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Introduction

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This special issue devoted to aspects of Italian settlement in Australia stems from an international conference held at Flinders University in September 2007 entitled “Moving Cultures, Shifting Identities”. However, given the considerable amount of work currently being done in other universities on issues related to the Italian presence in Australia, the editors decided not to limit the invitation to submit a paper only to conference participants but to extend it also to scholars throughout Australia who are engaged in research in the field.

Before the 1980s academic interest in the study of Italian migration to Australia had been sporadic (e.g., Rando 1967, Cronin 1970, Huber in 1977) but it was in the 1980s that a solid research foundation was built that encompassed a variety of disciplines ranging from history and anthropology to sociology and sociolinguistics (e.g., the work by Cresciani 1980, Thompson 1980, Ware 1981, Bettoni 1981, to name a few). By the late 1980s, at the same time as an increasing number of publications began to appear with the burgeoning of an interest in documenting and evaluating the Italian presence, conferences and workshops were also being held in Australia and Italy that attracted a diversity of scholars, whose contributions were subsequently published in edited volumes (for example, Ugolini 1988, Bettoni & Lo Bianco 1989, Bosworth & Ugolini 1992, Rando & Arrighi 1993, Bivona 1994). By 1990 a topic on “Italians in Australia” came to be included in an Italian Department major (Flinders) and today a number of Italian Departments in Australia, alongside Italian literature courses, offer topics in areas related to Italian migration, including sociolinguistics (e.g., Western Australia, Sydney, Western Sydney, UNE) and historical and socio-cultural analysis (e.g., Monash, Wollongong). Interest in Italian migration has led to an increase in the number of postgraduate students who have chosen to write their thesis on an aspect of the subject (e.g., in recent years in Italian at Flinders eight postgraduate students have completed their PhD on an Italian migration topic or are currently enrolled). Indeed, in other disciplines, such as history and anthropology, undergraduate and postgraduate students at Australian universities have for some years been able to undertake research in an area of Italian migration studies.

In this issue of *FULGOR* Loretta Baldassar and Susanna Iuliano, in a detailed bibliographical overview that also incorporates studies published in Canada, provide ample evidence in their paper of the great variety of contexts and approaches that have

characterised recent publications related to the Italian migrant experience in Australia. These include disciplines and subjects as diverse as history, sociology, linguistics, cinema, literature, politics, life writing, ethnicity and identity.

Other papers published in this issue of *FULGOR* explore aspects of Italian-Australian connections in narrative writing. Gaetano Rando discusses the relationship that a selection of Italian-Australian and Italian writers have with the Australian outback and the temporal and spatial dislocation that often results from the mapping of two overlapping geocultural contexts. Rita Wilson, in her paper, uses the works of Cappiello, Dell'oso and Marchetta to examine the multiplicities of belonging and issues related to cultural identity present in the novels of these three women writers, one Italian-born, the other two Italian-Australians of second and third generation. John Gatt-Rutter, on the other hand, chooses the life writing of several Australian Italians, in particular Claudio Alcorso and Peter Dalseno, who were interned during the second world war, in order to highlight the manner in which, in their narration of the experiences of internment, private history meets public history, but with different outcomes. A different kind of life writing is chosen by Francesco Ricatti. Through an analysis of a selection of the letters that two Italian migrant women wrote to *La Fiamma* columnist Lena Gustin in the period 1956-1964, Ricatti uncovers the dramatic experiences of two mothers exploited and struggling in a hostile environment.

Two papers consider the extent of belonging and bridging of two different Calabrian communities, one in Melbourne the other in Adelaide, one from the town of Polsi the other from Caulonia. Gerardo Papalia examines the rituals associated with the celebration of the festival of the Madonna della Montagna di Polsi both in Calabria and in Australia and the function of the Australian celebration in reconnecting with the hometown of the migrants and in reaffirming their identity. Daniela Cosmini-Rose uses oral testimonies of *cauloniesi* in Adelaide, of return migrants living in Caulonia and of *cauloniesi* in Italy who never migrated to Australia to illustrate the ongoing cultural and emotional bonds that exist in both directions between town of origin and town of destination abroad, bonds that are maintained and strengthened also through the migrants' devotion to their patron saint, St Hilarion.

A sociological approach is employed by Giancarlo Chiro in evaluating the cultural identity of over a hundred tertiary students and their attitudes to, and extent of maintenance of, Italian cultural values. Through a questionnaire these Italian-background students provided personal narratives that enabled the author of the paper to analyse and classify the way in which the students constructed and negotiated their identity.

The high quality of the papers selected for this special issue of *FULGOR* is further confirmation, if indeed any were needed, that much has been achieved in Italian migration studies in Australia in the last thirty years.