

# Memory, Identity and Migrant Generations: Articulating *italianità* in C20th and C21st Northern England through the Case of Kingston upon Hull.<sup>1</sup>

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When I was younger, we always used to go and run around the cenotaph in town. You'd always be looking for family names of people who had fought in the Boer War or the First or Second World War. I could never find Hurd. I could never find any of the other names, which is good obviously for survival, but when I go back to Calabria ... we were looking last week, me and my mum, we were in Scilla and on the war memorial, every name was Leone, Leone, Leone, Leone, Leone, and my Mum was like 'well, that's your great-uncle, second cousin ...' and you start to think, I've actually got as much [Italian] heritage, if not more. My Dad's family, I'm sure my Mum will probably say, but my Dad's family weren't over the moon that he was marrying into an Italian family and the weird thing is that because of that negativity ... I've kind of forgotten a bit about this. [...] Sometimes I really wish I was fully English. It'd be much easier.

Joe Hurd, a fourth generation Italian immigrant from the UK city of Kingston-Upon-Hull, demonstrates here some of the key ideas at work in the articulation of a migrant identity: as

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<sup>1</sup> Kingston upon Hull (usually and here abbreviated as Hull) is a port city of c. 260,000 inhabitants, located in the East Riding of Yorkshire, in Northern England, where the river Hull meets the Humber Estuary. The city acquired its name in 1293 when King Edward I, having taken possession of two smaller settlements (Wyke and Myton), decided to rename his new town Kingston upon Hull, that is the King's town on the river Hull, which he then turned into a royal borough in 1299 (Evans 2017, 28-29).

we can see, Joe's identity is both English and Italian, and is influenced by the memories of previous generations and by a strong desire to belong. His testimony illustrates the way in which memory and migrant experience influence diasporic identity, reminding us, to borrow MacIntyre's words, that 'what I am [...] is in key part what I inherit, a specific past that is present to some degree in my present' (MacIntyre 2007: 221). More specifically, Joe Hurd's story sheds light on the construction of an Italian identity in the context of a city in Northern England, Hull, whose history has been marked and shaped by migration and transmigration. His reference to war cemeteries and war memorials shows also the importance of trans-generational historical narratives 'in the formation of the ethnic, national, and cultural identities of individuals' (Sakai 2009).<sup>2</sup>

This article seeks to further examine these processes of identity construction with particular reference to the creation and articulation of an Italian identity, or *italianità*. We take as our case study the Italian migrant community of the city of Hull, and through two examples of migrant families, shed light on the processes of memory and identity making at work in the case of Italian communities across generations. The case of Hull is particularly interesting, given the distinctive experience in the city of migration and transmigration during the twentieth century. The article therefore uses the analysis of the city and its Italian community specifically as a means of illustrating the importance of the individual and the local in understanding migrant memories, traditions and stories.

After providing an overview of the ways in which migrant memory can be interrogated, and an introduction to the specificities of the migration experience of Hull and the history of the Italian immigrant presence in the city, the article focuses on the stories and memories of members of this community, which we have collected through face-to-face

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<sup>2</sup> As Sakai (2009), explains, a 'trans-generational historical narrative is simultaneously about personal micro interactions and emotions, and about the large process of macro history.'

interviews.<sup>3</sup> As we will demonstrate, we seek to read these memories in light of frameworks drawn from theories around the autonomy of migration, as a means of engaging with the politics of belonging, and valuing hybrid identities. In particular, we adopt the lens of postmemory, that ‘structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience’ (Hirsch 2008, 106), and trans-memory, which highlights specifically the ‘transferal, transitional and translational’ aspects of the migrant experience (Bedingfield 2004, 334). What emerges from these stories is that ethnicity was not always perceived as a form of social capital,<sup>4</sup> but as something to be ashamed of. However, whilst the children of the first generation migrants often sought to conceal their Italian origins and played down the impact that their family background had on their upbringing, a strong sense of *italianità* resurfaces in the third and fourth generations, even despite the lack of direct experience of Italy and an inability to speak Italian. Many of these interviewees display multiple identities, a strong sense of belonging to the environment in which they grew up, but also a great pride in their Italian origins and in the way their ancestors contributed to Hull.

As argued by scholars, the creation of hybrid identities is a key aspect of the diasporic imagination because ‘contact with a host community generates cultural complexity and

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<sup>3</sup> These interviews were conducted as a follow-up to a recent exhibition on Hull’s Italian community, entitled ‘Italian Connections’, which found that the city’s links with Italy have their origins in the 14th century, and the Italian community in Hull has had a significant impact on the city’s heritage, culture, architecture, and economy. The exhibition was held at the Streetlife Museum in Hull 24 February – 1 July 2018 and was the idea of Heritage Learning, a team of cultural and creative learning specialists based in Hull, who manage and deliver the creative and cultural learning programmes across the city’s eleven museum, gallery and History Centre sites. The authors collaborated with Heritage Learning on the design of parts of the exhibition and in particular on providing the research into contemporary Italian links in Hull in the restaurant sector. See Humber Museums Partnership (2018) for more information about the exhibition. Central to the exhibition’s narrative were the histories of prominent families and their contribution to Hull’s community, economy, and culture. Following the February launch, families who had not featured prominently in the initial research that informed the exhibition’s content, began and continued to contact the Heritage Learning team, in order to have their stories included. It soon became apparent that the exhibition had become an opportunity for many of these families to rediscover and even discover for the first time their own Italian connections. The exhibition arguably became a moment of rediscovery of the Italian community in Hull, and an opportunity for members therein to re-identify as part of this. Sharing family histories and stories with the ‘Italian Connections’ project and exhibition even became the point at which the community articulated its own existence in the 21st century.

<sup>4</sup> We understand ethnicity as ‘socio-cultural factors such as shared histories, memories, myths, customs, sentiments and values’ (Goulbourne and Solomos 2003, 330) and social capital as those ties and values that are at the core of any community.

diversity that are irreversible' (Salgado 2003, 186-187). Besides, a strong attachment to place could also be seen as feature of *italianità* because, as Gabaccia explains, prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Italy, loyalties to a *patria* [fatherland] 'developed more from love of a place than identity with a people defined as shared biological descent' (2000, 33). There is, then, a wider importance of telling these stories in the broader context of Hull's history and heritage: being able to discuss their family history matters to the members of the Italian community, as they believe that uncovering what they perceive to be this hidden aspect of Hull's past can impact positively on the city's future. What seems to have been forgotten (particularly if we take into account the overwhelming pro-Brexit vote in June 2016) is that "Hullness" has been shaped by the continual influence of outsiders throughout the port's long history' and that 'Hull would arguably be nothing without the continental migrants who expanded its commercial and cultural horizons, the transmigrants who for decades made Hull one of the most important hubs in the world, and latterly the economic migrants, refugees and university students that have made Hull a truly global city' (Evans 2017, 146).

