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Work, Identity, Narrative: Reconstructing the Working Experiences of Italians in Wales (1880s – 1950s)

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**Work, Identity, Narrative:
Reconstructing the Working Experiences
of Italians in Wales (1880s – 1950s)**

Gareth White

Abstract

In Wales, the historical narrative of Italian migration to Wales in the twentieth century has come to be dominated by the experiences of the widely celebrated *Bracchi* café industry. Academic interventions in the field of Welsh-Italian migration studies have largely followed suit, analysing the cultural contributions of Italians to Wales or the impact of the *Arandora Star* sinking and internment of members of the community during the Second World War.

Following trends in global Italian migration studies, this thesis seeks to construct a multi-faceted narrative of Italian migration to the country by focusing on marginalised voices and workers outside of the Italian refreshment industry. Drawing on a narrative approach to investigate Italian migration to Wales between the 1880s and 1950s, it departs from conventional studies by focusing predominantly on the narratives about work of Italian female café traders, prisoners of war, and metalworkers and miners. To do so, the thesis avails itself of a diverse corpus constructed of archival documents, 51 semi-structured digital oral history interviews conducted with Italians and Welsh-Italians of different generations, email communications, memoirs, and English-language newspaper articles published in the Welsh press.

In exploring the narratives of work from these sectors, the thesis shines a light on the different strategies used by Italians as they navigated a rapidly changing nineteenth and twentieth century Wales. It demonstrates how personal and family narratives represent how Italians challenged social stigmas and expressed a sense of emplacement in Welsh society, and the different processes of identity formation between work identity and individual identity. The thesis also employs insights from gender studies to research how entrepreneurial women in the café industry gained agency through active involvement in managing family businesses, as well as how Italian heavy industry workers performed Welsh-Italian working-class masculine values to reflect their belonging both to a mixed-culture Welsh workplace and the Italian community outside of work. Cultural practices and transcultural interactions between Italians and Welsh through merit of working also form a key pillar of investigation, with these being identified as defining Italians' experiences in the country.

In all, the thesis proposes a heterogeneous reading of Italian migration to the country. In light of debates in Italian migration studies to the UK regarding whose voices

are represented in the dominant historical narrative about Italians in Britain, the thesis argues the novelty of an approach that combines work, narratives, and identity in incorporating new perspectives into the wider picture.

Declarations

‘Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw’r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o’r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw’n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.’

‘I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.’

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I chwi holl, diolch yn fawr.

INTRODUCTION

On the 11th of July 2021 at the Wembley Stadium in London, England and Italy faced off in the UEFA Euro 2020 final. In anticipation of the event, an outpouring of support from Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland for Roberto Mancini's *Azzurri* symbolised the complex network of relationships between Celtic countries, the United Kingdom, and Italy. The final offered a moment of reflection between 'sporting tribalism', the 'long and complex history' linked to Celtic countries' statuses as 'distinct nations', and Italian migration to Great Britain, where the positive cultural legacy of Italian migration was identified in the news as one of the reasons why some supporters chose Italy over England:¹

[t]he Italians have made an important and significant contribution to Welsh life. They have added to the culture and brought colour and, sometimes, luxury to a people who sorely needed it. They are, quite simply, part of Wales. [...] In many cases they are a great legacy of Wales' industrial past. But they are also living, thriving businesses that have become part of the fabric of the communities they have served for generations. They are we, and we are they. When Italy play England in the Euro 2020 final there are many in Wales who will need no persuasion in deciding who to support. All we will say is... Forza Italia!²

This article frames the sympathy of Welsh supporters towards Italians but also passes comment on what has come to be celebrated as a 'success story' of the contribution of Italian migrants to the country.³ The similarities between Welsh and Italian citizens are also strongly alluded to – the reference to 'they are we, and we are they' connotes how, as a result of their working practices in the Italian cafes, they had become a part of the social fabric of the country.

Additionally, *Nation Cymru's* framing of the historical narrative of Italian migration to Wales delves into detail on the Italian cafes and how these played a central role in defining the experiences of Italians in the country over the twentieth century. While this is undoubtedly the case, it does not represent the *only* experience of Italians and work in the country. The text itself acknowledges this to some extent by referencing

¹ 'Euro 2020: Will Wales Fans Support England in Final?', *BBC News*, 9th July 2021, < <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-57765063>> [last accessed 28th August 2023].

² 'The Story of the Bracchi – When the Italians Arrived in Wales', *Nation Cymru*, 10th July 2021, < <https://nation.cymru/culture/the-story-of-the-bracchi-when-the-italians-arrived-in-wales/>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

³ Emanuela Bianchera, Robin Mann and Sarah Harper, 'Transnational mobility and cross-border family life cycles: A century of Welsh-Italian migration', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, (2019), 1– 16, p. 1.

how Italians ‘came to plug the gaps in British industry’ and worked in ‘mining, tin plating and in agriculture’, but these themes are not explored sufficiently.⁴ In short, alternative working practices are recognised, but they remain secondary to a dominant narrative that revolves around the ‘Bracchi’ cafes of the country.

This thesis investigates Italian migrants’ narratives of work in Wales between the 1880s and 1950s. It draws upon a corpus constructed of digital oral history interviews conducted by myself, and English-language newspaper articles to explore the working practices of Italian male and female café traders, prisoners of war, and heavy metal workers. The aims of the thesis are threefold. Firstly, it challenges a dominant historical narrative of Italian twentieth-century migration in Wales constructed around the experience of Italian café traders by paying attention to the perspectives of alternative testimonies. Secondly, it examines the interplay between work, migration, culture, and society in an ethnic group who have historically been considered a success story by studying how different work contexts and geopolitical events shaped individual experiences. These include the impact of the Second World War on women café traders and Italian prisoners, as well as the religious discrimination encountered by Italian café traders at the start of the twentieth century. And thirdly, it discusses processes of integration and identity formation that emerged as a result of working in Wales. To this regard, it looks at the ways that Italians construct work identities to adapt to different workplace environments, reflect on the loss and gaining of agency and identity, and refer to the performance of Italian and Welsh cultural values at work.

1. Italian Workers in Wales

The notion of Italian citizens enhancing their economic and social conditions by migrating beyond the confines of their country is a phenomenon that, as historians such as Donna Gabaccia (2000), Piero Bevilacqua (2001) or Michele Colucci and Matteo Sanfilippo (2009) argue, has existed for much of modern and contemporary

⁴ *Ibid.*

history.⁵ What did change as of the late nineteenth century was the scale of such movements, both in terms of distance and type.

Before Italians began to emigrate *en masse* to the Americas, their movements were characterised by the patterns of the seasons and the availability of jobs as part of labour migration in search of *lavori stagionali* (seasonal jobs). Until the 1850s, this migration was typically within the confines of Italy. Farmers and shepherds from the Marche and Abruzzo regions would tend to the fields of Lazio, entire towns of Genovesi would relocate for several months to work in the richer regions of Piedmont or Lombardy, and the lemon groves of Sicily would be staffed by Calabrians.⁶ Alternatively, groups of Italians would cross into neighbouring countries, leading labourers from the hills of Lucca to the large estates of Marseilles, Venetians to Austria-Hungary and Germany, and Lombards to Switzerland.⁷ Over time, the pathways were widened by developments in transportation and the opening up of new destinations, all in search of economic opportunities and social prosperity. New labour markets opened to Italians wishing to earn money to send back home in the form of *rimesse* (remittances). As such, increasing numbers of Italians traded the fields of France for the coffee plantations of Brazil, the railroads of the United States or the farmlands of Argentina.⁸ Whilst significant numbers of Italians travelled to the Americas in the latter half of the nineteenth century and well into the first half of the twentieth century, this period also witnessed the migration, albeit to a lesser extent, of Italians to other countries that were open to migrant labour. These migrations were the movements of the ‘trailblazers’, with migrants turning in increasing numbers to countries such as Russia, Belgium, Australia and Britain.⁹

As scholars such as Umberto Marin (1975), Lucio Sponza (1988) and Anne-Marie Fortier (1999) have demonstrated, Italians had been present on British soil long before the first waves of Italian migration arrived towards the end of the nineteenth century,

⁵ Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 2000); Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina de Clementi and Emilio Franzina, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana: partenze* (Rome: Donzelli editore, 2001); Michele Colucci and Matteo Sanfilippo, *Le migrazioni: un'introduzione storica* (Rome: Carocci editore, 2009).

⁶ Dino Cecil, 'The Seasonal Emigrations of Italians in the Nineteenth Century: From Internal to International Destinations', *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 10.1 (1982), 43–68 (p. 49); *Verso l'America: l'emigrazione italiana e gli Stati Uniti*, ed. Piero Bevilacqua (Rome: Donzelli, 2005); *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana: arrivi*, eds. Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi and Emilio Franzina (Rome: Donzelli, 2002).

⁷ Klaus Bade, *Migration in European History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) p. 57; Dino Cecil, 'The Seasonal Emigrations of Italians in the Nineteenth Century'.

⁸ *Verso l'America*, ed. Piero Bevilacqua; Jonathan Dunnage, *Twentieth Century Italy: A Social History* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 13.

⁹ Piero Bevilacqua *et al.*, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana: partenze*.

starting from the Romans and continuing throughout the past two millennia.¹⁰ In the nineteenth century, London was home of several prominent Italian exiles such as Ugo Foscolo, Antonio Panizzi and Giuseppe Mazzini, with the latter in particular playing a significant role in establishing the presence of an Italian community in Clerkenwell.¹¹ However, it was only as of the 19th century that popular emigration to London and the United Kingdom emerged and grew in scale, spreading beyond London, across England and eventually arriving in the Celtic nations of Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Whilst not as prominent as in England, Italian migration to Wales can be attributed in part to the favourable working conditions offered by the prosperous coalfields of South Wales – particularly amidst the rumours of the ‘black gold’ of Wales, and also by the opportunities of unexplored territories where they could start business ventures.¹² Rather than establishing a Little Italy in Cardiff or Swansea, they moved throughout the country, so that the presence of Italians was felt from Caernarfon to Cardiff. Over time, the Italians were associated with their food: more than one Italian coffee shop could be found in every town in the Welsh valleys by 1939, and there were several of them throughout North, West and Southwest Wales.¹³ With the exception of the Second World War, where suspicions were cast and longstanding members of the Welsh-Italian community were arrested, the Italians came to be seen as well-integrated members of Wales whose cultural contributions enhanced the socio-cultural fabric of the country.¹⁴

The success of the Italian café owners in Wales has meant that the narrative of Italian migration to Wales during the late nineteenth and twentieth century has almost

¹⁰ Umberto Marin, *Gli italiani in Gran Bretagna* (Rome: Centro studi emigrazione, 1975); Lucio Sponza, *Italian Immigrants in Nineteenth Century Britain: Realities and Images* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988); Anne-Marie Fortier, ‘Historicity and Communalism: Narratives about the Origins of the Italian Community in Britain’, *Identity and Affect: Experiences of Identity in a Globalising World*, eds. John Campbell and Alan Rew (London: Pluto Press, 1999).

