of the outback to the point that he may never be able to go back to live in the Southern cities:

"Come sempre, avvertiva tutto l'equivoco della sua personalità sdoppiata, non riusciva a placare i contrasti stridenti della sua vita. La vastità del cielo sul deserto australiano affascinava con la cupa intensità delle chiare notti stellate. Un dolce svuotamento, simile all'ineffabilità dell'amore saliva talvolta dagli abissi dello spirito, avvolgendo l'intero suo essere per fuggevoli istanti.

Non era raro che se ne stesse incantato sul greto asciutto del fiume Todd, a seguire tra i nodosi eucalipti gli svolazzamenti e gli schiamazzi d'uno stormo di Galah." (Abiuso 1979: 152)

Although it manages to convey something of the fascination Giovanni feels for the outback, the trilogy cannot be numbered among Abiuso's most successful stories. It is schematic and has structural defects such as inconsistencies in plot and development. Michael is introduced only towards the end of the story and it is not clear until the end just what the group of men is doing. Giovanni is described as a pawn in the illicit trade (p155) while in fact he seems to be the main figure. The implication that Jack decides not to kill him because of his Latin character and of his love of the outback is not really supported by the general thrust of the story and Giovanni's self-confessed dislike for the Aborigines. The characterization is poorly executed with Giovanni being the only potential "real" character while the others are sketched out very briefly. The use of "outback" similes employed in describing the characters is an interesting innovation but comes across as forced and artificial. Merv is described as having:

"Il collo nodoso sembrava un ceppo d'eucalipto solitario; il volto rugoso somigliava ad un fianco screpolato dei monti MacDonell. Merv era più vicino all'ornitorinco che al dingo." (Abiuso 1979: 153)

However Abiuso does manage to come out with the odd vivid brief description such as the train travelling across the desert which "avanzava a balzi e scossoni come un canguro attraverso la sterminata distesa di sabbia" (p151).

EMILIO GABBRIELLI

A relative newcomer to Italo-Australian writing is Emilio Gabbrielli, born in Florence in 1948 and a Chemical Engineering graduate of the University of Bologna. Gabbrielli emigrated to Australia in 1980 and was initially employed as an engineer by EPT. He recalls that he has always been interested in literature and creative writing and as a University student at Bologna he would regularly meet with a group of friends who read and commented Dante. His creative writing also dates from his student days and he has written many poems on themes as diverse as the '68 movement and love. He has also written several short stories set in Italy and one (almost a short novel), 'La Voglia di fare' (Rando 1983: 195-218), with a South American setting. He has won first prize in the only two Sydney CoAsIt literary competitions held to date. The first time was in 1982 with 'Ospizio' (partially published in Rando 1983: 69-70), a superbly written (although slightly traditionalist) short story. Its protagonist, unable to emigrate outside Italy because of his inability to adapt to life in Germany and without any special skills, leaves his village to go to live in an Italian city (Florence?) where he finds employment as an assistant orderly in an old peoples' home. Uprooted and alone since his brothers and sisters have all emigrated (two to Australia), he leads a frustrated existence

because of a stifling and cramped home situation - he has had to take in his nearly blind mother after his father's death. He hates his work and has a cathartic outburst in suffocating to death one of the old men entrusted to his care. The story manages to present a surprising number of themes relevant to contemporary Italian society: internal and external migration; the anonymity (expressed through the lack of names) and the difficult material and moral living conditions in the urban situation for those on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder; the situation of old people who have no one to really care for them. The story is told in an introspective, efficaciously realistic manner with the old man's thoughts as he lies in bed, alone and close to death, providing a particularly poignant passage. In 1983 Gabbrielli won the competition again with the story 'La sfortunata storia di uno scrittore nato' which is an ironically told tongue-in-cheek tale, clearly autobiographically based, about the vicissitudes of a young man who has the urge to write.

While the awards are indicative of Gabbrielli's standing as a writer, the economics of publishing have not allowed him, to date, to produce a collection of his prose writings. His first published story is 'La Voglia di fare' (Rando 1983:195-218), which presents as its main theme the clash between two cultures, and the difficulty of cross-cultural understanding.

A combination of work commitments and a period of "getting used to the country" have meant that it was not until 1985 that Gabbrielli produced the final draft of his first "Australian" story, 'Una tragedia sconosciuta a Ayers Rock'.[5] The story relates, through the

first-person account of the protagonist, Rosa B., a strange and mysterious experience in the outback. Rosa, the Australian-born daughter of Italian immigrants, is a secretary with a Melbourne engineering firm and, in an emergency, is sent to Darwin to deliver a quote for a tender. As a reward the firm gives her leave to spend the weekend on a visit to Ayers Rock since she has never seen the Australian outback. The hectic work involved in the preparation and delivery of the tender documents leaves Rosa feeling fatigued when, on Saturday morning she arrives at Alice Springs. The fatigue is accentuated by the searing midsummer heat. Her first "upsetting" outback experience occurs at an Alice Springs park where she spends some time while waiting for the departure of the guided tour to Ayres Rock. She is dismayed at the sight of the empty cans and broken glass which litter the place and is embarrassed as well as a little afraid at the stares of the Aborigines in the park. During the journey the driver decides to pick up an odd-looking, malodorous and taciturn hitchhiker who appears in the middle of the desert and asks for a lift to the Rock. Since the seat next to Rosa is the only one vacant she has to put up with him for the duration of the journey, a matter which she finds nauseating. The next day, when she climbs the rock, the heat, her tiredness, the effort and tension of climbing up the slippery surface of the monolith, cause her to sit and rest for over an hour at the top in a state of drowsiness. After the others have all gone down she sees, as if in a dream, the strange hitchhiker slowly pass by her, suddenly lose his footing and catapult out into space. She descends the Rock in a state of hysteria, tells the others and, although they search at the base of the rock where the stranger should have fallen, there is no trace of him. The others think Rosa

may have experienced an hallucination caused by the intense heat and Rosa herself is unsure whether what she thought she saw really happened. She does not report the matter to the police but as the months go by and she gets over the feeling of confusion and malaise caused by her experience, she becomes increasingly sure that what she witnessed really happened. She considers, however, that there is not much sense in reporting the matter to the Melbourne police and she is a little afraid that she might be charged for not having acted in the matter. Her feelings of guilt (perhaps she had "dreamed" the event because of her intense dislike for the stranger and the "dreaming" had caused the event to happen) lead to recurrent nightmares for which she decides to seek psychiatric help.

Somewhat reminiscent of Joan Lindsay's Picnic at Hanging Rock,[6] the story is a minutely related account of the protagonist's ambiguous relationship to the alien environment of the outback. For the majority of immigrants and their children Australia is the cities of the coastal areas. They have little or no knowledge of the interior, apart from knowing that it exists, no interest in relation to its environment. There seem to be very few NES immigrants in environmental action groups. It is significant that as Rosa's plane takes off from Melbourne for Darwin she reads, with little curiosity and even less interest, an article on the Gordon Below Franklin protest. More than on description Gabbrielli concentrates on the protagonist's physical and psychological reactions to her outback experience. Rosa's adventure gets off to a bad start because of the fatigue, the heat and the appearance of the mysterious yet repugnant stranger, a symbol of the wanderer in the outback. Her most intense

and positive appreciation of the environment occurs in the few passages where she is able to view the monolith and the surrounding landscape alone. Whereas her admiration of Mt Connor, viewed while travelling in the minibus, is a matter of few words, her contemplation of the colour and majesty of the Rock at dawn, seen so many times in photographs and postcards yet so unexpectedly different in its reality, is a more intense experience even though it is not absolutely unqualified and hence accepted with reservations:

> "il cielo era terso e la roccia era imponente, di un colore sul marrone con venature violacee. Mi ricordo che pensai a quanto fosse scontata quell'immagine e identica alle migliaia di fotografie e cartoline viste e riviste; e pur tuttavia il piacere e l'emozione a trovarmi in quell'immensità di fronte a quella presenza totalizzante mi pervasero subito con una intensità forse anche superiore alle aspettative. In realtà non so quanto di questa eccitante sensazione come di scoperta fosse dovuta ad una reazione rispetto alla sera prima, quando la stanchezza e il malumore che lo straniero maleodorante mi aveva causato mi avevano impedito di entusiasmarmi." (p11)[7]

However, after the fatigue produced by the climb to the top, Rosa's appreciation is directed to the fact of having found a comfortable niche in which to rest undisturbed rather that at the contemplation of the monolith which she is able to examine minutely or at the view of the interminable horizon of the desert. The Rock produces mixed feelings in the protagonist: awe and a sense of magic at its colour and majesty, at the complex processes of nature which have constructed the monolith, at its delicate ecosystem. The presence of man represented by the ramshackle motel, the tourist complex under construction and the trucks unloading material, is felt to be a profanatory element. However, the Rock also generates feelings of fear and apprehension, of some hidden and unspecified menace.[8]

There is the vast surrounding emptiness, the steep climb and its smooth slippery surface with the ever-present threat of sending the unwary tourist hurtling to his death. It is these later feelings which become predominant as she witnesses in dream-like slow motion the stranger slip and hurtle below, presumably to his death. There is an implication that the event is in part willed by the protagonist, because of her hate for the stranger, and made to happen through the magical aura which pervades the Rock. The resultant effect is a rejection of the Rock and hence the outback on the part of the protagonist. Thus the NES immigrant and his descendants cannot understand or relate to the vast interior of the continent perhaps because his presence in Australia is all too recent.

A little less polished and convincing than Gabbrielli's previous writings, perhaps because he is attempting to deal for the first time with an Australian theme, the story is nevertheless an interesting one in its thematic and symbolic values. It is, however, not altogether free from technical problems. In order to give it a "ring of veracity" Gabbrielli presents the story as a first person account by the protagonist and includes a preface in which he states that he had transcribed it from a tape recording. The preface seems somewhat artificial and is redundant since the story itself is well told, detailed and well developed. Gabbrielli is not a writer who tends to an avant-garde style like Cappiello, his style being in the tradition of the Italian twentieth century *novella*. He is verbose,[9] tends to overstatement, and there is little variation in pace or style in his writing, a trait which often leans towards monotony. This characteristic is common to his other stories as well but is more

pronounced here, possibly because Gabbrielli is still "feeling his way" in what is for him a new thematic context. Nevertheless the story creates atmosphere, does manage to hold the reader's interest most of the time and Rosa B. turns out a convincingly created character. Her reactions to the unpleasant aspects of the outback (heat, dust, the smelly desert wanderer) are consistent with her background of a city-bred non intellectual young person used to the comforts of an air conditioned office. In this she reminds us of Franca in 'La Voglia di fare'. Equally convincing is her sense of marvel at the rugged beauty of the landscape. Gabbrielli writes a polished literary Italian, a fact which did not fail to impress the judges in the above-mentioned competitions, but in this story he uses a few Italo-Australian expressions such as "avevano speso del tempo" (p19). He does this despite the fact that in the preface he states that the story had been rewritten in literary Italian since "l'italiano di Rosa presenta diverse lacune e si è servita dell'inglese nei punti dove aveva più difficoltà ad esprimersi compiutamente." (p1).

ENNIO MONESE

Although most Italian immigrants have settled in urban areas and consequently have had no direct experience of the bush or the desert, many, at least initially, were employed in farming and construction projects in the country and sometimes in remote areas. Even many of those who settled immediately in urban areas have had a fleeting contact with the country during their stay at Bonegilla in the first months after arrival. When immigrants speak about their experiences at Bonegilla they invariably mention (as well as the terrible food) the bleakness and desolation of the place set in the

country near Albury-Wodonga. Bonegilla and the surrounding countryside is the theme of Ennio Monese's short story 'Essere Australiano'[10], which relates the experiences of a group of seven young men who have been in Australia for a month. Desperate to get out of the camp and start earning money they decide to examine a proposal by Mr Lockward, a local landowner of German origin. He wants them to clear forest land in order to cultivate tomatoes. This is clearly a long and backbreaking project which will require two years before any profit is made and the men can start earning money, but Lockward is certain that the men will succeed since Italian immigrants have a reputation for turning forest and bush into good farming land. With this theme, which, however, is not developed, Monese presents another aspect, and perhaps the most significant one, of the relationship between the Italian immigrant and the bush. Despite well-known real life success stories such as Griffith, it is a theme which is not dealt with by any of the writers being examined. The only substantial narrative work which explores the relationship between the Italian immigrant and the land is Sacchi's La Casa in Oceania (see Chapter 1). Monese, instead, through Bepe's suicide and Mario's decision to leave immediately for Melbourne, has these men reject the proposal that they should become hardy country pioneers. Their first impressions of the bush, when Lockward takes them to inspect the property, have certainly nothing to do with the admiration of Australian nature. The view from Bonegilla is certainly not one to encourage optimism for what lies ahead:

> "Gli immigrati [...] rimanevano, avviliti, a guardare oltre il limite dell'ex Compound lo spazio verde e sconfinato, sconosciuto e sognato di una terra senza volto ancora, senza vita. Cosa era l'Australia? Una realtà bella o una favola amara?" (Abiuso 1979: 163)

When Lockward takes the group to look at the land the atmosphere in the bush is dank and menacing with signs of an approaching storm, certainly different from the type of bush they were used to back in Italy:

> "L'aria si faceva gelida quando li investiva con qualche folata sparsa. Oltre le cime delle altissime felci appariva, nei ritagli di cielo, il lembo nerastro appena orlato di bianchi merletti del temporale che avanzava.
>
> "Non è come andare sulla Rocca di Garda, il lunedì di Pasqua?" osservò Rito.
>
> "Ma mangiare le uova sode. Ti ricordi?" continuò Mario che era suo compaesano
>
> "Sono boschi da operetta quelli, in confronto a questi"." (Abiuso 1979: 161)

Despite the sombre atmosphere, the men are in good spirits and there is a note of levity when they mistake the kookaburra, which they hear for the first time, for Bepe laughing. But even this note of levity causes a moment of reflection in Giacomo: "A partire da oggi, voglio contare fra quanti giorni mi verrà voglia di ridere sul serio" (p161). It is Giacomo alone, an engineer who left Italy because he could not find work, who has a further experience with the bush. He accompanies Lockward back to Wodonga in order to discuss the project more thoroughly, and on his return buys some beer to take back to his friends at the camp. In the park he is accosted by a "typical" country town Australian who insults him, demands the beer and beats him up. Giacomo is helped by the Aboriginal Tolo who takes him back to the Lockwood property where he is living temporarily in a makeshift hut. Here nature further vents its fury over the head of the injured Giacomo who had already been soaked by the rain:

> "Pioveva a dirotto su Lonely Sheep. Una goccia stillava dal soffitto e l'umidità anneriva le pareti fatte di tronchi d'albero. La ragazza raccolse un barattolo vuoto e lo collocò sotto la goccia, che incominciò a tintinnare con ritmo sostenuto. Giacomo spinse lo sguardo attraverso la finestrella. Il vento sbandierava le cime degli alberi e ululava come un branco di lupi affamati I fulmini sferzavano le nubi in corsa tumultosa e, d'un colpo, qua e là, recidevano, stroncavano e incenerivano." (Abiuso 1979: 165)

It is in the hut during the storm that Giacomo and Tolo get to know each other. Tolo is a nomad hunter who seems to have formed a constructive compromise, retaining a meaningful relationship with the bush, between the traditional life-style of the aboriginal and the presence of the white man. He travels with his wife and daughter, according to the season, over Victoria, NSW and North Queensland hunting parrots, crocodiles and snakes which he sells. However Giacomo seems to learn nothing from the experience since when Tolo asks him why he came to Australia and whether he likes the country Giacomo's reply, vaguely reminiscent of Andreoni's Martin Pescatore, makes Tolo smile meaningfully:

> "non si viene in Australia come si va in Svizzera o in Francia o in Germania [...] Si viene in Australia non per restarne estranei, per fare un lavoro semplicemente, ma per divenirne parte integrante, per costruire una società nuova dando il contributo del meglio di se stessi, della propria cultura appunto, per creare un mondo migliore, per vivere umanamente. Ecco sì: per essere una persona umana!" (Abiuso 1979: 166).

Given Monese's experience as a writer in Italy, prior to his migration to Australia, the story is a disappointing one. Irrespective of what Giacomo says, 'Essere australiano', judging by the conclusion, seems to consist of a choice between Melbourne or the bush with an unequivocal preference for the former. A conclusion which is diametrically opposed to that of Andreoni. Giacomo's definition consequently seems out of place and fits in uneasily with the main thrust of the story. Monese may be using it as an example of the bush as a place of truth and revelation, but this is not really clear and in any case is incompatible with the theme of the bush as a negative experience. There is little development in terms of the

men's reaction to the environment and the conclusion is left somewhat up in the air. Although Mario's position is clear, since he votes with his feet, we are not told what the experience has meant for Giacomo who has carried most of the action of the story. Unlike Andreoni and Abiuso, Monese makes use of European referents to describe the bush (eg "una sinfonia verde" - p161; "Il vento sbandierava le cime degli alberi e ululava come un branco di lupi affamati" - p165).

FRANKO LEONI

A more positive conclusion, for Australia if not for the protagonist, is presented in Franko Leoni's 'La memorabile biografia di Carlo di Priamo, vignaio da Poggibonsi'.[11] It is the whimsical and well told tale of an Italian revolutionary who, during a clandestine visit to London, falls foul of British law and is transported to Australia in 1842. During the voyage out he is befriended by Dr Lindeman and is consequently assigned to the good doctor on arrival to the colony. The two settle on a farm in the Hunter valley and Carlo decides to make a "chianti australiano", the first real wine made in Australia. Carlo eventually gives the doctor the recipe for making the wine and leaves him to enjoy the financial benefits, settling in Botany Bay. The story presents the theme of Italian farming success in Australia and although it does constitute a departure from historical reality it is told in an original and convincing fashion. As the Brisbane-Sydney express traverses the Hunter Valley, a stranger (obviously Italian) enters the compartment and talks to the bored and heat-stricken passengers the story, offering them a drink of cool Lindemans white. The initial part of the story describes quite

graphically the heat and the deafening chorus of the cicadas:

> "il secco-calco-umido australiano; il caldo amico dell'appiccicosa mosca australe, il caldo spossante e ritemperante. Il caldo fermo, una presenza [...] una cornice all'assordante chiacchiericcio delle cicale; un mare d'esse. Cicaleccio che pur vanifica l'ansimar pesante del treno" (Rando 1983: 232)

As in Gabbrielli's story the heat provides a blurring of the distinction between reality and fantasy and it is in this atmosphere that the mysterious stranger with "baffi maestosi, a manubrio" (p232) begins to tell his story, overcoming even the resistance of one of the passengers, a truck driver, who is convinced that the contribution of Italian immigrants to the development of Australia is "se non proprio nulla, quasi insignificante" (p233). When he finishes the story the stranger leaves as abruptly as he had come. On his seat remain two empty flagons and "un biglietto da visita con un nome: 'Marco De Priamo' " (p238). After the strange experience the passengers are able to view the countryside through which the train is passing with a new and deeper meaning:

> " tutti, compreso il camionista dissidente guardarono fuori dal finestrino a quei vigneti sui bassi versanti solatii, nella grande vallata verde. Non più aridità [...] ma fertile terra rossigna cui il volo breve del passero dava una maestà più in scala, più ridotta, a misura d'uomo, come quegli uomini che avevano fatto l'Australia, Carlo" (Rando 1983: 237).

Apart from Andreoni, whose work contains equivocations and inconsistencies, Gabbrielli's convincing portrayal of a city-bred tourist's experience and Leoni's fanciful story of the founding of the Australian wine industry, the bush / outback is a theme which Italo-Australian narrative writers have found difficult to handle. It is, however, a significant, though not major, theme in

Italo-Australian poetry. Although Italian farming successes (New Italy, North Queensland, Griffith) have constituted a highly visible aspect of the history of Italian immigration to Australia, it is an aspect not depicted in Italo-Australian literature. Perhaps this is due to the lack of direct experience most writers have had with this environment or perhaps because they do not consider such material worthy of the narrative art, success making a less interesting story than conflict and defeat.

Notes

1. 'A Caccia' and 'La Battuta' (Andreoni 1962: 29-33; 47-51).

2. See Gilburnia (Carboni 1872) and Carboni1855: 9.

3. It may be noted that "Wood" is an unusual word with which to describe a piece of Tasmanian bush.

4. See Chapters 3 and 7. A brief biography of Abiuso is given in chapter 2 .

5. The final draft was completed during a period as visiting writer in the Department of European Languages (University of Wollongong) in September-October 1985 . It was presented at an Italian Writers' seminar held at the University on 25 May 1986 and subsequently published in Rando 1988:78-97. Curiously enough the completion of the final draft coincided with the ceremony marking the handing back of Ayers Rock to the Aborigines.

6. However in the preface Gabbrielli suggests that there are parallels with Camus' L'Etranger and Pasolini's Teorema as well.

7. Page references are to the typescript version.

8. This sense of the city dweller who feels threatened by the vast majestic grandeur of the bush and the outback is also found in contemporary Anglo-Australian writing. See, for example, Michael Wilding, 'I am Monarch of All I Survey', in Don Anderson (ed.), Transgressions Australian Writing Now, Ringwood [Vic], Penguin, 1986, pp157-164.

9. The tendency to "overwrite" is common to most Italo-Australian narrative writers, including Nibbi, Di Stefano, Tedeschi. The only outstanding exceptions being Andreoni and Cappiello who employ a relatively "condensed" style.

10. Abiuso 1979: 156-167. Ennio Monese comes from Garda (province of Verona) has been publishing prose fiction since the age of 13. For many years he was correspondent for the Venona newspaper L'Arena. He is a graduate at the University of Genoa (his thesis was on Bronte's Wuthering Heights) and has published literary criticism, plays and short stories as well as essays on post war Italian society. He taught Italian at La Trobe University and at Coburg High School in the 70s.

11. Published in Rando 1983: 232-238. The story was awarded the second prize, Premio Letterario Cantarella, Sydney, 1982. Leoni, born in Roma in 1941, emigrated to Australia in 1973. He is currently working as Tutor in Italian at the University of New England. His creative writings, novels and short stories, have, to date, remained unpublished.

CHAPTER 7

"MULTICULTURALISM" AS A THEME IN ITALO-AUSTRALIAN NARRATIVE[1]

One of the consistent elements in Italo-Australian narrative is what might be described as its "multicultural" content. In their depiction of Australian reality these writers often need to come to terms with the presence in Australian society of other cultural groups, other than the Anglo-Australian one. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine the expression of the "multicultural" element in Italo-Australian narrative, particularly in relation to writers such as Andreoni and Penninger who introduce a conscious multicultural discourse and who take a polemical stance in relation to the concept of Australia as a "multicultural" society.

The conscious enunciation of the concept that Australia is a multicultural society is a relatively new phenomenon and one borrowed from the Trudeauean view of Canadian society. Introduced during the Whitlam era, it marked a radical departure from the integrationist policy of successive liberal governments throughout the 60s. It was initially perceived as a political concept in that it envisaged the recognition of the social, cultural, linguistic and political rights of "ethnic" minorities but it was transformed by the succeeding Fraser Liberal government into a cultural concept of a

holistic type, a concept which has experienced little change under the Hawke Labor Government. Despite the Federal Government's continuing formal committment to multiculturalism recent events, both from within government circles[2] and outside, have brought into questions a number of aspects. A vague concept in theoretical terms, it is generally taken as meaning that the languages and cultures of immigrants from non English-speaking countries would become a part of Australia's cultural base. In practice, perhaps because of the cultural conservatism which is still rooted in mainstream Australian society, it seems to be restricted to its more surface manifestations such as "ethnic" cooking and folk dances.[3] At a theoretical level multiculturalism has remained a somewhat loosely defined concept despite the various attempts to set up models.[4]

While a number of writers (Nibbi, Cappiello, Bosi, D'Aprano, Andreoni, Abiuso, Penninger) have dealt with aspects of the pluriethnic composition of Australian society, not all have concerned themselves with the conscious critique of the multicultural concept. In presenting his tales of "odd" characters and strange situations, Nibbi introduces us not only to Italians, but also to Hungarians, Yugoslavs, Scots, Poles, Germans. Bosi, especially in his English stories, draws on a number of national groups for his characters. Hence in the case of these two writers we have what may be termed a "demographic" type of multiculturalism in that they present some aspects of a pluriethnic (but not truly multicultural) Australia. Rosa Cappiello too describes Australia as a pluriethnic society. Additionally, she posits a latent though unarticulated political multiculturalism through the implicit critique of the socioeconomic

system which relegates immigrants to the bottom of the heap especially through the denunciation of the status of the immigrant woman. A consciously militant brand of multiculturalism is found as a subsidiary theme in Abiuso's Diary of an Italo-Australian Schoolboy where Mario eventually reacts to the position of disadvantage to which he is relegated by the system by becoming an activist in the Victorian Union of Students. However Abiuso's thesis of the necessity of participation in the social, cultural and political life of the mainstream would seem to preclude a "true" multiculturalism in that he does not appear to advocate the carrying over of "ethnic" sociocultural values into the mainstream. D'Aprano, on the other hand, considers multiculturalism in terms of the definition of a separate and distinct Italo-Australian identity rather than the insertion of Italian elements into the mainstream.

ANDREONI AND THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL MULTICULTURALISM

Giovanni Andreoni's latest published work Cenere (Andreoni 1982) presents a consciously political discourse on multiculturalism through the experiences of its protagonist Peter Canova. Canova is the son of a middle class family from Latina who has accepted both Australian values (he was captain of the First XI at school) as well as his linguistic and cultural roots (he holds a B.A. Hons. in Italian). He is a journalist with the independent Sydney daily The Express. When the paper sends him on assignment to Ash, an economically depressed Northern NSW country town mainly populated by tobacco farmers from Sardinia, the equilibrium he has achieved between his Australian upbringing and his Italian heritage is rudely and

irreparably shattered. As he speaks to the farmers, he discovers that for most emigration has been a delusion and has simply meant a struggle for survival. The reason for their plight is a host society where even the most enlightened and progressive elements are indifferent to their situation both as farmers struggling to survive in a depressed industry and as immigrants. Their present economic difficulties stem partly from their status as immigrants (regarded as second class citizens) but also from a political and economic system ruled by the multinationals which do not act in the interests of the workers or of the country. As he uncovers the story of their struggle and hardship Peter increasingly identifies with the farmers of Ash. His "Italianness", already present through speaking Italian at home and his University studies, becomes more accentuated. It takes on an added dimension through his contact with the popular language and culture of the immigrant farmers. However, despite the paper's expressed interest in multiculturalism, when Peter writes his article denouncing the situation at Ash:

> "il caporedattore lo bocciò perché mancava di qualsiasi interesse per il pubblico australiano. L'articolo si trasformò nella storia del duro lavoro, delle fatiche e del successo finanziario di 3 italiani, da poveri emigranti ad allevatori di bestiame, con qualche riferimento all'industria del tabacco, ad Ash, alla emigrazione en masse; finì in quarta pagina tra la cronaca etnica" (Andreoni 1982:77)

This occurs at a time when the country is in political turmoil as a consequence of a landslide Labor victory in NSW. Peter, who is by now a full-fledged hard-hitting journalist and something of a committed idealist, is relegated to covering "la cronaca etnica e multiculturale: balli, riunioni della Dante Alighieri, dell'Alliance Française, di altri circoli e club accettati da anni nella migliore società australiana" (p78). Peter's idealism receives a final crushing

blow when even his friend George, whom he looks up to as something of a hero, shows himself unwilling to accept the concept of political multiculturalism as a necessary element in the formation of the new Australian generation. Multiculturalism is relegated to an academic debate and is degraded to a holistic status. The definition enunciated by the editor of the newspaper proves to be so much empty rhetoric and a roundabout way of stating the old assimilation thesis:

> "Qualsiasi emigrante dopo pochi anni comincia a cambiare perché l'ambiente sociale, l'ambiente fisico sono diversi. Comincerà a bere la birra fredda, più adatta del vino a un clima tropicale e così via [...] La pizza diventa australiana con la pancetta e le uova. Quando si parla di gruppi etnici, di multiculturalismo, si parla degl'italiani, dei greci, degli slavi, ecc., come sono qui in Australia e non nel loro paese d'origine, di come la loro cultura si sia adattata all'Australia ed abbia contribuito a trasformarla [...]" (Andreoni 1982:31)

This discourse, however, is now no longer acceptable to Peter who, while walking on a deserted beach engrossed in his thoughts, goes into the water, is pulled out to sea by a rip and drowns:

> "Voleva un'Australia più umana, dove ci fosse posto per tutti, dove si rispettasse ogni idea che non facesse male agli altri, dove il colore, il ceto sociale, la nazionalità fossero parole senza senso, dove il lavoro e la fatica servissero a costruire e non a tradire e sfruttare gli uomini e la natura. Dove la speranza di un avvenire per i figli non servisse a sfruttare ed avvilire i padri; dove i figli non sprecassero la vita a vergognarsi e a nascondere il passato dei padri." (Andreoni 1982:81)

Peter's dissolution in the Australian sea (somewhat reminiscent of Martin Pescatore's dissolution in the Australian bush) is thus symbolic in that the "new" Australian, the ideal synthesis between the "ethnic" and the "anglo-celtic", cannot exist since the host society, even its most enlightened elements, are still entrenched behind traditional WASP values. For Peter Canova it is impossible to be what he wants to be.

The political/multicultural discourse, quite interesting in its own right, tends to detract at times from the artistic viability of the novella as it can become somewhat long-winded. The story however presents other themes as well: the description of a depressed country town, its inhabitants (particularly the group of Sardinian farmers), the relationship between white Australians, immigrants and aboriginals, questions of "ethnic" and "Australian" identity, drink, the church. In some of these respects the novella can be linked to the bush/outback themes discussed in the previous chapter.

As in Martin Pescatore passages describing the physical aspects of the landscape are relatively brief. Moreover in Cenere they are significantly fewer. Andreoni nevertheless manages to convey the feeling of the heat, dust and isolation, a starkness which matches that of the social and economic setting. This is particularly the case for Peter for whom this visit is his first contact with the outback:

> "Girò a destra sul ponte di legno senza parapetti. Il calore del fango secco l'avvolse mozzandogli il fiato; c'era rimasta una pozzanghera d'acqua giallastra coperta di zanzare [...] Gli sembrò di essere in un enorme forno. La polvere sottile invase la macchina, arrossando gli occhi, irritando il naso, graffiando la gola. La cortina degli alberi e degli arbusti contorti s'apriva per mostrare un masso grigio, uno stagno secco e screpolato. Le mosche ronzavano a migliaia dentro e intorno alla macchina" (Andreoni 1982:39)

It is only at night that it manages to lose some of its hostility as seen, for example, through the eyes of one of the Sardinian farmers, Sam:

> I grilli cantavano nel silenzio profondo. Ash gli piaceva di notte, non gli sembrava più assetato ma fresco e tranquillo nel sonno, quasi un paese di Sardegna sotto la luna." (Andreoni 1982:18)

Hence the presence of the white man, his farms and his buildings, brings about disharmony in the natural setting. Here Andreoni develops a theme introduced in the short story 'Australia Felix' (see Chapter 6). In a sense this parallels disharmony in the social order where the WASP attempts to assimilate the Aboriginals and the non English-speaking immigrants have brought about a society which is undesirable both to Peter and to Angela, the Aboriginal woman of Johnny the Basque sharefarmer. In Angela's case it is only when, after Johnny's death, she decides to reject Father Murphy's well-intentioned proposal to place her children, Françisco and Dolores, in a home in Sydney and to revert to the tribal way of living, that harmony with nature and with her Aboriginal tribal ancestry is achieved. For Peter it is different. He can no longer respond to the expectation of his superiors at the newspaper ("le facce di alcuni colleghi erano mediterranee, ma la lingua, il comportamento non avevano nulla in comune con l'Europa Meridionale." - p31) but wishes to achieve an ideal fusion between his immigrant Italian heritage and his Australian upbringing. Rejected by a society which will not accept his new-found identity, he finds harmony through union with nature.