Common tropes emerge in all the accounts of our interviewees; these are the family, food, work ethics, language, and religion.<sup>5</sup> According to Medaglia, the centrality of the family in the *Italian way of life* is the result of the strong influence of the Catholic Church throughout the ages, which has also impacted on attitudes towards sexuality and gender roles (Medaglia 2001, 2).<sup>6</sup> This article focuses on two case studies, the Bottery and Coletta families,<sup>7</sup> as we were able to interview various members of the same family and thus have a multi-generational perspective on the migrant experience. This is useful when trying to

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<sup>5</sup> As demonstrated by scholarship, these "stereotypes" are classic markers of ethnic identities that interact and 'dialectically modify over time' (Di Giovine and Brulotte 2014: 3-4) because, like all forms of identity, also ethnic ones are constantly being developed.

<sup>6</sup> Although we did not directly discuss questions of sexuality and gender roles with our interviewees, some elements of their stories reveal fairly traditional and conservative views on these matters.

<sup>7</sup> The members of these families featured in this article have given us permission to use their names and stories here.

understand which values and norms were transmitted and perceived as an integral part of one's identity in the context of the Italian community in Hull.

### **Reading memory, reading migration**

The importance of memory in migration studies, and migration in memory studies, has received increased interest from scholars in recent years. Indeed, Julia Creet has argued that 'memory, in all its forms, physical, psychological, cultural, and familial, plays a crucial role within the contexts of migration, immigration, resettlement, and diasporas, for memory provides continuity to the dislocations of individual and social identity' (Creet 2014, 3). Yet she also points out the crucial role that notions of location play in the construction of memory, and the need, then, to explore the impact of movement, mobility, and travels on the fixity of memory and its relationship to place. This is because, as Creet explains, 'between times, places, generations, and media, from individuals to communities and vice versa, movement is what produces memory' (2014, 9). Migration memories, then, provide a useful way in which to read social, cultural, and geographic relationships and to further our understanding of how location is key to making memories. Crucially, 'migration has an effect on how and what we remember and [...] displacement intensifies our investments in memory, illuminating the *topos* of memory itself. Memory is always migrating, generating its own topological demands, never more so than now' (Creet 2014, 10).

In order to read the migration memories of the Italian community in Hull in particular, this article uses the lens of postmemory and trans-memory. We draw here on Marianne Hirsch's work on the memory of the Holocaust, building on her notion of postmemory that 'describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up' (Hirsch

2008, 106). What is important to postmemory is ‘precisely the “guardianship” of a traumatic personal and generational past with which some of us have a “living connection” and that past’s passing into history. At stake is not only a personal/familial/generational sense of ownership and protectiveness but also an evolving theoretical discussion about the workings of trauma, memory, and intergenerational acts of transfer’ (Hirsch 2008, 104). In terms of the present analysis of Italian memories of migration, we focus on the ways in which ideas of ownership and protectiveness emerge from the stories that are recounted, and how memories then transfer from one generation to the next. However, the notion of migration as trauma then emerges and it is significant to see how such trauma is reworked and negotiated across generations.

The perspective of trans-memory, as coined by Agnieszka Bedingfield (2004), builds on Hirsch’s notion of postmemory, but focuses on the cultural and linguistic adjustments that are inherent to memory but which take place in the present. Trans-memory works across three levels, encompassing linguistic challenges, and especially untranslatability, cross-generational challenges, and the desire for a return home and a nostalgia for the homeland (Bedingfield 2004, 335-345). In the case of the Italian memories of migration, this approach allows us to track the generational shifts in attitudes, values, and experience, thus exploring the ways in which the notions of *italianità* that emerge from these recollections in fact evolve and change over time.

More broadly, this article engages with notions of migration as framed by the debate around the critical perspective of the ‘autonomy of migration’, a theory that has emerged from work within the fields of social sciences, economics, and politics and international relations, to read and explain today’s migratory movements. This approach ‘emphasizes that migration is a social fact that mobilizes a full spectrum of creativity in human agency’ (Nyers 2015, 27). As a result, ‘the autonomy of migration approach does not, of course, consider

migration in isolation from social, cultural and economic structures. The opposite is true: migration is understood as a creative force within these structures' (Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos 2008, 202). In this light, an engagement with the autonomy of migration 'means looking at migratory movements and conflicts in terms that prioritize the subjective practices, the desires, the expectations, and the behaviours of migrants themselves' (Mezzadra 2011, 121). Such recognition brings with it a socio-political empowerment of the migrants involved (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013, 184). We seek to use this approach here in order to revisit historical migration and cast new light on the migrants themselves. Such an approach challenges the politics of control often at work within migration and instead highlights, prioritises, and valorises the individual's behaviours and motivations, and, importantly for this article, their voices and memories.

This focus on the individual is important because 'the minor desires and projects of migrants can result in political moments, events, and acts that can be central to understanding ruptures in social and political life. In this way, migration is a creative force that enables political, social, cultural, and economic transformations' (Nyers 2015, 28). The traditional narrative of the migrant as victim and the migrant as threat can then be disrupted through this focus on the individual, which rather promotes and authorizes the experience of the individual. Indeed, 'the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation' (Bhabha 2004, 3). A focus on the individual is one way to approach 'the challenge to see what is invisible' (Bhabha 2004, 67), and to 'focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These "in-between" spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity' (Bhabha 2004, 2). In this article, we seek to focus on the individual voices of the members of the Italian migrant community in Hull, thus

valorizing and promoting their experiences and desires, their negotiation of the ‘in-between’, and their resultant hybrid or transcultural identity.<sup>8</sup> But such an approach also requires an acknowledgement of and engagement with the specifics of place in providing a particular socio-cultural context. Our focus on Hull, then, illustrates how, within the perspective of the autonomy of migration, we can focus on questions of the local, the personal, and the individual in order to fully engage with migrant memory and better appreciate the impact of the migrant experience on social and cultural life.