¹¹ This aristocratic configuration of migration, whereby prominent Italian artists or exiles would migrate to another country, has occurred on a global scale. Margaret Campbell Wicks, *The Italian Exiles in London 1816 – 1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1937); Umberto Marin, *Gli italiani in Gran Bretagna*.

¹² Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015); Terri Colpi, *The Italian Factor, The Italian Community in Great Britain* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1991).

¹³ Marco Giudici, ‘A Bridge Across Ethnic Lines? Italian cafes in Welsh popular culture and public history’, *Welsh History Review / Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru*, 26.4 (2013), 649–674.

¹⁴ Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity: Italians and Nation-Building in Wales, 1940–2010’, (Bangor University, unpublished thesis, 2012); Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*.

become synonymous with these traders. As will be discussed below, the dominance of this narrative is notable in popular culture and academic literature, where studies and exhibitions of Italians in Wales centre around the ‘Bracchi’ industry, named after the so-called pioneer of the coffee trade in the country. However, historical records demonstrate that Italians actively worked in different sectors in Wales in the second half of the nineteenth century. Roman Catholic and Jesuit priests preached throughout the country, including St Beuno’s Jesuit College in Tremeirchion, Denbighshire.¹⁵ Sailors predominantly from Genova worked in the dockyards of the industrial cities of South Wales as labourers and ship merchants.¹⁶ Travelling musicians, performers, and *figurinai* roamed the country towards the latter decades of the nineteenth century, as did photographers and portrait makers.¹⁷ Italians worked in a variety of professions throughout the twentieth century, including as consular agents at the Italian Consulate in Cardiff, tailors, boarding house keepers, and manual labourers in a variety of industries related to mining.¹⁸ The extent of the recruitment of metal workers and miners in the 1950s, when a rapidly industrialising Wales imported workers to aid in the rebuilding of the economy, constituted a veritable wave of migration in its own right.¹⁹ These jobs composed different realities at odds with the prevailing narrative of café-owning Italians from Bardi (PI) and Picinisco (FR).

For these reasons, the historical period covered in this thesis spans from the 1880s to the 1950s. The choice of these dates is motivated by two significant historical coordinates related to the labour history of Italians in the country. As the 1881 census indicates, the 1880s mark the first decade that Italians arrived in significant numbers in Wales, doubling from 243 to 580 between 1871 and 1881.²⁰ The date also corresponds with the assumed date that, as the historical narrative dictates, Giacomo Bracchi opened the first Italian café towards the end of the 1880s and beginning of the 1890s.²¹ The 1950s, on the other hand, are statistically important as the post-war migration

¹⁵ Great Britain General Register Office (GBGRO), *Census of England and Wales, 1881* (London: HMSO, 1881).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Great Britain General Register Office (GBGRO), *Census of England and Wales, 1911* (London: HMSO, 1911).

¹⁹ Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity: Italians and Nation-Building in Wales, 1940–2010’, p. 61.

²⁰ Colin Hughes, *Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla. The Italian Community in South Wales, 1881–1945* (Bridgend: Seren, 1991; 2020), p. 136.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

constituted a second wave of Italian migration to the United Kingdom. This was composed mainly of workers recruited in bulk who were hired in manual labour industries such as mining, milling, and metal works.²² These workers filled labour shortages in relevant sections after the war as part of the rebuilding of Wales and Britain's economies.

In this thesis, I explore the working practices of Italians in the café trade, imported labourers as prisoners of war, and metal workers and miners, the three sectors that Italians were the most active in between these two decades. Regarding the first work sector studied in this thesis, the Italian refreshment industry, entrepreneurs started as itinerant traders selling hot chestnuts and ice creams in Wales. They opened the first café shops towards the end of the nineteenth century and continued to develop the trade to their heyday in the 1950s. The café trade, largely monopolised by families from Bardi and Picinisco, enhanced their trading possibilities through continuous modernisation and collective association throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Italian-run cafes, fish-and-chip shops, restaurants, and ice cream parlours were a staple of the Welsh cultural landscape throughout the twentieth century. Gradually dwindling over the latter years of the previous century through closures, only few of the original cafes remain open today.²³

The second work experience covered in this thesis regards prisoners of war captured during the Second World War. Italian soldiers apprehended in North Africa or Sicily after 1942 were transported to Commonwealth countries, among which Britain. As per the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War of 1929, detained soldiers could be employed during their imprisonment. These were often to fill urgent labour shortages and were not directly associated with the war effort. Many of the 7,262 Italian prisoners who arrived in Wales worked as agricultural labourers for Welsh farmers, even staying in the farmhouses with the families towards the end of the war.²⁴ The contribution of Italian prisoners in Wales is best embodied by the story of Mario Ferlito, a young Venetian who painted a mural of Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* on the roof of military

²² Siria Guzzo, *A Sociolinguistic Insight into the Italian Community in the UK: Workplace Language as an Identity Marker* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2014), p. 8.

²³ 'The Last of the Bracchis', BBC Radio Wales, 30th August 2021.

²⁴ Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity: Italians and Nation-Building in Wales, 1940–2010', p. 51.

barracks that were converted into a makeshift chapel by fellow prisoners in POW Camp 70, Carmarthenshire.²⁵

The mining and metallurgic industries are the third professional sector considered. As of the 1880s, sporadic numbers of Italians worked in tinsplate factories, coalfields, iron ore mines, and tinsplate furnaces throughout the country. Except for one lead mine in Frongoch, Cardiganshire, between 1899 – 1901, substantial arrangements for Italian labour were never formalised until the late 1940s to the early 1950s. As part of the rebuilding drive after the war, official trade agreements were struck with Welsh companies and the Italian *Ministero del Lavoro*, and Italians began to arrive on temporary contracts to mine coal and metals in Wales. Between 1950 and 1956, 2,259 Italian workers were recruited to work for tinsplate industries and 430 were employed in the coal sector.²⁶

The focus on the 1880s and 1950s is also relevant as it covers political events that shaped migrant and Italian experience globally. To challenge the ‘romanticised and glamourised’ narrative of Italian migration to Britain, scholars increasingly turned to the Second World War to demonstrate its traumatic impact on the Italian communities.²⁷ For those in the café industry, this revolves around the internment of Italians following Benito Mussolini’s declaration of war, the tensions and protests in urban areas of Wales on the same night, or the sinking of the *Arandora Star*, a ship transporting Axis prisoners to Canada sunk by a German torpedo off the coast of Ireland on the 2nd of July 1940. But it also covers the experiences of Italian prisoners of war who, between 1939 and 1946, shifted from being ‘enemy’ soldiers to volunteer workers. The Second World War constitutes an important frame of reference: it blighted the experiences of long-settled café traders, it triggered the arrival of prisoner labourers in the country between 1942 and 1948, and it looms in the background throughout the 1950s as a new wave of Italians adjusted to post-war Britain and the legacy of having been on opposite sides of the war to their Welsh neighbours.

²⁵ John Meirion Jones, *Y llinyn arian* (Cardiff: Cyhoeddiadau Barddas, 2005).

²⁶ The Tinsplate Industry, ‘Note on the Employment of Italians in the Tinsplate Trade’, West Glamorgan Archive Service (WGAS), D/D Z 53/23/2.; Ministry of Labour and National Service (MLNS), ‘Italians Recruited for Coalmining: Possibility of Placing Them in Other Work,’ 30 April 1952, The National Archives, LAB, 9/248.

²⁷ Wendy Ugolini, “Spaghetti Lengths in a Bowl?” Recovering Narratives of Not “Belonging” Amongst the Italian Scots’, *Immigrants & Minorities*, 31.2 (2013), 214–234, p. 214.

The importance of re-assessing the historical narrative of Italian migration to Wales comes at a time when their experiences risk being rewritten to suit a narrative of tolerance that emphasises the cultural synergy and unproblematic integration of Italians in the community.²⁸ For Marco Giudici, these are crafted by Welsh institutions, but there is equally evidence to suggest that this is occurring in Italian family businesses still trading in the 2020s who publish epic accounts of their family histories on their companies' websites:

(In 1898), Luigi Cascarini came over to Swansea from the Abruzzi mountains in Italy. In the midst of the industrial era, Mr. Cascarini was shocked to find that there were no cafes open to accommodate the early workers of the Swansea valley. So, Luigi decided to open up a workers haven where he would serve them rich roast coffee from the crack of dawn until the darkness of the night. He worked every hour of the day making his café such as success that soon he opened another... and another... and another. Before long, Luigi had opened a chain of cafes that his children ran with him.²⁹

The (Sidoli) Company was founded by Benedetto 'Ben' Sidoli in 1922. He had made the three-week journey from Bardi in Italy to Cwm near Ebbw Vale. Ben, aged only 12 at the time, left Italy to follow in the footsteps of his older brother Bert, who had already found work in the thriving industry in the South Wales Valleys. Bert and Ben began selling the lemon soft drink sarsaparilla, as well as coffee and tea, to miners at the local colliery. They soon opened a small café in Cwm, selling traditional Italian vanilla ice cream...³⁰

These two examples employ a similar development of events to describe the family's arrival and working practices in Wales. There is an epic journey (often by foot) to Wales of early Italians – usually men – who discover a gap in the market for serving hot beverages to hardworking Welsh miners. The businesses develop through the hard work of the individuals, allowing the pioneering Italians to become successful and advance in society. They choose to settle locally and are active in the community. These narratives stress the family's cultural contribution to the local area and suggest unproblematic integration amidst tolerant locals.³¹

²⁸ Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', p. 30.