Another aspect of identity is name, a theme which Andreoni has already presented in some of his short stories. As part of the assimilation process Christian names are anglicized. Not only for the second generation, as in the case of Peter (a fairly normal practice), but for the first generation as well. Angela's original Aboriginal name is forgotten. Sam is most likely Salvatore. It is only after Johnny's death that his real name (Antonio) becomes

known. He had not revealed it to anyone while he was alive although when drunk he resented the fact that his real name is not used ("Madre de Dios! Antonio, Antonio is my name." - p16). As part of the transition to awareness Peter also questions the relationship between name and identity. At school he had lived down the fact that his surname ended in "a" by becoming captain of the cricket team. That same final vowel had helped him obtain his job with the paper but Peter is finally brought to questioning, à la Pirandello, whether the difference which develops between his WASP colleagues and himself goes deeper than the name, a process which is catalyzed by his reflections on his senior colleague, George Anderson, a progressive Labor Party activist:

> "Beato lui che si chiamava Anderson! La differenza era nel nome o dentro? Forse il peso di una parola che ti trovi un giorno addosso, come il colore della pelle o degli occhi o dei capelli, anche se parli australiano più di loro, meglio di loro [...] Quando scoprono il tuo nome diventi "the Italian boy" anche se hai occhi azzurri, i capelli biondi e sei alto. Perché non si può essere australiani con gli occhi neri e la pelle olivastra?" (Andreoni 1982:47)

The question of feelings of "Italianness" and "Australianness" in the second generation is introduced not only through Peter's reflections but also in his interviews with the children of the farmers of Ash which are conducted in a rather odd sort of English. One of these young men who had emigrated from Italy at the age of nine considered himself a "fair dinkum Aussie" (p37) until he had gone back to Italy for a holiday. Now sees himself as:

> "different from a full blood Italian, but I am living in Australia and adopted the Australian way of living. That what I mean inside I am still Italian. I never say otherwise." (Andreoni 1982:39)

It is this declaration, together with Peter's reflections and the finale, which tends to contradict the complacent attitudes of the elderly reactionary journalist Edward Ironmonger. Ironmonger presents the "traditionalist" view of white Australian society according to which the migration experience may be a painful one for the first generation but the second generation becomes happily assimilated. Peter Canova's experiences tell us that this is not so.

However Cenere not only questions Italo-Australian socio-cultural identity. It also examines Australian socio-cultural identity. Australia is not autonomous either in cultural or economic terms. This theme is enunciated by the newspaper editor when he speaks to his staff about multiculturalism: "L'Australia non ha una cultura, tradizioni indipendenti. L'Inghilterra è il nostro modello da tanto, adesso è il turno americano" (p29). But to the editor, his anglo-Australian colleagues and, by implication, to mainstream Australian society, the formation of an autonomous Australian identity based on multiculturalism is unacceptable. Unfortunately Andreoni does not develop the debate. The question of identity is developed in terms of the protagonist rather than of society as a whole although at times the two strands coincide, such as in the opening part of the final chapter when Peter realizes that he is excluded from making any contribution at a political level.

Although in the outside world it is the WASP mainstream element which is predominant, in the microcosm of Ash it is the immigrants which form the predominant group at the working class level. They are not at all interested in Australian politics although their

sympathies are vaguely labor oriented. Politically Ash is a Country Party stronghold and higher up in the local power hierarchy (local council, graziers of whom only three are Italian) it is the mainstream group which predominates. In writing to the minister in order to obtain assistance for the ailing tobacco industry the County Clerk stresses how the industry is of capital importance in the assimilation process of the immigrants, giving as proof of assimilation the fact that two of their sons are prefects at the local school and three have obtained the Citizenship Award. The Catholic church is the province of the Anglo-celtic Father Murphy who is well-meaning, disposed to helping immigrants and aboriginals even though sometimes his efforts are misdirected. The Sardinian farmers do not view their Australian counterparts as superior: "Com'erano alti gli australiani, non finivano più. Non erano più forti dei sardi e lavoravano poco, ma quant'erano alti!" (p18). In the first years of Italian settlement the relationship between immigrants and Australian workers was not an easy one. This was due to cultural differences, the language barrier and the fact that Australian workers considered that the immigrants would take away their jobs. There would frequently be fights when the pub closed. As the years went by matters improved: "Siamo invecchiati insieme; gli abbiamo dato lavoro perché il tabacco ha dato lavoro quando non ce n'era" (p47). Now with the crisis in the industry those who work are all immigrants "gli altri non vogliono lavorare, gli australiani lavorano in ferrovia, lavoretti così in Comune" (p44). There are, of course "good" Australians such as the manager of the local hotel and his wife who help the Italians with writing letters and filling in applications. And there are "bad" Australians such as Father Murphy's

predecessor who hated Italians because they had little respect for the church and did not speak English. In presenting these aspects Andreoni is dealing with a commonplace almost stereotype pattern of the social realities pertaining to Italian immigration and settlement. What is said by the Sardinian farmers of Ash in their interviews with Peter could also be common to Italian immigrant experience everywhere. Andreoni (perhaps deliberately) does not introduce distinctive or personal elements in their experience and in doing so risks a type of narrative which falls somewhat flat.

Andreoni's novel is an interesting attempt to introduce political and multicultural discourse into Italo-Australian fiction. The narrative comes across in places as somewhat heavy-handed because of the digressions/debates on multiculturalism (chapter 3) and politics (chapter 10). However what Andreoni has to say on these topics is interesting enough and generally well articulated despite a lack of development and the odd confusing spot.

PENNINGER'S POLITICIZED VIEW OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

Andreoni's political theme finds some parallel in Mary my Hun by Hans Richard Penninger.[5] A curious document, and a most problematical one in a literary sense, Penninger's quasi novel is part autobiography and part polemic. It sets out to present the writer's experience as an immigrant and his views on Australian society and politics. Penninger somewhat incoherently discusses the ineptness of government, the corruption of society (both in the old world and the new), the futility of war, the evils of capitalism, antisemitism.

Like Andreoni after him he claims that Australia is being ruined by the multinationals and that immigrants should participate in Australian political life, a precept which he put into practice by founding his own (somewhat obscure) political party "Australian Social Democracy", whose platform seems to be based on a sort of humanitarian socialism with Nazi style overtones.

Mary my Hun is written in English and is the first book-length account containing fictional elements to be published in this language. The choice of language seems to have been a deliberate one as Penninger's aim is clearly than of transmitting his message not to the Italo-Australian reader but to an Australian audience.

It is debatable whether a work which contains something of the author's biography presented in a thinly fictionalized form, his views of politics, economics and society, a discourse on his personal philosophies and a number of bilingual poems can be classified as a novel. The book falls into three sections. One deals with the writer's experiences in the old country and his appraisal of the political, social and economic situation from the end of the first world war to the late 40s. A transitional one (the shortest of the three) describes the journey to Australia and presents the writer's thoughts on love and family. The third section deals mainly with the writer's experiences during his first ten or so years in Australia and includes a long, detailed and laborious diatribe on what is wrong with the Australian social, political and economic system. The three strands - literary (fictionalized autobiography and poems), philosophical and socio-political - are present throughout the book

and intertwine in a complex, uneven, confusing and hard to follow pattern.

The socio-political strand predominates in 20 out of the 71 brief chapters which comprise the work. It is present in the first and third sections and is entirely absent in the second one. It is the least "literary" and original of the three, being rather a sort of incoherent treatise on recent European history and contemporary Australian society presented from the highly subjective viewpoint of the writer. In the first part, Penninger takes a polemic stance against the European nations and the actions which led to two world wars, events in which he and his family were personally involved. His judgements of Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, Churchill and their relative countries are substantially negative ones. In the midst of this discourse Penninger presents his own view of political utopia, claiming that in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past a

> "small group of scientific academics must be trusted to govern the world; the dangerous superficialities must be replaced by the stronger leadership of the scientific mind which is the only one capable of combining the democratic principles of judgement, flexibility and compromise with the deep seated sense of security that the human mind finds in regimentation" (Penninger 1976:37-38).

In the third section Penninger continues his treatise with a discussion on capitalism, the multinationals and international Zionism, especially in relation to Australia, as well as a number of specific aspects regarding Australian politics, society and the economy. The link between the two sections is provided by an ongoing discourse on democracy. His views seem an uneasy conglomerate of those held by fringe political elements, both left and right wing. He advocates a socialist-type political system where

resources are distributed according to need and evils such as capital accumulation, uranium mining and pollution are eliminated. Penninger implies that this situation exists because Australians let it exist ("We have the system we deserve!") since they are apathetic, unthinking, spiritless and superficial. Besotted by drink provided by the capitalist-owned breweries, the Australian working class, despite having contributed to the winning of two world wars is "the strongest and most miserable in the world" (p76). The idea that Australians are living in a democracy is false since true democracy can only exist if backed by

> "a people who love themselves a little less and their Land a little more; a visionary people [...] an intelligent people [...] a people conscious of its destiny to form one Nation or to perish" (Penninger 1976:181)

Here Penninger touches on two aspects of Australian society which are also discussed by other writers. The passage brings to mind Hegel's concept of the historyless people, also mentioned by Nibbi (see Chapter 4). It also comments on the Australian propensity for drink in a way which is reminiscent of both Nibbi and Cappiello.

The theme of drink is one on which Penninger dwells at some length. The Australian pub is a "cock-pit of self admiring emptiness" (p154) where men rub elbows for long hours monotonously summer and winter. If Penninger subscribes to the axiom that "drink is the curse of the working classes", he carries the concept one step further by claiming that drink is at the base of Australians' inability to think

> "their mind fumigated by alcohol [...] talking ephemeral nonsense for hours on end, while united only in the one physical reality of keeping their bladder from bursting" (Penninger 1976:155)

In one of the 31 poems which are interspersed throughout the text in order to underline and illustrate aspects of his discourse, he depicts the pub as a den of iniquity ('To the Manly Hotel' - pp132-133 - written in *terza rima*). In another ('Traffic light Aussies' - p179) Australians are described as "good only when green", "easy going" for whom "only in drinking unity seems straight". Hence Penninger questions what sort of people accept the formation of a nation for a negative reason (fear of the Japanese). In his critique of Australian society there is little specifically of the migrant-eye-viewpoint, although he does advocate that a "better" classical education should be given to the young (a reflection of his own schooling) in order to make them more intellectually aware and "to understand the deep psychological difference between using and abusing the goods of this planet" (p38). He concludes his long treatise on what may be seen as an explicit multicultural note. In advocating the international brotherhood of man, he also advocates unity between the different people and classes which make up Australian society, thus implicitly positing, in his own elliptical way, the concept of political multiculturalism:

> "In our corner of the world, the tendency for unity is in the bloody stage of eliminating external influences [...] We have only one generation to find unity within ourselves; to stop this wasteful bickering, to create efficiency in our administration, but above all to give our people equality and dignity, without which unity is a farce [...] Yesterday's languages are the dialects of today's world." (Penninger 1962:182-183)

What may be termed the "moral" and "philosophical" strands of Penninger's work are relatively brief ones and are predominant in 12 chapters. The connecting theme is the praise of a simple, bucolic

life-style where man can live by his own efforts in an ambience unpolluted by the products of industry. In the autobiographical strand we discover that he could not achieve this life-style in Europe but was able to do so in Australia. Penninger also presents his considerations on religion and death in the first part. In the "transition" section (journey to Australia) his philosophical considerations turn, appropriately enough, to the concepts of mother, father, family, love, woman and womanhood. The third ("Australian") section continues the discourse on love and picks up again the praise of the simple life as well as presenting considerations on charity and the drug problem.

The "autobiographical" strand is the one which most closely approximates a narrative text and is predominant in 33 chapters of the "novel", although the political and "philosophical" strands are often intertwined with it. It is the type of account that if presented on its own would probably have been more appropriately included in chapter 2. Together with Andreoni's Martin Pescatore it is the only text which presents an experience of both before and after migration. It is told in a highly impressionistic almost story-like fashion reminiscent of parts of Carboni's Eureka Stockade. The central character, John, who lives in a "little North Adriatic town" (part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the end of the first world war), is orphaned at the age of four. He is brought up in an orphanage and during his formative years has negative experiences in relation to religion, sex and death. At the age of fifteen he finds employment in a local bank and has already made long-term plans to marry Nellina, whom he had met at the orphanage, but he is called up to serve in the

Italian army at the outbreak of the second world war. John survives the war and marries Nellina. Twelve months later the young couple, like some 27,000 of their compatriots, chose to become displaced persons subsequent to the passage of the territory to Yugoslavia. After spending three years (two in France, one in Italy) in refugee camps in a continual struggle for survival they decided to emigrate to Australia in order to give their son, who was born in France, a better future. They leave for Australia on the "Nelly", a converted freighter "carrying the end result of the war, the last casualties: people without a country" (p49). During the journey John has occasion to comment on the absurdities of shipboard life such as the segregation of the sexes, even husband and wife being separated. The ship is seen in Cappiello-like terms as

> "an inferno of lost sensuality, but also a Tower of Babel. Boats like this travel only in a sea of schizophrenia, in which thoughts, feelings and actions are disconnected" (Penninger 1976:59)

As the journey progresses and the Australian coastline comes into view he has doubts about whether he made the right decision. His English is very rudimentary and he wonders whether, having agreed to the generic government two-year contract which "only a person with no other way out of his misery would have signed" (pp62-63), he has "sold his life well" [sic] (p63).[6]

John's first impressions of Australian society are negative ones. With respect to Europeans Australians are insular and still seem to live "in the time of the Eureka Stockade" (p76). He resolved that he would return to Europe as soon as he had finished his contract. Yet "the rough people slowly became nice rough people and then plain nice

people" (p79) and within a year "he was in love with the Country" (p79). His reaction to the natural setting is one of fanciful wonder and the brief description of his first encounter with the Australian countryside is a striking one:

> Some migrants, seeing rabbit farms all around, were of the opinion that Australians were stretching their fancy a bit in growing rabbits [...]
>
> Then the birds, of course. Thousands of them with a real fancy for foreign languages, especially Italian, mostly unprintable material.
>
> There was the she-bird, an early morning one, who was keen to advertise to have lost her undies: "Ho perso le mutande ... Ho perso le mutande ... " she went on and on with pretended desperation.
>
> And the other one, a black crow with a throat of galvanized iron, who seemed to have a definite grudge with some Italian. It flew all over the Camp [Bonegilla] yelling "Vigliacco ... Vigliacco ..."
>
> The migrants were also demanding the impossible. To them it was late November and they expected the snow any day; not too much, just a light coverage, a few inches.
>
> It was so difficult to realize we were walking upside down, and that November had gone nuts." (Penninger 1976:74-75)

However, rather than the natural aspects of the country, it is the people and the social setting which hold John's interest. Although he learns to love them he never stops criticising them. Still under contract he is sent to Melbourne to work in a brickyard. Nellina weaves carpets. To John's European eyes his fellow workers are "sub-standard" (p76) because of the way they dress and behave, an observation which is later also made and further elaborated by Cappiello.

Tired of Melbourne and the migrant ghetto John decides to put his ideas on the simple life into practice as well as to move to "a place virgin from migrants, in which to study the language" (p82). With

Nellina's agreement, he buys a house and an acre of land at Campbell's Creek, near Castlemaine. In that "300 feet high, frosty paradise" (p87) they spent seven years, the best of their life. Here John discovers another aspect of Australia. The area is poor in material terms but the people were content with what they had. It was "living proof that poverty is not the cause of indignity and that there is no poverty that is not improved by a contact with nature" (p87). For John and Nellina life at Campbell's Creek is materially poor but idyllic. It is here that their second son and a daughter are born. They leave Campbell's Creek in 1958 to move to Sydney, a move John later regrets. On arrival in Sydney John finds a city which is diametrically opposed to the paradise on earth of Campbell's Creek and which is described, not altogether inappropriately, in Dantesque terms:

> "Arriving by train in Sydney early in the morning and without a destination, a man is bound to find himself in Haymarket; because it is down hill if not for a better reason.
> In 1958 Haymarket was not the ghost place it is today. It was lively indeed, and of a special devastating life, hitting the eyes of a stranger as only floating sandpaper could.
> Dante, departing from the fixed idea that the number three is the perfect one, divided Hell into nine circles. Haymarket was hell simplified: only three circles." (Penninger 1976:118)

At this stage (chapter XLVIII) the autobiographical strand is interrupted and, although in the following chapters we are treated to a comprehensive dissertation on Australian society, we do not know anything about John's life in Sydney. The autobiographical strand is only re-introduced in the second to last chapter (LXX) when we are told that on 13 June 1976 John returned to Italy. Apart from the brief announcement of John's emotional arrival in Italy the chapter

contains three poems, in both Italian and English, dedicated to the experience: "Nel 'vuoto immenso' (186-187), 'Piazza San Marco' (188-189) and 'Viva ancor!' (pp190-193).

The content aspect of Penninger's work has been discussed at some considerable length partly to attempt to place in some sort of order the many elements and strands which comprise it, partly because it may be of assistance in determining to what extent the work could be classified as a novel. The chapters which deal with life views, philosophies, political, social and economic topics are clearly not fiction, although they provide unusual if not interesting perspectives on Australia. These elements are also inserted in the "autobiographical" chapters. Penninger expresses himself in a subjective, undisciplined, unbalanced often rhetorical mode and the poems which are interspersed throughout the text are more an extension of the prose than poetry in its own right. Although in its entirety the work does not "hang together" as a coherent whole, it does, in some parts, have aspects worthy of consideration. Its positive points may be encountered especially in the narrative-autobiographical strand. Despite its inconsistencies - for example, we are not told why John came to love Australia and Australians nor why he decided to leave Campbell's Creek - and the monotonous way in which some episodes are related, John's story is, in parts, told with feeling. Examples of this are: the simple but idyllic life in the Adriatic town at the turn of the century shattered by the war and by the corruption of society; the bitterness and the feeling of tragedy at the partition of the territory east of Trieste after the second world war ("it's not enough to hope that one day New York will be sold like a

slave, and that nine out of ten of its people will prefer to spread like gypsies all over the world." - p41); the gratitude towards France ("When they [John and Nellina] left France they were as poor as when they entered, but [...] they were and are very proud to have their first son born in such a noble and beautiful country." - pp44-45); the anguish at leaving his native shores as the ship sails away ("No! Don't leave me my dear Land! I belong to you! But the beloved Land was moving East with the cruel inflexibility of death." - p53); the appreciation for the paradise found at Campbell's Creek ("Oh! What a paradise on Earth!" - p87). And Penninger does, at times, manage to provide striking and vivid comment on events and experiences. The fact that his bricklayer uncle manages, before his death from typhoid, to father a child on each of the two occasions he comes home on leave from the army solicits the comment "Who knows? The Austrians, with their fame for efficiency and all that . . . the insolent high command probably had a record of the menstrual period of every soldier's wife" (p3). A comment made about the refugee experience ("In Basel, France was (and is) just there, over a small vegetable garden. The young couple crossed this garden [...] They were in a different world, full of humans." - p44) is deftly related to the initial impact with Australia ("that was enough to depress him, deeper than he ever was in Switzerland: no garden here to cross into anywhere." - p78). After a discourse against the pill Penninger tells, with a sort of heavy-handed humour, how John and Nellina's "natural" method of birth control was disrupted when their two boys looked through the Italian picture calendar and left it open at the wrong month since they liked the snowman in December so much (pp115-117).

Although there are individual passages and chapters which may be seen as having literary merit - indeed on rare occasions Penninger can be almost as abrasive, pungent and outrageous as Cappiello - the socio-political discourse, which is not particularly well articulated, seriously compromises the artistic coherence of the work. It nevertheless presents some interesting views on Australia and Australian society and it does constitute a first attempt by a first generation Italo-Australian writer to produce a novel in English.

Although a number of Italo-Australian writers are conscious of the multicultural nature of Australian society, few develop the concept in their works to any great extent. Recognition of the presence of other ethno-cultural groups is widespread but most writers do not emphasise this point, preferring to focus on the Anglo-Australian environment and/or on the Italo-Australian community. Despite this, various "multicultural" aspects are presented as secondary themes in the writings of Nibbi, Bosi, Cappiello, Abiuso and D'Aprano. However substantial discussion on this aspect of Australian reality is found only in the works of Andreoni and Penninger. Andreoni argues that WASP dominated Australian society rejects the concept of political multiculturalism. In Penninger the multicultural discourse is present more by implication than by direct statement. He argues that one of the major reasons for the ills and troubles which beset Australian society is that those who hold political and economic power are unwilling to share it by allowing participation by other groups such as workers and immigrants. Political multiculturalism is also suggested in the works of D'Aprano and Abiuso discussed in the

preceding chapters, although, as pointed out above, the parameters adopted by these writers preclude a development of the theme. In D'Aprano's The Swallow the protagonist's political involvement and the discourse on the "new" Italo-Australian socio-cultural reality contains elements, implied though not articulated, which can be related to the concept of political multiculturalism. Abiuso touches on the theme in the Diary when, towards the end, Mario becomes politically active. However, apart from these examples, it does not seem to be a theme which has attracted Italian-Australian writers. Perhaps the lack of debate on what is one of the most crucial socio-political issues for the non English-speaking person in Australia today is due to the fact that the Italo-Australian writer must first resolve his relationship with his own social group and that of his group and the mainstream, as some of the material examined in previous chapters would seem to indicate. It is only after having done this that the writer can begin to explore the wider socio-political and philosophical issues which are relevant to the society he lives in.

Notes

1. This chapter is an adapted version of a paper, 'Il multiculturalismo e la narrativa italo-australiana', Il Veltro, XXXII (1-2), January-April 1988, pp83-90.

2. One such event which has important implications is the National Language Policy which does not in practice advocate the long-term maintenance of community languages and does not really take into account that the concept of multilingualism is tied to that of multiculturalism. Although there has been extensive discussion on both, a theoretical framework has not really developed. In the debate it does emerge however that: (i) Australia is not currently a multicultural society but it has within it seeds that may or may not germinate into one; (ii) while there are elements within Australian society that promote multiculturalism the concept has not achieved acceptance by the majority; (iii) A crucial element in the development of a multicultural society is the preservation and encouragement of languages other than English and their transmission to succeeding generations of Australians thus creating a pool of stable biliterate bilinguals.

However, apart from a relatively small number of polyglots, the current typology of language use in Australia may be schematized as follows:

1. English monolinguals
2. Other-language monolinguals
3. Monoliterate in English bilinguals
4. Monoliterate in other language bilinguals
5. Biliterate bilinguals

The first group is by far the largest although in percentage terms it is not as nearly all-pervasive as it was before World War II. There are many powerful political, economic and social forces within and outside Australia which tend to reinforce this and it may be that if migration from non-English speaking countries were to cease, Australia would quickly revert to its pre- World War II position. Linguistic assimilation tends to occur according to the following pattern. An immigrant arrives from a non-English speaking country as an other-language monoliterate (type 2). Unless he is too old to acquire some competency in English he usually becomes a monoliterate in other language bilingual (type 4). His children become monoliterate in English bilinguals (type 3) but as they grow older they tend towards monolingualism in English (type 1). The speed of the process will vary according to individual and environmental factors but the pattern may be seen as fairly consistent and the bilingualism of types 3 and 4 is an unstable, transitional one. Hence it is not a resource that can lead to multiculturalism.

The implications for the continuation of literary production in languages other than English (assuming also that this is a desirable aspect of multiculturalism) are quite clear: in the present situation it will not survive beyond the first (and in rare cases the second) generation.

3. Among the more interesting contributions to the debate on multiculturalism may be noted the Review of Multicultural and Migrant Education, Melbourne, AIMA, 1981 and Poole 1985. However it is likely that the recent (November 1986) debate sparked off by cuts in Federal Government "ethnic" oriented funding and by the proposed SBS/ABC merger may change perceptions of Multculturalism.

4. See, for example, the model discussed in Kringas - Lewins 1981 where three types of multiculturalism are identified: demographic (the recognition that Australian society is composed of elements from many different countries / cultures); holistic;

political (the recognition that the various "ethnic" groups have the right to active participation in the political life of the country on the same basis as Australians). Interesting theoretical issues are also implicitly present in chapter 8 of the report of the Committee of Review of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (Canberra, AGPS, 1983).

5. Penninger 1976. The novel is supposedly part 1 of a longer work which was never published. Hans Richard [John] Penninger was born in Ober-Hollabrunn (Austria) in 1920. He was raised in an orphanage in Pola in Istria, an Italian-speaking territory which reverted to Yugoslavia at the end of the second world war. Together with his wife Nellina he emigrated to Australia in 1949 as a displaced person. In Australia he had worked mainly as a farmer, subsequently settling in Sydney. He died in a traffic accident on 29 August 1983.

6. The thought is based on a saying - "La vita spesa bene lunga è" - which Penninger attributes to Leonardo da Vinci.

CHAPTER 8

ITALY REMEMBERED, ITALY IMAGINED, ITALY REVISITED

Some writers, viz. Andreoni, Gabbrielli, Penninger and Tedeschi, in writing about the migration experience have written about Italy. Some of Bosi's short stories are exclusively on an Italian theme. The only writers to have written exclusively about Italy seem to be Giuliano Mazza and Fernando Basili while most of Giovanna Guzzardi's and some of Pino Sollazzo's work deal with aspects of Italy not connected with the migrant experience. The theme of the emigrant returning home is treated in short stories by Valerio Borghese and Cristiana Sebastiani.

The theme of Italy is present in a number of writers in that there is clearly motive and justification for writing about the country they left behind. Unlike the poetry written on this theme the narrative seems to contain relatively little nostalgia or longing for the native country. Most writers tend to write about the Italy they knew before emigration. Few have dealt with the theme of Italy revisited or the emigrant's return.

GIULIANO MAZZA

Giuliano Mazza's novel Il Sogno del borgo[1] (his first), published before his emigration to Australia, is set in Italy, specifically in the

city of Parma in the region of Emilia Romagna. The story is about Adriano and his group of friends who have known each other since childhood when they lived in the same lower class peripheral area of the city dominated by a soap factory. It recounts their vicissitudes some years later when they are grown up. Some have gone to live in other areas yet they keep in touch, linked by their common experience. One of the group, Poldè, drowns in the river, an accident, reports the local paper, but Adriano suspects that he has committed suicide. Poldè had considered himself responsible for an accident and he had also become obsessed by the idea that the changing times were somehow leaving him behind, a feeling which Adriano too shares, although less intensely. Adriano, whose wife dies tragically, begins to be obsessed by dreams of the childhood suburb. After Poldè's funeral the group of friends visit the suburb to find that much has changed. Although the soap factory is still there, the ruined house, which had been the setting for many of their games, has been replaced by a six storey apartment block with shops on the ground floor. Adriano realizes that the process of growing up, which involves the passage of time, has also meant the disappearance of that childhood world. The adults who populated the area and whom the children wished to emulate have also passed away. In fact, death is a constant element present in the novel as some of the group of friends and their immediate families also die from various causes. This realization influences Adriano's dreams of the past to the point of turning them into nightmares so that the childhood world cannot be re-lived even in memory. As a result Adriano's existence is pervaded by fear. The novel is a psychological study which successfully captures the mood of the closed and somewhat drab life

lived, especially by the lower classes, in a small Italian provincial city, a drabness underscored in a number of the episodes by the presence of the dense fog characteristic of the region. It is a pessimistic story about life and the somewhat wearying process of living. Although the characters have broken out of the poverty they knew as children, at the same time they seem, paradoxically, to have been relatively untouched by the economic and social progress which has occurred in their region. The group which Mazza describes could be potential immigrants. However there is no significant mention of emigration in the novel. It seems that the characters remain where they are because of the bond among themselves linked through the place of childhood. They are thus spared the anguish and trauma of emigration although life presents other problems for them since it becomes empty and futile with the passage of time. Some four years ago Mazza had indicated that he was writing his second novel, this time in English, but no information is available as to whether this has been completed.

PIETRO TEDESCHI

Pietro Tedeschi's Senza Camicia is set entirely in Italy and, as has already been discussed (see chapter 2), presents a pre-migration portrait of its protagonist, Morcia. The background is Morcia's home city of Reggio in the province of Reggio Emilia which is described in minute and intimate detail, both in impressionistic terms and in terms of its socio-economic situation. Rather than physical description it is the inhabitants with whom Morcia comes into contact which interest Tedeschi. There are vivid portrayals of

Morcia's friends, the people who frequent Piazza San Prospero and the bar, some of the people who live in the vicinity of the piazza such as the artisan Violottini, who can fix anything. Through them Tedeschi conveys the atmosphere of this part of Reggio. In fact, one of the themes of the novel is the story of Morcia's relationship to the city. Despite Morcia's dire economic and social circumstances there is a feeling for his city to which he relates. It is as though his condition of orphan has led him to regard the inhabitants of the Piazza San Prospero district and hence the city as his family. When, finally, he is forced to take the decision to emigrate because there is no other alternative, there is real regret at having to leave "his" Reggio. This is not to say that Tedeschi does not depict the dire economic circumstances of the city in the immediate post-war years. This is done mainly through the protagonist (and has consequently been discussed in chapter 2) but also through some of the other characters such as the people who run stalls in the Piazza market and who have to work very hard just to make ends meet. Another grim aspect of the times is the closure of the Gioresi factory, the major employer in the area, and the economic hardship this causes to thousands of workers and their families. However, despite the poverty which characterizes the economic circumstances of a number of the characters in the novel as well as the social landscape of Morcia's Reggio, Tedeschi conveys a sense of the life and vitality of his city which gives the impression that, in the final analysis, his view of an Italy which is materially poor (rather similar to the view of Italy presented in much neorealist cinema) is not pessimistic (much less so than the view presented by Mazza who writes about a city in the same region) and perhaps even just a little bit nostalgic.

However, Italy does not seem likely to remain a predominant theme in Tedeschi's writings. While Senza Camicia, his first novel, is exclusively about Italy, his second novel, currently being written in English, relates the story of the arrival and first few years in Australia of a young Italian male immigrant from the Reggio Emilia region. From the typescript of the first draft of the first half of the novel supplied by the author it can be ascertained that this novel contains some flashback episodes to the Italy left by the protagonist. Apart from the brief first chapter, they are not so much episodes relating specifically to the protagonist's past, but rather ones which delineate the social, historical and political background which had led the protagonist and his friends to emigrate. On the whole they are somewhat cumbersome and will probably be substantially changed in successive drafts. However there is one which is particularly interesting. When the group of immigrants protest at Bonegilla because of the rationing of bread, a vital element of the Italian diet, a background episode is inserted explaining how these young men had participated in the resistance against the Germans in Italy and how that experience had given them an idealism, a maturity, an initiative and an independence of action which they had brought with them when economic conditions forced them to emigrate:

> "The former teenagers had become [after the war years] mature young men, full of zest and ideals not yet contaminated by the wheeling and dealing of eco-political [sic] realities. They were again at the forefront of events dragging a mass of undecided, confused and often cynic people [...] Their efforts were, however, to no avail. On the world chessboard these youngsters were just pawns to be moved about and sacrificed. Eventually they had to leave. But even so, in their suitcases they did not carry only misery and bitterness. They took with them their newly acquired self-respect. That same self-respect and dignity which had awakened that day, reaching the eucalyptus tops with the notes of their song." [p47 first draft typescript]

In a sociological sense, if not in a literary sense Tedeschi is saying something new about Italian emigration to Australia in the early fifties. A number of the young Italian men who came to Australia in that period had something more to offer than just their muscles. Indeed, the Italian immigrants' drive to succeed economically in the new country sprang in part from this type of experience, not just as a means of fleeing from the economic poverty they had left at home. It is a point entirely overlooked by Australian sociologists who have written on Italian immigration to Australia, although Italian intellectuals writing on emigration from Italy have often remarked that the phenomenon had deprived Italy in a qualitative sense, since those who emigrated were usually the best young men of the working and peasant classes.

PINO BOSI, GIUSEPPE ABIUSO, EMILIO GABBRIELLI

The short stories which constitute Bosi's Tre Case e un Campanile[2] depict a village somewhere in the Val Padana in Northern Italy. Contact between this community, comprised mainly of contadini, and the outside world is rare and generally leads to negative experiences. In 'Dagli! Dagli!'[3], a visitor from the "outside" is initially charmed by the idyllic atmosphere of the place but later frightened out of his wits when a crowd of locals, obviously suspicious of strangers, chase him away. In 'Suo figlio'[3] a returned emigrant, driven to thoughts of murder when he discovers that his wife has been unfaithful during his absence, is eventually reconciled. Bosi presents a view of Italy which may be defined "paesana", somewhat à la Guareschi. The country life of the contadini is meant

to be easy if not partially idyllic though sometimes marred by intrusion from the outside, petty envy ('Bortolo e i cani'[3]), the bickering and quarrelling amongst themselves and the occasional attempt at exacting vendetta ('Odio'[3]). However good sense and the inherent good nature of the inhabitants usually prevail. Quarrels and differences are generally settled amicably with just an occasional one being resolved by violence. This view of Italy which influences Bosi's concept of the Italo-Australian community may be considered valid in a sociological sense up to the early 50s, but it has become outdated subsequent to the considerable changes which have occurred in Italian society after this period. Bosi, however, does not present the complex sociological aspects of this peasant society of the past but gives a facile and superficial interpretation which extols the virtues of the simple life lived by the contadini in contact with nature without considering any of its harsh realities. In fact, the contadini of Tre Case e un Campanile become the immigrants of Australia Cane. An Australian perception of and appreciation for Italy's cultural heritage is presented in 'That . . . thing in "Via della Topaia"' (Bosi 1973:145-152) in which professor Pipps cannot bring himself to use a urinal in Rome (used by the locals for the past 400 years) because it was sculpted by a famous sixteenth century artist.