### **Italian Connections: Hull as a migrant destination and the city’s Italian community**

Strictly speaking the first contacts with Italy date back to times of the Roman occupation of Britain. However, although ‘the Roman army crossed the Humber in about AD 71 [...] much of the East Riding is thought to have been occupied by the *Parisi*, a local tribe who appear to have had a cordial relation to their new rulers’ (Evans 2017, 21). As a result, the area ‘was not subject to either military occupation or intense Romanisation’ (ibid.). The next important moment, in terms of connections with Italy was the Middle Ages. As noted by Shankland (2014, 6), ‘the North of England only resumed regular links with Italy in the wake of the Norman Conquest, in an era of church reform inspired by Lanfranc and Anselm, two successive Italian archbishops of Canterbury.’ Clergy and merchants dominated the scene. During this time, wool became ‘the most valued commodity, with most production in the hands of the great monasteries and large estates’ (Shankland 2014, 8) and Hull established itself as one the most important ports for wool exports. Since ‘agents of the Vatican

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<sup>8</sup> We draw here on Dirk Hoerder’s work (1994) on transculturalism, which ‘denotes the competence to live in two or more differing cultures and, in the process, to create a transcultural space which permits moves and linkages back to the evolving space of destination, connections to other spaces, *and* the everyday praxes of *métissage*, fusion, negotiation, conflict, and resistance. Strategic transcultural competence involves capabilities to plan and act life-projects in multiple contexts and to choose. In the process of transculturation, individuals and societies changes themselves by integrating diverse lifeways into a new dynamic everyday culture’ (Harzig and Hoerder with Gabaccia 2009, 84-85).



monopolised the British wool trade, contacts with Italy were fairly important' (Medaglia 2001, 73). From the Renaissance until the 18<sup>th</sup> century artisans and artists 'such as glass blowers, and clock makers, architects, sculptors, musicians, and scholars were summoned to Britain' (ibid.). Some settled in the East Riding area too: in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, the stucco artist Giuseppe Cortese 'embellished the architecture of Wilberforce House' (Evans 2017, 146) in Hull, whilst another stucco artist Domenico Bartoli was invited by William Constable to contribute to the refurbishment of the great hall in his Elizabethan Country House, Burton Constable, near Hull. These were usually isolated figures who travelled the world in search of patronage for their work but did not necessarily identify themselves as Italians (Gabaccia 2000, 29).

However, this is also the time when mass migration begins and Hull's appeal as a migrant destination can be explained thanks to the prominence of its port in European transmigration routes. The UK played an important role in transmigration as British ship owners had been developing highly competitive shipping services and facilities to traverse Britain since the 1770s. Hull was one of the leading UK ports for transmigration because of the dominance of the Humber to Liverpool route (Evans 2001, 71-72). As argued by Evans, indirect migration was fairly popular particularly among those leaving Finland, Germany, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden: 'though 30 million European immigrants entered the US between 1836 and 1914, up to five million transmigrants, or 20 per cent of the total number of immigrants, passed through the UK.' In this context the Humber ports of Hull and Grimsby were particularly popular because 'the journey from the Humber to Liverpool was the shortest route in terms of time and distance to travel across the country' (2001, 71). Indirect migration routes were more common than one might expect during that time as they gave passengers the opportunity to split the journey. Thanks to the development of railways, in many cases, transmigration routes offered a faster and more affordable journey. It was

more convenient and cost effective to reach large ports, where the frequency of transatlantic cruises was higher, by train than trying to leave from one's home country, particularly since shipping companies were striking deals with railway companies in the UK and abroad to offer integrated travel packages (Evans 2001, 74).

Although Italy was not part of the main transmigration routes, Italians arrived in Hull between the late 1800s and the 1930s (and, according to Shankland (2014), into the 1940s).<sup>9</sup> According to one observer, Italians were already present in Hull in 1899, based on his description of the city's harbour and market area:

There is always a crowd of heterogeneous human elements. Here one sees almost every type of the European family, together with men from the far-off corners of the earth. A Lincolnshire shepherd rubs shoulders with a swarthy Lascar; fair-haired Swedes lounge against the railings beyond which a party of emigrant Russian Jews, greasy and unkempt, are keeping strict watch over a few miserable belongings; Danes, Germans, Spaniards, Italians chatter and gabble in their own tongues to the accompaniment of the louder voices of Yorkshire or Lincolnshire folk who have come into Hull to market. Along the streets leading from the Humber side towards the centre of the town a similarly mixed crowd is always moving (Evans 2006, 224).

As noted by Evans (2017, 155), 'immigrants from most European countries [including Italy] found a home in Hull during the long 19<sup>th</sup> century' and the city was truly multi-cultural as these people 'brought new cultures, foods and styles' (ibid.) The time span for the arrival of Italians roughly coincides with the heyday of the Wilson Line, a Hull-based shipping company that at one point was considered to be the largest, privately-owned shipping line in

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<sup>9</sup> According to the Annual Report of His Majesty's Inspector, with Statement as to the Expulsion of Aliens (1906-1911), between 1909 and 1911, a total of 8,237 Italian transmigrants arrived in the UK (Evans 2006, 353).

the world. Established in the late 1700s, the company expanded its routes between 1860-1870 to include the Adriatic coast, the city of Bari in Puglia, and Sicily.<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly, most of the Italian families who settled in Hull during that period came from Southern Italy, in particular Calabria and Sicily, and some from Lazio (Cassino). Unlike other historic Italian communities in the UK (for instance in Scotland), where initially immigrants came all from a very small area and specialised in the same trade, this was not the case in Hull. However, despite the fact that they usually arrived as unskilled labourers, most of these immigrants quickly established successful small businesses in industries such as: food and catering; home furnishings and decoration (in particular tiles); and groceries. As the literature on pre-WWII Italian migrants to the UK reveals, in terms of trades, those Italians who settled in Hull were not dissimilar to those who settled in London. Talking of London, Zontini (2004, 14) for instance points out:

[The Italians] were initially itinerant workers engaged in a variety of activities ranging from street music to semiskilled and skilled crafts work. The most notable craftsmen of this period were the figurinai (makers and sellers of small statuettes), the arrotini (knife-grinders) and terrazzo workers (mosaic workers) (Colpi 1991: 40). Soon Italians started to move into the catering sector, first still as itinerant workers selling chestnuts in winter and ice-cream in summer, then as owners of small family businesses with which they gained a certain degree of success.