²⁹ 'Joe's: Our Story', <<https://www.joes-icecream.com/our-story>>, (2022), [last accessed 28th August 2023].

³⁰ 'The Sidolis Story', <<https://www.sidolis-icecream.co.uk/about/the-sidolis-story>>, (2018), [last accessed 28th August 2023].

³¹ The 2011 St Fagan's National History Museum exhibition on *Italian Memories in Wales* encapsulated this concept in their report for the event. 'Through their photographs and stories, the exhibition (...) shares their memories of living in Italy, their experiences of settling in Wales, and their *achievements* and links with their Italian roots. (...) Most Italians were *embraced by the Welsh* and were soon followed by their family and friends. Through *perseverance and hard work*, Italians found a niche within the Welsh community. They *integrated well*, ran successful businesses and *became respected local and national figures*.' See Marco Giudici, 'Memory, Migration and Identity', p. 166.

This sanitised, commercially palatable evocation is one version that strongly suggests the positive impact on the Welsh community. However, other records of a variety of different experiences need to be exposed. In the Welsh context, this has in part been addressed by campaign groups such as the Arandora Star Memorial Fund in Wales or the *Centro Studi Valceno* who have fought to have the impact of the Arandora Star on the Welsh-Italian community recognised officially.³² The arrest of longstanding members of the community and the demise of 486 Italians (of which 53 from Wales) had long been a 'silent narrative' for the community.³³ The successful initiatives organised by these groups, such as the creating of the memorial gardens and holding of annual commemorative masses in Cardiff, has opened a space for acknowledging traumatic wartime experiences. This is evidenced by the increasing awareness outside the confines of the Italian community of Wales of cultural projects about the Welsh Arandora Star experience, such as Geinor Styles and Mali Tudno Jones' highly successful play *The Arandora Star*.³⁴ The play tells the story of how Italian families in Wales were torn apart and documents the emotional struggles of the protagonist as she deals with the disappearance of her father. *The Arandora Star* was also broadcasted as a radio play to Welsh schoolchildren in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁵

Far more work needs to be done to capture different migration experiences, and narratives offer a useful framework to explore these. Narratives are one of the 'privileged forms used by humans to elaborate experience.'³⁶ By this, individuals organise events into a coherent form to articulate key events in a communicative medium. Narratives are 'shaped by contexts, but they also create new contexts by mobilizing and articulating fresh understandings of the world, by altering power relations between peoples [and] by

³² Delucia Sidoli, 'Arandora Star Memorial Fund in Wales', <<https://amicivalcenogalles.com/2010/02/08/arandora-star-memorial-fund-in-wales-1940-2010>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; 'La memoria dell'Arandora Star incontra in Galles le scuole, le nostre associazione e le istituzioni', 22nd March 2023, <<http://www.valcenostoria.it/2023/03/22/la-memoria-dellarandora-star-incontra-in-galles-le-scuole-le-nostre-associazioni-e-le-istituzioni-comunicato-e-servizi>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

³³ Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*, p. 47.

³⁴ Geinor Styles and Mali Tudno Jones, 'The Arandora Star', <<https://theatr-nanog.co.uk/arandora-star>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

³⁵ Steven Morris, 'Welsh schoolchildren to learn about Arandora Star sinking via radio', *The Guardian*, 1st July 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jul/01/welsh-schoolchildren-to-learn-about-arandora-star-sinking-via-radio>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

³⁶ Anna De Fina, *Identity in Narrative A Study of Immigrant Discourse* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003), p. 7.

constituting new practices.’³⁷ A narrative approach thus foregrounds the ‘construction of subjectivities and experientiality through stories.’ This involves paying attention to how narratives are ‘the prime vehicle’ for expressing individual and collective identities.³⁸

In light of the dominance of Italian café traders in the historical narrative of Italians in Britain, scholars have increasingly begun to interrogate how certain voices and experiences have become ‘marginalised’.³⁹ This scholarship can be interpreted as a first step towards integrating alternative voices and lost perspectives into what is understood by Italian twentieth century migration to Wales. After all, as Flavia Gasparetti argues in her study of Italian female textile workers in the 1950s, ‘no personal story of migration can possibly be the same as the next’, and ‘even a seemingly homogenous sample (...) is really made of countless different experiences, diverging paths, of individual life journeys which cannot be reduced to a comprehensive whole.’⁴⁰ The need to study and define a *narrative* of a social process such as migration should therefore be composed of different voices, both from the dominant group and the margins. The life stories of an Italian soldier captured in North Africa and forced to move to Wales to conduct agricultural labour will naturally differ from the wandering Italian traveller who brings coffee to South Wales and becomes a well-standing member of the community.

The originality of this thesis is that it adopts a narrative approach to study the individual stories and representations of Italians from the three most prominent working scenarios they were active in throughout this period, as opposed to focusing predominantly on the histories of the Italian refreshment industry. The experiences of workers whose perspectives have been romanticised, underplayed, or neglected – café trading women, prisoners of war, miners, and metalworkers – all feed into a macro-narrative about the movement of workers from Italy to various Welsh professions during the twentieth century.

In order to achieve this, the thesis proposes a reading of Italian migration to Wales by focusing on the category of work. Work is universally acknowledged as occupying a

³⁷ *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, eds. Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou (Oxford: Wiley & Sons, 2015), p. 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

³⁹ Terri Colpi, ‘Chaff in the winds of war? The Arandora Star, Not Forgetting and Commemoration at the 80th Anniversary’, *Italian Studies*, 75,4 (2020), 389–410.

⁴⁰ Flavia Gasparetti, ‘Italian women migrants in post-war Britain. The case of textile workers’, (unpublished thesis: University of Birmingham, 2012), p. 86.

substantial proportion of human life that is taken as a symbol of personal value.⁴¹ Work holds an important position in the quest for meaning. As Christopher Michaelson and others argue, ‘most adults spend their waking hours at work, which often serves as a primary source of purpose, belongingness, and identity.’⁴² Individuals organise their lives around work shifts and work-time.⁴³ They also adopt work identities, understood as a ‘work-based self-concept constituted of a combination of organizational, occupational, and other identities that shapes the roles a person adopts and the corresponding ways he or she behaves when performing his or her work.’⁴⁴ Darja Miscenko and David Day point out that individuals are ‘inclined to choose occupations that correspond to their innate traits’, and that ‘occupational environments can also motivate change in personal traits and identity.’⁴⁵ A focus on work is therefore seen as a means to explore people’s lives and experiences, and their expressions of identity.

The workplace is a microcosm of society complete with specific cultural values. These tend to be extrinsic, intrinsic, and social, and cover a range of aspects related to work practice such as self-enhancement, the need to create a materially safe environment, and the possibility of creating positive social relations.⁴⁶ The performance of these values by workers denotes their sense of belonging in the workplace and is linked to ‘the possibility of sharing practices in community, creating meanings, participating in common goals, learning through participation (and) grasping new shapes of identity through relationships with others.’⁴⁷

Thus, occupations and the workplace represent an ideal ‘contact zone’, intended by cultural theorist Mary Louise Pratt as the ‘social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power’.⁴⁸ While Pratt’s original conceptualisation focuses on cultural interactions

⁴¹ Keith Grint, *The Sociology of Work: Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

⁴² Christopher Michaelson *et al*, ‘Meaningful Work: Connecting Business Ethics and Organization Studies’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 121, (2014), 77–90, p. 77.

⁴³ Chris Nyland, ‘Capitalism and the History of Work-Time’, *The Sociology of Time*, ed. John Hassard (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990; 2016), 130–151.

⁴⁴ Kate Walsh and Judith Gordon, ‘Creating an individual work identity’, *Human Resource Management Review*, 18.1 (2008), 46–61.

⁴⁵ Darja Miscenko and David Day, ‘Identity and identification at work’, *Organizational Psychology Review*, 6.3 (2016), 215–247, p. 216.

⁴⁶ Maria Ros, Shalom Schwartz and Shoshana Surkiss, ‘Basic Individual Values, Work Values, and the Meaning of Work’, *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 48.1 (1999), 49–71.

⁴⁷ C Filstad, L Traavik and M Gorli, ‘Belonging at work: the experiences, representations and meanings of belonging’, *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 31.2 (2019), 116–142.

⁴⁸ Mary Louise Pratt, ‘Arts of the Contact Zone’, *Profession* (1991), 33–40.

between Spanish and Andean figures and a postcolonial reassessment of the relationship between the countries, it has since become a tool to 'denote both a sense of embodied presence within geographical space as well as a social and cultural metaphor' that insists on 'analysis of everyday experiences of sameness and difference.'⁴⁹ By this, the work setting can be understood as 'a proxy for "community" by virtue of its social character and dynamics', with the focus and nature of social relationships that are 'framed by the fundamental purpose of the institution, the nature of work to be performed,' and the dependence relationship between employer and employee'.⁵⁰ Additionally, the intensity of experience in the workplace, whereby workers would repeatedly spend long stretches of the day alongside other workers, configures the work space as sites where migrants can be brought into closer contact with other nationalities, thus increasing the potential for cultural (ex)change.

Another advantage is that a focus on *work* goes beyond traditional identitarian frames of reference for migration. Migration has typically been studied from a *nation-state* perspective where the individual's country of origin takes precedence. Studies have also paid significant attention to gender or race. In an attempt to investigate alternative experiences, the notion of work allows for the inclusion of different working conditions, from forced agricultural labour to miners on temporary contracts. This is not to undermine the importance of nationality or gender: each will be discussed in the analytical chapters that follow.

Drawing the strands together, the Welsh case study offers fertile terrain for scholars studying global Italian migration. Responding to a transatlantic 'quantitative bias' that has tended to 'ignore quantitatively small and geographically dispersed Italian settlements, focusing on the large, geographically concentrated and urban ones' in particular in North and South America, works have increasingly revealed novel perspectives from countries where migration occurred to a lesser extent.⁵¹ Despite being significantly smaller in terms of dimension, the nature of Italian migration to Wales during the twentieth century merits consideration for how it both differs and is similar to the experiences of Italians around the world. The Welsh-Italians are today considered

⁴⁹ Brenda Yeoh & Katie Willis, 'Singaporean and British transmigrants in China and the cultural politics of "contact zones"', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31.2 (2005), 269–285, p. 271.