Abiuso, on the other hand, depicts in some of his short stories (see Chapter 2) the harsh and often cruel realities of life in Rome during the war and in the immediate post-war years. In the capital city of a country plunged into moral and social chaos the struggle for survival in which the inhabitants of one of the poorer districts are engaged leads to stealing, violence, prostitution, betrayal and

exploitation of one's friends and relatives. Despite the restoration of social order in the immediate postwar period poverty is still commonplace, but the left-wing political idealism which aims at resolving the country's woes gives way to cynicism and betrayal of these ideals. Abiuso's view of Italy is substantially a pessimistic one and may be contrasted with the somewhat less pessimistic picture provided by Tedeschi.

While the "Italian" theme occupies relatively few of Bosi's and Abiuso's narrative works, it is present, and at a more sophisticated and complex level, in most of the short stories written to date by Emilio Gabbrielli.[4] With the exception of 'Ospizio' Gabbrielli's "Italian" stories have yet to be published. In them he presents a more modern Italy than the country depicted by any of the other Italo-Australian writers. It is the Italy of the post-1968 generation and Gabbrielli deals with social themes such as the ones discussed in 'Ospizio', the problems faced by the middle-class intellectual in dealing with the complex economic, social, political, often contradictory, realities of contemporary Italy, and the psychological complexities of his Italian protagonists. However Gabbrielli is careful not to draw specific conclusions about the Italian situation which is seen at times in negative terms, at times in positive ones, although he does create the impression that it is a country which is stimulating in both a political and a social sense. As discussed in Chapter 6 Gabbrielli has written little about Australia since he is a relative newcomer to the country. However, it may well be that in time Australian themes become more dominant in his narrative.

PENNINGER AND ANDREONI

The two novels by Penninger and Andreoni discussed in Chapter 7 deal partly with an Italian setting, partly with an Australian one. Penninger depicts an Italian territory which was, prior to the first world war, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and which, after the second world war, was ceded to Yugoslavia. Consequently his protagonist, John, feels outrage and sorrow when the territory is lost and he becomes a refugee. When, after two years in France, he moves to Italy he finds that in 1948 "Italy was a place where war was a thing of the past. Forgotten! Shops full of everything, cities reconstructed, well-dressed people, everywhere optimism and faith in the future" (Penninger 1976:46), a view which is in contradiction both with John's decision to emigrate and the economic realities of Italy in 1948 when poverty and hardship were still substantial. In a sense this statement seems inspired not so much by the reality of the situation as by John's attachment to what he considers his native land, an attachment which, later, as the Australia-bound ship leaves the Italian shore behind, provokes in John a cry of anguish. And during his first years in Australia, despite his commitment to his adopted country, there are expressions of nostalgia for the people, the culture, the traditions and the language of the country he has left. When, after 27 years, John returns to Italy the first glimpse of the country from the plane produces the most emotional reaction of the whole book:

> "What a glorious day in John's life! A real day of triumph. With his throat emotionally to the point of bursting, he picked up a greased piece of paper from the floor of the plane and, while writing [a poem], warm soothing tears ran down his shirt" (Penninger 1976:186)

Hence despite what may have been for John traumatic and negative experiences in the Italy he grew up in (the orphanage, war, refugee) he retains (and so, one may assume, does Penninger) a strong nostalgic attachment for the country he considers his native land. By contrast Andreoni's attitude seems to be diametrically opposed. As discussed in chapter 6 the Italy of Martin Pescatore is the Italy of the early 60s, the first years of the economic boom, but Martin feels that the country is too restrictive and claustrophobic. The expectation that he is supposed to stay in his job at the bank until retirement, the necessity of having to be deferent to his superiors, the rigid social structure, the lack of the sense of adventure and the chance to prove himself, are all factors which contribute to Martin's malaise and to his decision to emigrate. Thus it is not economic factors which trigger Martin's emigration but rather a sense of incompatibility with the country and its society. In this there is some parallel with the attitude expressed by Amato (see Appendix III), but unlike Amato's characters Martin is able to leave Italy completely behind him when he does emigrate. In Martin Pescatore there is no nostalgia or regret at having left his native land, nor does Andreoni subsequently write stories with an Italian setting as does Amato.

NARRATIVE SET PRINCIPALLY IN AUSTRALIA

In some of the works set principally in Australia there are references to Italy as well as comparisons between the two countries. For the protagonist of Paese fortunato arrival in Australia "mi separò nettamente da un'età, da una cultura, da un'altra vita"

(Cappiello 1981:8). Nevertheless there are a few brief, fragmentary yet powerful reminiscences of the place she left behind. At at a critical point in the novel there is the recall of the house she lived in. Alone and dejected when she contemplates the harbour and realizes that she will never return to Italy, she also realizes that she can never forget or put the memories entirely behind her:

> "Pur pensando spesso a casa mia, all'altra casa mia, veramente mia, e di un ritorno al Viale Agrelli, polveroso e provinciale, intriso di nostalgia e di una crescita irreale" (Cappiello 1981:194)

"Viale Agrelli" is not only constantly present in her memory but she has kept in touch with the place and consequently is aware of the changes ("crescita irreale") which have taken place in her absence. In another passage where she recalls her departure from Italy, from her family, there is the juxtaposition of an element, the sea, which provides a common link between Naples and Sydney. Both cities have bays of breathtaking natural beauty which are comparable. But the people are vastly different:

> "[la zia] chiedeva se il mare d'Australia era salato, azzurro e poteva competere con il mare nostrano. Sí, lo metto per iscritto, il mare è lo stesso, forse piú pulito, la gente difetta, ha un solo occhio nel sedere mezzo cecato."[4]

On another occasion, when she accompanies Sofia to discuss the latter's television appearance, Rosa thinks that, if she too were given the chance of participating in the programme, she would present the more colourful and visual aspects of her cultural tradition:

> "raccontar qualche Tammurriata Nera, una Piedigrotta, una Cantata dei Pastori, dal momento che Natale era imminente. Mi sarei accollata io le spese dei tric-trac, delle girandole, dei coriandoli, dei corpi di lupini, dello scetavaiasse." (Cappiello 1981:182)

The recall is brief but it is a powerful evocation of the atmosphere of the protagonist's home city and the carnival atmosphere of Christmas in Naples. If Neapolitan life is a continuous, vivacious and boisterous carnival, Sydney life, by contrast, is drab, monotonous and humdrum. There is one exception: the main street in Kings Cross, where similarities can be found with her native city:

> "Il corso, l'unico in città affollato notte e giorno, chiassoso, gaio e con quel sentore sensuale che ti dà nostalgia della dirompente vita napoletana." (Cappiello 1981:47)

In the first chapter of D'Aprano's The Swallow there is a brief recall of Castelvento, the village which young Stefano and his father left. There is a nostalgic element in that Teresa and the rest of the family have remained behind, but there is no nostalgia for the village itself, which is remembered as a place of poverty, hardship and isolation. Towards the end of the novel the village is presented in another aspect, assuming a metaphysical function in relation to the protagonist. It is the place to which Bill/Stefano, now matured and conscious of what he is, returns in order to rediscover and become reconciled to his roots. The return to Italy reveals to him its contemporary political and social aspects as well as the traditions of its high culture, Italy's political situation being of particular interest to Bill/Stefano who has become a committed socialist and a pacifist. It is thus the discovery of a new world unknown to the young Stefano for whom "Italy" was confined to the limits of his native village. A tourists' Italy is the theme of one of D'Aprano's short stories 'Julie' (D'Aprano 1986:73-80). The romance-shy Julie is a member of a group of Australians touring Italy in winter. She is

courted by Mark and although she initially rebuffs his advances his gentleness and sensitivity together with the romantic backdrop provided by Florence, Venice and Rome, gradually make her overcome the trauma of a previous affair. In this story D'Aprano presents a stereotype view of Italy as a land of beauty and romance although it is a view which also coincides with Nibbi's perceptions of how "educated" Australians view this country. Like Bosi's Professor Pipps, Julie and Mark's exclamation of "Isn't it beautiful" on seeing Florence at sunset or the Pietà in the Vatican constitutes a reaction to the Italian cultural-historical heritage which comes more from foreigners than from the Italians (or indeed the Italian emigrants) themselves who live in the midst of these artistic treasures and consequently take them more for granted. In any case, as Julie realizes, the place where one lives has little romanticism attached to it:

> "One could so easily fall into a romantic trap in a place like this. Everything is made to order for it - the holiday feeling, romantic Venice, the falling snow, the dinners in exotic restaurants. But Melbourne is another reality, and that's where we'll be before long." (D'Aprano 1986:78)

Apart from a very occasional brief reference to Italian literature and art there is no recall of Italy in the two volumes of short stories by Gino Nibbi. This circumstance may seem unusual since we know from his biography that he remained very attached to Italy and particularly to his native Marche. However Nibbi, for whom, in the Australian context, Italy was the high cultural tradition of art and literature, was able to express his feeling for the country in other ways. This he did through his lectures and his writings on Italian

art. Further there are brief graphic descriptions of various aspects of the Italian scene in Oracoli sommessi (Nibbi 1953), while his unpublished glossary of Marchigiano terms reveals a feeling for the language of his native region.

THE RETURN OF THE EMIGRANT: SEBASTIANI AND BORGHESE

Only two writers have dealt with the theme of permanent return to Italy. 'L'Altra stagione' (Rando 1983:274-280), a short story by Cristiana Sebastiani[5], is the sensitively told tale of Maria, who, despite her twenty years in Australia, finds that she is unable to adapt to life there which she views as empty and frenetic. When she returns to Italy to visit her relatives, including grandfather Giovanni who had instilled in her a love of contemporary literature, her impressions of the country are immediately positive despite the evident social disorder. There is an openness, an élitism, a sense of tradition and culture, which contrast with the claustrophobic and unrefined Australian setting. In a sense Sebastiani presents a view of Italy which is diametrically opposed to that depicted by Andreoni:

> "Le era piaciuto camminare lungo le strade di Napoli ataviche e raccolte, pur nella loro solitudine storica, viaggiare verso Roma e perdersi lungo le vie aperte e solari della capiale [...]
> Il paesaggio era quello degli anni ottanta, un accanito antesignano del dolore portato dall'efferato terrorismo ma, nonostante tutto, lei aveva potuto riallacciare il presente ai ricordi di bambina sconvolta negli affetti più cari, presaga dell'imminente emigrazione." (Rando 1983:277)

While she is in Rome visiting her aunt Ernesta, who lives in a magnificent old villa on the Appia Antica, she meets the painter Alessandro Boerio who had never left his native Rome for long

periods of time. In the company of Alessandro she is able for the first time to talk to someone about her feelings towards Australia:

> "Maria [...] gli aveva raccontato di quanto si fosse sentita un'estranea nell'altro suo mondo acquisito, disperso al di là delle onde, una patria diversa, un lager immenso e insostituibile d'indifferenza che si allargava con la stessa velocità di una macchia d'olio fino a inondarla di alienazione [...] Lei non era stata come tutti gli altri emigrati, tipo quelli che fuggono al proprio paese d'origine per trovare un altro propizio posto di lavoro in un deserto arido e aggrovigliato dal vizio delle birre, pena la rassegnazione del misero. No, Maria aveva solo accompagnato i suoi in un campo concentrico talmente cosmopolita e poliedrico da sembrarle confuso ed irreale, ancorato al periodo dell'infanzia." (Rando 1983:277-278)

However when the two marry and return to Australia Alessandro cannot adapt to the new environment. This leads him to cease painting and to spend most of his waking hours in a drunken stupor. For Maria too Australia becomes again the claustrophobic intellectually sterile place it had been before her visit to Italy. The difference now is that Italy revisited becomes a symbol of freedom and metaphysical adventure:

> "in Italia avrebbe potuto correre con entusiasmo e libertà di espressione e tale sensazione le avrebbe permesso di avvertire un nuovo lungo moto dell'animo, di una diversa purificazione del suo io." (Rando 1983:278)

Maria thus decides that for Alessandro's salvation and for her own well-being they must return to Italy and the story closes with the landing of their plane at Rome airport which provokes in Maria the feeling of having returned home.

If for Sebastiani return is a release from a suffered and stifled existence, for Valerio Borghese it is either impossible or it is an event which leads ultimately to isolation and alienation. In three short

stories, 'Un Sogno', '74+' (Borghese 1984:1-4 & 48-53) and 'Andata e Ritorno" (Abiuso 1979:126-128) Borghese presents the negative aspects of the return. In the first story the protagonist dreams that he has returned to his native city, sees his former apartment in via Cereria, familiar streets, the castle which dominates the city. Yet all is deserted save for a dog whose ferocious barking drives him away. Hence while return to the physical environment is possible, it is impossible to rediscover it as it was or to integrate into a social environment which rejects the returned emigrant. A similar experience befalls the protagonist of the second story, who returns to Trieste after 35 years in Australia. Australia, which had not been a happy experience for him, fades with time into a vague memory. The few old friends he has die, he spends all his savings and has to live only on his pension. His life is reduced to a daily routine carried out in the physical environment of Trieste but in isolation from his fellow Triestini:

> "Lui esce [...] al mattino presto, si ferma dal tabaccaio, gironzola, fa una sosta ai giardini, quindi all'osteria vicino casa dove consuma il suo pasto giornaliero alquanto frugale. Al principio l'oste aveva cercato più volte di fare un po' di conversazione, ma ottenendo ogni volta come risposta un 'sì' o un 'no' o semplicemente un 'eh' [...] aveva finito per rinunciare ad ogni tentativo" (Borghese 1984:52)

In the third story Alberto decides to leave Australia ("la terra che gli era rimasta straniera dove aveva trascorso dieci anni inutili" - Abiuso 1979:126) and return permanently to Italy. His feelings during the first few days back in Italy are of elation at the presence in the physical environment:

> "Finalmente poteva sentire la bella terra sotto i piedi. Camminava e camminava e guardava tutto, le vecchie case, la gente, i bar, le trattorie, i tavoli all'aperto, le opere d'arte, i parchi, le vetrine

> strapiene di cose belle, di cose buone. Voleva mangiare, voleva bere, cibo italiano, vino italiano. E soprattutto voleva parlare e che gli altri gli parlassero." (Abiuso 1979:126)

Initially he is welcomed by friends and relatives and invited to their homes where he talks to them about Australia. But as time goes on he realizes that he has nothing in common with them. He cannot find work. The people and the things his friends and relatives talk about are outside his experience. He feels like an intruder "entrato in un festino dove tutti ballano, bevono, cantano in buona compagnia e tutti sono accoppiati e si conoscono mentre lui solo sconosciuto a tutti" (Abiuso 1979:127). After having been in Italy nearly three months Alberto resigns himself to the prospect of returning to Australia since this now seems to be the lesser of the two evils. As he travels to the airport he feels that the country is already distancing itself from him:

> "Dal finestrino del treno guardava la campagna italiana, i paesetti sui cocuzzoli dei monti, le stazioni che si seguivano una dopo l'altra, i filari dei pini e alberi dai vari nomi e i fiumiciattoli che si perdevano nelle valli. Tutto correva e correva all'inverso, tutto si allontanava da lui [...] Aveva lasciato il paese delle cicale, si preparava a rientrare nel paese delle formiche [...] Avrebbe ripreso il suo mangiare, dormire, lavorare. Avrebbe risentito i discorsi sulla casa, sui soldi in banca, sulle corse dei cavalli, sul cricket. E la vecchietta vicina di casa vedendolo gli avrebbe detto: "How are you? Lovely weather, isn't it?"" (Abiuso 1979:128)

The finale has a pathos about it with its implicit realization that there can now be no turning back. If Alberto had left Italy the first time in the hope that one day he might return, this second parting has an air of finality about it. It marks the return to an empty life dictated by routine without the spiritual consolations which Italy had been able to provide before emigration but which are now forever lost.

FERNANDO BASILI

Fernando Basili's two published short stories[7] and five out of nine unpublished ones have an exclusively Italian setting. The remaining four have an European setting and will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. His stories are linguistically well written in a style tending towards the traditional and with a Tuscan penchant for witty, often complicated, word play, humour and irony which does not make him popular with the average Italo-Australian reader accustomed to less sophisticated fare. Whereas Bosi deals with the Italian countryside and Tedeschi presents the subproletarian environment of an Italian city, Basili's Italian stories are generally set in the the petit bourgeois environment of students and low ranking white collar workers in an unnamed Tuscan provincial centre. To a certain extent it is the type of social environment described by both Mazza and Andreoni, but Basili deals with it in a vastly different manner.

'Pane al pane e vino al vino' is the story of an elaborate practical joke played by a group of students. A leading authority on art, Professor Ghislolfi from the University, has been invited to the exhibition at the Town Hall and the narrator and his friends expect that Jozzelli, a local self-styled critic of little education who uses long and complicated words, will most certainly be there as well. They consequently turn up at the function with a tape recorder hidden under the narrator's frayed raincoat, to record Jozzelli's pompous and meaningless utterances. At the end of the function Professor Ghislolfi has not managed to get a word in edgewise, is visibly

irritated and has probably developed a headache because of Jozzelli's continuous gush of words which for the group of students had been a source of merriment. Jozzelli however gets his comeuppance when he turns to the old woman who is custodian of the gallery and who knows so little about art that she had hung one of the paintings upside down. So as to further display his self-perceived superiority he urges her to comment on the exhibition and remains astounded at her reply delivered with native Tuscan good sense:

> "La vecchia logicamente non ha capito che tutti quei gran discorsi di prima volevan tornare a dire che quei quadri eran non solo cose serie, ma oggetti pregevolissimi, e i loro autori artisti di vaglia. Perciò scuote il capo e azzarda timidamente: 'Mah, cosa vuole che dica, vero: poverini . . . almeno il mio figliolo non ne ha mai fatte di queste cose . . . però sempre meglio così che delinquenti, eh!'" (Rando 1983:142)

It is linguistically Basili's most intricate story as he uses the complicated language of the critic to make fun of him. However, on this point Basili perhaps exaggerates since about half the story is taken up with long passages of the type:

> "L'ubiquitarietà del senso panistico non richiede particolari enfatizzazioni. Ogni periglio di pornofania viene scongiurato grazie al superamento degli influssi egoarchici ed alla sublimazione delle direttrici cotangenziali scatotematiche nonché, su un piano più segnatamente pragmatico, di palesi considerazioni dispareuniache eterorganogene." (Rando 1983:140)

Although the main point of the story is the fun the students have at the expense of the pompous critic and his incomprehensible language, their behaviour is not so much anti-cultural as a way of expressing the need for cultural renovation if not revolution. The story also manages to illustrate aspects of the milieu such as the absurdity of the Italian esoteric academic style, the Italian goliardic tradition of the student joke, the "aliveness" of Italian provincial life.

Especially "lively" is the character of the narrator, a high school student who is culturally curious and aware but also something of a joker to the extent that he prefers to spend his money on the acquisition of the tape recorder for the joke than on the new raincoat which he really needs:

> "i quattrini per comprarmi una gabardina decente mi andavano a occhio, ma quando si trattava d'investire in oggetti che potevano servire a divertirci, e massime alle spalle del prossimo, non lesinavo." (Rando 1983:138)

Another story with an "academic" theme is 'Il Bombilio di Cleopatra'. Fausto Girelli, a young archeology graduate with a passionate interest in the story of Cleopatra, is appointed assistant digging supervisor to an Italian expedition to Egypt. The purpose of the expedition, headed by world renowned Professor Taffo of the National Institute of Archeology in Naples, is to investigate the supposed burial monument of Cleopatra. When they finally discover a secret room in the monument, presumably Cleopatra's burial chamber, the only object of interest remaining is a strangely shaped amphora. The two, together with the dig supervisor, dottor Scarta, speculate on the purpose of the object but cannot come to any agreement. After considerable and heated discussion they decide to have an analysis carried out on the residue remaining in the amphora. In the meantime each one is to write a paper sustaining his particular thesis so that as soon as the results of the analysis are obtained the correct one can be sent immediately to a prestigious German archeological magazine. Unfortunately none of the papers are right since the object turns out to be a common chamber pot. The main point of the story is a rather banal one. Fausto's admiration for the Egyptian queen who had conceived the grandiose plan of subjugating the Roman

Empire at the height of its power is somewhat deflated at the discovery that she should need a common chamber pot in her final hour. In fact, Fausto's thesis had been the most romantic one. He had sustained that the amphora was a container for perfume which Cleopatra had used to adorn herself before committing suicide. There are, however, some interesting themes in the story which are implicit but not developed. Archeology/history is present both as an object of academic study (the heated debates of the three members of the expedition) and as an important element of general Italian culture in a country which has a history reaching back some 4000 years. Fausto's friends who are not specialists in the subject nevertheless willingly talk about it, albeit in a light-hearted fashion. Strangely enough the story manages to hold the reader's interest and even to convey an element of suspense over the true function of the amphora despite the rather academic type of language and the technical terms employed (bombilio, prefericolo, psictere, infundibolo) in the debate over the object which takes up about half the account.

Two stories, 'Referenze scritte' and 'Illusione', deal with a very important characteristic of contemporary Italian society: the very difficult employment situation for the petit bourgeois, a matter which has had considerable influence on the lives of millions of Italians who could not readily emigrate unless they were prepared to completely abandon their aspirations to white collar occupations. In the first story Carlo Stanghino is an unemployed bookkeeper After managing to obtain his diploma, not without some difficulty because of his fondness for drink, he finds a job thanks to the

recommendation of the bishop. However Carlo takes to drink again and is dismissed. He subsequently marries and, with his wife pregnant, is desperately seeking to re-enter the workforce, but the lack of good written references proves an insurmountable obstacle. While perusing the obituaries in the local newspaper he becomes aware that they speak of the departed in the most praiseworthy terms, even in the case of people who had behaved most deplorably in this life. With the help of his friend Dr Fausto Ranieri he pretends to die from a heart attack and consequently Fausto and the parish priest write a most flattering eulogy which is published in the paper. Carlo then applies for a position, is tested by the employer and is found suitable. When he is asked for a reference he produces the obituary explaining that a mistake had been made regarding his death but that it had not been possible to stop publication of the notice. However having been signed by both a priest and a doctor it does constitute an excellent reference. Needless to say the job is his and his ingenuity is thus rewarded. The story is told in a witty fashion and illustrates a common characteristic of the Italian character, "l'arte di arrangiarsi", in Carlo's case executed with the Tuscan penchant for finding an ingenious solution to a difficult problem. It reminds us, albeit remotely, of some of Boccaccio's stories where the characters display this type of ingenuity such as 'Chichibio cuoco' (Decameron, day 6, story 4). The second story does not have a happy ending. Maurizio is poor, ugly and not particularly intelligent, factors which have a most unfortunate influence on his social life. After much effort and economic hardship he passes his "maturità" [HSC] and obtains a position at the local land registry thanks to his membership of the Azione Cattolica and the recommendation of the

priest don Lapo. However his new-found socio-economic position does nothing to improve his total lack of luck with the girls. After some unsuccessful attempts at resolving his situation Maurizio is forced to admit that there is no solution to his dilemma and the fault, if anything, lies with life which has given him the rawest of deals. In desperation Maurizio quits his job and takes to drink. When his benefactor don Lapo admonishes him Maurizio quarrels with him and rushes out to commit suicide. The story is a poignant and sensitively told account, though not without a touch of irony, of the desperation and isolation of a character who is unable to conform to the aesthetic norms set by his social class where personal appearance and grooming have a particularly high value (certainly true of the pre-1968 Italian middle class). Even if at a surface level Maurizio seems to gain acceptance by the educated and refined members of the Azione Cattolica, this acceptance turns out to be an illusion as is the thought that a job and money could improve his personal status. As well as its specific Italian context this story presents the wider, universal tragedy of the person who is a social misfit not through his own fault. It may consequently be also considered as a reflection of the cruel twists which life can hold.

'Il Natale di Nonna Ulderiga' is a touching story about a woman of the Florentine subproletariat who has not been treated kindly by life. Three years after her marriage she lost her husband and her only son was killed in the war. In order to survive she sells various articles and black market cigarettes at a corner in Via degli Orafi. The city police are aware of her activities but choose to turn a blind eye. However after 21 years a new and somewhat over-zealous policeman

decides to report her and the law has to take its course. While awaiting court proceedings her meagre stock of goods is confiscated and she loses her means of livelihood. When she finally appears in court she is fined 30,000 lire, an impossible sum for her. It is Christmas eve. Nonna Ulderiga is alone in her tenement room, without food, thinking of past and happier Christmases, waiting to be arrested (at least in prison she will be able to eat!) when there is a knock at the door. Instead of the police it is the landlady bringing food and some money. After this a veritable procession of people, including her confessor, come to her door also bringing food and money. Some have influence in the local council and tell her that she will finally obtain the modest pension and the bed in the nursing home which she has been trying to get for years. Nonna Ulderiga is quite moved and while waiting to go out to midnight Mass she reflects on what has happened:

> "Fra i tanti regali fuori del comune c'era anche una cassetta di candele. Riuscí a ricordare dov'era, la dissotterrò alla meglio dal mucchio degli altri regali, e ne accese una. A quella luce chiara e ferma di candela di buona qualità rimirò tutto quel bendidio stringendosi il labbro inferiore tra le gengive, e dove da decine di anni non avevan piú potuto le disgrazie e il dolore, in quella nuova specie di dolce raccoglimento poté la consolazione, forse perché la consolazione era per lei un sentimento nuovo: tutta quella gente che aveva pensato, che pensava a lei: e pianse [...] Infine si mise a smoccolare rosari di ringraziamento." (p9 typescript)

But the matter does not end there. Ulderiga decides to distribute the food and the money she does not need to the other poor people of the neighbourhood who had not experienced the same fortune. Just as she is ready to leave for her first visit the policeman who had reported her knocks at the door. He is quite penitent pointing out that because of his action he has increasingly become the target of ostracism in

the neighbourhood, even among his own colleagues, and he too brings food and the 30,000 lire to pay the fine. Nonna Ulderiga is quite willing to forgive and forget but she wishes that the man had helped her to do just one more thing:

> "Poverino però anche lui; poverino! - sospirò nonna Ulderiga - che legge è questa, eh? . . . ma perché è corso via in quel modo: visto che è tanto pentito, avrebbe potuto darmi una mano, grande e grosso com'è, a portare questi due panieroni fin lí dalla Bettina, no?" (p12)

As well as its considerable human interest value the story provides some interesting insights into traditional Italian society which institutionally provided little in terms of general welfare services (those who are not in regular employment do not obtain a pension, there is a great lack of care facilities for the elderly) but where friends, relatives and neighbours can and do make up for what the government does not provide. Another important point is the Italian custom of "chiudere un occhio": actions which are illegal are tolerated provided they harm no one and benefit someone, as in the case of Ulderiga's petty black marketeering which is ignored by both the authorities and the local residents. However, when the law is invoked, everyone is obliged to follow its course despite the fact that the lawyers and the judges involved in the case find the whole thing repugnant and all agree that it is most unfair to the poor old woman.

The law, its intricacies and pitfalls, is also the subject of the long short story 'La barba di Fra Candidino'. Walter Gaglioli's father had been virtually forced on his deathbed by the insistent Fra Candidino into signing a document by which half of the income deriving from the produce of his land should go to the church. Rather

than do this Walter prefers to earn his living as a welder and to leave his land uncultivated. Matters proceed in this fashion for many years until one day a herbalist from Florence picnicking in the area finds a rare plant on Walter's land and insists on paying for allowing him to harvest it. The matter eventually reaches the notice of the church administrators who threaten legal action if Walter does not pay them half the money received. The mayor, Riccardo Migliorini, hears of Walter's plight and offers his assistance. Migliorini is of working class origins, a committed communist, a lover of truth and a crusader for the underdog. He had obtained his degree in England, acquiring an English wife in the process, since "in Italia le borse di studio si danno di solito ai ricchi" (p8). After much manoeuvring on both sides Migliorini - ignoring his friends' warnings that he cannot win against the church - finally manages to win the case for Walter by proving that the church had substituted the original document with a forged one. While the grateful Walter decides that he will use half the income from the land to help the poor, Migliorini finds that in he has become the target of the church's machinations, spearheaded by the diocese's over-zealous administrator don Berardo Bianchi. As a result of the church's campaign Migliorini is first forced to resign as mayor and then dismissed from the jobs which he manages to obtain. The experience leaves him bitterly reflecting that people get the government they deserve and wondering whether "quella missione che s'era imposto di lottare per il miglioramento della società [...] fosse davvero un gioco che valeva la candela" (p19). In the final analysis he decides to return to England, despite the fact that the Communist Party offers him a position with its newspaper in Rome:

> " - Non è per codardia - spiegava il Migliorini - e vi manderò materiale anche da là per il giornale. Ma voi capite che non posso costringere mia moglie, che per lei quello che succede qui è semplicemente inconcepibile. I due, colmi di doni e della riconoscenza di tutta la cittadinanza, lasciarono finalmente il "paese del sole" per ritornare per sempre nelle nebbie del libero nord. E quando Libby, dalla plancia del battello, vide profilarsi in lontananza le bianche scogliere di Dover, non poté frenare un pianto di sollievo." (p25 typescript)

'La Barba di Fra Candidino' is perhaps the most "serious" of Basili's stories as well as being the longest one. He deals, in his own inimitable way, with a socio-political theme, that of the relationship between Church and State, which has been a burning issue in Italy since the Risorgimento. Despite the progressive secularization of the Italian state, the growing power of the Italian Communist Party and its political success particularly at local government level, the church still wields considerable influence, a situation which to foreigners (Migliorini's wife) is inconceivable. Paradoxically, although Migliorini is an excellent lawyer and enjoys both the political and the moral support of his fellow citizens, the church is able, through its Machiavellian influence in high places, to find the necessary legal and administrative loopholes to harass him and finally force him to return to England, virtually as a political exile. On the other hand, although don Berardo - a symbol of the more intransigent and hypocritical anti-communist faction in the Italian Church - has lost the case against Walter, he feels that he has won an even greater victory by forcing the departure of a dangerous political opponent with his "heretic wife" (p26). He celebrates his "victory" by organising a lavish banquet for the local prelates at which prayers are recited for the departed sinners.

Basili's stories, though usually shallow, are not superficial. Although the main thrust is often based on a relatively small and unimportant point, he also manages to introduce into his stories, some of which probably contain autobiographical elements, metaphysical and existential implications. For Basili Italy is a country with considerable social and economic problems, still very much dominated by the influence of the church (although individual priests can be either "good" or "bad"), where life is certainly not meant to be easy yet where the ingenuity of the individual and the good naturedness of neighbours can sometimes help to overcome adversity. Basili's characters seem very much attached to their town. Although some of them seem potential emigrants, emigration occurs only in the case of Migliorini when the situation has become so desperate that he has no other choice. As his friend Dr Zornig advises him: "Meglio un po' di nebbia che questa crudeltà e tutta quest'ingiustizia: tu sei troppo sensibile per vivere in una nazione come questa" (p18). But despite the injustice, the difficulties and the economic hardship, Italy remains for Basili a country which offers considerable intellectual stimulus. He is perhaps the only Italo-Australian writer to present cultural aspects of the Italian scene as well as to present an Italy in a European context. This latter aspect is introduced in 'Il Bombilio di Cleopatra', where the Italian archeological team is invited to work on an important find in Egypt because of the professor's international reputation and 'La Barba di Fra Candidino' (pp20-21) where comparison is made between the English and the Italian legal systems (one has an adversative-judicial basis, the other an inquisitorial basis). A fine writer with a traditionalist approach, Basili reminds us in his stories of the

"poesia burlesca" of some 14th century Tuscan writers as well as the element of wit to be found in some of Boccaccio's stories. Their appeal is more in the form than the content in that the intricate detail which goes into the fabrication of the story makes for interesting reading for its own sake despite the fact that the content may be relatively frivolous. Although he has resided in Australia for almost 30 years, Basili, so far, has not written fiction with an Australian context, perhaps because like his characters he too maintains a lasting though not nostalgic attachment to his native Tuscany.

GIOVANNA GUZZARDI

Six out of the ten short stories written by Giovanna Guzzardi[9] are set in an exclusively Italian environment. Although her narrative has as yet remained unpublished it is examined here because it presents both a writer and themes which serve as both contrast and comparison to other writers. Guzzardi's genre is predominantly that of romantic fiction, more so than is the case with Bertozzi. Indeed she may be described as a sort of antipodean Liala, in intent if not in result. Her stories are based on the type of formula commonly employed by writers of this genre. The heroine is young, very beautiful, elegant and usually of poor family (preferably orphan) although she may sometimes be a professional and/or daughter of a rich family. In Guzzardi's stories the heroines are all Italian, although one or two are Italo-Australian. The heroine meets a man who is some five to ten years older, very rich, handsome and debonair, often of a national origin different from her own. A series

of impediments, misunderstandings and other obstacles impede their union but these are eventually overcome and the two live happily ever after, usually in married bliss. Occasionally one of the pair dies leaving the other in eternal mourning; rarely both die. In this genre the specific national setting seems of little importance since the stories are usually set amidst a background of sumptuous villas, exotic islands, famous cities or international holiday resorts.