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<sup>10</sup> These routes were also used to import Italian goods to the UK. For instance, when looking at the Wilson Line's records, under 'Fruit and Onions Agreements' for 1902-1912, we discover that lemons were being imported from Sicily (Hull History Centre (n.d.), 100). The Adriatic routes became so important in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that in 1919 the company established an office in Trieste (Italy) where they founded Ellerman and Wilson Lines Agency Company, Ltd. (Samer & Co. Shipping 2017). We also know that Ellerman Wilson Lines owned some land in Bari which was purchased by the Italian government in 1934 to build a hospital (Hull History Centre (n.d.), 223).

As scholars like Fortier (2000, 22) have pointed out, this tendency to gradually blend into the local socio-economic fabric appears to be a common feature of Italian migrants in Britain. In places like Hull, this resulted (on the surface at least) in a weaker sense of community. According to Shankland (2014, 178), ‘the average Italian Immigrant was an apolitical individualist with no fondness for officialdom; his priorities were his family, his job, his attachment to his old home community [...] and perhaps his religion’. Interestingly, as mentioned earlier, family, work and work ethic, relationship with Italy, and religion are some of the tropes that keep reappearing in the migrant narratives across generations, as we are about to see the first of our case studies. In Hull, however, the need for the migrants to blend into the local socio-economic fabric was reinforced in the period from 1918 to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the progressive disappearance of ‘linguistic skills, communal and philanthropic institutions, and cultural bodies able to adapt and care for outsiders’ (Evans 2017, 172). Negativity towards immigrants seems to be cyclical and peaks during times of economic crises as it could be observed in June 2016 immediately after the outcome of the EU referendum. However, as we mentioned at the beginning of this essay, migration and immigration have formed part of the city’s identity since its origins, so much so that ‘when a statue to Queen Victoria was unveiled in 1903, the profile of a Wilson Line vessel carrying transmigrants was chosen to symbolise on its pedestal one of the means through which Hull had emerged as Britain’s third port during Victoria’s long reign’ (Evans 2017, 158). As Evans continues to explain though, after World War I, this aspect of the city’s history was almost forgotten until ‘the late 1990s when attempts were made by Hull City Council to rebrand the city as both gateway to Europe and fount of freedom’ (ibid.) What these phases of “amnesia” demonstrate is that when dealing with cultural memory ‘remembering and forgetting are intimately connected and engage with one another’ (Assman 2016, 38) as identity is never fixed but a constant “work in progress”. The families we interviewed saw

their stories as a useful reminder of the city's past, and seemed to endorse Evans's view that 'it is impossible to differentiate between Hull and the constantly changing mosaic that makes up its population' (Evans 2017, 174). By sharing their stories, our interviewees were hoping to make their city a more inclusive space. Their attitude confirms Hall's idea that 'cultural identity [...] is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as much as to the past' (2005, 445). This is also why, instead of structuring this article around the series of common tropes emerging from the interviews, we have decided to let our interviewees narrate their own stories, thus prioritizing our focus on the individual and their experience.

### **Lou Coletta and Paul Tyson**

Lou Coletta is a third generation Italian immigrant, whose family came initially from Sicily. His father was born in the UK shortly after the family arrived. Paul, Lou's nephew, is then a fourth generation immigrant. All quotations here from Lou and Paul are taken from the interviews we conducted with them in 2018. The history of the Coletta family that emerged from these interviews is an example of 'family folklore as memory' or, as Hirsch would have it, postmemory. As it was Lou's grandparents who immigrated to the UK, the trauma of this move is distanced and reworked in Lou's experiences. Indeed, in this context, and as Hirsch explains, 'the idiom of family can become an accessible lingua franca easing identification and projection across distance and difference' (2008, 115). In Lou's case in particular, the story that he shared about his family's past was projected and filtered through the memories of his father and other family members, which in some ways functioned to distance the experience from Lou. Yet these memories nevertheless have an impact on Lou's perceptions of his own *italianità*.

Lou explains that, due to the family's desire to get away from the organized crime of the area of Sicily where the Coletta family lived, and in which some members of the wider family were implicated, his immediate family moved to live close to Monte Cassino in Lazio. They stayed there only a short time, no more than five years, before deciding to move on. Lou recounts how, as far as he is aware, the family journeyed across Europe and certainly through Paris. In order to support themselves on the way, his grandfather would take on odd jobs and his grandmother would cook. The family arrived in the UK in Newcastle but stayed there only briefly before moving to Hull and settling in the city centre, in a slum near Ferensway, the main road through the city. Lou does not have exact dates for this journey or the family's arrival but he recounts the initial experience of the family:

two adults, six or seven children, one large room with a wash basin and the cold water tap and a grate for cooking, two bedrooms upstairs, and a communal toilet in the street. While they were there, three of the children died, two in 1918 with the Spanish flu and one shortly after childbirth. They moved eventually from there to a small shop off Ferensway on the main bus route and they had a small general shop, it was known as in those days. It wouldn't have existed today because there was a big heap of coal in one corner and a big drum of paraffin. And then at the other side of the shop they were selling spices and pulses, weighed out.

Lou was born in the early 1930s (he did not share the exact date with us when we interviewed him) and the memories he shared of his early childhood shed light on the challenges the family faced. Lou describes how he remembers stealing sausages from the butchers, which his grandparents were aware of, he says, because they had to cook the sausages for him. He also recounts how, at the age of 5, when Hull city council decided to

develop Ferensway and re-lay the road with tarry bricks, he was ‘given a large bag and [he] had to fill that with tarry logs’. While the family clearly faced financial difficulties and hardships, there was a certain resourcefulness that was part of family life.

Lou also talks about the need to work hard. When describing his father’s activities in the 1930s and 1940s, Lou is clearly proud of how hardworking his father was. He worked as a milkman, pushing his cart around twice a day, delivering milk from a churn in the morning, and then cream in the afternoon. In his spare time, he then worked as a bouncer for the local nightclubs. He also worked for a grocery wholesalers in Hull, which involved pushing a hand cart of groceries in order to make deliveries, even to towns as far away as Goole (a journey of almost 30 miles). When asked where this work ethic came from, Lou explains: ‘the poverty-stricken upbringing and seeing siblings dying and living in one room with a cold water tap and a fire for cooking, shared toilets. He was determined that he was going to work his way to a better life’. Interestingly, it is Paul who makes the specific connection between being hardworking, and being Italian. He explains that

growing up, obviously my granddad would be there and everybody would be talking about how hard the family worked and such, so I formed an opinion that it was an Italian work ethic that you just went that extra mile, worked a little bit harder and longer than everybody else in everything that you did.