⁵⁰ Christian van Tonder & Werner Soontiek, 'Migrant Acculturation and the Workplace', *Procedia: Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 143 (2014), 1041–1047, (p. 1041).

⁵¹ Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', p. 19; Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in Movimento: L'emigrazione italiana in Europa, 1945-57* (Roma: Donzelli, 2008).

as a success story, but studies have demonstrated how they too have been gravely impacted by geopolitical representations, recalling experiences of racism encountered by Italians in the Americas during the early twentieth century.⁵² Migration occurred to a country that, in the twenty-first century, is framing itself as a 'tolerant nation' who are culturally similar to the Italians, and yet tensions had the potential to flare up due to economic deprivation, sexual jealousy, or from being instigated by political rhetoric, in line with the experiences encountered elsewhere in the world. The *Welsh* aspect adds further complexity to the issue, given Wales's long and complex history shaped by its colonial/collaborative relationship with England and with a unique cultural heritage and values of its own.⁵³ A study about Italian migration to *Wales*, therefore, is also a chance to explore Italian migration to a country of dualisms: Welsh/English or British; colonised subjects/willing partners; a tolerant nation or one that was equally susceptible to the winds of xenophobia.

As well as being the most celebrated story of migration to Wales, it could be argued that Italian migration to the country is one of the most studied national migratory phenomena over the last two decades. Migration scholars and historians have provided insights, for instance, into Jewish, Irish, and Black migrations to Wales, but Italian migration to the country has figured more prominently in the historiography of Wales' migration history.⁵⁴ Most of the research produced on the subject has focused on the impact of the Italian café industry in Wales from 1880 to the 2010s. Studies are inherently interested in the experiences of the contemporary Italian communities and how they express and perform Italian identity and cultural values (Giudici, 2011; 2013; Bianchera et al, 2019; Spagnuolo, 2022)⁵⁵ or how they articulate and commemorate the tragedy of

⁵² *Are Italians White? How Race is made in America*, eds. Guglielmo, J. and Salerno, S., (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁵³ Martin Johnes, *Wales: England's Colony. The Conquest, Assimilation and Re-creation of Wales* (Cardigan: Parthian Books, 2019).

⁵⁴ Cai Parry-Jones, *The Jews of Wales – A History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017); *Irish Migrants in Modern Wales*, ed. Paul O'Leary (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004); *A Tolerant Nation? Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Wales*, eds. Charlotte Williams, Neil Evans and Paul O'Leary (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015).

⁵⁵ Marco Giudici, 'A Bridge Across Ethnic Lines? Italian cafes in Welsh popular culture and public history', *Welsh History Review / Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru*, 26.4 (2013), 649–674; Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity: Italians and Nation-Building in Wales, 1940–2010'; Emanuela Bianchera, *et al*, 'Transnational mobility and cross-border family life cycles: A century of Welsh-Italian migration'; Elena Anna Spagnuolo, 'Rewriting the Transnational Dimension of Italian Migration to Wales in the Time of COVID-19', *Italian Studies*, 77.4 (2022), 383–399.

the Arandora Star (Chezzi, 2014; Wren-Owens; 2012, 2015).⁵⁶ Historical analyses of Italian migration to Wales do occur; these are typically used to explore the contribution of Italians to the cultural landscape and the nation-state project of Wales (Giudici, 2012) or the links between family, migration, and transnational care networks between Italy and Wales (Bianchera et al, 2019; Martini), with a major emphasis on the latter half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.⁵⁷ There is also a dominant focus on Italians from the Bardi area (Hughes, 1991) to the detriment of Italians from other regions.⁵⁸

This thesis stands apart from the above studies in numerous ways. Even though it uses voices from the present (similarly to many of the other studies), it is interested in exploring how these testimonies reconstruct the experiences of the past. It focuses on representations of Italians between the 1880s and 1950s, rather than how these events impacted the contemporary Italian communities. It also seeks to chart new ground into conventional understandings of the historical narrative of migration to the country. It adds to the pioneering work of recent scholarship that has brought to light the traumatic legacy of the Arandora Star, or the performance of Italian cultural values in Wales, and invigorates it by exploring different working sectors, alternative voices, and diverse Italian localities.

2. Methodology

2.1. English-language newspapers in Wales

The way in which the migration process has been studied has evolved drastically over the twentieth century, with new theoretical perspectives evolving the way that migration

⁵⁶ Bruna Chezzi, 'Wales breaks its silence' from memory to Memorial and beyond. The Italians in Wales and the Second World War', *Italian Studies*, 69.3 (2014), 376–393; Elizabeth Wren-Owens, 'Remembering fascism. Polyphony and its absence in contemporary Italian-Scottish and Italian-Welsh narrative', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 15.1, (2015), 73–90; Liz Wren-Owens, 'The delayed emergence of Italian Welsh narratives, or class and the commodification of ethnicity', *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture*, 3.1 (2012).

⁵⁷ Marco Giudici, 'Immigrant narratives and nation-building in a stateless nation: the case of Italians in post-devolution Wales', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37.8 (2012), 1409–1426; Emanuela Bianchera *et al*, 'Transnational mobility and cross-border family life cycles'; Manuela Martini, 'Family, Care and Migration: Gendered Paths from the Mediterranean Italian Mountains to Northern Europe in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Gender and Migration in Historical Perspective*, ed. B. Zucca Micheletto (Berlin: Springer, 2022), 419–450.

⁵⁸ Colin Hughes, *Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla. The Italian Community in South Wales, 1881–1945*.

research was understood. Researching historic processes of migration, on the other hand, has proven more challenging to conduct.⁵⁹ The first challenge concerns the availability of sources. An analysis of the subjective experiences of individuals championed by social historians proves more difficult to undertake given that illiteracy rates resulted in a limited number of written sources being produced. The durability of such written sources is another, with the paper format acting as a further limit. Much of the primary material regarding the everyday experiences of individuals from the past – in letters, photos, or personal documents – is not accessible in public archives, and instead is kept by families. This has proven the case for studies of migration in Wales, where the lack of readily available primary sources was identified vis-à-vis Italian, Jewish, and South-Asian migrant communities in the country.⁶⁰

In answer to the lack of first-hand sources, historians have turned to alternative ones to capture perspectives regarding past migrations. One such source that has been amply studied by migration historians is the newspaper. Newspapers have, historically, been sites where issues about immigration have been discussed and debated; they have also been influential in shaping discourse and societal attitudes towards immigrants.⁶¹ The media has been credited by scholars such as Russell King as playing a crucial role in conditioning ‘the type of reception they are accorded’ and for regulating ‘eventual experience(s) of inclusion or exclusion’.⁶²

Scholars in the field of migration studies have used newspapers to address issues such as the representation of migrants in their adopted country or the treatment of migrants by autochthonous citizens – particularly in terms of issues regarding race.⁶³

⁵⁹ Lorella Viola, ‘ChronicleItaly and ChronicleItaly 2.0: Digital Heritage to Access Narratives of Migration’, *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing*, 15, 1–2, (2021), 170–185.

⁶⁰ The lack of potential sources in Welsh archives pertaining to historic migration has been noted by Marco Giudici, Cai Parry-Jones, and Samuel Sequeira, for instance, in their studies of the Italian, Jewish, and South Asian communities of Wales. See Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity: Italians and Nation-Building in Wales, 1940s–2010s’; Samuel Sequeira, ‘Memory, History, Identity: Narratives of Partition, Migration, and Settlement among South Asian Communities of South Wales’, (unpublished thesis, University of Cardiff, 2015); Cai Parry-Jones, *The Jews of Wales – A History*.

⁶¹ For a critical overview of the field, see: Teun van Dijk, *News as discourse* (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988); *Media and Migration - constructions of mobility and difference*, eds. Russell King and Nancy Wood (London: Routledge, 2001), Stephanie Fryberg, ‘How the Media Frames the Immigration Debate’.

⁶² *Media and Migration - constructions of mobility and difference*, eds. Russell King and Nancy Wood (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁶³ C. Critcher, M. Parker and R. Sondhi, ‘Race in the provincial Press: A case study of five West Midlands papers’, UNESCO, *Ethnicity in the Media* (Paris: UNESCO, 1977), 25 – 192; B. Troyna, *Public Awareness and the Media: A Study of Reporting on Race*, (London: Commission for Racial Equality, 1981); Teun A. Van Dijk, *Racism and the Press*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

Within the field of Italian migration studies, newspaper archives have allowed academics to study a wide range of issues associated to migrant experience such as the construction of racial hierarchies in American mainstream and radical newspapers or the impact of Italian language press on the rate of assimilation of Italian migrants in Buenos Aires and São Paulo.⁶⁴ The fact that newspapers are frequently archived and are accessible to researchers also boosts the number of potential consultable sources. Scholars such as Lorella Viola or Peter Vellon have successfully conducted archival research on Italian immigrant newspapers in America, with their studies demonstrating that the ‘immense importance’ played by Italian-American papers provided ‘a forum, or staging area, where identity, culture, and race interacted.’⁶⁵ Viola, in particular, can be seen as a pioneer in this area: her work has involved the digitalisation of relevant newspaper articles and their consolidation into digital archives of *ChroniclItaly* and *ChroniclItaly 2.0*.⁶⁶ While this thesis does not aspire to build a digital archive of newspaper articles pertaining to Italian experience in Wales, it does take note of the importance of newspapers in providing insights into past migrations.