Consequently Guzzardi's Italy has virtually nothing in common with the country depicted by other Italo-Australian writers. Indeed in only one story is there mention of Italian socio-political reality and this is presented exclusively as a device. In 'Le Brigate Rosse avevano colpito ancora' Senator Valerio Borsi, a medical doctor by profession, falls in love with his secretary Lorena, a girl half his age and daughter of the proprietor of one of Rome's most important antique shops. Needless to say she had already fallen in love with him but had not dared approach such an important man. The two marry, are wildly happy and soon Lorena is expecting. One day Borsi falls victim to a terrorist bomb and Lorena, who collapses at the news, spends months in hospital, managing to deliver her baby, Valerio Junior, only with great difficulty. She then retires to the sumptuous villa on the Costa Azzurra which Borsi had given her as a wedding present in order to dedicate herself entirely to caring for her child. Although the bomb is present in the story basically as a device to trigger the catharsis, the story illustrates in a sense the personal suffering which such terrorist actions cause in real life and the comment on the action of the terrorist group is a poignant enough one despite a tendency to be somewhat bombastic and over-dramatic:

> "Le brigate rosse avevano colpito ancora, loro non avevano cuore, loro non possedevano amore, loro possedevano solo la mania della distruzione, degli assassini. Lorena aveva la radio accesa, le piaceva tanto ascoltare musica [...] apprese così la triste tragedia e dopo un grido soffocato e un tonfo fragoroso al cervello, non capì più niente." (pp4-5 typescript)

As in Sollazzo, although for different reasons, Guzzardi presents a view of Italian terrorism which is common among Italians who have emigrated. Another story where there is some reference to contemporary Italian reality is 'Primavera italiana' in which Pamela, a beautiful eighteen year old born in Australia of Italian parents, goes to Italy to visit her grandparents, falls in love with a young writer, Ubaldo, is kidnapped and held for ransom because her kidnappers think that being from Australia she must be from a rich family and is rescued by Ubaldo. However in this case too the kidnapping is basically a device to provide a complication in the plot.

National setting, however, does assume significance in Guzzardi's Australian stories. Except for a nondescript one pager ('Droga in viaggio di nozze') in which Michele and Ambra, Melbourne newlyweds, are delayed in getting off on their honeymoon because they are innocently involved in drug peddling, these stories present a contrast and comparison between Italy and Australia from an essentially Italian view. Hence Pamela, the Italo-Australian protagonist of 'Primavera italiana', is struck by the freshness of the Italian spring (a somewhat unreal and romantic view, given current pollution levels in Italy) and the fragrance of the flowers:

> "il sole splendeva [...] inondando d'oro tutta quella meraviglia. Prati verdissimi, mare azzurrissimo, campanili altissimi, che parevano toccassero il cielo, dove si rincorrevano a miriadi di rondinelle [...] Era mezzogiorno, le

> campane suonavano e l'invitavano a guardarsi intorno, ad ammirare monumenti e ville strapiene di fiori di un profumo intenso, forte e stupendo, che non aveva mai sentito prima. In Australia i fiori hanno poco profumo." (p1 typescript)

Rosella ('Rose rosse in un convento'), a sort of *femme fatale* whose name is a clear reference to both an Australian bird and, quite unromantically, a famous brand of tomato sauce, returns to Sicily after sixteen years to bury her parents who had died in Australia and wish to be buried in their native land. Having left the town at the age of two she finds everything quite strange, especially the houses which are all close together and not separated by gardens as they are in Australia:

> "Le strade erano diverse da come le avevo immaginate, le case sembravano accavalcarsi l'una sull'altra, dando l'immagine di mostri enormi, che cercavano di abbracciarsi. La gente tutta uguale, stava impalata lì a curiosare." (p1 typescript)

Not only does she find the place strange but she discovers that her relatives have a strange perception of Australians. When she confesses to her cousin Marco that she is expecting a child by her Australian boyfriend Samuel, Marco offers to marry her, overcoming her objection that Samuel will rush to Italy as soon as he knows by saying that Australians are "incapaci di un'amore duraturo" and that their heart "era freddo e inerte" (p2). In 'Caldo Natale in Australia' Milena, a hostess with Alitalia, although her parents are wealthy shopkeepers and have a magnificent apartment on the Gianicolo in Rome, is fascinated by the hot Australian December and decides to spend Christmas in Melbourne:

> "Il sole così abbagliante, quel caldo sole di dicembre soffocava, il verde tutt'intorno, ovunque si girasse l'accarezzava come un miraggio. Era arrivata in Australia, in un caldissimo giorno di dicembre e aveva lasciato la sua Roma, tutta indirizzita [sic] dal freddo e dal gelo. Dicembre! Quanta differenza di clima. Qui avrebbe subito avuto, la voglia matta di

> buttarsi in un mare qualsiasi, che avesse trovato per primo nei dintorni [...] un mese di dicembre meraviglioso, colmo dei splendidi colori dell'Iride, che brillavano ovunque volgesse lo sguardo." (p1 typescript)

Not only does this mysterious land hold a fascination for her but at the beach she meets Osvaldo, fair-haired son of Italian immigrants, a mechanical engineer by profession and an artist by inclination. However after a brief but idyllic love affair Milena has to return to Rome because her father has had a heart attack. After various vicissitudes the two are reunited on Easter day in the Rome hospital where Milena has been admitted because of the complications which have arisen over the child she is expecting and Osvaldo because he has been involved in a traffic accident. In 'Sulle rive dello Yarra vedo te' eighteen year old Flavia wins a one month holiday in Australia as a prize in a beauty contest. She is reluctant to leave her native land and displays little interest in visiting "la terra degli aborigini e dei deportati" (p1), which, however, turns out to hold some curious and fascinating elements for her:

> "Ora, dopo essere vissuta qui per quindici giorni, la mia opinione è del tutto opposta. Questa terra è molto affascinante e piena di un verde favoloso e la sua gente, tutta di razza mista è molto cordiale e sorride sempre, salutando e aggiungendo lo stato meterologico di ogni giorno. Sembrano pappagalli che hanno imparato a dire solo quello che fa il tempo, infine in Italia di Bernacca ce n'è uno solo, qui in compenso si può dire, che lo sono tutti quanti. Ma scherzi a parte, adesso questa terra d'incanto mi piace da impazzire e vorrei prolungare la mia visita" (p1 typescript)

Her enchantment with the new land is further enhanced when, having found employment as a teacher of Italian to adults in Melbourne, she meets Dario, orphaned son of Italian parents. The two decide to marry and Flavia decides to write to her parents telling them of her marriage: "avevo trovato l'amore tra i canguri e non ritornavo" (p2).

The story however ends tragically as Flavia, the only one of Guzzardi's heroines who decides to settle permanently in Australia, has a miscarriage and then dies of a terminal illness, almost as if severing her ties with Italy has meant severing her ties with life.

Thus Guzzardi's characters move in a fantasy world virtually detached from the migration experience as well as the realities of life in both Italy and Australia. Although in some of the stories the characters seem to flit quite easily between the two countries, appreciating the positive points of both, nearly all the characters remain Italian in attitudes end sentiments. Thematically the stories are interesting examples of romantic fiction applied, in some cases, to an Italo-Australian situation. Their lack of contact with reality is quite in keeping with the genre. Although Guzzardi comes across as an inventive storyteller who has adapted some elements of Italian oral popular narrative, the stories present a number of linguistic problems. Guzzardi's style is discursive but monotonous, often patchy and unpolished. The dialogues are stilted in the extreme. Words are sometimes used inappropriately. A few basic errors in spelling ("penzato") and syntax ("le" instead of the correct gli for the third person masculine singular indirect object pronoun) are consistently present due to the interference of her dialect base. Perhaps these have been some contributing factors in preventing Guzzardi from becoming an antipodean Liala.

PINO SOLLAZZO

Two stories by Pino Sollazzo[10] are set in Italy and both deal with the theme of the 'ndrangheta (the Calabrian version of the mafia). Although Sollazzo's narrative is unpublished it is examined here in that it presents a view of Italy not dealt with by other immigrant writers in Australia. 'Massaro Micu' has a contemporary setting and relates how the 'ndrangheta uses its power. 'Jenko' is a long short story on the same theme. The story presents a view of Italy which is seen as a country where the government is weak and supports terrorism while the real power lies with mafia-type organizations. In this some parallels may be found with Mario Puzo's novel The Sicilian based on the exploits of Salvatore Giuliano.

The plot of 'Jenko' is somewhat complicated and confusing and the story is written in a language which contains linguistic elements drawn from popular Italian and Italo-Australian. It is a work virtually devoid of literary value yet it does present some interesting points in that: (i) it reflects a view of Italy not uncommon among the immigrant of contadino origins (and indeed among contadini in the Italian South); (ii) to a certain extent the story is based on the oral dialect narrative style of the cantastorie. Many immigrants in this category, taking a simplistic view of the political and social situation in contemporary Italy which is based on their historical traditions, regard the Italian government (and its instrumentalities such as the police) as ineffective, something alien to their reality, an instrument of corruption and oppression. Similarly terrorism, particularly the left wing variety, is considered

as one of the plagues of contemporary Italian society and a shame on the whole country. Many of these immigrants in the older age groups, indeed, are nostalgic for the Fascist regime of the past, claiming that it was able to bring order and discipline to the country. Consequently, in the context of their folkloric romanticism, the rebel against the state and its institutions is a hero. In the Italian South this hero was invariably the bandito.[11] Hence Salluzzo presents Jenko as a hero although he acts no less ruthlessly than the terrorists he is fighting. He is successful in taking the law into his own hands in a situation where the "official" law is seen as weak and indeed as aiding and abetting the terrorists ("le B.R. sono appoggiate dal governo" - p20; "la polizia aveva sbagliato gioco" - p26). Not only does Jenko become a hero but he inspires a popular revolt among those who desire a "strong" state:

> "Appena la Camurra diede vita alla rivolta di Jenko, per combattere il terrorismo, decine di persone si affilarono con loro [...] Alla fine di Novembre, si allacciarono al gruppo di Jenko molti polizziotti, che non credevano piu nell'attuale Governo. "Siamo stanchi di cadere senza poter reagire". L'esempio fu da molti altri militi; la mano della mafia si stendeva oramai su tutta l'Italia." (p27 typescript)

When, at the end of the story, Jenko is rescued from prison by his followers, he becomes almost a legendary figure and is seen as a symbol of the struggle for freedom and justice. In the somewhat polemical though badly articulated conclusion his often cold-blooded and ruthless actions are considered to have a moral value:

> "Per molti anni ancora combatte sotto il nome di Jenko, per la giustizia del mondo e più di tutto dell'Italia. Valsero infine i suoi sforzi per ridare all'Italia un volto nuovo, senza i Peci, I Curcio e cosi via, e un governo schifoso che invece di lavorare per il Popolo, lavorava per se stesso e il trionfo della sovversivita?? . . . . . Lascio a voi la risposta, perche soltanto l'individuo, libero sia spiritualmente e moralmente potrebbe darvi una risposta." (p31 typescript)

SECOND GENERATION WRITERS AND ITALY

Although second generation writers are excluded by the terms of reference of the present thesis, it is nevertheless interesting to note briefly their concept of Italy and the Italian tradition. This tends to be expressed mainly in poetry such as in Catalano 1978, Ursino 1980 and Susan Basili 1982. That the second generation can have a more "modern" view of Italy than their parents is demonstrated in Tony Giurissevich's play 'Mogli e buoi dai paesi tuoi' (Rando 1983:223-231). Few second generation narrative writers seem to have written about Italy. In two writers the view of Italy seems to substantially negative. In Rotellini 1986 it is a poor country where people do not have enough to eat and where the only things that can be really planned and programmed are miracles. It is clearly an anachronistic view in relation to contemporary Italy but it is one which the parents of the protagonist, Carlo, brought with them when they emigrated many years ago. In Fusillo 1987 a visit to the ancestral home of the protagonist set somewhere in rural Italy leads to his rejection of his land and his relatives because his (Australian?) wife found the experience unpleasant due to language and cultural differences. It is perhaps difficult to generalize from a few examples but it would seem that there is a tendency among second generation narrative writers to view Italy in a negative light. This also seems to have been the case in Velia Ercole's No Escape (see Chapter 1) where Teresa, who remains very much tied to Italy and Italian tradition commits suicide. Clearly the view of Italy presented by second generation writers is an area which would be well worth investigating.

The view of Italy presented by the immigrant (first generation) narrative writer varies greatly and ranges from the positive to the negative. Some reject entirely the country they left while others retain nostalgic memories and yet others deal with fragmentary and highly impressionistic aspects of the country. Guzzardi presents a fairy-tale view of Italy as romantic fantasy largely divorced from the migration process and almost completely from its socioeconomic and political realities. Fernando Basili is the only writer who presents a minute view of the middle and working class elements of contemporary Italian society and their struggles to cope with its complex social and political realities. He is also the only writer to take a "European" view of the Italian scene. Like Basili, although with far less success, Sollazzo attempts to deal with some political and social aspects of contemporary Italy, an attempt which is not particularly successful because of its lack of depth and because of the popularising elements which are found in the story. Generally speaking Italy is not a major theme in Italo-Australian narrative where Australia and Australian-related themes seem to predominate.

Notes

1. Mazza 1981. Mazza, born in Parma in 1940, emigrated to Australia in 1982. Nothing has been heard of him in the last few years and it is rumoured that he may have returned to Italy.

2. See Chapter 3, note 5.

3. See Chapter 3, note 5.

4. For information on Gabbrielli and the story 'Ospizio' see Charper 6.

5. Cappiello 1981:91. Yet another Italian link, this time a cultural one, is provided by the "occhio" reference which recalls the Homeric cyclops, a symbol of ignorance and brutality, who was reputed to live on the north-eastern coast of Sicily. The reference is adapted to the Australian context by placing the eye on the posterior of the inhabitants of the eastern seaboard of the Southern island continent.

6. Born in Perugia in 1952 where she also obtained teaching qualifications, Sebastiani emigrated to Australia in 1981 subsequent to her marriage to the sculptor Diego Latella. Prior to coming to Australia she had been active in the literary circles of her native town and had written a considerable number of poems. Despite the continuation of this activity in Italo-Australian literary and cultural circles she found it difficult to relate to mainstream intellectual activity and consequently returned to Italy in 1985. During her time in Australia she published two volumes of poetry and a short story.

7. 'Pane al pane e vino al vino' Rando 1983:137-142 and 'Referenze scritte' (Rando 1988:45-54. Basili was born in Pistoia in 1930 and emigrated to Australia some 30 years ago. He has obtained degrees from the Universities of Sydney, New England and Macquarie and has taught Italian in schools and Universities.

8. In this respect Carlo's attitudes closely parallel those of Martin Pescatore although the two find vastly different solutions to their problems. Martin decides to resolve his situation by emigrating while Carlo comes up with a most original plan to help him obtain employment in his home town.

9. Giovanna Guzzardi lives in Melbourne. She has written ten unpublished short stories six of which present an exclusively Italian setting: 'Le Brigate Rosse avevano colpito ancora', 'Una violetta con gli occhi da gatta', 'L'incompiuta a Taormina', 'Un meraviglioso caffelatte azzurro', 'Villa azzurra', 'Primavera italiana'. The other four stories, which are set in both Italy and Australia are: 'Rose rosse in un convento', 'Caldo Natale in Australia', 'Sulle rive dello Yarra vedo te', 'Droga in viaggio di nozze'.

10. Sollazzo was born at San Martino [Reggio Calabria] in 1953 and arrived in Australia in 1977. An interior decorator by profession, he has been active in the Italian Writers Circle of Melbourne and has won a number of prizes for his poetry which he has also published in volume form (Sollazzo 1983).

11. This view is presented, for example, by Carlo Levi in Cristo si è fermato a Eboli.

CHAPTER 9

OTHER WRITERS, OTHER THEMES

It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss writers and/or themes which have not been dealt with in previous chapters. A number of writers have attempted to deal with the complex personal and individual reactions to the migration experience. Two writers, Scappatura and Gabbrielli have produced narrative which deals with South American themes and settings. Lidia Sallustio has written children's stories with an Australian setting. Pino Sollazzo, Fernando Basili, Leonida Nardi and Rosanna Perosino Dabbene have produced narrative which does not have a particular connection with either Australia, Italy or the migration experience. Syd Bristow presents the rare example of an Anglo-Australian writer who has written some prose in Italian. Renato Amato is an Italian writer in New Zealand who wrote in the late 50s and early 60s. Although he is excluded from consideration by the terms of reference of the thesis his experience does have a number of points in common (as well as some differences) with respect to the Italo-Australian writers and he is consequently discussed in Appendix III.

PERSONAL AND INDIVIDUAL REACTIONS TO THE MIGRATION EXPERIENCE

One of the major elements of Cappiello's novel is the highly personal reaction of both the protagonist and the other characters to the migration experience and to Australia. It is an aspect which has

been dealt with, although less forcibly and at a less intense level, by a number of writers in narrative which presents as a main theme the more personal aspects of the Italian immigrant character and experience.

The one novel in this category is Oltre il mare (Bertozzi 1984). Born in 1934 of a Florentine family, Daniele Bertozzi emigrated to Australia around 1970 after leaving the Italian public service. His activity in Australia seems to be oriented around the use of language. He does some teaching of Italian in the schools, works as a typographer and has plans to launch a magazine. Oltre il mare is his first novel. It has already been partially discussed in chapter 3 where its somewhat commonplace elements relating to the Italo-Australian community were examined. This brief novel also contains a number of aspects which relate to the personal situation of its protagonist, a young woman of romantic aspirations, a parallel too obviously reinforced by a somewhat blatant Manzonian reference ("Addio monti amici...", p15). The heroine's romantic aspirations are crushed when she comes into contact with the realities of the lucky country. More than by economic considerations her decision to travel to Australia is prompted by personal reasons, since the prospect of marriage to a young man who has already emigrated appears to provide a means of escape from her somewhat humdrum and tradition-bound existence in a small Italian hillside town.

Like Guzzardi's stories the novel contains a number of elements common to the "romanzo rosa" (romantic fiction) genre in that it is superficial in plot, structure, content and characterization. It is a

type of fiction, as the author himself states in the brief preface, of the "women's magazine" variety and presents a heroine of a suitably romantic inclination. However the novel also presents a number of important differences from the standard model. The heroine may have fallen in love with the idea of love but she does not fall in love with either of the two proposed Italo-Australian suitors. Hence standard elements such as palpitations and blushes at the sight of the beloved, the long description of the first kiss, are missing. Moreover there is no conventional happy ending since there is no marriage. The heroine cannot relate to either suitor, much less fall in love with them, because they are perceived as being somehow "different", a difference brought about by the migration process. They lack the finesse and even the physical aspect which the heroine associates with romantic love. Alberto, the man for whom she travelled out to Australia, treats her as if she were an object. Rosario, son of the aunt's *comare* who is presented as an alternative suitor, is insensitive, materialistic, somewhat crass, and looks like a caveman. These observations on Italo-Australian men closely parallel the more detailed ones made by Cappiello.

If there is a "love affair" it is with the more pleasant aspects of the Australian setting. The heroine's romantic sensitivity is struck by the natural environment, but not by the suburban cityscape which she finds squalid and which causes "una strana tristezza mista di rimpianto" (p26). The "freeing" aspects of Australian society appeal to her, but not the Italo-Australian ghetto which restricts her freedom and renders her passive. The beach where she is taken for a Sunday picnic is a place "decisamente incantevole" (p43) although the

aggressive flies make the experience slightly less than perfect. However it does instill in her a desire to explore the Australian countryside which is so different from the Italian one, a desire which is developed in a more intensive and poetic manner in Martin Pescatore (see chapter 6):

> "Tutto sommato quella gita al mare mi piacque. Scoprii un aspetto dell'Australia che non avrei mai potuto immaginare: la natura non ancora contaminata dalla presenza dell'uomo.
> Si trovavano anche in Italia luoghi distanti dalle città apparentemente disabitati, ma la presenza umana traspare ovunque. Sembra che la natura abbia sempre dovuto condividere la sua esistenza con la presenza dell'uomo, come se quest'ultimo fosse stato creato insieme e si fosse evoluto con l'ambiente.
> Quest'aspetto dell'ambiente naturale australiano, insolito per me, mi mise una gran voglia di conoscerlo ancora di piú, di penetrare nei suoi misteri, di vedere ció che al giorno d'oggi, nella vecchia Italia, è solo fantasia." (Bertozzi 1984:51)

She persuades an unwilling Rosario, who cannot understand her enthusiasm for nature and is somewhat afraid of incurring his mother's displeasure, to take her for a drive in the country. There she discovers "un verde ordinato e pulito" (p57), a lake which is "un mondo diverso, proibito all'uomo" (p62), the perpetual motion of the sea eternally repeated "per ricamare le coste del suo pittoresco paesaggio" (p65), a nature which is described almost entirely in terms of European-oriented referents. It is this enthusiasm for nature which constitutes one of the differences between herself and her Italo-Australian relatives, who consider her a little strange and even slightly mad. The other positive aspect of Australia is the potential it has for offering her a freer and fuller life if she can manage to make herself independent of her Italo-Australian relatives. The heroine endorses a somewhat romantic concept of individual self-determination, providing this is not achieved at the

expense of the rights of others, and she senses that the new country is supportive of this aspiration. Despite this, emotion wins over reason as she decides in the end to return to her native town, since if she should decide to remain in Australia it would be a "tragedia insostenibile" (p71) for her aged parents. However, the Australian experience does have a positive result. The breath of the new which the heroine brings back with her helps to sweep away the cobwebs of anachronistic tradition. In the vaguely feminist conclusion to the story she realizes that she has gained a new respect in the eyes of her parents and of her fellow townspeople:

> "In paese mi ero reinserita normalmente nella solita vita, in fondo mancavo da poco tempo. Per le mie amiche ero un po' l'eroina della liberazione femmista. Per le persone piú anziane ero la piú criticata, ma in fondo ero sempre io. Quel distacco aveva cambiato la mia situazione da ragazza prigioniera di una società integerrima nei suoi antichi costumi, in quella di donna adulta e autodeterminante della propria vita." (Bertozzi 1984:79)

The happy ending thus lies not in marriage but in the achievement of independence on the part of the heroine. Australia does represent something positive and, as a result of her trip "down under", the heroine's life takes a change for the better as the vitality of the new country influences the static and entrenched life patterns of the old.

As a romantic fiction the novel should certainly have found some acceptance with an Italo-Australian reading public which favours Liala, a leading exponent of this genre, above all other Italian authors. Bertozzi mentions in the preface that the writing of the novel had begun with the publication of the first two segments in L'Eco del Veneto, newsletter of the Melbourne Veneto Social Club. Although the newsletter discontinued publication of the segments,

Bertozzi was encouraged to finish and publish the novel after receiving positive feedback from some of the women readers. As a novel it falls somewhat "flat", is slightly moralizing in tone and vaguely feministic. It appears as an almost direct antithesis to Paese fortunato although the two have some points in common. In both there is an appreciation of the Australian natural setting which is seen as a positive element of the migration experience and which symbolizes a "freeing" element in the female protagonist's metaphysical makeup. But Bertozzi portrays this far less intensely than Cappiello.

Of the short story writers Valerio Borghese[1] is the one whose production most consistently deals with the "personal" reaction to the Australian experience. As with Cappiello, migration affects Borghese's characters in odd ways. Most either develop eccentric traits, become alienated to a greater or lesser degree, or meet with a tragic end.

In three stories the eccentricity is a relatively harmless one. Achille, the protagonist of 'Achille l'orografo' (Borghese 1984:69-74), loves the Australian bush because he had been struck by the gold fever, the Australian dream of "striking it rich". He spends all his spare time in the bush gathering rock samples which he takes home to analyse in his basement laboratory. In his wanderings over the years Achille has achieved an understanding of the bush and its denizens but he has not found gold. The conclusion of the story shows him ever hopefully searching in an unequal struggle against advancing old age which, in the not too distant future, will sap away

his vitality, perhaps leaving him with his dream unrealized. However he is not aware that in a sense he has found a treasure, although not a material one. It is his knowledge of and his familiarity with the bush. In 'I Compleanni del Signor Bruno' (Borghese 1984:54-60) Bruno Morandi has developed the strange habit of celebrating his birthday every week. Bruno lives all alone after his mother's death, a few years previously, while she was on a visit to Italy. From the very beginning his migration experience was not a happy one. A long-standing Oedipus complex is reinforced when, at the age of fourteen, he had come to Australia with his mother to join his father who had emigrated a few years before them. His father had disappeared and could no longer be traced and Bruno develops a hate for his father counterbalanced by the realization that he can now have his mother all to himself. Feeling that he has to look after his mother, he does not form relationships with anyone else and consequently ends up living in solitude. Remigio ('Le Delizie del giardino' - Borghese 1984:61-68), whose preferences in housing are strongly in favour of the European-style urban apartment, feels threatened and insecure when his wife makes him conform to the great Australian dream of living in a house with accompanying block of land. His efforts at gardening are unsuccessful and during a storm lightning starts a fire in the overgrown garden and the house burns down. For Remigio it is a liberation since he is now able to move into a small flat and his wife no longer pressures him to live in a house. However his satisfaction is not quite complete: "Remigio non vuol più parlare di case, né sentirne parlare, dentro di sé però si porta il rimorso e un senso di colpa per aver desiderato quella distruzione" (p68).

In other cases eccentricity develops pathological manifestations leading to alienation and madness. A train cleaner for Victoria Rail from the province of Foggia who writes senseless and ungrammatical "poetry" attempts suicide when his fellow workers make fun of him. He is committed to an asylum where he spends all his time continuing to write senseless verse ('Il Poeta pugliese' - Abiuso 1979:29-32). 'La stanzetta' (Borghese 1984:5-8) is a short short story, related in a hyperrealistic style, about a man who has locked himself in his room and spends all his time pacing up and down. He has completely cut himself off from the outside world and no longer even bothers to wind his clock, thus completely isolating himself in a fixed position in time and space. In a sense this may be seen as symbolic of the consequence of the migrant condition in which the immigrant belongs neither to the new country nor the old, neither to the present nor the past. One very hot summer's day the unnamed protagonist of the story 'La Moneta' (Borghese 1984:38-47) stands naked in his living room, destroying the furniture, throwing his money about and shouting "Sono un canguro. Evviva la moneta! Evviva i canguri! Evviva la moneta! La mooooneeetaaa . . ." (p47). His is a cathartic reaction to a lifetime spent working in a Melbourne factory in order to pay off his house, buy furniture and send his wife on an extended holiday to Italy. It is also both a reaction to the fact that his children have become Australianized and have left home as well as an expression of his dislike for Australia which he feels has become his prison. He does not like the climate or Australian food, hates the English language and considers all Australians to be drunks and ignoramuses. Yet by emigrating he has changed, he feels that he is no longer Italian and that therefore he cannot return to Italy.

Deprived of spiritual satisfaction, trapped in a hostile environment, money has become an obsession and work "una specie di droga con la quale cerchiamo di tenere lontano nostalgie e rimpianti, ma non sempre si riesce." (p44).

In yet other cases the migrant experience leaves a legacy of tragedy. Tonio is killed in an industrial accident just when, after many years of hard work, he is about to leave for a long-awaited and eagerly anticipated extended holiday in Italy ('Biglietti e lacrime', Abiuso 1979:114-117). A frustrated would-be writer who has accepted passively everything that life has thrown at him, including war and emigration, decides to commit suicide at dawn on a beach by taking an overdose of barbiturates washed down with a bottle of grappa ('L'ultima lettera' - Borghese 1984:11-14). When Laura's grandfather comes from Italy to visit, she feels at first uncomfortable and embarrassed at the presence of an old man whom she had never met before ('Il Nonno' - Borghese 1984:25-37). As the months pass the two gradually get to know each other and form a meaningful relationship. The grandfather is a dilettante writer and tells Laura the stories he has written, among them a fable in which life is seen as a journey in time, with death as its destination. Laura is now proud of the old man and talks about him with her friends at school. Grandfather, however, decides to return to Italy since, although he has grown to like Australia's parks, beaches and bush, he feels that he is too old to begin a new life: "io non appartengo a questo paese e anche se, metti il caso, rimanessi, continuerei a sentirmi un estraneo e il desiderio di ritornare nella mia terra non mi darebbe pace" (p34). He realizes also that it is equally impossible

for Laura to go and live in Italy since her roots are in Australia. However on the day of departure the old man is found dead in bed, on the bedside table some stories and poems dedicated to his granddaughter.

Along with the physically tragic aspects of migration come those that are metaphysical. The migration process changes the individual. Franco, who seemed so "Italian", becomes so totally assimilated after a few years in Australia that he is almost unrecognisable ('L'Italo-Australiano' - Abiuso 1979:136-138). "Non era Franco quello, ma solo la brutta copia di lui. Dov'era Franco? L'Australia lo aveva assimilato?" (p138). This is an interesting image in that assimilation is equated with the unaesthetic and the undesirable. Those of Borghese's characters who attempt to return to Italy find that they no longer recognize themselves in the places of their youth and are either forced to return to Australia or live their life in isolation.[2]

Essentially Borghese seems to be saying that migration demands a price, one which may be different in each case but which must be paid by all. A further example is provided in the story 'Tre' (Borghese 1984:15-24) which presents three Triestini, Dino, Claudio and Guido, who experience quite different situations. Dino acquires riches as a proprietor of a construction company, becoming completely assimilated in the process, but loses touch with his linguistic and cultural roots. He finds soccer less attractive than in the past and, as for art and culture: "Ora la cultura e l'arte sono cose che non gli servono più e lui è adesso interessato solo in quelle cose che gli

servono, che sono utilizzabili, che rendono qualcosa." (p17). For Claudio Australia has meant the achievement of a secure but modest economic position. He appreciates the natural beauties of the country but has substantially maintained his linguistic and cultural traditions. Despite the fact that Trieste continues to hold some attractions for him, he has resigned himself to spending the rest of his life in Australia. Guido has found that emigration "è stato un fiasco totale" (p22). He has not been able to buy his own house and his incurable nostalgia for Trieste is accentuated by the realization that he can never return there. Frustrated also in his intellectual aspirations, since his cultural interests and his writings are carried out in a vacuum, his life is reduced to a series of mechanical acts at home and at the workplace accompanied by the fatalistic realization that he will end his days in Australia. The story presents some interesting concepts but is rendered somewhat trite by the application of what becomes a stereotyped formula. Borghese equates assimilation with upward socioeconomic mobility and the attachment to one's linguistic and cultural roots with relegation to the ethnic ghetto and the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. There is none of the dramatic tension which is found in Cappiello when she deals with the same concept.

Unlike Cappiello, Borghese's stories and characters lack the vigour to present effectively the personal aspects, sometimes tragic, of the immigrant's confrontation with Australia. Although a few, especially 'Il Nonno', are moving, most are unconvincing and fall somewhat flat. The stories are usually too short to allow the development of mood, important in this type, on which much of

Borghese's technique depends, or the exposition of the potentially complicated situations which the various characters encounter as part and parcel of their migration experience.

Two stories by Ottorino Rizzo[3] illustrate the theme of migration as a generator (potential or actual) of mental illness. In 'Il Cugino Arturo' (Abiuso 1979:13-18) Salvatore, an architect, is sponsored by his cousin Arturo and emigrates to Australia in 1968. Arturo had emigrated some 25 years previously and without formal qualifications had embarked on a rigorous programme of hard work and stringent economy in order to achieve economic security. However Salvatore's arrival disrupts Arturo's pattern of work and saving. Salvatore, used to a European urban life-style, spends his earnings on "luxuries" such as a car, a washing machine and a vacuum cleaner. Consequently Arturo comes under pressure from his wife to copy his cousin's consumption patterns. The final straw comes when his wife and son go to Italy for three months to visit her sick mother. Arturo becomes very apprehensive when he learns that his mother-in-law's illness is not really serious and that his wife is actually enjoying herself. He makes Salvatore send a telegram saying that if his wife does not return immediately he will have himself admitted to a lunatic asylum. 'Attaccati al tram' (Abiuso 1979:26-28) presents the frenetic ravings of Pietro, a refrigerator mechanic who hates the English language, Australian food ("carne di pecora" - p27) and his wife Luisa who does not know how to cook. The pressures build up and, one day, after a quarrel with his boss, Pietro goes berserk and smashes the mirrors in the toilets. He is put in a straitjacket even though he keeps insisting that he is not mad.