This is not something that Lou seeks to underscore in his narrative of the family: if anything, he plays down the notion that such behaviour is a specifically Italian quality by making no mention of the family’s nationality in his description of their resourcefulness when faced with challenges, or of how hard they worked. The challenge of living in the slum off Ferensway following the family’s arrival in Hull was not Lou’s; rather, it is an example of a memory passed down from the one generation to the next. The trauma of early life in Hull, faced by Lou’s father, becomes part of Lou’s memory of migration, and can then be seen as an

example of what Bedingfield has shown as trans-memory in that, in this instance, there is a ‘transgenerational transfer of trauma and memory’(2004, 334) from parent to child. The way in which Lou comes to terms with this trauma is to personalise the experience as that of the family, whilst distancing the idea that the hard work required to escape such circumstances is then an Italian trait.

The distancing of his personal association with Italy is also seen in the way Lou talks about the Italian community in Hull, his family’s experience during World War II, and his own experience with the Italian language. When asked whether there was a fully-established Italian community in Hull during the 1930s, Lou answers ‘yes, because just down the road nearer the bus station, was Stephens and they had an ice cream business and a sweet shop. There was a girl there that worked in the shop and looked after cleaning and helping out, called Mina’. The community did not come together to meet; rather, the Italian population of Hull was concentrated in the one area in the city centre where, as Lou explains, ‘the church was close and she [his grandmother] went to mass at least three times a week. Very religious. Very hard life’. His memories suggest a community that existed only because of the shared location in which the Italian migrants lived, rather than because of a shared migration experience and journey, which, as we have seen, was the case in other areas of the UK. This can arguably be explained by the nature of migration into the city during the period in question, but this description also begins to shed light on Lou’s relationship with his Italian heritage. He does not seek to openly discuss his Italian identity and appears reluctant to identify as a member of the Italian community, which he constructs as existing almost by chance.

In response to questions about potential hostility towards the Italians in Hull, Lou discusses his family’s experiences of World War II, thereby indicating that it was at that point when such attitudes emerged:



The hostility arose when my father had to join the fire service. Obviously, he was a wop. His elder brother was interned because he'd been an interpreter for the consulate. But because he had a son in the regular army and a brother in the regular army, he was very soon released. So my father was always interested in physical health and kept himself very fit with the jobs he did. And he got fed up with the insults and by then he was actually the welterweight champion of the fire brigade. So he offered to do three rounds with anyone that wanted to take him on. Anyone that housed any hostility could do three rounds with him and he wouldn't punish them too much, actually.

It is clear that the experience of the war changed attitudes towards the Italian community in general, and towards Lou's family in particular. The description of his father as a 'wop' reflects this, and also shows what Lou remembers about the trauma of this period. Paul also describes what he perceives as this trauma, when he explains 'it always struck me that that was a confusing time as well, when the Second World War came. My Uncle Lou says when they turned up to intern my great-grandmother, this is after being settled for probably best part of 25 years or something...' and Lou then adds 'Yeah, yeah, not for long but nevertheless it was upsetting at the time'. This trauma has become common to both generations, and it is interesting to see how Paul's postmemory of this event makes use of Lou's memories by citing his story. There is here, as Hirsch would have it, a 'connection to the past [that is] not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation' (2008, 107). By using Lou's memories, Paul comes to a conclusion about this period in his family's history that is also that of Lou, thanks to the stories that have become shared memories and postmemories, allowing both men to work through the impact of the war and the trauma it represents.

It becomes apparent from Lou's recollections that his Italian heritage, whilst ever-present, is not a prominent part of his identity. For example, Lou confesses that he was not brought up speaking Italian:

only a few words because my father was born in England and schooled in English and spoke very little Italian. I can tell you, *porco dio*, which means God is a pig, *giovinazza*<sup>11</sup> ... I used to remember quite a few other words, but they escape me at the moment.

His grandmother, on the other hand, spoke little English. Significantly, this linguistic barrier means that traditional family recipes were not passed down from Lou's grandmother, despite the fact that Lou's parents would go on to own and run very successful pubs, where they would also serve food. In answer to a question about Italian recipes being passed down, Lou explains 'till the day she died, she didn't speak much English, just pidgin English. She wouldn't have been able to write it and she didn't get on very well with my mother because my mother was English and she wanted my father to marry Italian'. Seemingly, Lou does not feel chagrined regarding his lack of Italian or the lack of Italian recipes in the family; instead, it is Paul who expresses a sense of loss for these aspects of his heritage. He shares a story of his grandmother (Lou's mother) cooking in the house with his great-grandmother, and his nostalgia for a moment in his family's past, which he did not experience first-hand, is clear:

for me, my gran's cooking was fantastic. I loved it, absolutely, and she cooked a lot for myself and my brother, and she told this story. I said 'well, how did you learn to cook?' and she said, 'you know, your granddad's mum showed me. She used to stand over me watching and glowering'. If you see pictures of

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<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that several swearwords in Italian involve religion, or better, the de-sacralisation of religion by juxtaposing religious and profane terms (as in the afore-mentioned case of "god is a pig"). As for *giovinazza* [youth] it was also the title of a song that became popular during Fascism and is usually seen as a symbol of the politics of the regime. However, its music was composed in 1909 and had been used in different contexts prior to the Fascist appropriation, which partially explains the song's huge popularity, even among people who did not necessarily support the regime.

my great-gran, that is a scary, scary sight. She said, ‘if I was getting anything, if it was a bit too much of that, I would get a wrap over the knuckles with the spoon. You soon learned because it had to be the best for her son.

In this case, the nostalgia of trans-memory, which, as Bedingfield explains, contains the idea of the return to the old country (2004, 342-5), is here transposed to a moment in the past where Italian and English heritage merge. The ‘romanticised and mythical view of the return home’ inherent in trans-memory (Dundar 2016, 141) instead then becomes a romanticised view of an acculturated migrant family, who are seen as simultaneously Italian and English for Paul as a fourth generation immigrant. The way in which Paul constructs his own identity as such, is also revealed here: his Italian heritage is an accepted part of who he is, and he is proud to be considered of Italian origin.