Throughout this thesis, I have constructed a corpus of data from newspaper articles that directly concerned the experience of Italians in Wales. For this, I drew on two digital newspaper archives located in Britain. The first, the *Welsh Newspapers Online* archive managed by the National Library of Wales, contains approximately 15 million newspaper articles published in Wales between 1804 and 1919. The second is the *British Newspaper Archive*, run by the British Library, and consists of 56.7 million pages of transcribed newspaper articles between the 1700s and 2022.⁶⁷ A keyword search was employed on both databases; these keywords were typically linked to national identity (Italy, Italian) and also professional sector (café, bar, Bracchi, fish and chips, trader, prisoner, labourer, steel, tinplate, copper, miner). For the British Newspaper Archive, this search was further limited by region – only newspaper articles published in Wales were

⁶⁴ Lorella Viola, ‘Chroniclitaly and Chroniclitaly 2.0: Digital Heritage to access narratives of migration’; Peter Vellon, *A great conspiracy against our race – Italian immigrant newspapers and the construction of whiteness in the early 20th century* (London: New York University Press, 2014); Ilaria Serra, *The Imagined Immigrant: Images of Italian Emigration to the United States between 1890 and 1924* (Teaneck, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009); Samuel Baily, ‘The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo’, *The International Migration Review*, 12,3 (1978), 321–340.

⁶⁵ Peter Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against our Race: Italian Immigrant Newspapers and the Construction of Whiteness in the Early 20th Century*, p. 11.

⁶⁶ Lorella Viola, ‘Chroniclitaly and Chroniclitaly 2.0: Digital Heritage to access narratives of migration’.

⁶⁷ British Newspaper Archive, < <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; Welsh Newspapers Online, < <https://newspapers.library.wales/>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

considered for analysis, as opposed to British newspapers that referenced the Welsh case. The database search also unearthed several advertisements from Italian traders, or very short news bulletins consisting of a sentence generally announcing an event: these have been excluded from the corpus that I have built due to the lack of analysable data. I have used a qualitative approach to examine the selected articles, whose findings are presented in the analytical chapter.

There appear to be several advantages of using newspapers in the Welsh context. Firstly, as noted above, the availability of primary sources has typically been an obstacle to migration scholars: the vast range of digitally preserved newspapers in public archives offers a chance to capture perspectives from the past. As has been done for the American context, I will use newspaper articles to explore the ways that Italian identity, culture, and working practices interacted. The analysis I will undertake will also pay attention to the ideological context from which these news stories have been crafted, situating articles that condemn or praise the working practices of Italians into wider debates concerning the role of Italians as part of the Welsh workforce. Specifically, by exploring media narratives from the Temperance movement, the Second World War, and the early 1950s, it will be possible to explore how Welsh society represented the occupational practices of Italians in this period and how these reflected on their experiences of living and working in Wales.

Newspapers are also used in this thesis as part of an exploration of contemporary historical narratives of Italian migration to Wales. As well as newspaper articles published in Wales over the last two decades, I draw on TV documentaries, podcasts, films, and books. These sources are used as part of a narrative synthesis – a ‘form of storytelling that espouses a textual approach to synthesizing the findings of primary studies’ – that generate the contours of how contemporary societies have interpreted the historical narratives regarding Italians in the three working sectors studied in the thesis.⁶⁸ My use of narrative synthesis allows for careful consideration of how the historical narrative of Italian migration to Wales is largely formulated around the experience of Italian café traders from Bardi, Emilia Romagna.

⁶⁸ Sandra Ojurongbe, ‘The Perceived Effects of Migration on the Mental Health of Afro-Caribbean immigrants: A Narrative Synthesis of Qualitative Studies’, *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 00, (2023), 1–13, pp. 4–5.

2.2.Oral History Interviews and Autobiographical Memoirs

Alongside the newspaper articles, I utilize oral history interviews in this thesis to shed light on counter-narratives and alternative perspectives of Italian experience in Wales, and also to remedy the limited number of primary sources available for analysis. Given that the articles used in this thesis are sourced from English-language newspapers in Wales, it can be argued that they represent the gaze of the dominant society and not that of Italians themselves. To provide a sense of balance here to this external gaze, but also to include personal testimonies relating to direct experience, the oral history interview was selected as a source that could directly capture new voices that discuss past experiences.

Oral history interviews have been increasingly used by scholars wishing to gain access to the 'perspectives of groups of people who might otherwise have been hidden from history'.⁶⁹ Early experiments conducted in the 1940s – 1960s saw scholars begin to 'privilege the spoken voice as a repository of tradition' by conducting interviews with subjects previously neglected from the positivist focus on institutional actors.⁷⁰ The influence of the social turn, in particular, invigorated the field for practitioners wishing to record the direct testimonies and narratives of everyday subjects. Whereas interviews had previously been shunned for their perceived unreliability by historians ascribing to a positivist approach, the subjectivity and fluidity of the source were acknowledged as having the potential of engendering new understandings of phenomena. The interview thus ceased to be an objective representation of reality, and increasingly came to be seen as a composed narrative.⁷¹ In Italian studies, in particular, the study of oral sources was developed by influential voices such as Alessandro Portelli, Luisa Passerini and Maurizio Gribaudi, whose own studies employed oral interviews with regards to issues such as worker unrest and assassination of a factory worker in Terni (Umbria) in the 1950s or the cultural experience of Italians during Fascism.⁷² These studies can be seen as

⁶⁹ *The oral history reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), p. ix.

⁷⁰ Lynn Abrams, *Oral history theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Maurizio Gribaudi, 'Storia orale e struttura del racconto autobiografico', *Quaderni storici*, 13,39 (1978), 1131–1146; Luisa Passerini, *Torino operaia e fascismo: una storia orale* (Bari: Laterza, 1984); Alessandro Portelli, *The death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories: form and meaning in oral history* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

cornerstones in terms of the study of historical processes in the multidisciplinary field of Italian studies, but also of the central role that stories collected during the interview process play in reshaping conventional understanding of events. Portelli's scholarship has been of particular use to this thesis with his insights into the methodological considerations about doing oral history work. For Portelli, the interview is a 'historical and social event that creates a bi-vocal dialogical linguistic construct and wreaks significant changes both in the narrator and in the interviewee.'⁷³ They 'often reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events' and 'always cast new light on unexplored areas of the daily life of the nonhegemonic classes.'⁷⁴

For this thesis, a total of 51 semi-structured interviews were conducted with different generations of Italians, ranging from Italians who directly worked in the relevant professional sectors (as was the case for Italian metal workers who migrated in the 1950s), to the family members of those who were active across all three trades between the 1880s and 1950s. As the data collection was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, these interviews were conducted online via the video communication applications Zoom, Skype, and Microsoft Teams. Online interviews have increasingly been identified by scholars since the 2010s as having the potential to overcome 'time and place limitations', geographic dispersion, and physical mobility boundaries; they have also been proven to increase participation.⁷⁵ By using digital technologies, it was possible to continue interviewing at a time when social contact was restricted, organise interviews around individuals' busy lives when lockdown restrictions were eased, and finally to involve participants from a variety of locations such as North and South Wales, the English borders, Sardinia, Emilia Romagna, and Naples.

Potential interviewees were located via a variety of methods. Some respondents voluntarily answered social media appeals that were placed on local historical Facebook pages and agreed to be interviewed; others were found via snowball sampling. In some instances, purposeful sampling was also used where interviewees were approached as they were either still active in the family trade in Wales (most commonly in the Italian café industry) or were otherwise identified through previous interviews conducted for

⁷³ Alessandro Portelli, 'Living voices', *The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience*, *Oral History Review*, 45.2 (2018), 239–248, p. 247.

⁷⁴ Alessandro Portelli, *The death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories*, p. 50.

⁷⁵ Sara Thunberg and Linda Arnell, 'Pioneering the use of technologies in qualitative research – A research review of the use of digital interviews', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 25.6 (2022), 757–768.

other projects or local media (such as with a notable Welsh-Italian sculptor). Most of the interviews were conducted by myself. I also drew on two digital media archives to consolidate the number of potential sources for analysis. This proved particularly important for the analytical chapter regarding Italian metalworkers in the 1950s when comparatively fewer people responded to appeals. These additional interviews were sourced from regional cultural projects related to Italian migration, such as the 2010 Welsh exhibition *Italian Memories in Wales* or the 2011 multimedia archive of memories of migration organised by the region of Friuli-Venezia-Giulia entitled *Archivio multimediale della memoria dell'emigrazione regionale (AMMER)*.⁷⁶

In total, 72 individuals participated in the interview process. 17 were not formally interviewed but instead chose to respond directly via social media to a question sheet that was sent to all interested parties before the interview taking place; the other 55 were interviewed by myself. At times, these interviews were conducted on an individual basis directly with the lead investigator. At other times, multiple interviewees expressed an interest in discussing together their family stories; interviews were conducted with siblings, partners, between parents and children, or with small groups of participants whose relatives all worked in the same professional sector and had migrated from Italy to Wales. Some interviewees were not directly linked by parentage to an Italian who worked in Wales but were of different national origin (English; Welsh) and were associated externally with the workers. A summary of the profiles of the interviewees is here reported in Table One:

TABLE ONE: Profiles of interviewees

Profile of interviewee	Number of participants identified
First generation Italian workers, settled in Wales	2
Second generation in Wales	26
Third generation in Wales	24

⁷⁶ ‘Archivio multimediale della memoria dell’emigrazione regionale’, Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia, < <http://www.ammer-fvg.org/aspx/Home.aspx?idAmb=107&idMenu=-1&liv=0>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; St Fagans Museum, ‘Italian Memories in Wales’, < <https://museum.wales/blog/244/Italian-Memories-in-Wales/>>. [last accessed 28th August 2023].

Fourth generation in Wales	4
Fifth generation in Wales	2
Second generation, settled in Italy	9
Third generation, settled in Italy	2
Association through relationship to Italian worker	3

The association of each interviewee to the relevant work practice is summarised in Table Two.

TABLE TWO: Interviewee profile by professional sector

Professional working experience	Number of interviewees
Catering industry (café, fish and chip bar, refreshment trade)	33
Forced labourer as prisoner of war (agricultural labourer, forestry work, professional roles within the camp)	20
Heavy metal industry worker (iron ore, tinsplate, steel plating, coal)	19

A few important considerations should be made in light of the profiles identified in Tables 1 and 2. Firstly, the small scale of the sample size present (33; 20; 19) implies that the overall aim of the thesis should not be to suggest generalisable conclusions applicable to the entirety of the Italian population of Wales. An approach that draws on identifying themes and strategies, while also acknowledging the individuality of the source that is analysed, should thus be considered: one that also reflects the nature of migration as a

phenomenon that is impossible to condense into one coherent macro-narrative.⁷⁷ The second consideration involves the relationship between the individual interviewed and the direct experience of Italian workers. As Table 1 demonstrates, only two testimonies from individuals who directly lived and worked in Wales are present in the corpus, with the other participants involved being from later generations. As such, an approach grounded purely on *oral history* – which has typically been used to capture first-hand experiences at later stages in life – cannot fully be undertaken.