He refuses to cooperate and is sent back to Italy. Rizzo is an interesting writer. His stories are animated, well conceived and written. It is a pity that he has not published more.

Sandro Monese's[4] short story 'La Belva' (Abiuso 1979:36-42) is one of the very few pieces of Italo-Australian fiction written to date which present a protagonist who is a criminal. It would appear that crime is not a favourite theme with Italo-Australian writers, Sollazzo excluded. Luca Biondi is sentenced to a long prison term subsequent to acts of (unspecified) violence committed when the parents of Carla, whom he wishes to marry, move to stop the relationship. However Luca considers that he has been branded as a violent criminal partly because of his ethnic origins. The judge, jury and the Anglo-Australian press were only too willing to cast him in a stereotyped role without any real consideration of the circumstances which led him to commit the crime. Luca manages to break out of jail with his Australian cellmate but, rather than leave the country with him, he decides to see Carla once more. Carla is now happily married to Luca's best friend Marco Stringari. After this discovery he shoots himself in the middle of the soccer stadium where he was once a champion. 'La Belva' is a somewhat melodramatic and simplistic story and it is difficult to make out Monese's thesis. It is perhaps that the frustrations created by the traditional and restricting aspects of the Italo-Australian environment can lead to expressions of individual violence and that Anglo-Australian society is only too ready to create criminals out of immigrants. A similar and similarly simplistic story of violence and passion is Fenisia Giglio's[5] 'Vulcano' (Abiuso 1979:33-35), in which the Neapolitan

protagonist, Giacomino, jilted by Maria when she decides to marry her childhood sweetheart and return to Venice, gives Vesuvius-like vent to his fury by smashing all the wedding gifts.

The physical and moral consequences of a work-related accident is the theme of John Lando's[6] 'Lo sconfitto dell'emigrazione' (Abiuso 1979:118-125). Nineteen year old Mario decides to emigrate to Australia, against the better judgement of family and friends, when he loses his job as a fitter and turner and cannot find another. On arrival in Melbourne he immediately finds a job as a construction worker in a remote country town and derives considerable satisfaction from the money he earns which is four times the amount he would have earned in Italy. Although he finds that the work is not too heavy, he is dejected at the loneliness and monotony of life at the work camp as well as by nostalgia for his home. He is also dismayed at the degradation which takes place in his fellow workers:

> "Meditò a lungo sulla sorte toccata ad alcuni operai che gli erano diventati amici. Erano venuti in Australia, spinti ed abbagliati dallo stesso miraggio di far soldi in fretta e ritornarsene. Ma pochi riuscivano a staccarsi da questa terra dopo pochi anni. Come erano cambiati nei loro atteggiamenti! Erano ridotti a soli muscoli, a forza bruta, a bestie da soma. Avevano perso ogni senso di sensibilità morale e di dignità personale. Non conservavano nessuna aspirazione al di sopra del denaro, del lavoro e del cibo. Erano uomini volgari e disumani, anche se forti e instancabili. Nominavano Dio solo per bestemmiarlo." (Abiuso 1979:122)

Afraid the he too might succumb, Mario decides to return home after the expiration of his work contract but suffers an accident and is seriously. He will never be able to walk properly again. After he has boarded the plane to return home he draws the conclusion to his bitter Australian experience:

> "Avrebbe voluto dimenticare gli avvenimenti dell'ultimo anno e mezzo. Si sentiva un uomo rovinato nel fisico e nel morale. Aveva perso il suo naturale ottimismo, non sorrideva più; aveva il volto invecchiato e stanco, la bocca tesa in una piega amara." (Abiuso 1979:125)

This story is fairly similar to Borghese's 'Biglietti e lacrime'. Although it has a little more depth, it is still too schematic and lacks the development to deal fully with a complex situation. Mario does not come across as a "real" character. His observations on Australia are bland and stereotyped as are his experiences as an injured worker.

The relationship between parents and children is examined in 'Vito Quattara' (Rando 1983:260-267) by Nino Sanciolo[7]. Vito Quattara is a "typical" immigrant (probably Sicilian) who has emigrated to Australia, worked hard and set up his own small cementing business. He is in a comfortable financial position and possesses a Mercedes sedan. However, life has not given him those spiritual satisfactions for which he had hoped so much. He feels that all the sacrifices he has made have been useless, that he has somehow been "let down" by the migration process. Sometimes this feeling leads to outbursts of rage such as when he shouts at his wife or drives his car badly. Quattara is very much a traditionalist at heart. He believes in his patriarchal position and expects to be obeyed by his wife Maria Grazia and his daughter Rosetta, an obedience which includes his right to choose a husband for his daughter. Quattara's main source of grief is that, much against his wishes, Rosetta has fallen in love with an Australian boy. His feelings are exemplified in the opening sequence of the story when

Rosetta, naturally under parental observation, attends a dance with her boyfriend:

> "La tortura, e l'ira, anche, gli veniva dalla vista di quella sua figlia scatenata come un diavolo che ad intervalli gli roteava davanti, sgambettante e sculettante come una epilettica, strappata di qua e di là da quel giovane biondo con i jeans sbiaditi sulle natiche e sulle cosce lunghe come quelle d'una cavalletta." (Rando 1983:260)

Eventually Rosetta elopes with her boyfriend. This leads Quattara to refuse ever to see her again and to quarrel continually with his wife. She takes Rosetta's side since she wishes to keep seeing her daughter despite being forbidden to do so by Quattara. The life of the couple thus becomes an inferno until, some years later, Rosetta, her husband and their child, Vituzzo, come back. At the sight of his grandson, who has been taught to speak Italian, Quattara bursts into tears. There is a sudden reconciliation, thus proving the old adage that blood is thicker than water:

> "Li vedeva per la prima volta dopo tanti anni, tra il velo di lacrime che gli tremolavano fra le palpebre e si sentì all'improvviso riconciliato con loro, con se stesso, con Maria Grazia e con il mondo intero e per la prima volta vide quel giovane biondo così come avrebbe dovuto vederlo sin dal primo momento e sentì che per farlo felice sarebbe stato pronto a sacrificarsi anche per lui, perché anche lui faceva ormai parte della sua famiglia, perché era il padre del suo Vituzzo, perché era diventato ormai anche lui suo figlio." (Rando 1983:267)

This story is probably the best one in this category. There is depth to the character. Vito's feelings are graphically portrayed through the interior monologue and Sanciolo uses both Italo-Australian and dialect to give his characters linguistic realism. There are also some graphically descriptive passages such as the one quoted above where Rosetta's dancing is seen through the eyes of her father, clearly unimpressed by the gymnastics of modern dancing. The

emotional finale is rather melodramatic and somewhat reminiscent of The Shifting Heart in reverse. Like Benyon, Sanciolo is stating the need for mutual understanding and acceptance both across the generations and across cultures. For him it is the grandchildren who will act as catalysts for this process.

What happens to the parent-child relationship when the child decides to become engaged to an Australian is also examined by Charles D'Aprano and Ugo Rotellini.[8] In 'The Engagement' (D'Aprano 1986:63-71), one of D'Aprano's better stories, Lucy's parents are dismayed when she announces her engagement to an Australian boy, Allan. Her father greets the news with an explosion of rage and her mother anxiously admonishes her not to disgrace the family. The situation is made even more complicated by the fact that Allan's mother is living with a defrocked Catholic priest. Torn between her love for Allan and her obligations to her parents, Lucy/Lucia decides to have an open and frank discussion with her very traditionalist parents in a desperate attempt to resolve the situation. Surprisingly enough she is supported by her father who declares that their duty is to their daughter. The story provides interesting dramatic tension through the daughter/parent relationship which is happily resolved when a point of conciliation is reached with the father's realization that he must come to a compromise with his traditional cultural values for the sake of his daughter's happiness. Less optimistic is the conclusion of 'Closing conversation' (Rotellini 1986). Carlo's family disapprove of his engagement to Sue since they judge her to be a "loose woman" because of her uninhibited and open behavior (she smokes, paints her toenails and lives alone) and also because her

parents are divorced: "it was obvious she was not suitable for him [...] She spoke little Italian and her imprudence and education distracted her from the chores of being a woman" (p33). When Carlo receives a "serious" offer of marriage from a girl from a family who came from the same region of Italy, his family decide that it is time to break up his relationship with Sue. Sue is threatened and when Carlo has to choose between her and his family he finds that he cannot break his family ties. A somewhat schematic and superficial story, it nevertheless illustrates how strong the ties of the Italo-Australian family can limit individuality and freedom of choice by making the individual conform to traditional norms of behavior. This conformity is expected not only from the members of the family but also from those who aspire to marry into the family, even though they may be of a different ethno-cultural group. For the "outsiders" especially, this pressure to conform can generate much suffering and bitterness.

Another story by Rotellini and one by Vic Caruso[9] deal with the theme of the arranged marriage. This theme seems a popular one with second generation writers (those who came to Australia as children or who were born here), is presented in Tony Giurissevich's play Mogli e buoi dai paesi tuoi and is also touched upon in Christine Madafferi's A hard bargain. Whereas in Giurissevich's play the protagonists reject the tradition of the arranged marriage in these two stories the characters conform more or less willingly to the dictates of their respective families and accept this tradition. In Rotellini's 'To discuss the possibility of . . ." (Holt 1983: 78-85) Sandra, a teacher, regretfully decides to break off with her boy friend who does not intend to marry her because her parents expect

her to settle down ("She had been caught unaware, her Italianness no longer a myth or romantic side-effect of her life." - Holt 1983: 79). When her parents announce that they have a prospective husband in mind she at first refuses to meet him but evenutally accepts "drawn by a need that was both ambivalent and compelling" (p79). The negotiations are however left to the father who becomes far less enthusiastic at the proposed match when he learns that the family are no longer Catholics but have become Jehovah's Witnesses, a change of religion which has occurred to a number of Italian immigrants in Australia. Hence although it appears that the two young people like each other, it is left to the father, in his traditional role as head of the family, to decide what is best for his daughter. The story is well told, the conversation between the father and his *compare,* who acts as professional matchmaker, being particularly lively and realistic, although it is a little unconvincing in that two young professional people, either born or brought up in Australia, should seem so submissive to the wishes of their elders. In 'Giovanni's Courtship' (Holt 1983: 86-99) Vic Caruso relates the first meeting between a Calabrian and a Neapolitan family. Giovanni Calvari, a young builder, is introduced to Natalina Madafferi, a hairdresser, at a meeting arranged between the two families for a preliminary discussion regarding a possible arranged marriage. Once again the arrangement has been made by a professional matchmaker, Carlo Pulastro, and it is the fathers who do most of the talking while Giovanni sits and watches and Natalina is made to serve the refreshments in order to show off her domestic virtues. There is very much the sensation that the meeting is something of a bartering situation between the two families, Natalina particularly being

presented as an item to be traded (her father offers to give the couple a house and will, of course, pay for the wedding), although at the finale Giovanni is quite happy with the proposed arrangements since "He would marry a vision, a blushing, shy vision, a little lamb he would overwhelm with his manhood" (Holt 1983: 99). The story presents a set of stereotypes both in the roles assumed by the various characters, the statements, both expressed and implied, about male and female domains, the description of the Madafferi house, complete with garden gnomes and a mystical Aboriginal name ("EMOH RUO"). However these stereotypes are presented in an amusing fashion and are made to appear somewhat incongruous and anachronistic while the choral comments of the Australians' laziness and the way that in matters of courtship they left everything to their "immature, irresponsible sons and callous, loose-moralled, bitchy daughters" (Holt 1983: 97) gives the parents a somewhat smug air of self-righteousness and perhaps even a feeling of superiority.

It would appear that, with the exception of Sanciolo and, to some extent, D'Aprano, Bertozzi and Rizzo, the attempt to deal with the personal/psychological aspects of the migration experience on the part of Italo-Australian writers is on the whole not very successful. Most writers have difficulty in constructing and handling the complex elements of plot, characterization and language which are required to deal with situations of this nature. Consequently their stories come across as superficial, schematic and unconvincing. These stories lack the vigour and depth which Cappiello, despite the structural problems encountered in her novel, manages to infuse into the psychological reactions of her characters through her use of language.

CHILDREN'S STORIES

Children's stories such as the rewriting in Italian of Aboriginal legends or the recounting of migrant experiences have been and are generally prepared for didactic purposes in the context of language acquisition/ maintenance or multicultural teaching programmes. In the case of Lidia Bruscino Sallustio[10], however, the writing in Italian of fables with an Australian context for children assumes a literary art form. Her only published story Una Storia per Genni (Sallustio 1979) saw the light in 1979, the International year of the Child. The story is a fanciful dream by the little boy protagonist Genni, who is taken by a daisy on a journey among the stars and on a visit to the Queen of the Moon. It is thus a fable within the European tradition but which is set identifiably in the Southern hemisphere since when he arrives in the sky it is the stars of the Southern Cross which are prominent in welcoming him.

Genni's journey has a purpose in that he is to bring back to earth peace and harmony. By way of preparation for his role the secrets of the universe are revealed to him, among them that of the formation of Australia from a dress of pearls which the Ocean steals from the Moon. Hence Australia springs from "un astro il piú splendente. Ecco perché si chiamó Australia" (p16) - the play on words belongs to the realm of fantasy rather than that of etymology. As a result of Genni's mission all world leaders meet to discuss mutual cooperation and to banish war. Symbolically peace on earth is brought about by the innocence of childhood in the person of an immigrant child from the newest world. Perhaps with this detail Sallustio wishes to refer

to Australia's role as a peace mediator in the international scene, an underlying element of reality to the mood of fantasy set by the story. The atmosphere of fantasy is set in the two-page premise which is a sort of poetic prelude to the story and identifies the narrator with nature and the land in a symbiosis which recalls Andreoni:

> "Io amo questa terra! - Selvaggia . . . arida . . . pianeggiante . . . feconda . . . vibrante di ogni piccolo essere . . .
>
> Amo questa terra che il vento innalza fino al sole e . . . spinge fino a me turbinante, serrandomi gli occhi, e la vedo, la sento nel sogno.
>
> Le sue piccolissime parti punteggiano tutto il mio corpo ed il mio volto, si nascondono nei miei capelli e la sua forza quasi mi spinge al suolo; ma io l'amo perché siamo la stessa cosa, ed il mio corpo un giorno sará da lei ricoperto. [...]
>
> Io saró di nuovo la natura che vive all'infinito, nel perpetuarsi di un fiore, di una farfalla, nel profumo di una rosa vermiglia." (Sallustio 1979:2-3)

Among Sallustio's unpublished fables is the 'Storia di una Nuvoletta e di un Pettirosso' (written in August 1985), which recounts the birth of Kangaroo Island [South Australia]. The cultural referents belong to European mythology. A robin redbreast singing in the highest branch of a red gum is able to banish with his song the sadness and disorientation of a little lost cloud. The cloud, the bird and the moon join together to create a beautiful harmony which attracts everything in the universe, including Andromeda. The cloud settles into the ocean where it is transformed into a huge marvellous rock, later called by man "remarkable rocks" and Lalù, a maiden, friendly with the moon, who lives alone on a small island with seals, penguins and kangaroos, is transformed into Kangaroo Island.

RAFFAELE SCAPPATURA

Raffaele Scappatura[11] is known mainly for his epic poem 'Emigranti' (Rando 1983:269-273), which was awarded a prize by the Special Broadcasting Service at the 1980 Italian Arts Festival of Melbourne. The poem, written in a classical tradition which recalls the early nineteenth century poet Ugo Foscolo, and, less directly, Alessandro Manzoni, is an attempt to translate into universal terms the reality and the destiny of the migrant's existence on a cosmic plane. Fate treats the migrant more harshly than others, since, anonymous, unsung and unrecognized, he must work and die in far away lands amidst peoples who are not his own. The poem is, by and large, successful in conveying the essence of the migrant experience in its universal, human and individual aspects, although it tends somewhat towards the rhetorical, notwithstanding its Australian referents. As a writer of prose narrative Scappatura has produced two collections of short stories, Amica Pampa and Diario di un camminante. These stories have so far remained unpublished apart from two which have appeared in La Fiamma[12]. They are impressionistic and evocative slice-of-life stories which depict the Argentinian landscape, mainly the country areas, and the personages found there. It is also claimed that Scappatura has written some stories with an Australian setting but so far it has not been possible to trace these. Another writer who has dealt with a South American setting is Emilio Gabbrielli. His story 'La Voglia di fare', discussed in Chapter 6, explores the socio-political and cultural aspects of a South American setting seen from the point of view of an educated Italian.

PINO SOLLAZZO

Pino Sollazzo[13] has published a volume of poetry (Sollazzo 1983) and has written four novels and five short stories, all of which are awaiting publication. His narrative production gravitates around the themes of love and crime, sometimes intermingled, and he alternates between Italian and Australian settings. The men protagonists seem to be the male counterparts of Guzzardi's heroines. They are young skilled workers, honest and hard-working but poor, while the young women with whom they fall in love are usually from well-to-do families. The plots of his stories are rather complicated and somewhat forced. His style is incisive if at times disconnected, tending towards that of the popular folk tale, not without not without formal errors of grammar and syntax as well as a few Italo-Australian linguistic elements. 'Il Vento del Sud', described by the author as a "racconto veristico" is a short novel in which the protagonist, Passero Pino, ex carabiniere, is an immigrant worker from Calabria who arrives in Melbourne. He falls in love with Altea but the match is opposed by her family (also Calabrese) and the two flee to Sydney. When they return to Melbourne with Altea already expecting, her brother, Tony, initiates a vendetta against Passero. As a result Passero shoots Tony and is in turn shot by Altea. It is a tale of love, passion and vendetta of the type traditional among the lower classes of the Italian South which Sollazzo transposes to an Australian setting. The setting seems to have little to do with the story, although it does present familiar elements to the Italo-Australian reader and illustrates the fact that base culture traditional values survive in Australia. Like 'Jenko' the plot of 'Il

Vento del Sud' is unduly complicated and confusing. 'L'Alfetta Rossa' is a short story also with an Italo-Australian setting. It is told in the first person and its protagonist, Dino, runs an Alfa Romeo repair shop in Melbourne. One day he meets Nadia Covacci who comes to have her red Alfa (latest model) repaired. Nadia is "alta, snella, un corpo proprio alla Raffaella Carrà" (p2), teaches at La Trobe University and lives in a villa styled like a 16th century castle in the Dandenongs, her father being the proprietor of a textile factory. The two fall in love but the match is opposed by her mother who is a Jehovah's Witness. When Nadia is critically injured in a road accident Dino saves her life by convincing the doctor to give a blood transfusion without obtaining the parents' consent and then exposes the hypocrisy of the mother who is having an affair with a fellow Witness. When Nadia gets out of hospital she goes to see Dino and the two drive off into the sunset in the red Alfa with Dino at the wheel. Again the story does not particularly depend on the Australian setting although, almost by coincidence, there are two marginal link elements. Dino's passion for prestige Italian cars underscores one of the aspects for which Italian technology is most widely known in Australia. The conversion of Nadia and her mother to the Jehovah's Witness sect exemplifies a phenomenon within the Italo-Australian community, that of a shift from Catholicism to fringe religious sects. Structurally and stylistically the story is an improvement on "Il Vento del Sud" although a few formal language errors are still present. Perhaps Sollazzo is better at handling shorter formats. In addition he has managed to coin two striking similes in relation to Italian automobiles: "Alcuni non sanno che il motore dell'Alfa romeo [sic] è delicato come il cuore di un bambino"

(p4) and "per un attimo i battiti del cuore avevano aumentato i suoi giri come una ferrari [sic] che stava per tagliare gloriosamente il traguardo di una gara importante" (p17).

FERNANDO BASILI

As stated in the previous chapter four stories by Fernando Basili do not refer to either Italy or Australia. They are, however, of the same type and style as his Italian stories. 'Pranzo d'etichetta' is the story of a formal dinner in Paris between two diplomatic representatives, the American John Mackerony (the surname is a transliteration of "maccheroni") and the Russian Birikynoff, who meet to discuss affairs of state. Unsure of the behaviour required by protocol the two men sit through the dinner without eating, both pretending that they had eaten earlier. Later they meet by accident at a stall in a nearby street which sells a sort of pancake which both men are devouring. It is an amusing tale, particularly in the detailed description of the formal dinner and the antithetical conclusion when the two men meet out in the street and devour the rather plebeian pancakes. It has nevertheless a "serious" message viz. that men may be divided by suspicion and political barriers but that they are really all brothers under the skin particularly when it comes to satisfying basic needs such as hunger. 'Un uomo normale' is set in Germany. Its protagonist, Werner, is very similar to the poor struggling students of Basili's Italian tales. A dreamer and an idealist with a philosophical bent for the works of Nietzsche, Hegel and Goebbels, Werner manages to graduate at age 32 and is promptly sent off to fight in the second world war. He survives, returns home covered in

lice and glory, marries a rich Berlin war widow and settles down to a routine of work and family becoming "padre scontento e marito infedele [...] normale in modo tale che di normali come lui, in giro, se ne intoppan pochi" (p3). Hence the idealism and dreams of youth fade into normality and mediocrity with the passage of time as the business of living forces preoccupation with mundane affairs. 'Operazione Sodoma e Gomorra' is a satire on technological progress. A famous American biologist Ted Safecracker devises a system for eliminating the fly by spraying the insects with hormones so that they will become homosexual and stop reproducing. The plan is approved by the UN Health Council and implemented in nearly all the countries of the world. However, instead of dying off, the flies reproduce at an alarming rate and the situation becomes so desperate that a third world war almost eventuates. The crisis is averted when Sister Orilha, a humble Portuguese nun scandalized at the licentious behaviour of the insects, uses some old-fashioned insecticide which proves effective in reducing their numbers to a normal level. Needless to say Sister Orilha is canonized. Common sense and old-fashioned methods thus become remedies to hi-tech procedures which disrupt the delicate ecological equilibrium found in the natural order. 'Che la beata vetustà vien meno' - the title is a play on an Italian saying "che la beata gioventù vien meno" - is a whimsical tale à la Calvino set in the planet $X^{y}301$. On this planet one is born in old age and dies in childhood. The protagonist -6X?z is in the advanced stages of growing young and expects to be born (i.e. die) soon. He reflects on his old age when life was an interminable round of fun and games in the company of good friends who have since passed away. Despite the fanciful way in which Basili approaches the theme

the story is nevertheless one of his less successful ones, being a somewhat trite and stereotyped exposition of the theme of the lament for the long past times of youth. Paradoxically Basili, the only writer who does not seem to have touched on Australian themes, is among the most varied and interesting of the Italo-Australian writers and probably one of the best in qualitative terms for the type of genre which he handles.

OTHER WRITERS

Leonida Nardi of Perth has published a few short stories in La Fiamma. They are of the "slice of life" type, an example of which is provided by 'Il Vecchietto' (La Fiamma, 30-7-81, p37). The protagonist recalls that as a boy (presumably in Italy) he liked to stop and talk with people in the streets. In particular he strikes up a friendship with an old man who is poor but too proud to beg and whose philosophy of life is that "la terra reclama i suoi diritti", a phrase whose meaning the boy understands only when the old man dies and is buried. This short fable-like tale on the discovery of the meaning of life and death is simply but effectively told and constitutes, in a sense, the recall of Italian "contadino" philosophy, which is based on sayings and adages.

A short short story by Rosanna Perosino Dabbene, 'Che stupida maniera di morire' (La Fiamma, 2-11-81, p44), deals with the theme of the distinction between dream and reality. The male protagonist cannot sleep, goes for a drive at 2am and crashes through the bridge railing into the river. When the event occurs, he realizes that he had

seen it all before in a dream. The setting is not identified with any particular country although there are a few details which suggest an Australian one - the protagonist wears shorts and sandals (thongs?), the garage is under the house. The story is fairly well written although it does not display any particular distinguishing characteristics as it deals with a not uncommon theme in a rather commonplace sort of way.

Syd Bristow[14] constitutes an example of an Anglo-Australian creative writer who has made the effort to write in Italian. This phenomenon is a relatively rare one, because of the language barrier, and is much more frequent in poetry than in prose. Moreover if the writers in this case are very few, those who publish are even fewer. Bristow's Italian works were initially written in English and then translated by him into Italian with the help of Italian student colleagues. As well as a play ('L'educazione di Caterina') he has written two short stories 'Una coperta' ('By Hook or by Crook') and 'Morire per amore' ('Falling in Love'), of which the latter has been published (Rando 1983:157-158). It is a short short story set in Naples and is a whimsical tale about fat Maria Rossi who decides to throw herself from the balcony because her husband, Giovanni, does not love her any more and has taken up with another, thinner, woman. However in doing so she falls on Giovanni and crushes him. With the insurance money Maria buys a restaurant, slims down, marries the head waiter and lives happily ever after.

ORAL LITERATURE

The dialect-based oral narrative tradition seems to have only one representative in Salvatore Tripoli. Enquiries to date have failed to reveal any substantial information about him. His story, narrated and sung in Calabrese with an admixture of local Italian, is accessible on a privately produced 45rpm record probably released in the early 60s. The story is narrated in the first person and recounts in a humorous vein the "typical" experiences of a contadino from Southern Italy (probably Calabria) who, in 1952, decides to emigrate to Australia because he has heard that there he can make lots of money:

> "Tutti mi dicivano l'Australia è una terra ricca, terra di miliuni. E iu veramenti ch'avia una famiddia con figlioli piccirriddi vuliva ir'a mi vidu 'sta terra e vidu se li sordi li pozzu fari a palati."

He goes through the process of application, selection and departure, leaving his wife and two children back home in the care of relatives, assisted passages not being available at that time. The sea voyage takes a biblical 40 days and nights and is somewhat frightening. On arrival in Australia he is welcomed by his brother and paesani:

> "Ognunu mi vuliva livari alla sua casa pi rispettu di me frati e pi rispettu di tutti li amici [...] e allura accuntentammu una famiddia e iemmu e mangiammu."

There is a strong desire to earn lots of money so that he can return to his native village and buy land. But the realities of the Australian experience are quite different from the stories of sudden wealth he had heard back home. Although he earns a good wage the work is so arduous that only the encouragement of his paesani keeps him going:

> "'sta fabbrica di bicchieri era nu lavuru tintu [...] acqua vuddiuta di tutti li maneri. Li maniceddi l'aviva incaiati, l'unnia mi stavevano calendo, nun ci la faciva cchiù. Era nu bisognu ca mi frati mi diciva Turi coraggio s'umporta quando iamu in Italia e accattamu nu pezzu ni terra e facimu li grandi signuri"

Despite this encouragement Salvatore decides after a year that he has had enough and returns home. He realizes that the return will entail a disadvantage in economic terms but this is more than compensated by the prospect of being reunited with his family ("E' meddiu 'nta l'Italia cu lu pani e 'a cipudda"). Australia does not seem to be a suitable country to which to bring his family and in any case the only advantage to be had there is a material one:

> "Ma altrimenti nun s'è nenti a chidda terra. E' 'na terra di sacrifici. E' 'na terra che dio minni libberi che terra. Luntana. Ma poi che manch'i cani . . ."

The finale to the story constitutes an admonition to his listeners not to emigrate to Australia because what happened to him could happen to anyone. Australia is not the much-vaunted promised land. It is a remote land of suffering which does little to fulfill the immigrant's dream of sudden riches and of being able to return to his native village a wealthy man. Consequently it is better to stay at home to enjoy the spiritual comforts and satisfaction of family life. Its intended effect may be twofold and contradictory. It is a surprising story since in a period when emigration from Italy to Australia was in full swing it sets out to debunk the myth of Australia as a country of easily-acquired riches, one of the most important factors in promoting the decision to emigrate there on the part of Italians. It may suggest that this myth was not widely accepted or believed and it certainly highlights the very real difficulties which the immigrant had to cope with on arrival, since as well as difficulties in the workplace it also deals with language difficulties, problems in using public transport, in achieving social contact with Australians, in shopping and in other matters of

everyday living. In this sense it is a story firmly set in the social realities of the migration process and its humour can be a vehicle for the transmission of more serious messages. Tripoli employs a technique derived from a common Italian popular cultural tradition, especially in Southern Italy, that of the *cantastorie*. A series of verbal situational sketches each separated by a song which further illustrates the situation and draws a moral. The language employed also derives from the cultural base of the peasant migrant. Tripoli uses dialect with an admixture of Italian forms and, where appropriate, Italo-Australian words and expressions. Frequent use is made of sayings and commonplace phrases. The use of familiar cultural forms and the typification of language, content and situation helps his intended listener relate to the experiences recounted and thus gives moral conviction to the concluding admonition. Whether the listener agrees with the conclusion or even decides to return to Italy is, of course, another matter. He can nevertheless derive some enjoyment from the humorous way in which Salvatore's various predicaments are presented and perhaps reflect that his own experience, after all, has not been too bad by comparison.

This chapter has examined a number of features of Italo-Australian narrative which do relate to the major themes and/or writers discussed in the preceding chapters. Although relatively less important than the major elements to which they are linked, these features nevertheless are essential in obtaining an overview of what constitutes Italo-Australian narrative. The attempt to describe individual reaction to the migration experience has been far less successful in writers other than Rosa Cappiello but

it is important to note that she had not been the only writer to deal with this aspect. Bertozzi, Sallustio and Guzzardi have shown that specific narrative genres such as romantic fiction and fables can be found in the work of Italian writers in Australia. The writings of Basili, Nardi and Dabbene indicate that Italo-Australian writers do not necessarily restrict themselves to Italo-Australian themes. Tripoli serves as an example that the Italian oral narrative tradition has found at least one exponent in Australia, while Bristow shows that Italo-Australian writers need not necessarily be Italians or of Italian descent. All these are elements which tend to make the general mosaic more varied and more interesting.

Notes

1. Biographical data on this author are given in Chapter 2.

2. These stories are discussed in detail in chapter 8.

3. Ottorino Rizzo (brother of former Sydney University Italian professor Gino Rizzo) was born in Venice in 1925. A chemistry graduate of the University of Padova he was "assistente" at the University of Venice and subsequently worked in the petrochemical industry. In 1964 he commenced a teaching career as a teacher of mathematics and physics in the Italian state school system ("scuola media"). He emigrated to Australia in 1968 and has taught science subjects in various Victorian private schools. He has published a book on D'Annunzio (Il Superuomo nell'opera di Gabriele D'Annunzio, Venice, Zanetti Editore, 1959) and was associated with the paper Siracusa Nuova from 1960 to 1964. He has obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Melbourne.

4. Monese was born in Modena in 1957 and is probably the youngest first generation Italo-Australian writer.

5. Giglio was born and educated in Melbourne although she spent three years in Italy perfecting her Italian. She has taught Italian in Melbourne schools for several years and is currently teaching ESL at the Open College of Further Education in Adelaide.

6. Lando is from the province of Vicenza and emigrated to Melbourne in 1966 after completing the Liceo Classico. A BA, DipEd graduate of La Trobe University, he is a teacher of Italian in Melbourne schools.

7. Sanciolo, born in Messina in 1921, emigrated to Australia in 1968. He is presently Melbourne editor of La Fiamma. This short story was awarded the Premio McCormick 1980.

8. Ugo Rotellini was born in Italy and came to Australia with his parents at the age of five. By profession he is a social worker with the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. He began to write for publication at the beginning of the 80s and has had several poems and short stories published in various magazines and newspapers.

9. Vic Caruso was born in Italy in 1949 and settled with his family in Melbourne in 1956. He is a journalist by profession.

10. Sallustio emigrated from Naples in the late 60s. The art of making Capodimonte ceramics is a family tradition and she continued this in Australia becoming widely known for her production. As well as her fables she has written a number of poems.

11. Raffaele Scappatura was born at Busto Arsizio in 1923 and died in Melbourne in 1983. His education and literary formation was obtained in Turin where, in the years immediately after the war, he had known Cesare Pavese. He emigrated to Australia in 1963 after having spent several years in Argentina.

12. 'Il Mendico' (from Amica Pampa), La Fiamma, 28-5-1981, p38 and 'Camino de la Esperanza' (from Diario di un Camminante), La Fiamma, 24-9-1981, p40.

13. For biographical information on Sollazzo see Chapter 8, note9.

14. Bristow was born in England in 1919. He emigrated to Australia in 1957, working in the steel industry until 1977 and studying for a degree at the University of Wollongong after his retirement. He began writing about fifteen years ago and has produced some 70 short stories and two plays.