The reasons for this pride then emerge from Paul’s personal story. When describing his family and what he believes to be the history of Italians in Hull, he clearly identifies as a marker of the Italian community of previous generations a need to survive. For example, he recounts how his great-grandmother would send his grandfather to ‘steal’ offcuts of meat from the local shops and cites this as an example of the Italian survival mentality. The extent to which there is interference here from Lou’s recollections about stealing sausages is unclear, and is perhaps an example of the role inherited memories can play in postmemory (see Hirsch 2008, 107). Paul also speaks of the need that the community felt to integrate into the local community: there were no celebrations of the Italian connections, but differences were nevertheless identifiable, particularly when it came to food. Food was always the freshest possible, particularly the meat in the family, something that Paul personally experienced growing up with his grandfather. He says that this was different to his friends when he was younger: ‘they were growing up eating Findus fish fingers, something that

wouldn't be seen on our family table'. Paul seems to take pride in his family's difference, an indication of the extent to which he has accepted and embraced his Italian heritage.

Paul speaks a lot about the experience of his grandfather (Lou's father), John Coletta, living in Hull during World War II. According to Paul, his grandfather felt the need to disguise his Italian accent as he was not accepted as a migrant. No Italian was spoken in the family; they were working so hard to fit in and anglicise themselves that their Italian became lost. Paul himself does not speak Italian, which he feels is a terrible shame. Drawing on Bedingfield's conceptualisation of trans-memory, this is arguably an example of linguistic challenge. Yet this is not an instance of Italian-speaking migrants accessing English as a means of beginning to settle and integrate into the receiving society but rather of an English speaker seeking to substitute that language with the parental language (Bedingfield 2004, 334), in order to better understand his own identity, more fully access his cultural heritage, and thus return to the 'old' country, Italy. There is thus something positive and aspirational for Paul that emerges from his post- and trans-memory of his family's history.

This is also the case when Paul talks specifically about his grandfather's work ethic. John Coletta served in the fire service in Hull and in 1941 was awarded the George Medal for saving the historic Wilberforce House<sup>12</sup> from fire following a severe air raid in the city. Yet Paul explains that being Italian meant receiving abuse for this in the fire service. His grandfather had grown up in Hull and was educated in the city. But because his family was Italian, Paul explains that the teachers thought his Grandfather was 'thick' and would regularly punish him by sending him to the corner of the classroom with the dunce's cap on his head. There was a need, Paul explains, to fight your way out of everything as an Italian immigrant. What is interesting here is that Paul not only sees this as a positive character trait,

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<sup>12</sup> Wilberforce House is the birthplace of William Wilberforce, the British politician campaigner against the slave trade. The house was built c. 1656 is located in the High Street in Hull, in the now Museums Quarter and Old Town district of the city centre.

but, and as we have already seen, he presents it as a particularly Italian one: he says there is nothing like an Italian work ethic, and no-one does it like an Italian, something which he appears to aspire to and which allows him to connect with what he perceives to be his family's roots.

Speaking of his own experience in light of the Italian Connections exhibition, Paul explains that he thinks it is strange that the Italian community in Hull is not closer. In his opinion, the exhibition was actually a chance for the community to draw together and re-establish itself once again. He is disappointed in this lack of community, particularly for his own generation. He is proud of his Italian roots, and wants to preserve and promote them. His explanation of why there is no community is that perhaps the Italians worked so hard to hide away and integrate, that they did not feel they could be a community. It is interesting that unlike Lou as a third generation immigrant, Paul is ready and seeking to reconnect with Italy and his heritage, as a fourth generation immigrant who is acculturated yet desires to embrace more fully his multicultural and transcultural heritage. He saw the Italian Connections exhibition as an opportunity to shine a light on the Italian community, and his own personal heritage and history. But it is also important for the city of Hull: as Paul says, 'if you think of Hull and East Yorkshire, the area has received a lot of immigrants but you wouldn't say that Hull is diverse. At school, we felt we were out on a limb, a last bastion of Englishness. Hull, wrongly, is quite good at suppressing its immigrant history'. Hull is multicultural, and it is important to tell that story.

### **Sue Hurd (née Bottery) and Joe Hurd**

The second case study for this article is the Bottari family and here, we interviewed Sue Hurd (née Bottery, an anglicisation of Bottari) and her son, Joe. They consider themselves second and third generation Italian immigrants respectively, but in actual fact are third and fourth

generation. Sue's great aunt arrived in Hull in 1896 where she married an Italian who owned a shop. Her great aunt's brothers and sisters moved to Hull in 1901 and her great grandfather then arrived in 1910 but sadly survived only one year in the UK as he was already in his seventies by the time of his arrival. All quotations here attributed to Sue and Joe are taken from the interviews we conducted with them in 2018. Again, the notions of postmemory and trans-memory are useful in understanding their story and experience of migration. However, what emerges from this case is the different perspectives we also gain of the past Italian community in Hull. Sue grew up in the city during the 1960s, during what could be seen as the heyday of the community. Joe then grew up in Hull in the 1990s, at a time when ignorance about the city's multicultural history was widespread, and when markers of difference were perceived negatively. It is thus interesting to see not only how this family view their Italian heritage, but also their perception of the place of this Italian identity in the wider city community in which they live.

When discussing their Italian heritage, both Sue and Joe talk about the importance of food, religion, family, and work, which, as we have seen, are the tropes which recur regularly in the presentation and representation of the Italian immigrant to the North of England (see Shankland (2014, 178)). For example, Sue talks at length about her family history, explaining that

the family went backwards and forwards between Italy because my grandfather was called back to serve in the First World War and he went back with his wife, my granny, and they had my father in Italy. He was the second born; the first born was in England but my father was born in Italy and they stayed in Italy. They came back to England just after the end of the First World War, so my father was a little toddler, to a grocery business and then

my grandfather died in the 1920s sadly and my granny and my uncle kind of kept the business going with support from family and friends.

Hirsch (2008, 106) explains the importance of stories, images, and behaviours in the creation of postmemory and Sue's recollections here are then in a case point. She draws on stories she had been told about her family's origins by her father and, in the case of the family's shop specifically, the influence of an image in the creation of this postmemory is clear. She has a photograph of the shop and explains the kind of things that the family sold:

It was general groceries, but it did say on the sign above the shop Italian, not delicatessens, Italian provisions, which I was interested in but you can see in the window that there doesn't seem to be an awful lot of Italian provisions: it's Fry's chocolate, the advert, and cocoa, and there's bread in the window and bananas hanging up and all kinds of different things. And then my uncle, my father's elder brother who became the patriarch of the family at a very young age, started a wholesale fruit and vegetables in Humber Street. So that kind of grocery business ran through.