At this stage, some important aspects regarding the use of semi-structured interviews should be clarified. Since the 1980s, the perception and use of interviews in historical studies have changed from being an exercise in the field of ‘recovery history’ – where interviews are used largely to represent neglected voices – to being stories that are crafted by narrators.⁷⁸ A key aspect in this crafting is the researcher who, rather than playing a passive role as a recorder and silent witness as previously presumed, is in fact involved in the form that the narrative takes. Portelli rightly notes this as the *inter-vista* (*inter-view*), ‘a mutual, personal encounter based on some form of reciprocity’, where the continuous ‘exchange of gazes’ between the researcher and the narrator means that both subjects are aware of the presence of the other and are influenced by it in the production of the interview narrative.⁷⁹ The form that the narrative contains is therefore influenced by the formal setting of an interview conducted with a researcher (as opposed to a narrative told in the family home to close acquaintances), but also by the identity of the researcher itself.⁸⁰

With specific regard to this thesis, these boundaries undoubtedly were present in the interviewing process. As a bilingual Welsh-English researcher studying and teaching Italian studies at a Welsh university, fluent in English and Italian and conversational in Welsh, and having married into an Italian family, my positionality can be interpreted as representing a middle-ground for all the participants with whom I spoke: all parties could claim access to a shared culture (whether Welsh, British, Welsh-Italian, or Italian). This

⁷⁷ A similar consideration is made in Gasperetti’s analysis of interviews in a historical investigation of Italian migration to the UK. See Flavia Gasperetti, ‘Italian women migrants in post-war Britain: The case of textile workers (1949-61), p. 86.

⁷⁸ Penny Summerfield, *Histories of the Self – Personal Narratives and Historical Practice* (London: Routledge, 2018).

⁷⁹ Alessandro Portelli, ‘Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience’, p. 240.

⁸⁰ Sharan Merriam et al, ‘Power and positionality: negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures,’ *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20,5 (2001), 405–416.

also involved my negotiating of these boundaries between an ‘insider/outsider’ dynamic, where researchers are simultaneously ‘closer’ to the people they are studying but also ‘much more aware of their social position as a result’.⁸¹

Even though the interviews were conducted online, my physical location during the interviews could also have furthered this claim to shared understandings. Many of the English-speaking interviews were conducted either in Wales or in Scotland whereas, incidentally, a large proportion of the interviews conducted in Italian occurred during time spent in Italy. In identifying myself as a Welsh researcher and through access to this shared culture, I found that participants were able to positively respond to questions regarding the working and cultural practices of themselves or their ancestors in Wales; often they were even appreciative to be interviewed and were eager to have their family histories recorded and included in the project. These factors also allowed for the building of mutual trust, developed over email and social media exchanges, that then translated into the final interview itself.

The researcher does not only subconsciously influence the interviewee by merit of being physically (or digitally) present at the telling of the narrative, but they are also active in shaping the agenda of the interview, in the same way that the narrator themselves also crafts the shape of the discussion.⁸² The questions asked focused on the working experiences of their ancestors, but certain aspects related to each working sector were, at times, emphasised during the interviews based on these dual agendas. In interviews concerning the café industry, for instance, my interest in analysing the working and cultural practices of Italian *women* in the trade shaped the line of questioning. Some participants were therefore invited to tell family histories from the perspectives of mothers and grandmothers as opposed to male members of the family, with varying degrees of success. Many of those interviewed were family researchers who had actively investigated their family histories – they were active on genealogy websites such as *Ancestry.com* or had family photos, objects or even personal documents that they drew upon during the interviews with myself. As a result, they had actively collated family histories that they wished to share, and the subsequent discussion was influenced in this way also. Some had been interviewed previously by the media or other projects, and

⁸¹ Deianira Ganga and Sam Scott, ‘Cultural “Insiders” and the Issue of Positionality in Qualitative Migration Research: Moving “Across” and Moving “Along” Research-Participant Divides’, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7.3 (2006) < <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-7.3.134>>, p. 6.

⁸² Alessandro Portelli, ‘Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience’, p. 240.

others appeared to be part of communities where the telling of the histories of their ancestors acquired central importance. For some of the former prisoners of war of Henllan Bridge Camp 70, for instance, annual rallies were conducted in the latter half of the twentieth century where families would gather in Northern Italy and recount their experiences of *la prigionia in Galles*; some of their children are now working on writing manuscripts of these experiences. This would echo the well-contested affirmation in oral history studies that individuals often draw on readily available tales in communicative occasions, making slight modifications to account for their audience.

A further way in which the researcher actively shapes the final format of the interview is in the transcription from recording to text.⁸³ The digital transcribing of the interview was conducted using *Descript*, an audio/video editing and transcription software. A total of over 40 hours of recordings was thus organised into a textual format, and these were then encoded manually to discern common themes and motifs. These transcripts will be drawn on in the subsequent analytical chapters.

Other than oral history interviews, I also draw on additional sources to capture alternative perspectives when such were lacking. For the chapter regarding Italian prisoners of war, for instance, I investigate two autobiographical memoirs that were written after the war. The first is Vittorio Bonucci's 1995 novel *POW – Quasi una fantasia*, a manuscript that charts the author's experiences in West Wales. The second work consists of the unpublished biography of Mario Ferlito, *Breve storia di un guerriero mancato*, composed from the diaries and notes of the soldier during his imprisonment in Africa and Wales.⁸⁴ In sum, a methodological approach was needed that could capture the nuances of each text regardless of its form, as many of the works chosen have a differing relationship between the author and lived experience. In recognising each manifestation of experience as a *narrative*, it is possible to study novelised memories, articles published that discuss Italians in Wales, memories of first-generation migrants recorded towards the end of their lives, and finally family stories passed along from generation to generation as repositories where experiences related to identity formation, cultural practices, and inclusion or exclusion are contained.

⁸³ Alessandro Portelli, 'What makes oral history different?', *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, pp. 63–74.

⁸⁴ Mario Ferlito's memoir was sent to me via email by his daughter, Sonia Ferlito, after our oral history interview in June 2021.

2.3. Interpretivist Perspective and Narrative Analysis

Throughout this thesis, I adopt an interpretivist perspective as my epistemological stance. This is consistent with the theoretical and methodological shifts away from positivism in terms of the way scholars have diversified the ways how migration is studied. As Greene notes:

Interpretivist knowledge comprises the reconstruction of inter-subjective meanings, the interpretive understandings of the meanings humans construct in a given context and how these meanings interrelate to form a whole. Any given interpretive reconstruction is idiographic, time- and place-bound; multiple reconstructions are pluralistic, divergent, even conflictual.⁸⁵

The thesis' aim to investigate how Italians in Wales constructed their sense of identity, as well as how members of external societies reacted to and represented Italian identity, resonates with the principle of reality as being 'constructed from inter-subjective meanings'. What is meant to be Italian, and how this responds and is influenced by the Welsh workplace, can be interpreted as recalling how different *selves* are constructed for different contexts. It sees work as fundamental in conditioning *one* aspect of identity, but also recognises the constantly shifting senses through which identities are built. This ties closely into the attestation that meaning is built within temporal and spatial limits, as well as the fact that these subjective processes are open to alternative interpretations. The potential disjoint between external and self-representations connotes the potential of clashing perspectives: these differing perspectives contrast though with positivist perspectives that tended to find one generalisable rule for matters related to life. And finally, unlike a positivist approach that aimed to construct universal laws applicable to homogeneous bodies of people, an interpretivist approach instead recognises the heterogeneity of those studied. As migration has been stated as impossible to reduce to a singular experience but is shaped instead by numerous individual and unique trajectories, an interpretivist stance captures and celebrates the individuality of each case.

⁸⁵ J Greene, 'Knowledge accumulation: Three views on the nature and the role of knowledge in social science', quoted in J. Hillier, 'Epistemological foundations of objectivist and interpretivist research', available < <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1054&context=books>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

In drawing on narrative analysis, the thesis aims to ‘pay attention to subjective processes such as feelings and individual perspectives of events.’⁸⁶ The thesis takes note of how identities are never fixed but can be multiple, as well as that people ‘act differently in different contexts’ and ‘adopt particular roles in face-to-face interactions depending upon the specific circumstances.’⁸⁷ In so doing, my analysis unveils the impact of the Welsh workplace in conditioning how Italians identified themselves, and also draws to light differing relations and configurations of national, regional, and personal identities.

3. Layout of the Thesis and Main Findings

The thesis comprises a systematic literature review and three analytical chapters, each focused on the different work sectors outlined above. In the literature review, I explore the interplay between work, Italian migration to the UK, and narratives. The various sections chart how work and migration have been thematised in academic research, the ways that women’s experiences of work have increasingly come to light, and how narratives about and by migrants have used the sphere of work to reflect on increasingly more complex questions such as their identity formation or integration or exclusion into host societies. These questions are all weaved into a wider study of approaches to Italian migration studies to Britain and global Italian emigration, leading me to conclude by specifically homing into the case of Italians in Wales.

The first analytical chapter, “Beyond the Bracchis”: Alternative Perspectives on the Working Experiences of the Men and Women from the Italian Refreshment Industry in Wales (1880s – 1945)’, examines the Italian cafe industry in Wales. The chapter makes an original contribution by investigating two neglected areas regarding the Italian café trade in the country. First, it explores the impact of the non-Conformist movement and the Sunday Closing Act of 1881 on the nascent businesses. In this period, religious campaigners, influenced by the global Temperance movement, fought to preserve Christian values as an antidote to perceived vices.⁸⁸ The early Italian-run café trades in Wales soon became a target for this movement, who displayed concern over the supposed

⁸⁶ Lynn Abrams, ‘Subjectivity and intersubjectivity’, *Oral History Theory*, 54–78.

⁸⁷ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1956).