CONCLUSION

As anticipated in Chapter 1, this study of "Italo-Australian" narrative has given rise to a number of questions relating to its characteristics, its evaluation and its status as a literary genre. Now that the corpus of texts has been examined we shall in this chapter discuss and seek answers to these questions.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It was posited in chapter 1 that the study of Italo-Australian narrative could lead to some reflections of a theoretical nature. Italo-Australian narrative clearly fits into the "minority literature" category elaborated by Dubois (see Chapter 1), in that it is not recognized institutionally, is usually ignored and, if not ignored, is considered as marginal to both Italian and Australian mainstreams. In terms of the Australian mainstream we have the case of the production of narrative writing in two languages (Italian and English) by an ethno-linguistic group whose members come from a country which has a different cultural and linguistic base from that prevalent in the host society. Of course the model does not apply just to the Italians in Australia but to many other groups as well. There are some parallels with the category considered by Dubois when he refers to French writers outside Metropolitan France (Switzerland, Belgium, some African countries and Quebec) but there are differences as well. In the cases mentioned by Dubois the writers are either in areas where

French language and culture constitute the mainstream or where a substantial number (if not all) of those interested in literature have substantial knowledge of French language and culture. Consequently it is likely that their writings in French are read outside their own community. Further, the "mother tongue" (or "cultural" mother tongue) of these writers is likely to be French although they may also be bilinguals and may possibly write (but Dubois does not mention this) in the other language of the country or region. Moreover it is unfortunate that Dubois does not mention whether in this particular case the writers are still to be considered as "marginal". In the Australian case the writers are more or less permanent immigrants to the country, their "mother tongue" is a language other than English and most are partial bilinguals. Further, the language and culture of the originating country is little known outside their own community and it is highly unlikely that works written in Italian or another community language are read outside the respective communities. These writers may also write in English but even in this case they are generally considered as marginal to the mainstream - cf. in the Italian case the questioning of Carboni's competency in English or the patronising attitude with regard to Cappiello's translated novel.

The studies by Dubois and Mouralis do not take into consideration the educational qualifications of the writers. However, educational qualifications seem to be one of the marks of institutional recognition. In some cases lack of the "right" education may be a barrier to acceptance or recognition by the

literary institutions of the mainstream. While there is not necessarily a strict correlation between educational qualifications and ability as a writer, it would seem likely that writers in marginal groups tend to be less "educated" in formal terms than writers in mainstream groups. Hence it is in the marginal groups that one is more likely to come across "scrittori da quinta elementare".

Another comment of a theoretical nature may be made in relation to the observation that Italo-Australian narrative writers seem to favour certain types of writings over others. Both Dubois and Mouralis point out that this can be a characteristic of "marginal" groups. Writers write about what most concerns them, what is most relevant or close to their own experience, although the writing may also transcend the routine aspects of everyday living. In the case of the Italo-Australian writer the everyday reality is usually presented in a quite transparent way, hence the popularity of social realist narrative, autobiographical narrative and narrative which relates specifically to the Italo-Australian community. There are also strong grounds for arguing that this type of writing can represent a form of cultural identity crisis worked out in literature, possibly a way of resolving the writer's personal dilemma. This would also seem to be the case with other "migrant" groups in Australia. Whether this "transparency" of presentation and the popularity of certain narrative types is a general characteristic of "minority" groups is a point which has so far not been discussed to any great extent by the sociologists of literature.

A third theoretical point is the question of the publishing of texts produced by minority groups and what the publication of these works means in terms of their value. They are not recognized by the commercial publishers in that their work is considered not to be sufficiently viable in economic terms or of sufficient literary value or both. Publication through this avenue could thus be seen as an acknowledgment of literary merit. Further it would appear that for the commercial publisher the work needs to be in English and on a migrant-related theme. Consequently writers are usually able to publish only by means of subsidies, in some cases by subsidising or even by publishing the work themselves. Various cultural and social bodies and community groups (and in the Australian case "ethnic" organizations too) also finance the printing of these works. And there has also been the odd case of a writer founding his own publishing company. However in these cases too works published are strictly related to the migrant experience, a requirement which would substantially seem to exclude writers such as Basili and Guzzardi. The availability of word processors has made available the very viable alternative of "desk top publishing", whereby the writer can make substantial savings on typesetting costs, thus making a limited print run economically feasible. Other means of reproduction of texts are the more traditional ones of cyclostyle and photocopying. There is also the question of the distribution of works so produced, a distribution which normally takes place outside the usual commercial circuit of bookshops, newsagents and supermarkets. Often it is the writer himself who sells or gives away his own works. This activity would seem to

imply a rethinking of the concept of "publication" which, with technological advances, is now possible outside the institutionalized publishing framework. Furthermore, the production of limited run editions is now more viable in economic terms than in the past. However, while the economics of production have undergone change, those relating to distribution have remained substantially the same. The very problematical question of distribution outside the institutionalized framework still poses a considerable obstacle to the circulation of marginal literary works.

A consideration, of a methodological nature, is the fact that, in the present study, unpublished as well as published works are taken into consideration. In Chapter one it was explained that the reason for the inclusion of unpublished texts was to give as composite a picture as possible of Italo-Australian narrative over a twenty-one year period, given the difficulty of publication and the fact that some unpublished works may enjoy some circulation (eg. through photocopying). This has proved to be the case since over the last few years a number of writers have circulated photocopies of their work at meetings and conferences and a few have sent material to writers' groups in other states. Further, it was considered likely that at least some of these works may have been published in the future. In fact since writing the final draft of the thesis stories by Basili, Cappiello, Gabbrielli, Giglio and Tedeschi as well as extracts from Di Stefano's novel have appeared in print.

Finally, and this is a question which will be addressed at the conclusion of this chapter, the examination of these writings may well lead to reflections on the nature of literature itself and of the cultural context in which it is produced.

ITALO-AUSTRALIAN NARRATIVE AS OBJECT

The examination of the texts and their writers suggests a number of parameters which serve to define the characteristics of "Italo-Australian" narrative by defining what type of people write these texts, how and why they write them and what they write about. The latter element, in fact, has comprised the main thrust of this thesis and will be discussed in the first section. Here it is intended to provide some reflections on the commercial, sociological and psychological characteristics of Italo-Australian narrative.

While these characteristics are useful in a taxonomic, sense it can be posited that they are likely to change over time., this type of writing being a transitory phenomenon and dependent on the continuation of immigration. It is thus indicative of a group of writers of Italian origin writing in Australia at a given point in time, not as a paradigm perpetuating a distinct and separate category of writers. In fact the "multicultural" concept of Australian society would in a sense indicate that such categorization or "separateness" could be counterproductive or even contradictory. Nevertheless there is some element of categorization, of separation into distinct categories which comes

about both from the hegemonic group as well as from the Italo-Australian writers themselves. For some Italo-Australian writers, in particular Charles D'Aprano, this separation is correlated to the formulation of a distinct Italo-Australian cultural identity. However not all Italo-Australian writers subscribe to this concept. Some first generation writers and most of the second generation do not see themselves as a unique group distinct from the rest of Australian writing. An example of this latter position is provided by Archimede Fusillo:

> "As a writer I can only be as indigenously Australian as my voice will allow; and as that voice may change with subject, so, too, my status as a truly Australian writer. But then this may be a valuable asset because this writing voice may very well allow me to cross the boundaries between one culture and another, without selling out to either. If anything, this transition may actually prove to find the writer a wider audience, one that can appreciate the written word as a giver, irrespective of the writer's origins." (Fusillo 1987:12)

However, as far as the mainstream is concerned, the idea that the NES immigrant can also be a writer is a relatively new one. It can perhaps be claimed that for Australian society at large the picture of the "ethnic" writer is somewhat at variance with generally perceived stereotypes of the NES immigrant. A case in point is provided by Hempel (among others) who states that "Australian opinion of Italian immigration tends to be influenced by traditional prejudice rather than scientific fact" (Hempel 1959:45). He characterises the Italian male immigrant as an opportunistic person concerned with thrift, hard work and success. Accordingly "a happy migrant is a migrant who has been placed in

employment suitable to the level of his education and skill" (Hempel 1959:47). Hence in order to become "Australianized" and accepted Nino Culotta must change his profession from journalist (i.e. a writer) to that of brickie's labourer. Within this paradigm there was no room for the immigrant who might have aspirations to creative activity, for the immigrant who, having secured his economic position, would in later years graduate from his status of worker and turn to writing (Pietro Tedeschi) or art and sculpture (Gino Sanguineti), despite, in some cases, relatively low levels of formal education.

That "Italo-Australian" writers exist as a sociocultural group has been amply illustrated in the preceding chapters. For reasons partly of space and partly of coherence the present study has concerned itself with first generation writers. Apart from the odd reference it has not addressed the question of the writer of Italian descent and his relationship to both the mainstream and the Italo-Australian group. As the above quote by Fusillo seems to indicate, this aspect would be worthy of investigation in its own right.

The writers of "Italo-Australian" narrative over the period 1965-1986 examined in the present study are all Italian born with the exception of F. Giglio, the only Australian-born writer to identify closely with this group. In general second generation writers seem to be less identifiable in terms of the parameters discussed here. With regard to socio-economic status and formal educational experience we find that writers come from a variety

of backgrounds. Only two (Pino Bosi and Rosa Cappiello) may be considered "professional" writers in that writing is their main occupation. The others, apart from a few housewives, fall into two main occupational groups: skilled workers and the professions. In this latter category the majority of writers are teachers, mostly in secondary schools with a few in Universities. In fact, the contributors of narrative texts to Voci nostre (Abiuso 1979) were nearly all involved in some sort of teaching activity. In this particular case, however, the tendency can in part be accounted for by the didactic purpose of the anthology and the fact that the compilers themselves are teachers. Hence with very few exceptions it can be said that Italo-Australian narrative writers are middle class, a factor in keeping with the traditional view of narrative as a middle class literary genre. In educational terms most have some sort of Italian qualification beyond the "scuola media" (junior secondary school), while most of the teachers hold Australian qualifications and, in some cases, Italian ones as well. A few writers have had only Italian primary schooling. While the technically better writers are all tertiary qualified (Basili, Gabbrielli), talent is not necessarily correlated with formal education (Cappiello).

A complementary question to "who are the writers?" is "who are the readers?", a question which the present study does not really address since an exhaustive analysis of this aspect would require a research effort and methodology of a different kind altogether. However, the information collected, although not comprehensive, does allow a few tentative considerations. Most

of those works of Italo-Australian narrative that have been published have required some sort of subsidy, have had limited circulation and a limited number of readers. Only Pino Bosi's Australia cane has achieved some measure of readership among first generation Italo-Australians outside the circle of those who actively follow such writings. Bosi's The Checkmate seems to have found sufficient Anglo-Australian readers to warrant a second (subsidised) edition. Cappiello's Paese fortunato is the only Italo-Australian novel to have been the subject of a commercial venture by an Italian publisher (although the readers probably number not more than a few thousand) and a semi-commercial venture by an Australian publisher. In this latter case the paperback edition published in 1987 is perhaps a sign that there is continued interest in the novel on the part of the Anglo-Australian reader. It may be facetious to conclude that Italo-Australian narrative is produced more for the writer than for the reader but it is a consideration which has to be kept in mind.

A comparison with Green's study of Italo-American literature (see Chapter 1) highlights two fundamental differences. Italo-Australian narrative does not seem to be susceptible to the five-stage pattern which Green has identified for Italo-American narrative. To a large extent this is due to the different periods and social contexts in which the two were generated as well as to the fact that Italo-Australian narrative is a much more recent phenomenon. Nevertheless the two seem to identify quite closely in their presentation of conflict and isolation patterns. The second difference is that Italo-Australian narrative seems to

present a much more critical and dialectic view of Australian society than Italo-American narrative presents of American society. In this respect Italo-Australian narrative may be seen as less conformist in terms of the mainstream. Whereas Green 1974:19 sees the Italo-American writer as presenting a largely positive view of American society, the Italo-Australian writer often seems to do the opposite. Both literatures tend to depict in realistic fiction segments of their particular societies and to give that fiction distinctive interpretations. However the distinctive interpretation in Italo-American literature is that "the individual has the moral power to triumph in the struggle against a hostile environment" (Green 1974:19) and there would thus seem to be some tendency to romanticization of the migration experience. In Italo-Australian literature there is no such uniformity. In some cases the individual triumphs, in other cases he does not and in still other cases the outcome is left in doubt. Further, there seems to be a general tendency to the deromanticization of the migration experience, Cappiello being a particular case in point. It is mainly in Pino Bosi's Australia cane and,to a certain extent in Di Stefano's L'Avventura australiana, that we may note a tendency to romanticization and a triumphal conclusion. Their "successful" immigrants are potentially committed to fit into the classless boundaries of the egalitarian Australian ethos and the liberal parameters of rugged individualism in the guise of success and hard work. This is particularly so in the case of Enzo (L'Avventura australiana) who, despite his status as a lawyer in the originating culture is prepared to work as a factory hand in order to ensure his adherence to its ethos.

THEMATIC AND CULTURAL-LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ITALO-AUSTRALIAN NARRATIVE

The type of theme found in Italo-Australian narrative seems to fall within certain specifically definable limits.

Autobiographical fiction seems to be a popular choice. As pointed out in Chapter 2 most Italo-Australian narrative has some (auto)biographical basis. In certain texts this basis is very obvious and transparent in that the characters and events presented have an explicit identification with the experience of the author. Usually this type of writing covers episodes in the life of the writer over a period of one or two years which are seen as particularly traumatic and which are identified with migration. The one exception is Cozzi's brief novel. In the case of Tedeschi's Senza camicia it is the difficult and indeed desperate life experience of the writer/protagonist which leads to his decision to emigrate. In Di Stefano's Avventura australiana there is the minute description of the thoughts, trials and tribulations of the protagonist as she comes to terms with a new life in a new country. Andreoni's Martin Pescatore, although not in the same transparent autobiographical terms, deals in part with the writer/protagonist's metaphysical travail, based on his life experience, in his transition from the old country and culture to the new. These thematic characteristics are also found in a number of the short stories examined. Charles D'Aprano's The Swallow also has a number of elements in common with the foregoing but it also presents an aspect which so far is not to be

found elsewhere in Italo-Australian narrative (although it is an important theme in poetry). It is the re-evaluation of home society and culture which takes place after the consummation of the migration and settlement experience. In D'Aprano's case this leads to the positing of a new and unique "Italo-Australian" cultural identity (whereas in poetry it leads to nostalgia, rejection or acceptance) and herein lies perhaps one of the most potentially innovative thematic aspects of Italo-Australian narrative. However the other side of the coin is presented too when in Cenere Andreoni posits the practical impossibility of the emergence of this desirable and positive new identity since it is stifled by the cultural conservatism of the host society.

Another common thematic element is that of the Italo-Australian community. It is the community which has formed as a result of the migration and settlement experience of the 50s and 60s. This theme is presented from a variety of perspectives. For Bosi the community is a positive, cohesive, identifiable, male-dominated group which responds positively to the experience in the new country by creating its own "little world" within the egalitarian and apparently classless wider Australian community. To a certain extent this view corresponds to that presented in sociological studies such as Hempel 1969. However (and this to some extent coincides with some of the more recent sociological studies) most writers tend to present a deromanticized though not necessarily negative view of the community. Abiuso and Andreoni deal with the economic hardship experienced by urban workers and farmers and the concomitant

social and personal problems these cause. For both writers the socio-economic activities and aspirations of the Italo-Australian community are circumscribed and limited by the host society although for Abiuso the community, for those individuals who are receptive to the mores and ethos of the host society, can serve as a point of access to the Australian community. Bertozzi and Cappiello (although in Cappiello this is not a main theme) view the Italo-Australian community in negative terms as representing social and cultural atrophy. Its customs, outlook and practices belong to the past and have remained those prevalent in the originating society at the time of migration. The community (but not necessarily individuals within it) is closed to whatever cultural change might be available from the host society and is cut off from the cultural evolution which has taken place in the home country. This later point is a dominant and important theme in much of Italo-Australian theatre. Hence, according to Bertozzi and Cappiello, the community presents and reinforces a number of characteristics which are seen as atavistic and retrograde, such as the chauvinism of the Latin male (despite the relative scarcity of females) and the exploitation of the woman migrant both in her traditional role as a domestic object and in her new one as a provider of a second income. Gino Nibbi too tends to see the Italo-Australian community as representing a sort of migrant subculture. Unlike Bertozzi, and, especially, Cappiello, he does not present any overt subjective judgements although his irony serves as a distinct pointer to underlying negative attitudes, particularly in relation to those segments of the community originating from the Italian South.

A third common thematic element is that pertinent to Australian society and certain aspects of the Australian natural environment. The critique of Australian society comes across in a particularly emphatic manner in the writings of Nibbi and Cappiello. Australians are seen as a people without culture or history, spineless and mentally sluggish when compared to the more vivacious and alive Europeans. There is a drabness about Australian life, customs and mores which sits uneasily even with relatively "uncultured" migrants. If anything it is the pluriethnic nature of Australian society which adds some colour to the human landscape, a matter commented upon by Nibbi and, especially, Bosi. Other writers, though less emphatically and to varying degrees, also view the human environment in a negative light and it is perhaps these negative aspects of Australian life and culture which prevent D'Aprano's Bill/Stefano from fully identifying as an Australian. Andreoni and Penninger comment on the political dimension of Australian life, which is seen as conservative and subservient to outside economic and political influence. In part it is the result of the political and mental apathy displayed by the bulk of Australians.

While in most writers there is a rejection, or at best a wary and uneasy acceptance of the human environment, there is an almost universal acceptance of the Australian natural setting. It is this aspect of Australia which perhaps best serves to define both the uniqueness of the country and, in some cases, the justification for the decision to remain there. For Cappiello the urban costal natural environment is a compensation for loneliness

and the alienating aspects of the social landscape. Bertozzi's unwilling bride to be finds the urban setting of the Italo-Australian community stifling and restrictive but revels in the beauty and splendor of the Victorian coastline. Nibbi appreciates the primitiveness and tranquillity of the Tasmanian bush although he is somewhat less enamoured of the Australian tropics, due perhaps to his perception of nature from a European perspective. The bush and outback as mystique is an important feature of the writing of Abiuso and, particularly, Andreoni, who has attempted to find some parallels with the Aboriginal feeling for the land.

Aspects such as the migrant work ethic (recently dubbed "migrant drive" by the sociologists - see "9 O'Clock", SBS-TV, 6-2-87), the Australians' fondness for drink, Australians' dress habits, are common thematic components, although Italo-Australian writers are often unaware of each other's work. There is thus a certain thematic repetitiveness in Italo-Australian narrative, although it is also true to say that each writer deals with these themes in his/her own particular way. Australia and Australian society are presented in quite divergent ways although the condemnation of Australian drinking habits is quite uniform and is presented by writers as varied as Nibbi and Cappiello. Surprisingly uniform is the presentation of the migrant work ethic theme which is found in Cappiello and Di Stefano and, to a certain extent, Bosi and Andreoni as well as Sanciolo. All writers tend to regard this aspect in negative terms, although from the point of view of the Anglo-Australian sociologists it is one of the more

positive aspects of Italian emigration to Australia, thus constituting one point where creative writing and sociology do not agree. Perhaps these are the themes which are of more immediate interest to the writer, closer to his/her "reality" and that of the intended reader (Paese fortunato and Nibbi excepted). Nevertheless they do have a limiting effect and very rarely does a work transcend these limits to attain more universal values. Further, although "migration" literature in Italy deals with the experience of the emigrant both in the host and in the home country (see Appendix II), Italo-Australian narrative has, to date, not dealt with the migrant experience in the home country (Italy) to any great extent. In fact both groups show that "migrant" narrative is very closely tied to personal experience.

Surpisingly enough Italy is a relatively minor theme in Italo-Australian narrative, almost as though the writer, rather than looking back on his pre-migration experience, prefers to examine his/her present situation and environment.

Cultural referents found in Italo-Australian narrative are generally in terms of the originating culture - eg. references to the Italian and the Graeco-Latin cultural traditions, with Dante being one of the more favoured. However in some cases there are references to the host culture, such as Cappiello's reference to A. D. Hope, Andreoni's and Sallustio's presentation of Aboriginal legends. In fact in Andreoni there is a tendency to gravitate more to the host culture than to the originating culture. Sometimes cultural juxtaposition can occur, such as in the cases already

noted in Cappiello (see Chapter 5) where the winter/chrysanthemum/death nexus, an Italian cultural referent, is transposed to an Australian context or where the protagonist states that thirteen and seventeen are her lucky numbers. However thirteen is also a lucky number for feminists since it is a witching number.

Yet another characteristic of the category is the use of language. Italo-Australian narrative writers have used both English and Italian. Both languages have taken on distinct characteristics such as the introduction of Italo-Australian words and structures in the Italian, the insertion of Italianate forms in the English. In the main, Italo-Australian narrative works have been written in Italian, Pino Bosi being the only writer to have published in both languages. However in the last few years there seems to have been a tendency towards language shift. Abiuso and D'Aprano have published their works in volume form in English. Tedeschi has published his first novel in Italian but is writing his second one in English. Di Stefano and Cappiello are translating into English some of their own unpublished Italian works. The shift towards English, possibly in part triggered by the translation of Paese fortunato, seems due to the realization that if a work is to be published in Australia then an Italian text will have a very limited number of potential readers and hence less chance of being published, while a text in English has a much better chance of being read and hence published. Works published in Italy and intended for the Italian reader there, such as in Andreoni's case, continue to be published in Italian.

ITALO-AUSTRALIAN NARRATIVE AS LITERATURE

An attempt to define the characteristics of Italo-Australian narrative will invariably lead to an attempt at the evaluation of these works as literature. While the sociology of literature defines the literary work in the broadest of possible terms, Escarpit nevertheless recognizes that the work of literature can also be differentiated in qualitative terms. However, qualitative criteria are only one in a variety of sets of criteria which can be employed and in fact the discipline has tended to concentrate on criteria other than those pertaining to quality. Needless to say, no antipodean Dante or Nobel prizewinner has as yet emerged from this group and the discussion of quality in Italo-Australian narrative must be a relative one. In intrinsic terms it can lead to considerable reservations about the value of some of the works which constitute the corpus. If by quality one intends legitimisation through acceptance by all or some of the relevant social institutions (commercial publishers, second editions, literary magazines, literary critics, literary prize committees, the education system) or by its intended readers, then writers such as Cappiello, Nibbi, Gabbrielli, Bosi and possibly Andreoni could be seen as constituting a sort of qualitative ranking order with others falling outside this scheme. In terms of personal selection, too, these seem to be the writers who, for a variety of reasons, may be considered as being better than the others in qualitative terms, with perhaps a few writers such as Penninger and Lando being excluded from consideration as writers of fiction. Another test of quality could be whether Italo-Australian

narrative is likely to have any appeal outside its strict sphere of relevance in time and place and perhaps here the only possible candidate is, to date, Cappiello. It seems something of a paradox that the writer most accepted by the host society institutions of his time, Renato Amato, wrote in New Zealand and not in Australia.

However, if the consideration of these texts as "literature" in their intrinsic aspects can lead to some doubt as to their validity, some of the criteria developed by Escarpit in defining a "valid" literary work (see Chapter 1) can be applied to qualify some of these works as literary texts. Among these criteria can be identified acceptance on the part of the reader, coincidence of outlook between writer and reader and to what extent the writer is successful in portraying the realities of the society he lives in. There are, moreover, the arguments advanced by Lumb and Hazell 1983:xvi, who apologize for the intrinsic qualitative drawback of Australian migrant / minority literature but claim that it is "valid" literature on the grounds that "majority" authors have substantially failed to develop themes or elements which relate to the experience of the NES immigrant. Hence it could be argued by analogy that Italo-Australian narrative is a valid literary form in that it presents a unique perspective on this experience.

ITALO-AUSTRALIAN NARRATIVE AS A SOCIOLOGICAL TEXT

The most forceful argument for the "validity" of this type of literature would seem to rely substantially on its value as a text in relation to the socio-historical reality of the migration

experience. There is, in fact, widespread agreement on the socio-historical value of these writings. While, as has been seen, some writers deal with themes not necessarily tied to the migration experience, and Cappiello transcends these aspects, it can nevertheless be said that most writers and most works present aspects of the migration experience as a main theme. How some Italian immigrants see Australia and Australian society, how they react to it, their appreciation of the natural beauties of the new country, what they think of the land they left behind, are all salient elements of the category. They are "inside" stories told not with the detachment or the objectivity of the Anglo-saxon trained sociologist or historian but from a subjective personal and sometimes visceral point of view. They are not statistics and academic dissertations but partial, highly individualized truths which together may add up to defining a commonality of experience, perhaps representative of the story each immigrant has within him. They relate the anger, frustration, the hopes and disappointments lived by the immigrants. The traumatic experience of leaving one's native land and of having to start again in a new country with the realization that perhaps one can never really "belong" completely is a story only the immigrant can tell. It is an irreconcilable metaphysical wandering between two worlds which only the immigrant has known. It is a view of the host society which only the immigrant can give. These are the aspects which make these documents worthy of perusal by the second and third generation, as well as by Anglo-Australians, irrespective of their possible intrinsic literary value. Paradoxically it is these limiting aspects which make these

documents unique, possibly more so when from the standpoint of a future generation there is an attempt to evaluate the post World War II mass migration phenomenon.

Certainly what these texts present is, in many cases, very much at variance with the way in which Australian society currently views immigration, a view which is in turn reflected in official immigration policy. On the one hand there is the element in official immigration policy (formulated in the early 70s by the ALP Government) which elects not to discriminate on the basis of "natural" boundaries; on the other there is the tendency to discriminate against those potential immigrants whose own cultural boundaries would be seen as incompatible with the cultural traditions of the Australian, and whose own traditions would be seen as resulting in "social" problems arising through difference and conflict with the tradition of the Australian. The "non-discrimination" immigration policy is hence supposed to operate within a "natural" category. It seeks to place the potential "new" Australian on an equal footing with the "old" Australian provided s/he exhibits those discriminatory characteristics which would be compatible with the theme of "equality of opportunity" within the established Australian traditions of social hierarchy based on notions of work, success, power and prestige. What the literature written by NES immigrants tends to do in the main is to debunk these concepts of "egalitarianism" and "non-discrimination". Despite all the good intentions of "official" policy, these texts tell us that, in the main, the immigrant does not feel on an equal footing with Australian-born citizens.

If we accept the argument advanced in chapter 1 that "scientific" truth is mediated by the hegemonic social group, then the work of sociologists and historians, insofar as it is mediated through social institutions, can be seen as presenting a view from the WASP centre and tending towards cultural stereotyping. It is perhaps the "ethnic" creative writers who may be seen in the Australian context as the only ones able to present a view from the periphery.

ITALO-AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE AND AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

Italo-Australian narrative, as defined above in terms of its practitioners, its themes and its horizons (and indeed Italo-Australian literature as a whole) appears a marginal and transitory phenomenon, unlikely to survive beyond the first generation and developed mainly in isolation from the rest of Australian letters. Although many themes and developments in Italo-Australian narrative parallel those found in "migration" narrative in contemporary Italian literature, it has virtually no impact and little connection with this aspect of the home culture. Its potential would seem to be mainly expressed in terms of the literature of the host society.

What, then, is its validity, if any, with respect to the general Australian cultural ambience? Firstly, irrespective of their literary value, these texts provide a new perspective on Australia and Australian society, one which is impossible to obtain from a

mainstream standpoint and one which is different from the perspective which may be provided by other "ethnic" groups. Secondly, and this is a more restricted function found only among the qualitatively better writers, it provides a means of literary expression, different from that employed by the mainstream, with which to represent the Australian ambience. Thirdly, and this is perhaps where its greatest potential may lie, it may have some influence on mainstream literature. That the mainstream is receptive to a variety of influences can be demonstrated by the fact that since 1945 it has absorbed literary trends and philosophies not only from the UK and the US but also and increasingly from Europe and South America. Literary activity is thus no longer rigidly linked to defined boundaries of cultural and national identity. These influences are particularly observable in recent anthologies such as Transgressions (Penguin Australia 1986), edited by Don Anderson, which includes not only material by anglo-Australian writers showing influences as varied as Italo Calvino, Samuel Beckett and Jorge Luis Borges but also writings by Aboriginals and authors of NES backgrounds resident in Australia. This may be taken as constituting a sign that together with other "migrant" literatures and "aboriginal" literature, Italo-Australian literature has over the past few years slowly been gaining some institutional recognition through its inclusion in anthologies of Australian writings, in the education system, and a very limited acceptance on the part of semi-commercial publishers. This influence is beginning to be felt in the mainstream (eg. the adaptation of Aboriginal narrative forms by the scriptwriters of Mad Max III). This acceptance constitutes, perhaps, the beginning

of an answer on the literary/creative plane to the question posited some ten years ago by Jean Martin:

> "The crucial question in relation to public knowledge and public policy is whether the ordered production of knowledge and the complimentary participation in social structure enable these diverse experiences to become publicly relevant, or whether - on the contrary - the experiences of only the favoured few are acknowledged as legitimate sources of social knowledge." (Martin 1978:213)

In fact, whereas in the past these writings were totally ignored, there is now an opening out, if not a tendency towards over-representation. However, the fact that the literature of minority NES groups should be recognized and possibly accepted by the mainstream is one of the positive aspects of multiculturalism. This may or may not lead to subsequent merging with and enrichment of the mainstream (eg. through the systematic adaptation of new expressive linguistic forms). It does however lead to a questioning of the nature of "migrant" and "aboriginal" writing, to their place in "Australian" writing and subsequently to the possible reformulation of the concept of what is "Australian" writing which may in turn lead to new attitudes and aspects in the formulation of an Australian cultural identity.

As the special issue of Meanjin 1/1983 on immigration and culture suggests, the introduction of new and different perspectives through the presence in Australian society of minorities of different language groups and cultural backgrounds leads to a reexamination of the frailties and strengths of cultural traditions and hence to a change in the way in which the host

society perceives itself. Creative writing by immigrants does not just enrich or add to the mainstream. It has the potential to make a cultural and political statement certainly to the extent of rupturing perhaps permanently the traditional homogeneal view of this aspect of Australian society and possibly in terms of providing a new dimension to the perception of national identity.

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APPENDICES

Rivista Italiana di Dialettologia, Scuola società territorio a. IX (1985), numero unico

APPENDIX I

DIALETTO, LINGUA E CULTURA NELLA PRODUZIONE LETTERARIA DEGLI IMMIGRATI ITALIANI IN AUSTRALIA

Please see print copy for article on p418-430:

Rando, G 1985, 'Dialetto, lingua e cultura nella produzione letteraria degli immigrati italiani in Australia', *Rassegna Italiana Di Dialettologia*, vol.9, pp 129-154.

APPENDIX II

THE MIGRATION THEME IN THE MAINSTREAM LITERATURES (ITALIAN AND AUSTRALIAN)

What is the relationship between "migrant" literature and the respective mainstream literature(s)? While a major if not an exclusive theme of "migrant" literature may be expected to be the migration experience, to what extent is this theme prominent in the mainstream literature of countries which experience the migration phenomenon? Is the migration theme, like "migrant" literature itself, considered as constituting a marginal category? Given that the migration theme can serve as a link between "migrant" literature and the respective mainstream literature(s), what is the connection, if any, between the two types of literature? These are the questions which it is proposed to address by surveying the migration theme in Italian and Anglo-Australian literatures.

THE MIGRATION THEME IN ITALIAN LITERATURE

Although touched upon by late 19th century writers of the calibre of De Amicis, Verga and Pascoli as well as some other less important ones such as Salgari, migration as a coherent theme in modern Italian literature did not emerge until after the second world war, when the migratory phenomenon had already been in progress for eighty odd years and, rare exceptions apart, it is found only in minor or regional writers. In any case, given the nature of the 19th century writer especially in the period up to unification, emigration, when it did appear (such as in the works of Ugo Foscolo and even in the Italian works of Raffaello Carboni), invariably referred to those who had had to go into political exile because of their involvement with the various national liberation movements.

Edmondo De Amicis' best known and most acclaimed literary work Cuore (1886) is a classic of modern Italian literature. Written ostensibly as a children's book, it presents the political theme of post-risorgimento brotherhood and equality among all

Italians despite regional, class and cultural differences. It is a fictitious diary which relates a year in the life of a thirteen year old schoolboy. In addition eleven edifying / moral stories, one per month, are inserted. Among the stories is 'Dagli Appennini alle Ande' which relates the odyssey of a thirteen year old Genovese boy, Marco, whose family had fallen on hard times and whose mother had emigrated to Argentina in order to earn money by working as a maid. When no further news is received from the mother, Marco persuades his father to let him go to Argentina to search for her. After a series of adventures he is finally reunited with her and it is implied that they will return to Italy together. The basic theme of the story is about family (hence national) attachment and unity, but in describing Marco's travels and his meetings with Italian immigrants in Argentina (who in a gesture of solidarity contribute to a collection when he runs out of money) some aspects of the migrant condition are presented. Perhaps the most important one is the message that emigration causes the division of families (although it may also be remarked that it is somewhat odd that the mother should have left the family and migrated since in real life this was the role usually reserved for the father!). A few years later De Amicis published Sull'Oceano (1889) a *reportage* which explores with considerable sentimentality the factors of hunger, poverty, exploitation and ill-treatment by the ruling class which had led to the then recent phenomenon of mass emigration by the subproletariat. D'Amicis also describes the extreme difficulties and hardships (exploitation by the boat owners, crowded and unhygienic conditions aboard ship which lead to the death of not insignificant numbers during the voyage) which these poor wretches endured during the long journey from their homes to the new country, Argentina. Similar themes and attitudes are presented by a then popular writer of adventure novels Emilio Salgari (a sort of Italian Kipling) in a very brief but graphic though somewhat rhetorical piece 'Gli Emigranti', which was originally published in a Turin children's magazine (L'Innocenza) in 1896:

> "Avrete udito parlare piú volte di quei poveri contadini che, non trovando da guadagnarsi il pane nei loro paesetti, vanno a cercare fortuna nella lontana America, e forse ne avrete veduti parecchi partire

e affollarsi nei carrozzoni della ferrovia, recando con loro pochi stracci, l'ultima loro ricchezza.