The decision to brand the shop as Italian but then to stock typical English produce points to what is arguably a broader trend in the experience of first and second generation migrants, which we saw also in the case of the Coletta family: that is, the genuine desire to integrate and be part of the social fabric of the local community. Another example of this would be the anglicisation of names. Sue's father, for instance, appears to have changed his name from Bottari to Bottery in the 1940s as a result of having volunteered to serve in the Yorkshire regiment during WWII. But Sue is unsure of the exact circumstances that prompted this alteration; in response to the question 'do you know when your family name was anglicised?', she explains:

Not really because for my father, in his first passport that I've seen was the Italian name and, and I'm guessing he must have anglicized it because he volunteered for the Second World War. This is a big enigma in our family because he was an Italian Citizen and remained an Italian until the end of the 1940s, but signed up with the Yorkshire regiment as an Italian, so I'm not quite sure.

As Bedingfield (2004, 334) notes, the act of translation and appropriation to overcome challenges in the migration experience become part of the trans-memory of that process but it is clear Sue's recollection is of her father's behaviour. Because she was not privy to his decision-making process, she can only partially understand this translation act.

Sue's father's desire for acculturation is also seen in his decision to become a British citizen and to give up his Italian passport. Sue explains how proud her father felt at having been invited to apply for British nationality after serving during the war. But his *italianità* still resurfaced fully every time they went to Italy:

he gave up his Italian passport when he became a British subject and he was very definite about that. And he said no, if you've decided to live in a country and they've been kind enough, because he was invited to become a British subject after serving in the Army, to invite you to become a British subject, he said you shouldn't keep your Italian passport as well if you were wanting to be a British subject. So he was quite principled and so he said no, I'm a British subject. So he was quite proud of that. But at the same time when we went back to Italy, you could see a different side to him and he'd say 'in here, I'm still Italian'.

Another aspect of this desire for acculturation was Sue's father's adoption of English as his principle language. He would only use Italian to address those members of his family



that did not speak any English. However, and as Sue points out, what was spoken was not Italian but Calabrese. Sue learnt Italian by attending the Italian School on a Saturday as her father wanted his children to learn proper Italian (not dialect). Later on in the 1960s, she continued to practice her Italian by attending the Italian Club, once a month, run by the University's Catholic Chaplaincy. This Club played an important role in fostering links between the various families and in creating and preserving a sense of an Italian community in Hull specifically. Sue remembers the events organised as an opportunity for all generations to get together for food, dancing, and bingo. Unfortunately, all this petered out during the 1970s. The Italian Connections exhibition, then, was a chance to bring that community back together and to once again grant it a public forum. Sue says: 'it was fabulous. I think that you got the essence of the Italians in Hull, the whole thing'. In response to a question about the opportunity to meet the other Italian families, she says:

Oh, well, that was amazing because we knew just about everybody else in the room. And there were people who I didn't realize were Italian: an ex-work colleague and the parent of a child that I'd taught – I had no idea but her name had been anglicized. And of course, you know, my married name is English. So we had a nice talk and she had had a different experience to ours, and not really as happy an experience. So that was interesting but it was a bit sad as well and I tell you, the thing that the exhibition brought home was how almost every family had anglicized their names at some point, and sometimes changed it back again, but almost everybody had changed their name.

In a similar way to Paul in our previous case study, the fact that the exhibition sheds public light on private memories is important not only for Sue's personal family history but also for the city of Hull and for bringing to the fore once again the hidden multicultural heritage of the city.

Despite her father's desire to acculturate and hide the family's Italian origins, Sue herself significantly identifies as 'a good 50%' Italian and demonstrates a real desire to discover/re-discover and showcase *italianità* in the context of a hybrid identity. She visits Italy regularly and keeps in touch with her family in Calabria via social media. She also identifies what she values the most about Italian culture:

It would have to be food! But I love the people. And I love the art and the architecture and when we're in Italy, particularly in the South I feel as comfortable there as I do at home. [...] There's a lovely warmth about the people and yes, I do feel as if I belong in both places, which is lovely.

Joe also demonstrates this strong desire to re-discover and showcase *italianità*. He is acutely aware of his hybrid identity and the challenge it poses, saying that sometimes he wishes he were fully English, as that would make things easier. In this context, he speaks of an Anglo-Italian identity, drawing on the example of the US where, as he sees it, Italian-Americans are properly recognised:

I really wish like we had more of an identity as Anglo-Italian. I really wish that was a thing because, in America, the Italian-American community are a recognized community and they have a lot of cultural identity, which isn't Italian even. I mean, they've created their own, especially with things like food and music and language. Some of the words they say are such distortions or bastardizations of Sicilian and Calabrese, but you understand what they're saying, but it's not quite right and I wish that we'd probably not compromised some of the larger parts of our ... I mean, I think it's really reassuring now, a few of my cousins who have the Bottari family name have actually changed their name back from Bottery to Bottari and I go by Francesco as my middle

name now and my cousins all go by their Italian middle names and in fact, they're even christening their children with Italian names.

Joe demonstrates here a strong nostalgia for a return home, an important part of the trans-memory of migration (Bedingfield 2004, 334), but this nostalgia is then counterbalanced here by the desire to maintain a hybrid identity. Nevertheless, Joe's criticism of the compromises that the previous generations made, which have resulted in a loss of an important part of his heritage and identity, arguably reveals a tendency to view *italianità* in a romanticized and mythicized way, and to minimize the challenges faced by previous generations in their desire to integrate and acculturate.

However, we also see in Joe an attachment to a much more localised identity, as he claims he feels more Calabrese than Italian:

My girlfriend recently, she said, 'oh well, it'd be nice to go back to Calabria, but maybe next year we could go to Greece or somewhere else' and I said 'Pfft. I'm not going to Greece or Spain'. It is quite an important part of my identity and whether I like it or not, I do feel this kind of ... maybe not to Italy so much I think, maybe more to Calabria, which I think is quite Italian.

In this sense, he confirms what scholars of the Italian diaspora have said, namely that: 'even after several years abroad [Italians] maintained strong links with their villages of origin, usually in the form of regular phone calls, letters and above all visits' (Zontini 2004: 15). Joe thinks that the strength of the sense of *italianità* in his generation would have probably come as a surprise to his ancestors: 'they probably thought that it would have bred out by now but it has not, it is strong'. And he wants to pass on this *italianità* to the next generation:

I think I'd like my children to understand their heritage and where they come from because there will be things in the home which they will see [that are] different to other people and they'll want to know why their dad is shouting for Italy in the next

World Cup, or why we don't have a roast dinner on a Sunday or why we're having longer lunches or why we drink an espresso with a brioche and we're not having a full English [breakfast].