⁸⁸ Kenneth Morgan, *Wales, Rebirth of a Nation 1880 – 1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 36.

immorality of the traders for keeping shops open on Sundays. The chapter studies the narratives present in English-language newspaper articles published in Wales over this period and the strategies used to represent their working practices. It identifies a series of tropes employed in the articles analysed built around immorality, irreligiosity, and the cultural differences between Welsh and Italian citizens.

This chapter also includes the analysis of the experiences of Italian women in the cafés. Academic research has started to acknowledge that women in Wales played an active role in the family business, but their working practices are typically framed as being part of a wider family business culture (Giudici, 2012; Chezzi, 2012, 2015) or as invisible labour (Martini, 2022). The chapter shines a light on entrepreneurial women who managed cafés during the first half of the twentieth century. It starts by exploring the narrative strategies used in oral history interviews to construct the women traders as ‘the brains behind the businesses.’ It interprets how the narratives construct a social identity of being shrewd entrepreneurs and well-respected members of the local community in the stories of women opening businesses, deciding to emigrate, aiding striking workers, and being responsible for important financial and organisational decisions. In the context of the Second World War, I explore how the dominant narrative focuses on the traumatic impact of separation and the internment of *men*, neglecting the women who continued to trade normally or defiantly in this period. A series of family histories are analysed to explore the ‘loss-and-growth’ narratives produced by the descendants of Italian female café traders, with this section paying attention to constructions of resilience and individual strength.

The second chapter is entitled ‘Agency, Identity and Transculturality in Italian Prisoner of War Narratives from Henllan Bridge Camp 70’. Italian prisoners working as agricultural labourers in Wales have been celebrated in the country, most notably through the strong links between former Italian prisoners and the allocation of the ‘Italian Trophy of Peace’ presented at the *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru*.⁸⁹ Academic investigations into the experiences of the prisoners, however, remain a neglected field in the history of Italian migration to the country. The chapter takes as a case study the Italians of Prisoner of War Camp 70, Henllan Bridge, Carmarthenshire. From 1942 to 1946, many Italians worked as farmhands and agricultural labourers on nearby farms.

⁸⁹ Marco Giudici, ‘Memory, Migration and Identity’, p. 115.

Italians were also active in other sectors at the time, including quarrying, general handymen, and as part of the camp staff.⁹⁰ The experiences of agricultural labourers and the camp staff are studied throughout the chapter as they provide different perspectives on life within an Italian prisoner-of-war camp and of working and living in Welsh farms alongside local families.

This chapter draws on two counter-narratives to provide novel insights into the experiences of Italian POWs in Wales. In light of a romanticised image of the conviviality and cultural synergy between Italian prisoners and Welsh civilians, the chapter uses the frame of ‘prisoner of war narratives’ to explore the associations of POWs with war and captivity. A greater attention to this theme is used to explore how the testimonies of Italian POWs deal with the displacement and alienation of being captive prisoners and losing their individual identities, as well as their quest to regain agency. This often emerges by Italians tapping into previous transferable skills and reconstructing their identities in a new environment, allowing them to gain meaning in imprisonment and reconnect with a sense of who they used to be. The second counter-narrative regards ‘transcultural narratives.’ Rather than a simplistic reading that focuses on the positive contributions that Italians made to Welsh society, I explore how the recollections about cross-cultural contact use tangible signs of culture (food, music, religion, and bodies) to ‘overcome suspicion and prejudice’.⁹¹ These lead to reflections on the state of war and, as demonstrated in the chapter, either result in the uniting or distancing of Italians and Welsh individuals.

The final analytical chapter studies the narratives of Italian metal workers and miners in post-war Wales. ‘Men of Steel: Representations of Masculinities of Italian Heavy Industry Workers in Wales, 1945 – 1957’ is interested in narratives regarding workplace culture and belonging. The chapter is constructed around interviews with first and subsequent generations of Italian miners and metalworkers who migrated on temporary contracts to South Wales; these are used to analyse the different representations of working-class Italian male masculinity and how these values manifest themselves at work and at home. Two notions of this are posited in the chapter. First, I look at how the testimonies focus on discourses of corporality and masculine values when assessing the

⁹⁰ John Meirion Jones, *Y llinyn arian*.

⁹¹ Maurizio Ascari, *Literature of the Global Age: A Critical Study of Transcultural Narratives*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Inc., 2011), p. 13.

difficult nature of work and the experience of workplace dangers. These are considered as frames that situate Italian workers within a shared workplace culture that stoically accepted dangers and tolerated working conditions as they were perceived as being a key to avoiding economic hardships in Italy and gaining a better future in Wales.

The second area of interest in Chapter Three revolves around the homosociality of Italian workers and the intercultural interaction that occurred within workplace groups, in the general workplace setting concerning workers' trade unionism, and between other groups of Italians outside of work. By focusing on social bonds, the chapter analyses the representations of camaraderie and competitiveness and how these impact the Italians' work experiences. These are identified in a range of instances such as anecdotes about strength and fighting colleagues, of being valued members of a mixed ethnicity work group, in recollections about their involvement in trade union campaigns for better working conditions, and finally in their stories about performing Italian cultural values with colleagues outside of work. Drawing insights on studies that explore masculinity, migration, and work, this section looks at how these recollections demonstrate how Italian working-class masculine values are performed and reproduced.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis is a historical investigation of the social processes that directly affected Italian migrants who lived and worked in Wales between the 1880s and 1950s. As such, it situates itself at a junction between research strands: work, migration, narratives, and the specific case of Italian emigration to Wales and Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this literature review, these areas of inquiry are brought into dialogue with each other to situate the novelty of this work.

The first section of this chapter explores the historiography of work and Italian migration to the UK, and the way that these are used to chart different extents of migrants' sense of emplacement in society from assimilation to multiculturalism. Drawing on insights from the development of the fields of Migration Studies and Work Studies, this section highlights the different theoretical frameworks and epistemological stances (such as positivism and postcolonialism) and the ways that these were used to study Italian migration to Britain.

The second section argues the case for the thesis' focus on gender. It documents the various positions that have seen the rise of studies investigating women's experiences of migration, starting from early studies where the working practices of women were neglected in a historical narrative constructed largely around the experience of young migrant men. This is challenged in later studies, where research increasingly highlights the agency of women in a range of work sectors. These considerations are then applied to the British-Italian case, where I point out that studies from the British context have under-represented the working practices of Italian women, choosing instead to mainly focus on their roles as family caregivers and assisting their husbands in Italian cafes. The section concludes with an overview of masculinity in Italian migration studies to the UK, which allows me to argue the novelty of using this frame to study the experiences of Italian miners and metalworkers in the 1950s.

The third section looks at migrant narratives about work. If studies into the Italian community of Britain have used oral history interviews extensively to provide insights into migrant experience, far less attention has been paid to the narrative strategies employed. By engaging with scholarship that identifies two types of narrative practices – those *about* migrants, and those *by* migrants – this section provides an overview of the

way that narrative approaches have been used to explore processes of identity formation and reflections about inclusion and exclusion in migrant narratives about workplace experiences. This paves the way for an exploration of narratives of Italian migration in the UK which, as I posit, are largely interested in the experiences of Italian café traders in the country, their experiences during the Second World War, and the way that contemporary members of Italian communities express belonging or exclusion.

1. Assimilation, Integration, Multiculturalism

In his 1964 study of the suitability and socialisation models employed by Italians in a steelworks plant in South Wales, the Welsh social psychologist J. K. Chadwick Jones painted a relatively pessimistic view of the assimilation of Italian workers:

[t]he very high labour turnover among this group is indicated by the fact that five of the sample had been employed for less than six months. Only two had advanced to mill grades above that of the most junior and lowest-paid position in the team. Their attitudes (in so far as these could be elicited with the aid of an interpreter) reflected a minimal level of commitment and job satisfaction. The positive attractions of the job did not extend beyond the relative security and regular wages which the immigrants contrasted to their experience of irregular employment and lower wage-rates in Italy.⁹²

Chadwick-Jones's assessment of the workplace attitudes of Italian migrants is emblematic of a positivist approach to work in the field of migration studies that, throughout the twentieth century, had tended to conceptualise the link between labour and migrants in three ways. These were the extent of immigration to another country, their contribution to the host nation's economy, and the rate of their assimilation into the country. The link was first expressed by English-German cartographer Ernst Ravenstein who, in his 1885 work 'The Laws of Migration', noted that when (migrants were) asked for the motives as to why people migrated, 'they did so in search of work of a more remunerative or attractive kind than that afforded by the place of their birth.'⁹³ The act of migration, then, was read as an 'equilibrating adjustment mechanism that shifts local

⁹² J. K. Chadwick-Jones, 'Italian Workers in a British Factory: A Study of Informal Selection and Training', *Institute of Race Relations*, 6,3 (1965), 169–183, p. 178.

⁹³ E G Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 48.2 (1885), 167–235.

labor market supplies from areas where labor is underemployed to areas in which it could be fully employed.’⁹⁴

Studies published in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century tended to confirm the principle that migration occurred largely for work reasons or for the economy. With specific reference to the historical narrative of Italian migration, Italians are presented as ‘hard-working and industrious [...] desirable settlers’ who would not implement ‘a lower style of living to the detriment of (America).’⁹⁵ Their ‘vigor’ as labourers ‘cannot be placed in doubt’, particularly for countries in ‘need of brawn as well as brain’ that were in a ‘period of development’, as highlighted in G. E. Di Palma Castiglione’s 1905 study of Italian workers in the United States of America.⁹⁶ Successful integration, for these early scholars, is based on the potential benefits to the workforce and in boosting national economies. They are depicted as ‘unskilled workers’ driven from Italy by socio-economic, ecological, and political push factors that prompted emigration and attracted by the pull factor of significantly enhanced socio-economic mobility abroad.⁹⁷ As Robert Foerster posits:

[r]ooted much more deeply in the characters of the emigrants is that pecuniary motive [...] Nothing could be more striking than the frequency with which ideas of economic well-being and of country are reconciled by identification. At Goeschenen Professor Villari [...] asked some workmen, “Are you Italians?” and they replied “We were born in Italy but are not Italians, because we have had to seek our bread elsewhere.”⁹⁸

Robert Foerster’s comments underscore the core idea of my research, whereby Italians are conceptualised as innate and adept workers whose identities are affected by migration. In the encounter between Professor Villari and the Italians in Goeschenen, this manifests in a sense of abandonment, where the workers are portrayed as having traded in their national identity in exchange for becoming economic breadwinners. Whereas the way that Italians construct their identities also around the frame of their working practices is something which is argued in my own analysis, the thesis disagrees with the

⁹⁴ Charles Mueller and Edwin Mills, *The Economics of Labor Migration, A Behavioural Analysis* (London: Academic Press, 1982), p. 1.