Quei disgraziati, prima di giungere in America, devono attraversare un oceano immenso, l'Atlantico, e viaggiare venticinque giorni o anche trenta sui bastimenti.

Vi presentiamo oggi una scena dell'emigrazione. Guardate tutti quei contadini, che hanno abbandonato la nostra bella Italia, raggruppati in una grande cabina della nave. Vi sono con loro donne e bambini.

E' l'ora del pranzo. Tutti si affollano attorno ai cuochi e ai marinai per ricevere la loro minestra. Ma il mare non è tranquillo, e la nave, scossa dalle onde, trabalza disordinatamente, facendo tentennare tutti.

I tondi si rovesciano, i bambini cadono a terra, perdendo la minestra, gli altri si aggrappano alle sottane delle mammine e urlano di spavento, o si fanno aiutare dai fratelli piú grandi, mentre i padri accorrono da tutte le parti per tema di dover restare senza pranzo.

Sono cose che toccano quasi ogni giorno in mare, scene che si ripetono sempre e che mettono a dura prova la pazienza e la fame di quei poveri contadini.

Ma finalmente anche l'oceano è attraversato, le coste dell'America sono in vista, e sbarcono in quelle lontane regioni. Ma quanti disinganni li attendono sovente colà, e quanti ritornano in patria piú poveri di prima!" (Salgari 1971: 353-354)

While De Amicis and Salgari, both Northern writers, deal only with emigration to overseas countries (perhaps because it is considered more dramatic than emigration to other European countries) the great Southern writer Giovanni Verga mentions in his early novels (Eva, 1864-65; Una Peccatrice, 1866) the phenomenon of the migration of Southern intellectuals to Northern Italy. In some of his short stories (eg. 'Nedda') the peasant characters indulge in temporary migration within the same region in order to find work, a phenomenon which had begun to become manifest around 1870. However in 1881, the year which coincides with the initial period of mass emigration to the Americas (a peak year being 1900 when some 100,000 Sicilians left their native island), Verga published I Malavoglia which was to become his most important novel. In this novel emigration outside the home region is presented

in the most negative of terms. One of the protagonists of the novel, 'Ntoni, dreams of emigrating to a city (unspecified) where, in contrast to the poverty in the native village of Aci Trezza, the family will be able to eat pasta and meat every day. This notion is immediately censured by his grandfather, the partiarch and the wise old man in the story:

> "Va', va' a starci tu in città. Per me io voglio morire dove son nato;" e pensando alla casa dove era nato, e che non era più sua si lasciò cadere la testa sul petto. "Tu sei ragazzo e non lo sai!...non lo sai!... Vedrai cos'è quando non potrai più dormire nel tuo letto; e il sole non entrerà più dalla tua finestra!... Lo vedrai! te lo dico io che son vecchio!" Il poveraccio tossiva che pareva soffocasse, col dorso curvo, e dimenava tristemente il capo: "Ad ogni uccello, suo nido è bello."" (Verga 1979: 204)

In fact it is 'Ntoni's dream of leaving which is one of the major contributing factors to the family's subsequent misfortunes. Thus Verga, the "verista" writer par excellence, develops the notions of family unity, of attachment to one's native soil and stresses that it is better to live in dignified poverty at home than amidst riches elsewhere. Despite his self-professed stance as a realist writer he is significantly silent on one of the most important social realities of his time - viz. that poverty in Sicily was by no means dignified and that it was perhaps the most important factor responsible for the phenomenon of mass emigration from the island. According to Gramsci 1953:9 Verga adopts this position in order to serve the interests of the Sicilian hegemonic class for whom mass emigration meant loss of cheap labour. Similarly, but for quite opposite reasons, Vasco Pratolini in his famous historical novel Metello (1955) set in late nineteenth century Florence has his protagonist reject emigration as a solution to social and personal problems ("Chi emigra muore") since he must stay on and fight for workers' rights.

Although the national literary figures of the time gave little importance to the migration theme there is the odd case of minor dramatic writers who have presented the topic. As mentioned above Raffaello Carboni, in some of his plays, deals with the theme of pre-unification Italian patriots who have had emigrate because of

their political activities. A Roman Catholic priest, P. L. Grazioli presents emigration as a social drama (L'Emigrazione, dramma sociale, Milan 1881) in which he depicts the distress of poor farming families leaving for Brazil. The old mother is left alone at home while all the young men emigrate after the visit of an emigration agent and one of the group falls sick and dies. In the play a miner's rebellion is mentioned, probably a reference to the Eureka Stockade. Clearly Brazil and Australia, as destinations for emigrants, were equally remote and somewhat undistinguished.

The poet Giovanni Pascoli (a romagnolo educated at Urbino), whose sentimentalist brand of poetry tends to obscure its social content, nevertheless deals with the theme of migration in two poems which the critics invariably relegate to his minor poetry. One, 'Italy' (written in 1897), from the collection Primi poemetti, which extols the virtues of the simple country life (farming families who work their own small plots of land and make a modest but sufficient living), tells the sad story of a family which had emigrated to the United States and returns together with the American born daughter Molly (who is sick but is cured during her stay in Italy) to the native village Caprona in Tuscany to visit relatives. The family had emigrated for economic reasons, in order to make enough money so that they could return to their native village and buy some land, but life in America was not without its physical, material, and economic hardships. In a language which abounds with Italo-Americanisms in order to underscore the reality of the migrant experience Pascoli talks about the cost and suffering of emigration:

> "Offrono cheap la roba, cheap le braccia,
> indifferenti al tacito diniego;
> e cheap la vita, e tutto cheap; e in faccia
> no, dietro mormorare odono: Dego!" (Pascoli 1926: 207)

The story treats not only the experiences of the first generation but the loss of cultural and linguistic roots experienced by their children. An example of this is when Molly converses with her grandmother, although this initial difficulty is eventually overcome and the two are finally able to understand each other:

"Parlava; e la sua nonna, tremebonda,
stava a sentire, e poi dicea: 'non pare
un lui quando canta tra la fronda?'
Parlava la sua lingua d'oltremare:
'...a chicken-house' 'un piccolo lui...'
'...for mice and rats' 'che goda a cinguettare,
zi zi' 'Bad country, Joe, your Italy!'" (Pascoli 1926: 197)

In the other poem, 'Pietole', (Nuovi Poemetti) Pascoli deals with the theme of emigration as exile, pointing out that the poet Virgil himself dealt with such a theme and that no generation of Italians (from Dante to Colombo to Garibaldi) has escaped this fate. While in his poetry the migration theme is somewhat minor and nebulous, in his lectures Pascoli was quite explicit about Italy's social and economic ills which had prompted so many Italians to leave the country. He considered emigration a deviant phenomenon in terms of Italy's history and traditions, and advocated the necessity for the foundation of Italian colonies. At a national level, apart from Pascoli and Giacomo Zanella in his odes L'emigrazione dei contadini there was very little else written on the migration theme by the Italian poets of the time. At the regional level there is the Sicilian poet Mario Rapisardi, whose poetry of social protest Giustizia (1883) generally tends to be overlooked by the critics on qualitative grounds. However the theme is very much alive among regional/folk poets like Bruno Pelaggi who wrote in both Italian and dialect. It is only after the second world war that the theme appears on a consistent and coherent though marginal basis in Italian poetry. Minor poets such as the Calabrians Franco Constabile (La Rosa nel Bicchiere) and Michele Rio (Rifiuto e adesione, 1966) and the Sicilian Stefano Vilardo (Tutti dicono Germania Germania, 1975) write extensively and at first hand on the migrant experience at a time when migration flow is no longer so much to overseas countries but to Nothern Italy and the more developed European countries. Constabile's poetic composition, considered by Crupi 1979: 169-173 as the most forceful, dramatic and epic poetry written on the migration theme, transcends regional barriers and tells of a world without laughter, without kindness, without grace. The failure of the "Cassa per il Mezzogiorno" (the post World War II

government funded projects to aid development in Southern Italy) has only served to increase the exodus of those dispossessed people who constitute "the longest trains"[1] and are "the shame and dishonour of youth"[1] while the emaciated women remain at home harvesting "thorns and weeds"[1] in order to survive. Rio tells of the disillusionment suffered in the big cities of Northern Italy, mecca of so many Southern emigrants, while Vilardo follows his emigrants to Germany where as more or less temporary guest workers they are condemned to travel eternally back and forth across frontiers, to suffer the hardship of life in shanty towns and remain unable to make proper use of available social services because of language and other barriers.

In a no less negative vein but in a much more poignant, coherent and extensive manner the migration theme is also present in the folk literature in dialect of the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century. If, as we have seen, it constitutes a marginal theme in Italian poetry, it is a consistent theme in dialect poetry, each region of emigration having its own corpus of texts, both oral and written, in its own dialect. Although the composition of oral poetry and other forms of oral literature has now virtually become extinct, the practice of writing poetry in dialect is a particularly strong aspect of Italy's regional culture and is carried on even today despite the inroads made by the national language in all facets of regional life. To give some examples from Sicily: Giuseppe Borrello (Catania, 1820-1894) 'Esiliatu', Giovanni Formisano (Catania, 1897-) 'America' - Formisano gained wide acclaim for his lyrics to 'E vui durmiti ancora', probably the most popular Sicilian song this century, Salvatore Equizzi (Palermo, 1907-1964) 'Littra d'emigranti'. Themes common to these, and to other poems, are hostility ("In America they treat the best of us like dogs" - Formisano), migration as exile (Borrello), the longing to be reunited with wife and family (Equizzi) friends and familiar places (Borrello, Formisano, Equizzi). In Calabria Bruno Pelaggi wrote about the collective exasperation caused by poverty so utter and so real that it can be "gathered with pick and shovel" while those who can "run away to Novajorca [New York]". Vincenzo Franco in 'Rose e Spine'

(1889) denounces the five festering sores which sap the lifeblood of the Calabrian contadino: poverty, drunkenness, lawyers, taxes, America. Michele Pane (1876-1953) and other Calabrians who had emigrated to America (and the same can be said for migrants from other regions) write of their nostalgia brought about by the endless and hopeless separation from their native village. Examples of the migration theme are also to be found in oral literature. One Calabrian poem (probably early 20th century) curses Columbus for having discovered America:

"Cristofuru Columbu, chi facisti?
La megghiu giuvintù tu ruvinasti.
Ed eu chi vinni mu passu lu mari
cu chiju lignu niru di vapuri.
L'America ch'è ricca di dinari
é girata di paddi e di cannuni,
e li mugghieri di li "mericani"
chianginu forti ca ristaru suli."[2]

In the late 1940s / early 1950s, a period of considerable emigration to Australia from the Eolian Islands (Sicily), a popular song in dialect related, in an ironic tone, how many of the inhabitants (skilled fishermen) ended up working in Australian fruit shops:

"'Chiappi l'attu di richiamu
com'o pisci ammucchi all'amu,
e ti cridi ch'e strillini
sunnu carti di latrini.
Va all'Australia, va all'Australia,
va a 'llustrari, va a 'llustrari,
va a 'llustrari puma e pira
da mattina 'nfina a sira."[3]

In the oral folk tales of the same region emigration is often mentioned, as in the story of Zia Rosa who has to sell her cow in order to survive because her sons had emigrated to America, or the old woman who steals fish in order to eat because all her menfolk had emigrated. There is also the story of zu Ninu Tarantu who had emigrated to America (in other versions, to Australia) but who magically returned home every night while his wife was asleep and did all the housework because she had three small children to look after.[4]

In 20th century mainstream literature, however, the migration theme continues to be a marginal one, almost entirely absent in poetry and present only rarely in prose writers. Francesco Perri's novel Emigranti (1928) tells the story of the contadini of the Calabrian village of Pandurio who are forced to emigrate not because the land is unproductive but because of the injustices imposed by the absentee landowners aided and abetted by the courts. The peasants' emigration to America is thus seen as a flight from injustice, the only form of protest which they are able to articulate. The results are tragic for some of the characters: Gésu Bléfari contracts venereal disease in America and comes back to his village to die (not before having infected his wife Maruzza), while the women who remain are often left by their husbands or fiancés to fend for themselves. One abandoned wife even commits suicide. Although a few return with enough money to better their socio-economic condition, for most emigration is a tragic experience. The poor are condemned to remain poor even in an America which becomes an ambiguous image representing the myth of possible riches and the reality of hardship and exploitation. Perri, an almost unknown writer in the context of national Italian literature, has not been treated kindly by the critics (considering also the political climate of the period). Even Gramsci considers the lack of historical perspective a serious defect in the novel (perhaps forgetting that such an element constitutes one of the essential characteristics of folk literature!) claiming that "tutte queste distinzioni storiche, che sono essenziali per comprendere e rappresentare la vita del contadino, sono annullate e l'insieme confuso si riflette in modo rozzo, brutale, senza elaborazione artistica" (Gramsci 1977: 182). Antonio Piromalli, while stating that Perri "con tono accorato canta il dolore del popolo dei miseri borghi della Calabria che è costretto a lasciare la patria, i parenti, gli affetti per emigrare in terre lontane di oltremare" (Piromalli 1977: 209), nevertheless judges Perri's style as belonging to the nineteenth century while his characters come across as somewhat shallow since "lo scrittore non sembra scendere nel profondo del personaggio" (Piromalli 1977: 209).

Because of what has been claimed by a number of critics as the "provincial" nature of mainstream Italian literature,[5] the creative writer, given the restricted nature of his experiences and attitudes, was not able to locate his character beyond his immediate ambience. Thus the migration experience outside Italy was not able to be described. The only exception is perhaps Filippo Sacchi's La Casa in Oceania which achieved some critical acclaim as "un romanzo coloniale" (Pancrazi 1946: 146), a good adventure yarn set in exotic places. However it is generally claimed that none of the institutionally recognized writers has produced a "migrant" novel. In the narrative works of Corrado Alvaro (1895-1956) the migration theme is often present, particularly in the collection of short stories Gente in Aspromonte (1930) which deal with the stark reality of the Calabria of the time. However it is claimed that the writer's tendency to lyricism, to the internalization of his characters' experience and the description of the migrants' nostalgia for their native land, tend to detract from the more immediate aspects of social reality and that the writer, rather than concentrating on the migrant condition is more concerned with "la ricerca poetica di un'atmosfera arcaica e leggendaria, fuori del tempo, che la ricognizione documentaria sulle condizioni sociali e i caratteri psicologici dei protagonisti" (Asor Rosa 1969: 128). In other landmark novels on the South such as Ignazio Silone's Fontamara (1933) and Francesco Jovine's Le Terre del Sacramento (1950) migration is presented as a peripheral topic. In another Silone novel, Pane e Vino (1937), one of the minor characters, a returned emigrant, is nicknamed Sciatàp (phonic adaptation of shut up) by his fellow villagers because in all the years he had stayed in America it was one of the few English expressions he had learned. Rather than on the migration theme these authors prefer to concentrate on the abject economic and social conditions which blight the peasants' existence and (especially in Jovine) the peasants' unsuccessful struggles for land against the local potentates. Another contemporary writer, perhaps the most famous one, to have touched on the migration theme, is Cesare Pavese who in his last novel La Luna e i Falò (1950) presents a protagonist, the foundling Anguilla, who emigrates to America and, after having

made some money through quite varied types of work, returns to his native Langhe in Piemonte. However migration, in Anguilla's case, provides merely the deus ex machina for his constant yet unsuccessful attempts to resolve his condition of rootlessness. Although he returns as a relatively rich man to the village in which he grew up, his anguish does not allow him to settle down and the novel concludes with his leaving the village, an eternal wanderer. Migration as mystique is also featured in one of Pavese's poems 'I Mari del Sud', where the narrator reminisces about an almost forgotten cousin who had emigrated to Tasmania.

The migration theme occupies a prominent place in Carlo Levi's quasi-novel Cristo si è fermato a Eboli (1945), produced as a result of the writer's experiences as a political exile at Gagliano (Lucania) during the Fascist period. Sent from his native Turin to a remote village in Southern Italy, Levi poignantly describes the lives of its inhabitants who are caught up in a vicious circle of poverty and primitiveness. Hailed as a work which brought into the limelight the almost unknown harsh social realities of Italy's "deep South", it is considered one of the classics of contemporary Italian literature. For the inhabitants of Gagliano, whose struggle for survival in a difficult land is compounded by the social injustice perpetrated upon them by local landowners and the government, the only possible escape from centuries of oppression is to emigrate to America. Thus Levi describes not only those who stay and bend their backs to the yoke of oppression but also those who emigrate, the women they leave behind and who rarely if ever follow the men. The population of the Gagliano described by Levi is 1,200 while over the years about 2,000 Gaglianesi have emigrated to America. Both the abject poverty in which the Gaglianesi live and the personal and social problems caused by emigration are, according to Levi, an indictment of the government in Rome which is considered by the contadini as a foreign state present only through the carabinieri who enforce alien laws and tax officials who plunder what little the contadini produce. If these dispossessed peasants could have a "patria" it would be New York, the promised land from which their compatriots send money to relatives left behind:

> "Per la gente di Lucania, Roma non è nulla: è la capitale dei signori, il centro di uno stato straniero e malefico. [...] L'altro mondo è l'America. Anche l'America ha per i contadini una doppia natura. E' una terra dove si va a lavorare, dove si suda e si fatica, dove il poco denaro è risparmiato con mille stenti e privazioni, dove qualche volta si muore e nessuno più ci ricorda; ma nello stesso tempo, e senza contraddizioni, è il paradiso, la terra promessa del Regno. [...] New York sarebbe la vera capitale dei contadini di Lucania se mai questi uomini senza Stato potessero averne una. E lo è nel solo modo possibile per loro, in un modo mitologico." (Levi 1964: 100)

Those who have emigrated to America return to Gagliano only if they are forced to, such as when a combination of Fascist propaganda and the 1929 depression attracted some emigrants back to their native village where their savings were soon dissipated. These repatriates (called "Americani" by their fellow villagers), contrary to what generally occurs in "migration" literature, experience an inverse nostalgia and regret for their host country: "Gagliano è piena di questi emigrati ritornati: il giorno del ritorni è considerato da loro tutti un giorno di disgrazia" (Levi 1964: 101). However while Levi, dealing with the realities of the situation he describes, deals also with migration at both a social and a human level, the phenomenon is presented as one of the factors, certainly not the principal factor, influencing the general situation of Lucania. It is considered a phenomenon which helps to attenuate but does not eliminate the abject poverty of the region. For this reason the migration theme is generally seen as a marginal one in perhaps the only nationally and internationally acclaimed work of Italian literature which deals with the phenomenon on a substantial basis.

The migration theme is an important if not dominant feature of the work of a little-known Lucanian writer, Rocco Scotellaro (1924-1953), who in his narrative and poetry describes Lucania in the late 40s and early 50s, a period of upheaval when 230,000 contadini departed from the region leaving many villages almost entirely abandoned. His characters, dispersed and cut off from their cultural roots and from their history, leave their land with bitterness in their heart to wander as strangers in foreign lands.

However some of those who return after having worked and suffered in America are, like Levi's characters, nostalgic about the host country.

Perhaps the most prolific narrative writer on the migration theme is the Calabrian Saverio Strati (1924-) who between 1956 and 1978 published ten volumes of novels and short stories and is categorized by Piromalli 1977: 217-218, who considers him an original and a truly great writer, as belonging to the most recent generation of neorealist writers. In contrast to most other writers Strati, who had himself emigrated temporarily to Switzerland, is able to recount the migrant experience both in the region of origin and in the country of immigration. He thus considers not only the causes and effects of emigration and the experiences of those who return, but also the vicissitudes of the emigrants' life in Switzerland. It is a life subject to racism, to segregation and to oppression, since migrants are not allowed to protest (either on the job or off). They are forced to live in shanty towns while the areas frequented by the Swiss are off limits to dogs and Italians. Many of these emigrants are rejected by the host society and return, more or less willingly, to their native village, often with empty hands. Dealing with the post-war migration phenomenon which has heavily depleted the region's labour force[6], Strati identifies this desire for mass escape not only in the endemic poverty and the oppression of the landowners but also because of the 'ndragheta (the Calabrian Mafia - an element also present in Luigi Strano's poetry). Initially it is the contadini who leave, not unaware that by leaving they have won, since the land owners are now unable to find anyone who will work the land[7]. But this desolation of the rural sector also provokes a general cultural impoverishment. Not only do peasants and workers emigrate but also, in a later period when the spectre of material poverty has disappeared, the intellectuals and professionals. The communist activist Dominic, protagonist of the novel Il Selvaggio di S. Venere (1977), decides to emigrate because he does not want to become a rubber stamp for the mafiosi even though realizing that he could become the mayor of his paese. Emigration, however, is not seen by Strati as an entirely negative

phenomenon since it is presented as a liberating element from the failure of the social transformation of the South, as a catalyst for class consciousness and political awareness among those who have emigrated. In so doing he presents an aspect of the migration phenomenon different from the nostalgic-sentimentalistic view of migration which is traditional to Italian literature.

Strati is probably the most outstanding example of a group of Calabrian writers who present the migration phenomenon as a central theme, although, as pointed out above, the most representative writer of the group, Alvaro, does so only in a peripheral way. Other regional groups have also done this but the Calabrian example is perhaps the most significant, given the period in which the emigration occurred and the impact which emigration had had on the region. Of the thirteen contemporary Calabrian narrative writers mentioned by Piromalli (1977: 206-225) only four (Perri, Strati, Gulli, Guerrazzi) have included the migration theme as a central and significant part of their work while in the other nine it is either peripheral or absent. Giovanna Gulli's only novel Caterina Marasco (1940) in which fame 'hunger' is one of the most frequently recurring words, relates the story of a subproletarian Calabrian family. The family emigrates to a ghetto-like life in a large southern Italian city because the land can no longer provide a living. Vincenzo Guerrazzi, himself an emigrant to Genova, writes in his novels (Nord e Sud uniti nella Lotta, 1974; Le Ferie dell'Operaio, 1974) about the experiences of emigrant workers (not only Calabrians) in northern factories. Other writers, such as Raul Maria De Angelis, while mentioning migration, tend to concentrate on themes related to the economic, social and political disintegration of the region (although very few write explicitly on the 'ndragheta) and on the human and existential problems which these conditions create.

Because of the marginal position occupied by the above-mentioned texts and writers in terms of the social institutions, none of the Italo-Australian authors seem to have been aware that such a body of literature existed, their attention having been

focused during their formative years in Italy, particularly through the education system, on institutionally sanctioned writers and texts. Pascoli was studied at school but certainly not his two poems on migration (considering they are relatively minor ones with respect to his overall corpus). Although Luigi Strano may have been in touch with dialect and oral literary forms, his literary reminiscences are almost exclusively related to the Latin and Italian classical authors with the inclusion of a few German and English classics. Emilio Gabbrielli recalls how, as an engineering student at the University of Bologna, he would meet regularly with other friends interested in literature to read and comment Dante. Rosa Cappiello, whose style and language reflect Neapolitan oral tradition, is nevertheless at pains to point out that her reading habits range over a wide variety of institutionalized writers and texts from a number of countries.

It can thus be argued (and discussions with some of the writers confirm this) that the interest among Italo-Australian writers in the migration theme did not manifest itself until the writer had undergone a personal migration experience. In fact in this respect there is a very close parallel to the "migrant" writers in Italy since in their case too their writings are relatively recent and seem to be closely correlated to personal experience of migration. Such an attitude coincides with the almost complete lack of interest in migration, which was after all a massive social phenomenon, among most Italian intellectuals up to about twenty or so years ago, a lack of interest which was interpreted by Gramsci in terms of the intellectual's relationship to the power structure within the context of the overall relationship between ruling and working class. Why should the power élite (classe dirigente), its culture and its literature, bother itself about Italian workers abroad when it does not even concern itself with Italian workers at home? Gramsci is concerned here with "official" culture/literature, the culture of the hegemonic classes, seen elsewhere in Letteratura e Vita nazionale[8] as an appositional concept to that of folklore (the culture of the people), his concept of literature being intrinsically a socio-historical one. Although creative writers began to deal with the

Southern phenomenon (and consequently with migration) in the wake of the sociological studies conducted by Sonnino, Franchetti, Villari and others, the treatment of the situation was generally analogous to that of the sociologists: the ills were identified but the debate was not carried on beyond this point.

Costantino Ianni interprets this lack of interest in migration as both a social and literary phenomenon in terms of the Croce-dominated intellectual tradition:

> "La chiave per spiegare il disinteresse degli intellettuali nei riguardi di quello che forse è il più grande fenomeno sociale del loro popolo ce lo dà la forte prevalenza della cultura storicistica, la quale tanto ha nociuto allo sviluppo e all'applicazione delle scienze sociali [...] Certo non neghiamo che nell'essere o fare lo storico ci sono vantaggi speciali: non si hanno impegni con i problemi del giorno, e quindi non si hanno fastidi [...] con i "padroni del vapore" il quali sono tra i più cospicui beneficari dell'emigrazione giacché compito dello storico sono i fatti del passato, quanto più remoti tanto meglio." (Ianni 1965: 50-51)

In fact in Storia del Regno di Napoli Croce had already defined the work of the intellectual as being undertaken within the "Academies" in an environment circumscribed by science, criticism, culture, while emigrants were the shame of Italy "elemento negativo, massa inerte e pesante e riluttante" (Croce 1967: 225). It is only with the spread of Gramscian thought that the intellectual's (and hence the writer's) role is seen in a wider context. Gramsci's concept that culture is not the privilege of the few but the domain of the many, that culture means an educated people conscious of its rights and duties, of its national identity and capable of constructing the present of its knowledge of the past, contains, as mentioned above, intrinsic implications for the consideration of literature as an object determined by and determining the social context. For Gramsci all men are intellectuals and the intellectual must operate within the fabric of his immediate social ambience. This all-embracing premise does not exclude the creative writer. Thus the production of creative writing, while it may not necessarily lead to a "great" literary work, is nevertheless socially significant at all times and in all contexts. These developments in Italian

intellectual life, which took place in the post-war period and which were to prove a determining factor in the acceptance of the validity of what may be termed a literature of migration among both writers and literary critics, seem to have had little if any influence of Italo-Australian writers (with the possible exception of Charles D'Aprano) although it was clearly influential in the critical success of Rosa Cappiello's Paese fortunato.

THE MIGRATION THEME IN ANGLO-AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

The link between first generation Italo-Australian writers, educated in Italy, and Australian literature is tenuous and often nonexistent apart from rare cases such as Mariano Coreno, who for a time was in contact with Judith Wright and had been encouraged by her or Charles D'Aprano who seems to have had some contact with Judah Waten (both lived in Melbourne, both held similar political views and commitments). For the second and successive generations, educated in Australia, the link is often much more direct and relevant.

While the migration experience occupies a central position in Anglo-Australian literature, it is generally in terms of the experience of the dominant group. Indeed the Irish migrant experience, for a variety of socio-historical reasons, is either non existent or, where treated, indistinguishable from that of the dominant group while, until quite recently, that of other non-Anglo ethnic groups was either institutionally unacceptable when dealt with by the groups' own writers or, when treated by writers belonging to the dominant group, was considered marginal. It is perhaps significant that in Green's History of Australian literature the only two Italian writers mentioned are Carboni and Ercole and that the literary value of Carboni's work is questioned while Ercole is treated as an "Australian" writer. In Leonie Kramer's Oxford History of Australian Literature (1981) only Carboni (and then only for his influence on the Eureka Stockade sequences in Marcus Clark's For the rest of his natural life) is mentioned, while The Oxford

Companion to Australian Literature includes brief entries on Cappiello and Andreoni as well as on Carboni and Ercole.

Bernard Hickey's inclusion of Italo-Australian writers in his article on Australian literature (Hickey 1973) and of two Italo-Australian poets (Luigi Strano and Mariano Coreno) in his anthology of contemporary Australian poetry (Hickey 1977) can be seen as an admirable first attempt to bridge the ethnic barrier. Despite the lack of contact, and hence the lack of influence, between Italo-Australian writers and Australian literature (significantly Rosa Cappiello claims not to have heard of Donald Horne's work before having thought up the title of her novel) there are parallels between Italo-Australian literature and nineteenth century Australian literature in that both deal with themes of exile, nostalgia, isolation, the difficulty in coming to terms with the Australian environment both physical and social. However, as Hickey points out, the greater ease of communication with the mother country has tended to greatly diminish the element of "geographical schizophrenia" in Italo-Australian literature. Very few Italo-Australian writers (notably Abiuso and Andreoni) have dealt with themes related to exploration, pioneers and the bush, while the convict experience, the bushranger romances and the nineteenth century adventure yarns all lie outside the historical time-frame of collective Italian migration. For the Italian immigrant too, Australia can be the land of plenty or the land of the second chance, a theme adopted by some Italo-Australian writers (for example Pino Bosi), while by contrast other writers (Cappiello, Abiuso) have dwelt on the negative socio-economic aspects of Australian urban life. Like Henry Kingsley (Geoffrey Hamlyn, 1859) a few Italo-Australian writers (notably Gino Nibbi) have presented the exotic aspects of the Australian environment. As Hickey quite rightly points out, it is only relatively recently that the concept of adult mature love was accepted in Australian poetry (Hickey 1973: 227 - he gives the example of Judith Wright's Woman to man, 1949) because love was considered an antiheroic sentiment. Perhaps Italo-Australian poets may claim a precedent since the concept had already been developed in Italo-Australian poetry in the 30s.