What we see is that across generations, the Italian identity survived in the private sphere mainly through food, or food related-traditions. Sue, for instance, feels that food was the first means by which she fully realised her different heritage:

I think perhaps the thing that struck me first was probably through food because my father would cook occasionally, which was quite rare in the 50s and 60s and he would do Pasta Pomodoro with Polpette. But it would be a labour of love and the pasta wasn't easy to come by. We used to get that delivered from Leeds and the olive oil, we had to get from Boots down Whitefriargate and my granny had to have olive oil every week<sup>13</sup>. So every week we had to go to Boots and you could only get tiny little bottles of olive oil because it was for medicinal purposes. [...] So the mince for the polpette was bought and my father would mince it with a hand grinder. And the breadcrumbs again were all grated and it would take forever. And I'd think of the people having roast beef and Yorkshire pudding but then we were allowed a little bit of wine, with water in, which nobody had, and that was just the norm.

The hard work and care that would go into the preparation of food serves to create a sense of home and belonging, which, for Sue, simultaneously brings together ideas of the 'old' homeland of Italy and of the 'new' home of Hull. Rabikowska (2010, 378) has argued that, in

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<sup>13</sup> Leeds is approximately 65 miles away from Hull. Whitefriargate is one of the main shopping streets in Hull city centre. Boots is then a pharmacy and health and beauty retail chain in the UK.

the context of migration, 'food in its very sensual dimension serves as vehicle for the recreation of the abstract meaning of home through materially involved activities which alleviate the sense of fragmentation and discontinuity caused by displacement'. Through food, it is possible to maintain a physical connection to the 'old' homeland. Yet it also provides a potential mechanism through which to create a new identity. Rabikowska suggests that when the migrant's national identity and host culture identity meet, 'although there is an inescapable conflict between such different identifications, their meeting does not need to provoke a crisis: on the contrary, their constant confrontations may result in an identity in progress which never settles but is more accepting' (2010, 378-9). Food becomes the conduit through which an 'in-between' identity can emerge and take root. And, as Sue demonstrates, can also become the vehicle through which difference becomes the accepted norm.

For Joe, like for his mother, food is what made him realize from a very early age that he was different. However, it was not just the items of food in themselves that pointed to this difference but it was also the fact that he grew up with the vocabulary of Italian food:

English families would be having roast dinners on a Sunday, we'd be having pasta, *sugo, ragù*. We would eat different things in an evening. We'd always have pasta or we'd always have more Italian kind of vegetarian dishes. So we were growing up with the vocabulary of Italian. We were having *parmigiana*. We were having *melanzane*, we weren't having roast aubergines, we had this dripfeed and I think that made me realize, the food, that we were slightly different from the other families.

But this difference is a source of joy for Joe who, as a fourth generation immigrant, has embraced his Italian heritage and wishes to protect it. He explains that:

I think food was for me the biggest obvious aspect of the Italian identity and we just ate. I mean that was it, that was the life and soul of our family. We ate

together as a complete family probably four or five times a week. Cousins, aunts and uncles. So that for me is the Italian Heritage and difference. I'd go around to my English friends' houses and you'd be sat in front of a TV with something like potato chips and beans and something but then when they'd come to my house, you'd have everybody. Grandparents. Fresh produce from the garden. So I'd always kind of associated cooking with joy, with happiness, with conviviality.

For Joe, food has become a key marker of what he identifies as his Anglo-Italian identity and also an important instrument through which he articulates his ongoing relationship with Italy. Thus, food is a way of resisting the translation, appropriation, and acculturation seen in previous generations of the family. Joe is particularly proud of this and of the fact that, in his work as a cook, he is able to work with Italian food. He is passionate in his quest to 'protect it and to safeguard it, to understand its roots and how we treat it', illustrating the significance of Italian food for both his personal and professional identities.

Finally, when asked to summarize in five words what Italy means to him, Joe responds: food – family – religion – beaches – Hull. The tropes of the Italian immigrant (Shankland 2014, 178) return here but with one notable exception. Hull, for Joe, is an integral part of his Italian heritage. His trans-memory of the migration process as a fourth generation immigrant is blurred with his memories of growing up, and his own coming-to-terms with and construction of a hybrid, Anglo-Italian identity. Hull is then the home context from which this identity emerges. Joe's personal story of multiculturalism, together with those of Sue, Paul, and Lou, shed light on different aspects of the public story of Hull, with the Italian community in Hull as a case study demonstrating the city's multicultural heritage, which recently has been neglected in the ways in which the city is perceived, at least for our

interviewees. It is for this reason that it is important to give a voice to these people and their communities, and tell their stories.

## **Conclusion**

The memories, postmemories, and trans-memories of the Italian migrant and immigrant experience in Hull, which our four interviewees shared, shed important light on the ways in which Italian migrant identity was and is constructed in this case, and how Italian origins and heritage was and is remembered. The trauma of the original migration experience constitutes an example of postmemory for Lou, Paul, Sue, and Joe, whose recollections of their family's migration history have been filtered through 'the stories, images and behaviours' (Hirsch 2008, 107) that surrounded them as they grew up. The extent of their coming-to-terms with their hybrid identity and their family roots then demonstrates some of the challenges at work in trans-memory. There are the linguistic challenges of losing Italian linguistic competence and embracing the English language, trans-generational dilemmas as regards the apparently difficult integration experiences of grandparents, and the idea of the return to the old country seen in particular in the fourth generation's desire to reconnect with Italy, through food, embracing a strong work ethic, and the reacquisition of the language.

But allowing our participants to tell their stories is also important for the valorization of their own experience and of the role played by the location of Hull in the creation of their transcultural identities and sense of belonging. The stories they share about the Italian community are important to them as a means of challenging what they perceive to be the self-contained, monocultural identity of Hull. The city's identity thus intersects with the hybrid identities of these migrants, providing the geographic, social and cultural backdrop against which cultural difference plays out, as the migrants (re)negotiate their own identities, and come to belong to a new community. Throughout the twentieth century, what emerges is an

ever-evolving relationship between this migrant community and the host city, where the distancing from *italianità* and embracing of “Hullness” in the early and mid-twentieth century gives way to a return to and re-embracing of *italianità* in the 1960s, and again in the 2000s. The opportunity to discuss their family history for the Italian Connections project in a way encourages a new wave of remembering for the community and provides a new opportunity to again articulate the value of the individual migrant experience.

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