There are two separate and distinct groups of Italian themes which have occupied some Australian writers but which do not seem to have had any direct bearing on Italo-Australian literature. The first is constituted by the Australian perspectives on Italy presented by those writers who have written on Italian themes beginning with David Burn's romantic melodrama set in Sicily, Loreda (written in 1829), and carrying through to Hal Porter's Italian short stories, Martin Boyd's subjective travel book Much else in Italy (1958), Desmond O'Grady's fictional and other writings, J. R. Rowland's poetry and David Malouf. The second group of themes, which are directly relevant to the Italian migrant experience in Australia, are related to the Italian immigrant characters found in literary works by Australian authors. Characters from other ethnic groups are also found in Australian literature but it is proposed here to deal only with the Italians. The most obvious example is Nino Culotta's [pseudonym for John Patrick O'Grady] They're a weird mob (1957), whose central character, a tall Northern Italian type, emigrates from Italy to Australia and, by changing from his profession as a well-spoken wine-drinking journalist to a strine-speaking beer-swilling brickie's labourer, achieves a happy assimilation into Australian society. Given the humorous, popular nature of O'Grady's novel, the characters have no depth and come across very much as stereotypes. However, as Gorlier points out, Italians are often presented as stereotypes even in more "serious" works of Australian fiction, being fitted "into a code of predictable and established commonplaces" (Gorlier 1983: 127). Perhaps because of this most Italo-Australian writers, assuming that they have come in contact with these works, would find little in common with this type of characterization. Moreover it is worth recalling that Carboni, as a protagonist in various versions of the Eureka Stockade episode, was considered a charlatan whose behaviour savoured more of the craven than the hero. While the Australian intellectual has displayed quite evident admiration for Italy's cultural "greats" the quite different socio-cultural background of most Italian immigrants together with their lack of skill in English and often (although fully proficient in dialect) in Italian can be considered as determining factors in their presentation as

stereotypes insofar as they are perceived as representatives of a subaltern culture. Further, it is more the "Italian" as a type rather than his/her experience as an immigrant which seems to interest most Australian writers who have dealt with the theme. Thus the Italian immigrant in Australian literature, although he may sing excerpts of opera as well as O Sole Mio, is comic, lazy, over-sexed, amoral and irresponsible. In Eve Langley's The Pea-pickers (1942) the Gippsland Italian rural workers are presented as primitives and children who speak a queer mixture of English and an even more peculiar variety of Italian. A North Italian character has writhing lips and narrow eyes while a Calabrian is little, dark, guttural and vivacious. The central character in Dorothy Hewitt's play The Fields of heaven, Rome Bodera (who had taken part in D'Annunzio's Fiume expedition), is an over-sexed, instinctive, unruly but intelligent and handsome Italian immigrant who through sheer hard work succeeds in becoming a powerful landowner while retaining an Italian identity rooted in the peasant (folk) culture of Southern Italy. His vitality and his capacity for work overwhelm the decadent and vacuous Australian owners of the homestead where he is initially engaged as a labourer. Although materially successful he is repudiated by his Australian lover and his son and dies at age 48. The antihero in Vance Palmer's trilogy Golconda, Seedtime, and The Big fellow (1948-1959) is Farelli who is a Latin lover type, a trickster and quite alien to the WASP work ethic. It could be argued that Farell's laziness is an aspect of his character contrary to sociological reality, since the bulk of Italian migrants worked very hard indeed. Maria de Santis, a minor character in Patrick White's novel The Eye of the storm, is a nurse of Italian/Greek descent, her father, Enrico de Santis, being a gynecologist from Bologna who ended up as a shopkeeper in Australia. Perhaps because of the fabric and context of the novel, her ethnicity is not emphasized. Italian characters seem to fare somewhat better in the works of Judah Waten who is of Jewish origin and is one of only two Australian minority writers (the other is the Hungarian-born David Martin) to have so far been accepted into the mainstream while consistently and consciously remaining an ethnic minority writer.[9] In his short story The Knife, the Calabrian Pino Bonelli, who has inherited his

deceased father's carving knife, ends up in jail when, in defending himself against the attack of a North Melbourne street gang, he stabs the gang leader, not because he is the stereotype knife-wielding Italian but because his cultural background makes him unfamiliar with the Australian street brawl code which forbids the use of weapons. In So far no further (1971) Waten presents the theme of generation conflict in the story of Giuseppe Avanzo, an immigrant from Campania. Although he has rapidly acquired considerable social and economic status in Australia he clings to his rural catholic traditions and feels secure in his daily links with the Melbourne Italian community. His son Paul, who is encouraged to become Australian by his father, nevertheless earns Giuseppe's displeasure because of his engagement to a Jewish girl and his involvement in politics at University. Tony Manetti, the young Fremantle fisherman in Katharine Susan Pritchard's Intimate strangers (1937), son of a political refugee and himself a committed communist and union leader, has inherited certain Italian characteristics such as the ability to sing and a pervasive sexuality. However, despite his Australian birth and his native fluency in English, it is his ancestry (particularly his lower-class mother) which prevents him from crossing class and ethnic barriers and winning social acceptance in the mainstream.

In his play Martello Towers Alexander Buzo (Australian-born, Australian mother and Albanian father of Italian cultural tendencies) presents themes related to the uneasy juxtaposition of two cultures and the generation conflict. Anthony Martello emigrated to Australia forty years ago and is married to an Australian. He is a successful businessman who has climbed to the top of the social ladder but who remains closely linked to his ancestral heritage, in part because of the thinly-veiled prejudice which Australians still display towards him. His son Edward resents any reference to his Italian background and acquires Australian habits and behaviour, rejecting his father's values but finding also that most of his Australian acquaintances and even relatives (on his mother's side) seem reluctant to accept him on an equal basis, thus placing him in danger of becoming a displaced

person. Velia Ercole's No Escape (1932), the only novel written by a second generation Australian Italian on a specifically "migrant" theme (although the migration experience appears briefly in writings by Glen Tomasetti and Gary Catalano it does not occupy a thematically central position) is the story of Leo Gherardi, a doctor and political refugee, who slowly accepts a somewhat uneasy and not quite complete assimilation into Australian society. While the protagonist is portrayed with a considerable depth of characterization, his wife, Teresa, who is unable to accept assimilation and eventually commits suicide, is presented as a perceived stereotype of Italian woman with olive face and black hair, excitable and prone to hysteria.

Although there is, generally speaking, little if any connection between Italo-Australian writers and the migration theme in both Italian and Anglo-Australian literature, the examination of these two latter categories has been useful in that it will serve to demonstrate that many themes and developments in Italo-Australian literature are by no means unique and indeed are common to the two separate and distinct mainstreams as they may well also be common to the creative writing produced by authors belonging to other Australian non Angloceltic groups.

Notes

1. Quoted in Crupi 1979: 169-173.

2. Quoted in Crupi 1979: 189.

3. Quoted in Rita Rando 1983: 28.

4. Rita Rando 1983: 36-37, 40-41.

5. As Paolo Volponi puts it: "La letteratura italiana ha sempre una dimensione molto provinciale, un piano troppo ridotto [...] una problematica anche molto locale" (Brändle & Rando 1981: 8).

6. An average of between 26,000 and 28,000 persons per year left the region in the period 1951-1961 - a greater exodus than for any other Italian region (Cinanni 1974: 97-101). Once united Italy had become a reality, Calabria remained isolated from the rest of the nation, in part because of a grossly inadequate communications network, and there was a general feeling (shared by other underdeveloped regions) that the Risorgimento had been somewhat of a betrayal as far as the region was concerned. Thus the illiterate peasants began to emigrate from their villages, isolated and removed from any sort of progress, to look for work elsewhere. Events in Calabria throughout the first half of the 20th century tended to encourage an ever-increasing emigration flow, already considerable at the end of the 19th century (an estimated total of 2,037,000 Calabrians left the region between 1876 and 1970). Natural disasters such as the 1908 earthquake which razed the cities of Reggio (in Calabria) and Messina (in Sicily); the abject poverty of the contadini accentuated by the depression; widespread illiteracy; neglect by successive national governments; the failure of land reforms after the second world war; the authoritarian, repressive clientilism of institutional structures pervaded by the Mafia. These factors led to the destruction of the traditional archaic contadino society without, initially, putting anything in its place.

7. See, for example the story 'Gianni Palaia di Melissa' in Gente di Viaggio, Milan, 1966 and the novel Il Nodo, Milan, 1965. By the 80s, however, farm labour was being carried out by illegal immigrants from North African countries such as Algeirs and Tunisia who had come to the Italian South to fill the gaps left by the Italians who had emigrated and who work for lower wages. Returned Italian emigrants rarely, if ever, work as farm labourers.

8. 'Osservazioni sul folklore' in Gramsci 1975: 215-221.

9. Waten (who died in 1986) perhaps more consistently and consciously than Martin who has only recently developed as a writer on "ethnic" themes although Martin's pioneering efforts as he attempts to represent Australian diversity in young people's popular fiction are not to be underrated. Waten alone appears to be the only ethnic minority writer who rose through the ranks of Australian publishers while Martin was initially established by London publishers.

APPENDIX III

RENATO AMATO: AN ITALIAN IMMIGRANT WRITER IN NEW ZEALAND

Renato Amato was born in Potenza on 22 June 1928. His father, a bank official, was frequently transferred and Renato grew up in the north as well as in the south of Italy.[1] Although he had never belonged to the Fascist youth movement, the allied invasion of Italy aroused his patriotic feeling to the extent that he felt he had to do something. His attempts to join the army ended up in being, not altogether willingly, drafted into the Brigate Nere and, at the age of 16, he found himself involved not in a war to drive all foreigners from Italian soil but in one against the partisans who were his own countrymen. As the war drew to an end his commanding officer provided him with forged papers and sent him to join a partisan brigade as a spy. A few weeks later he found himself in the agonizing position of watching his former comrades shot by a partisan firing squad. After the end of the war he went back to finish school and then enrolled in Law at the University of Turin, although he never completed a law degree. He joined a literary group at the University and had contacts with Cesare Pavese (who failed to understand the reasons for the violence Amato portrayed in his narrative). He began writing short stories based on his war experiences and one or two of these were printed in newspapers. He left University and moved to Rome where he worked at all sorts of jobs and frequented writers' circles, striking up a particular friendship with Giose Rimanelli.[2] He began to learn English in 1950 and later, while working as an orientation officer for the International Refugee Organization, he began to think about emigration to an English-speaking country. His divided feelings about Italy as a result of his war experiences, a sense of claustrophobia and futility (the same as found later in Andreoni), the fact that he had never really got along with his stepmother (his mother had died when he was six), contributed to his decision to emigrate. He chose New Zealand because a relative was able to facilitate his entry there. The very little he knew about the country suggested that it was a land without the restrictions and the rigid social structure of the old world. Also the idea of becoming a pioneer and helping to build something new in the South Pacific was an attractive one. He arrived in

Auckland in May 1954 and was delighted by the ease with which he found work as a labourer. But he was disillusioned by the provincial and biased attitude of New Zealanders towards foreigners. Shortly after his arrival he changed his Christian name to "Michael" because his workmates made jokes about his Italian one. For several years he worked at a variety of occupations - labourer, waiter, car salesman, linen salesman. His writing, like Italy, had been left behind. Despite his educational qualifications and an almost perfect command of English he was not able to obtain "white collar" employment with banks or the public service. In 1958 he met Sheena McAdam, a recent immigrant herself, who was studying Italian at Victoria University (Wellington). The two married, Amato enrolled at the University and began writing again. A son, Timothy, was born in 1959. He obtained employment in the public service where he worked until 1962 when he obtained a position with an advertising agency. After his first story, written in Italian and translated into English was published, he wrote directly in English. Stimulating, prickly, provocative and fierce in argument, he was very active in literary circles, giving lectures, participating in radio programs and writers' workshops, identifying more and more with his adopted country. In April 1964 he died of a cerebral hemorrhage. His death was reported not only in New Zealand but also in Italy.

Although his stories were to appear in volume form only after his death,[3] Amato was a prolific writer.[4] His work which appeared in New Zealand literary magazines gained him the respect of critics, who saw him as representing something entirely new in New Zealand writing. Here was a writer whose acid objectivity and detachment contrasted with the beatnik-like production of most of his contemporaries who were some ten years younger than Amato. It was also predicted that he might achieve a stature equal to that of Katherine Mansfield. His stimulating personality won him the friendship of some of the leading writers of the time such as James Baxter and Ian Cross.

The thirteen stories in the Full Circle of the Travelling Cuckoo can be divided into three groups according to their thematic content and setting:

1. Stories set in Italy: 'Green almonds, a castle and a couple of horses', 'Only a matter of grammar', 'A Summer night', 'Perspective';

2. Stories set in New Zealand: (a) "migrant" stories concerned with the problems faced by the immigrant of non English-speaking background, particularly the problem of his acceptance by New Zealanders - One of the Titans', 'The New new'; (b) stories concerned with New Zealand customs and habits - 'An Evening's work', 'Like panning for gold', 'Courting', 'Bargains';

3. "Flashback" stories which contain remembrances and recollections of Italian experience within New Zealand settings 'Window-watching', 'Nothings', 'A Walk in the shadows'.

Most of the stories are in the first person and hence present if not autobiographical experience, Amato's own views, thoughts and feelings. Taken as a cohesive whole they reflect what Shadbolt has described as Amato's bifold personality (Italian/New Zealand) and his looking both to the past (remembrance and recollection of the old country triggered off by surrounding objects of existence) and to the future (integration/ assimilation within the new country).

By presenting negative aspects of his experiences in Italy in the first group of stories Amato seems to reject Italy in metaphysical terms as he had physically rejected the country with the act of emigration. But the more traumatic aspects of his Italian experience come back in the third group of stories. Amato cannot shake off the past and in a sense this prevents total assimilation into the new society. In any case the second group of stories presents a bifold attitude towards New Zealand. The "migrant" characters in 'One of the Titans' and 'The New new' are able to relate to the natural setting of the new country but not to the social environment and they are in turn rejected by New Zealand society. In the other "New Zealand" stories the protagonist is a New Zealand character with New Zealand attitudes, although it is still possible to identify him autobiographically with Amato. Yet in these stories, too, negative aspects of New Zealand life and society are presented.

'Green almonds, a castle and a couple of horses' (pp19-25) is the memory of a childhood experience. The protagonist (the narrating "I") and a friend Mimo decide to wag school and go on a ramble. They look for fruit to eat, finding only green almonds, their taste being "the taste of the worlds beyond the horizons [...] beyond my years that had had no time to accrue" (p21). The unfinished castle where they play represents the mystery and excitement of the cultural past. The two boys then go to

Uncle Tama's farm where, from a hidden vantage point, they watch a group of men doing something to two horses, but the boys are chased away by the dogs before they can see what it is. For the protagonist the horses remain an unfathomable mystery although in retrospect "it is only now that I know how, on that day, I began to be old. And how, somehow, I refused to begin to be wise" (p25). 'Only a matter of grammar' (pp26-36) is a powerful first person story in which the protagonist, a youth who had just joined a partisan Communist brigade watches his former Fascist comrades being shot. It is a traumatic experience both in personal terms and in terms of ideals. Words like "patriotism" have become empty and meaningless but meaningless also has become the tragedy of Italy which had both lost and won the war and is plunged into moral and social chaos:

> "But was it WE or was it THEY? I didn't know whether either thing still had a very definite meaning. La Mazza [the Communist commander], in a way, was just another Bianchi senior [the Fascist commander], not so well educated, perhaps [...] Blacks or Reds, the words were the same; even the names of the battles were the same, because both had fought them: Cavour to the east, Rivergaro to the south, and Montefiorino and Casetta Rossa. The terms of reference hadn't changed. We - either 'we' - had shot them and at them and run away to lick out wounds and dispose of our dead." (pp35-36)

An Italian reader who had lived through the war in Italy stated that this story was a telling depiction of the moral and intellectual anguish which many Italians experienced at the time. By comparison to Abiuso's war stories 'Only a matter of grammar' presents the personal dilemma created by the times in a much more profound and dramatic fashion in that Amato transcends the surface level and deals with the metaphysical travail which the situation provokes. The futility of intellectual aspirations when confronted with practical problems of existence and the degradation of the individual are the themes of 'A Summer night' (pp37-49). Two writer friends in dire economic straits, Romanelli and Albert (a character probably based on Amato), wander the streets of Rome at night because they cannot afford both food and accommodation, speaking to the homosexuals and prostitutes which are its denizens. To Romanelli these people represent physical revulsion and loathing although he realizes that "when one is down and hungry and can't see any way ahead [...] One might come to the conclusion that anything would be easy - stealing or being a prostitute" (p48). When Gloria, who works in a night club, offers the two a bed Romanelli, despite the fact that he is mortally tired from wandering about all night, refuses. Set against the

grandeur of Rome ("History with a capital H" - p49) is the desperation of a sensitive man who lives from day to day, his "future stretching no farther than 12 a.m." (p49), but who cannot compromise with the realities of life. With 'Perspective' (pp50-61) a return is made to first person narration. The protagonist, lonely and cold seeks not only sexual satisfaction in a brothel but something more from a girl whom he believes he has been visiting regularly. But he discovers, in a Pirandellian-inspired dichotomy of being and seeming, that it was the "perspective" of his short-sightedness which has deluded him into believing that he has been visiting the same girl each time and that she bears him some kind of affection, whereas in fact it had been a different girl on each visit. The protagonist, an isolated man desperately groping for something to give meaning to his existence, realizes that nothing can give life an absolute value. Italy thus represents not only childhood and growing up but also the delusion of ideals.

Two Italians transplanted to New Zealand, Giuliano Martine ('One of the Titans' - pp67-72) and Gerolamo Musmeci ('The New new' - pp 73-76) find self-sufficiency in their isolation. Manual labour has not dampened their intellectual aspirations (as it seems to have done in the case of their New Zealand workmates). They achieve a relationship with their work (they do it not just because "la moneta è buona" - p68) and with the landscape but they do not find acceptance by the New Zealanders. Hence their potential integration occurs at a private and personal level rather than a social one. Shunned by his workmates who call him "wop" and "Eye-tie", Giuliano takes philosophical though irony-tinged consolation in the thought that, as one of the workers creating a town in the New Zealand wilderness, he too could, like the titans of classical mythology (the simile sums up and intensifies the diversity of his cultural base), be one of the men who mould and shape nature if he is prepared to divest himself of his cultural values:

> "He would then be one of them: not with them, but *like* them. One of the 'builders of a country', an outstanding specimen, drunken and broke, run-down and grumpy, hating everything and fighting everybody.
> And then his loneliness would end.
> One of the pioneers, one of the titans, talking and moving and shouting and sweating and swearing, without knowing what or whom he was doing it for.
> For the country, or himself, or maybe for the free world." (pp71-72)

Gerolamo is acutely conscious of the contrast and difference between "him" and "them" and of the degree of non-acceptance which has led his nice decent neighbours to distort the pronunciation of his name beyond recognition ("Jee Moochee-moochee" - p76). This difference is exemplified by his encounter with a drunk, a total stranger. Because to the drunk Gerolamo looks "like a bloody Eye-tie" (p75) he insults him and calls him a coward. The drunk's attitude is certainly not pacified by Gerolamo's patronizing stance of superiority when, among other things, he remarks that the drunk's efforts in fighting Germans and Italians during the war were "a commendable worthy enterprise" (p75). Non-acceptance, hence, may be reciprocal since Gerolamo's thoughts on the discoloured two-storey high, fifty-year-old wooden buildings which flank the main street of the capital city (he calls them "monuments to posterity" - p76 - hence the title of the story is clearly an ironic one) and on the "splendid achievements of the early settlers" (p76) who brought civilization to the natives with bible, clothing and gun are ironical ones. Perhaps the barriers between "him" and "them" are impossible to cross. Gerolamo questions the host society's sense of values (lack of interest in historical achievements, the drunk, his neighbours, lack of aesthetic sense) and, although he realizes that by now it was expected of him "that he had to merge, that he had to belong" (p73), he apparently refuses to do so, preferring to maintain the integrity of his traditional cultural values. All he seems to require of the host society is that it allow him to survive as the ironic finale enunciates: "But he was glad that at least they let him breathe. He was a *happy man* " (p76).

The short stories with a wholly New Zealand background present a critique of new Zealand society not from the outside, as Nibbi does in his Australian stories, but from the inside, through situations "lived " by the protagonists somewhat in the manner of Cappiello. The squalid sexual behaviour of four country dwellers and their lack of real concern or affection for each other is the theme of 'An Evening's work' (pp77-96). The narrating "I", a linen salesman, visits the home of an engaged girl in the hope of selling her some items for her glory box. During the course of the evening two men, Barry and Tom, come in. The group drinks and gets tipsy, the girl and her mother go into the bedrooms to try on some of the saleman's wares. Barry, who had been introduced as the mother's brother and Tom, the girl's fiancé, join them soon afterwards on the

pretext of seeing what they look like but in fact to engage in sexual play. The condescending salesman is left with the distinct impression that he has aided and abetted something squalid, while the order he is given is promptly cancelled the next day. Two of the stories deal with the theme of courtship, and Amato uses the theme to draw out aspects of the New Zealand character which is unsophisticated and inarticulate by comparison to the philosophical and discursive Italians presented in similar situations in the Italian stories. 'Like panning for gold' (pp97-113) is the story of Joe (a labourer) and Betty (a kitchen hand) out on a first date. It is an intricate description of the strategies employed by the two in order to get the maximum benefit from the outing. Joe's awkward, blunt, unsophisticated and direct approaches are rebuffed by Betty who just wants to have a good time. When the two go to a party held by one of Betty's friends, Joe, out of pique, leaves her, joins the boys in the kitchen, gets drunk and ends up going to sleep in the garden amidst his host's tomato plants. Betty goes home with Ferdy, one of Joe's workmates who had a big American car. The story is an interesting and intricate one, both in the way it depicts interpersonal relationships, stated bluntly and inarticulately, and the description of certain common customs related to dating, partying and drinking. On the way to the party Betty and Joe drink gin in order to "loosen up". But "serious" drinking (beer) is a ritual for men only and is undertaken to blot out the problems of everyday existence and the intellectual void. When Joe goes into the kitchen:

> "There was a reverent, concentrated atmosphere in there that made him think of churches and worship. The four men squatted under the one-eyed glare of the beer keg and drank in steady, conscientious gulps, staring at each other and pasting their words studiously and slowly. He didn't know any of them, but he preferred them to Betty. Anything was better than Betty [...]
> "Hand over," the man said, and filled the glass again. The other three started remembering other gulping feats they had witnessed or heard of. 'There . . . is . . . a . . . er . . . tech-a-nique to it . . . if yuh . . . don't want to bust your bloody guts.'
> Joe listened modestly. Then he lost the thread of what they were saying but kept thinking that men were better than women." (pp109-110)

The aftermath of the drinking bout is that, the morning after, Bob, the host, notices something unusual in the garden. It is the only insertion of a non New Zealand element into the story:

> "What was unusual, though - it dawned on him after a while - was that man lying on the ground, close by the hedge, straddled over a patch of patiently nurtured tomatoes. He lay like a dead rag of a thing run over by a heavy truck. Bob had seen the war in Italy." (p111)

Hence in dealing with the theme of drink Amato parallels quite closely Italo-Australian writers. Like Cappiello he deals with the metaphysical aspects but he does so in a more articulate and philosophical though less dramatic manner. 'Courting' (pp114-119) is a psychological study of two young lovers, Alan and Lyz, a repressed boy and a liberated girl. The young man, intellectual but awkward, unsophisticated, unimaginative and inhibited is a source of frustration to the girl who expects a more open and direct relationship. In this sense Alan seems more like Amato's Italian characters, were it not for his anglosaxon name. 'Bargains' (pp124-130) deals with an entrenched New Zealand custom - the purchase of second hand goods. Michael and his wife Sheena go to purchase a second hand lawn mower advertised in the paper. After much hard bargaining Michael manages to convince the vendor to sell it for the price he wants to pay and succeeds in having a pair of garden shears thrown in into the bargain. However, as he is attempting to get the machine into the car, borrowed from his father in law for the occasion, he drops the mower and it breaks in a way which cannot be repaired. The story seems a banal one but it is, under the surface, a subtle insight into the various tactics adopted by husband and wife in order to assert their control of the situation. Both wish to assert the validity of their views regarding the management of money, living on a budget and the purchase of second hand goods. Sheena, from past experience, is somewhat sceptical of Michael's self-avowed expertise in obtaining second hand bargains, since those that he had purchased previously have turned out to be white elephants. However, when the mower breaks and Michael is agonized and dejected, she is quick to comfort and console him with the thought that they have at least got the shears.

The "flashback" stories are all related in the first person. They present a contrast in that they depict both the New Zealand present and the hazy world of recollection and memory related to Italy. The memory of Italy haunts the protagonist and is in contrast to the realistic, simple and restricted world of New Zealand in which the protagonist now finds himself. 'Window-watching' (p62-66) is an evocative and impressionistic reminiscence of Tonin, a friend with whom the protagonist had shared

the years of his youth and the war years. After the protagonist had left his home town, Tonin had become completely paralysed as a result of an illness which had turned him into a vegetable and he spent his time looking out of the window of his flat. As the protagonist remembers their boyhood pranks and the war experiences they lived through together, he wonders to what extent his life has been/is intertwined with that of Tonin across the years and miles which separate them. The story concludes with the first and only mention of the New Zealand present which is linked to a Proustian evocation of the past:

> "I seem to be sharing a window-watching experience with him. We are both inside, in two rooms twelve thousand miles apart, looking out for the hills and valleys we would like to have again, for our youth without time that is irreparably gone: he, unable to see because there is water on his brains; I, unable to see because there is a sad, concrete cupboard for living dead across my road, no further than thirty yards away." (p66)

The story begins with an apparently unrelated reference to "an old man I knew, who had come back from Brazil to fight a war for what he called his ideals, and was stabbed to death at one o'clock in the morning" (p62). This curiously parallels a short story by Pirandello ('Nell'albergo è morto un tale'). As in Pirandello's story the death of the stranger becomes a symbol of detachment, non-involvement and disinterest in the same way as when the protagonist first hears of Tonin's illness he is detached and uninvolved ("I was glad I was not Tonin and I was glad I still had the world within my reach. His experience was just his own personal affair" - p66). But later, in remembering Tonin across time and space, the protagonist realizes that no man is an island. 'Nothings' (pp120-123) is a delicate fable-like blending of the New Zealand present and the Italian past. The protagonist, a sort of Tonin transposed to the New Zealand setting, sits at the window watching the people go by and unheeded by them. They are his only contact with the outside world and it is only through them that he can relate to life. Among scenes of the predominant present (the rubbish-collectors, the newspaper girl, the children riding their carts) are merged memories of the past (ramparts and battlements in the sunset, lovers sitting on a grey brick wall). 'A Walk in the shadows' (pp131-135), the last story in the collection, is also the last one Amato wrote before his death. The New Zealand element in the story is the protagonist's walk with his son in a Wellington suburb, the child's questioning of the names and location of the streets, the discovery of nearby places which are unknown, the

people in their gardens. These elements provide a link with the juxtaposed passages of the protagonist's recollections of the war in Italy which can be seen as a sort of prologue to 'Only a matter of grammar', and of his early sexual experiences which have some links with the story 'Perspective'. The elements of past and present are inserted in about equal proportion and in alternation but the present (afternoon walk in a suburb) is restrictive while the past depicts more vital and resounding events in the protagonist's psyche. In the strangely prophetic finale to the story, past and present are merged and reconciled through the contemplation of nature which is universal: "It is a beautiful hill; it is a beautiful day, but it is again as it has always been. I am so short of time" (p135).

Renato Amato thus presents an experience which has some parallels yet also some differences with respect to the Italo-Australian writers. His perspective seems to be much broader than that of most of his trans-Tasman counterparts. Like Cappiello his works go beyond the surface situation and significance and can be susceptible to a number of interpretations. Amato's ability to reflect, philosophize and to transcend the surface value of experience make him a writer whose works achieve universal meaning. The time and the place dictated that he must turn to English in order to be reborn and to survive as a writer. Perhaps this was a blessing in disguise since the use of the new language seems to have presented him with a challenge as well as leading him to re-think his style and narrative technique. New Zealand is a country which has had relative little "migrant" literature during the twentieth century - the predominant marginal or alternative literary group being comprised of the Maori writers who use English predominantly. In any case there was and is no sizeable Italian community in the country and there are no other Italian creative writers who have settled there permanently. The recognition given to his writing is nevertheless indicative of the possibility that the "migrant" writer can become accepted by and acceptable to the mainstream. Perhaps that is the solution to his continuation as a writer, to sublimate the "migrant" aspect but not to forget it entirely nor leave it behind him, a solution which in the Italo-Australian situation is so far potentially implicit only in Cappiello. If it is possible to conclude on a highly speculative note it may be questioned whether Amato would have achieved what he did had he emigrated to Australia instead of to New Zealand.

Notes

1. Biographical data on Amato have been obtained from two works by New Zealand writer Maurice Shadbolt: 'Renato Amato, a memoir' in Renato Amato, The Full Circle of the Travelling Cuckoo, Christchurch, Whitcombe & Tombs, 1967, pp7-18; and Shadbolt's autobiographical novel on Amato An Ear of the Dragon, London, Cassel, 1971. Material was also obtained from an unpublished paper by L. E. Simmons 'A Sort of pattern. Some comments on the fiction of Renato Amato' [University of Auckland ca 1974].

2. Giose Rimanelli enjoyed some modest success in the 50s with his first novels. See G. Barberi Squarotti, La Narrativa italiana del dopoguerra, Bologna, Cappelli, 1965, p147.

3. The Full Circle of the Travelling Cuckoo contains a selection of 13 stories. The dust jacket flap of the collection gives a telling summary of Amato's standing as a writer: "This collection of short stories reveals him as a man torn between two worlds, struggling to win acceptance and security in New Zealand, yet haunted by memories of his homeland and ever drawn back to it. Universal in theme, these studies show a breath of experience reflecting both the writer's inner conflict and his intimate knowledge of the old world and the new. They have lasting value by any literary standards." The volume also aroused some interest in Italy and some ten years after its publication the prestigious Turin publisher Einaudi commissioned a translation by Gaetano Rando of a selection of 10 of the stories with the title Il ritorno del Cucù viaggiatore. The stories excluded were one of the "Italian" ones, both of the "migrant" stories, one of the "New Zealand" setting and one of the recollection accounts. However one of the "migrant" and the excluded "New Zealand" story were re-admitted in the final selection. This translation still has to see the light since the subsequent serious financial problems of the publishing house have led to drastic changes in its management structure and editorial policy (in fact the editorial assistant handling the Amato translation was retrenched!). If and when the translation is published Amato will have well and truly returned home.

4. Amato's papers, deposited in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington contain (as well as various items of correspondence and the typescript of The Full Circle):

Draft of a novel Malady;
Scripts of 18 short stories in English (not included in The Full Circle of the Travelling Cuckoo) and notes and drafts of other short stories;
Two untitled short stories in Italian;
Notes and drafts on literary subjects including an extensive note on Pavese (dealing with Amato's relationship with him and a critique of his work) and an essay on Machiavelli;
Radio talks; radio and book reviews.

APPENDIX IV

ON ITALIAN CANADIAN LITERATURE

In Chapter 1 (pp38-39) a brief review was made of previous studies (published before 1986) on the literatures of Italian immigrants in other countries with particular reference to Basile Green's study of the Italian-American novel which was considered particularly relevant to the thesis topic. Prior to the cut-off point (1986) no other monograph had been published on novels written by Italian immigrants in English-speaking countries. However a collection of essays, published in October 1985, is the first book-length work on Italian-Canadian literature and contains some papers in Italian-Canadian narrative.[1] Previously, articles on Italian-Canadian literature, such as Joseph Pivato's pioneer work on the genre[2] and Giovanni Bonanno's analysis of Frank Paci's novels,[3] had been appearing in Canada and Italy since the early 1980s. In fact the time scale of development of interest in the study of Italian-Canadian literature closely parallels that for the Italo-Australian case.

Italian-Canadian literature presents some interesting parallels with the Italo-Australian variety. Although there has been an Italian presence in Canada for more than 100 years and some writings by Italian immigrants appeared in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, it is essentially a phenomenon of the last two decades and coincides, as in the Australian case, both with post-war Italian immigration to Canada and with the rise of the Trudeauan concept of multiculturalism. The themes in Italian-Canadian narrative seem to parallel those of Italo-Australian narrative: exile, alienation, emargination, the concept of community, the question if not the resolution of identity, the impossibility of return, although the emphasis given to these are likely to be different. It also presents some fascinating differences. Italian Canadian writers as a group, though not necessarily on an individual basis, write in four languages. dialect,[4] "standard" Italian, English and French with some works being rewritten or translated from one language to the other as in the case of Frank Paci's novels. Another notable difference is the presence of sizeable group of second generation Italian-Canadian writers, university educated, mobile and articulate who not only write in English

and/or French but also make the effort to write in Italian,[5] an element which is so far largely lacking among Italian Australian writers. It is largely the work of second generation writers, in a cultural context which accepts difference more readily than the Australian one, which has led to the opening up of the critical debate.

Critical work has taken the approach of examining thematic aspects in considerable detail as well as a detailed discussion of the function and role of the Italian-Canadian writer and his/her relationship to the mosaic which comprises Canadian society. Discussion of the sociological nature of these texts seems to have been largely avoided since it is seen as detracting from discourse on their literary value although the literary value of the texts is taken as a "given" and the analysis proceeds on that basis. It is argued that the production of Italian-Canadian writers, albeit categorized as a "minority literature within a minority literature",[6] presents a qualitative element which makes it equal to Canadian "mainstream" literature and that it also presents elements which render it worthy of note on a global basis and hence is worthy of consideration in the context of world literature. In relation to the Canadian context, it both brings an added dimension to the debate on Canadian cultural identity, in part because it does not have its roots in the frontier but in the literary traditions of the old country, while with respect to the Italian community it provides an articulation on behalf of those who could not speak of the hardships, struggles and price of the migrant experience.

A comparative study of writings by Italian immigrants in Canada and Australia would clearly be of interest although it would obviously require a much more detailed treatment than that contained in this outline.

Notes

[1]Joseph Pivato (ed.). *Contrasts. Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing,* Montreal, Guernica, 1985. The collection contains three essays specifically on Italian-Canadian prose while three others of a more general nature contain sections on narrative.

[2]Joseph Pivato. 'The Arrival of Italian-Canadian Writing', *Canadian Ethnic Studies,* XIV(1), 1982 and 'Documenting Italian-Canadian Writing: A Bibliography', *Italian Canadiana,* 1(1), 1985.

[3]Giovanni Bonanno. 'An Analysis of Frank Paci's Novels', in Alfredo Rizzardi (ed.) *The Verbal Creation / la creazione verbale,* Abano Terme, Piovan Editore, 1985.

[4]Exclusively in poetry eg. Corrado Mastropasqua, *'Na lacrema e 'na risa,* Napoli, 1969.

[5]Joseph Pivato, 'A Literature of Exile: Italian Language Writing in Canada', in Pivato, *Contrasts,* p180.

[6]Pivato, *Contrasts,* p11.