⁹⁵ Eugene Schuyler, ‘Italian Immigration into the United States’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 4.3 (1889), 480–495. p. 494.

⁹⁶ G E Di Palma Castiglione, ‘Italian Immigration into the United States’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 11.2 (1905), 183–206. p. 194.

⁹⁷ Robert Foerster, *The Italian Emigration of our Times* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1924), p. 431.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 431.

assimilationist perspective hinted at in the references to the loss of Italian identity abroad.

As well as formulating generalisable rules, positivist studies also aimed to objectify problems and the impact on state policies. The defining thread here is the extent to which migrants could integrate into the local context and be beneficial to the nation's economy. A dominant voice here was that of the Chicago School of Sociology whose members explored the notion of assimilation. Through works such as Robert Park's, the general assumption here was that individuals would 'spontaneously acquire one another's language' and 'become incorporated into larger groups'; migrants would be involved in a unilateral transferring of their cultural identities by shedding cultural values belonging to their country of origin. Park consolidates this conclusion by evidencing the 'ease and rapidity' with which 'aliens' integrated into American life, and even posits that such assimilation can assist in forming a 'corporate character to social groups.'⁹⁹ They would thus be depicted as having to lose their own cultural values in order to become a part of the social fabric of a country and, often, the workplace.

The first studies investigating Italian migration to Britain also focus on the rate of assimilation of Italian workers into local communities. A key strand relates to the composure of early Italian networks that either facilitated or hindered the extent of integration. The kinship structure of the Italian community of London is identified as a strong point that allowed newly-arrived Italians to find accommodation and work in Italian businesses such as the catering industry as per Philip Garigue and Raymond Firth's 'Kinship Organisation of Italianates in London.'¹⁰⁰ In contrast, J. K. Chadwick Jones argues against this model. Through participant observation, Chadwick Jones depicts Italians as being at the edge of the steelworks' workplace culture, preferring only to socialise with each other instead of with their Welsh colleagues. The 'only very partial socialization' is linked to limited acceptance and exclusion, factors which lead Chadwick-Jones to call for better formal training programmes to assist Italians further.¹⁰¹ The two studies suggest that, while inter-Italian socialisation models were seen as advantageous for ethnic businesses, the same ones are depicted as an obstacle to their successful

⁹⁹ Robert Park, 'Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups with Particular Reference to the Negro', *American Journal of Sociology*, 19.5 (1914), 606–623.

¹⁰⁰ Philip Garigue and Raymond Firth, 'Kinship Organisation of Italianates in London', in *Two Studies of Kinship in London*, ed. Raymond Firth (London: University of London The Athlone Press, 1956), 67–93).

¹⁰¹ J. K. Chadwick-Jones, 'Italian Workers in a British Factory', p. 181.

integration in a mixed-ethnicity workplace. In accepting the workplace values, Italians are portrayed in these studies as being able to become a valued part of the community and achieve upward socio-economic mobility, as Bruno Tonna argues in his comparative historical-ethnographic analysis of the family structures and cultural values of Italians in Britain and Belgium:

Qualunque fosse stata la gerarchia dei valori in Italia, il primo posto in Inghilterra era occupato dal valore del “lavoro” inteso, si capisce, come mezzo infallibile per guadagnare ed assicurarsi un migliore avvenire. [...] La situazione non era così chiara a Péronnes-Ressaix. Qui i valori dominanti erano: adattamento alle circostanze, desiderio di beneficiare dei servizi sociali, spesso perfino speranza di raggiungere presto quel grado di silicosi che avrebbe messo in grado di ottenere, col licenziamento, i diritti alla pensione.

[No matter what the hierarchy of values was in Italy, the main one in England was the role of work, intended as an infallible means of making a living and guaranteeing a better future. [...] The situation was not so evident in Péronnes-Ressaix. Here, the dominant values were: adapting to circumstances, the desire to benefit from social services, often even the hope of quickly reaching that state of silicosis that would have allowed them to obtain, by being laid off from work, the rights to a pension.]¹⁰²

Bruno Tonna's comparative analysis foregrounds the importance of attitudes regarding work as leading to differing rates of integration and success for Italian migrants. Italians who bought into the logic of work and organised their lives around it, as evidenced by the Italians of Bedford, achieve enhanced socio-economic status and a 'better future'. In contrast, those who do not wish to work, preferring instead to rely on social benefits, were viewed as less favourable.

These tensions are also visible in the way that historians noted the differing attitudes to work between North and Southern Italians. Influenced by *anti-meridionalisti* scholars such as Cesare Lombroso and Alfredo Niceforo, who argued for the supposed 'inferiority' of Southern Italians who arrived in America in the early twentieth century, studies are quick to highlight the difference between the 'educated, skilled workmen' from the North versus the 'inexperienced, ill-disciplined and ill-equipped' Southerners who were 'dumped' on countries such as Australia and America.¹⁰³ Together, these studies demonstrate the central role of work in defining positivist approaches to Italian migration studies. The loss of ethnic diversity and sharing of values regarding work are

¹⁰² Benjamin Tonna, 'Fattori di integrazione familiare e socio-culturale in due gruppi di italiani emigrati', *Studi emigrazione*, ed. Centro studi emigrazione Roma (Brescia: La Nuova Cartografica, 1964), pp. 18–42, p. 23, translation my own.

¹⁰³ Percy Martin, 'Australia and Italian migration', *Fortnightly Review*, May 1865–June 1934, 124, 744 (Dec 1928); 804–811.

seen as favourable characteristics by the host society. In contrast, diversity and divergence lead to lack of integration and social opportunities.

The strength of positivist approaches to migration studies began to wane in the 1960s and 1970s as part of the paradigmatic shift towards social history. The working practices of Italians continue to be an important feature of investigations produced in the latter half of the twentieth century, although these are less bound by an ideological imposition that tied migrant labour into acceptability and assimilation. There is greater attention to Italians' sense of agency and use of human capital ('skills, competences, characteristics, and qualifications of themselves and others') and social capital ('the nature of social relations and how they can be used to one's own benefits') as they navigate their way through work and living arrangements.¹⁰⁴ From the Americas, Virginia Yans-McLaughlin's exploration of the Italian community of Buffalo, New York, and Samuel Baily's comparative analysis of the Italian communities of New York and Buenos Aires, offer insights into this.¹⁰⁵ Yans-McLaughlin's work on the Italian community of Buffalo makes the case for the study of dynamic processes of 'give and take between new conditions and old social forms' for Italians in the New York area.¹⁰⁶ This is demonstrated in her analysis of Italian families as they negotiate social, political and cultural changes in order to adapt to life in America between the 1890s and 1920s. Similarly, Samuel Baily's comparison of the Italian communities present in Argentina and the United States also explores how different 'housing conditions, home ownership, residential mobility, economic activity, and community organizations' impacted on the rate of successful 'adjustment' of Italians in their respective areas.¹⁰⁷ These are but two examples that show a greater attention to social processes as well as economical outputs, with work once again being represented as a key factor that facilitates integration and acceptance in the community.

These trends extended also to the study of Italian communities in Britain. Work and housing are seen as two criteria that facilitate the adjustment of Italians in the country. Robin Palmer's 1977 article on the impact of migration chains in determining

¹⁰⁴ Mingzhi Hu, Yinxin Su & Haiyong Zhang, 'Migrant Entrepreneurship: The Family as Emotional Support, Social Capital and Human Capital, *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, 57.12 (2021), 3367–3386.

¹⁰⁵ Virginia Yans Mc-Laughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880 – 1930* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁷ Samuel Baily, 'The Adjustment of Italian Immigrants in Buenos Aires and New York 1870–1914', *The American Historical Review*, 88.2 (1983), 281–305, p. 295.

the movement of Italians from the rural village of Abbazia (Emilia Romagna) to London offers one example of this.¹⁰⁸ For Palmer, 'Emilian values' are described as being 'adaptive' in Britain, where 'petty capitalist aspirations to independence' and a taste for 'the good things in life' allow them to become 'property-owners and businessmen.'¹⁰⁹ Russell King concurs, noting how the 'relatively liberal attitude of Britons towards Italians running businesses, owning property [...] and bringing in other family members' ultimately gave them a 'settled and stable position.'¹¹⁰ Activating social and human capital and aspiring to upward socio-economic mobility, as demonstrated in other studies produced towards the end of the 1970s with reference to the Italians in Bedford, London, and Scotland, are portrayed as factors that allow Italians in Britain to seamlessly settle into the country.¹¹¹

A dominant notion in studies is that the successful integration of Italians depended on them trading in their ethnicity and developing niche markets by providing Italian services to local populations. The Italian catering industry is often quoted as an example *par excellence* of this. A variety of studies produced about the Italians in Britain, America and Australia espouse a common historical narrative. Italian migrants arrive in a new country and open businesses, cafes and restaurants where 'they were not disadvantaged by a lack of knowledge of English'.¹¹² They draw on their ethnicity by selling typically Italian products such as coffee or *gelato*; these are then positively received by local communities and provide the conditions for Italians to obtain the upwards socio-economic mobility that they desire. In so doing, they make key contributions to the socio-cultural landscape of the host country, all of which prove essential to their acceptance in the community.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Robin Palmer, 'The Italians: Patterns of Migration to London', *Between Two Cultures*, ed. James Watson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 242–268, p. 246.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

¹¹⁰ Russell King, 'Italians in Britain. An Idiosyncratic Immigration', *Association for Teachers of Italian Journal*, 29 (Autumn 1979), 4–16, p. 11.

¹¹¹ Andrew Wilkin, 'Origins and Destinations of the Early Scots', *Association for Teachers of Italian Journal*, 29 (Autumn 1979), 52–61; Terri Colpi, 'The Italian Community in Glasgow, With Special Reference to Spatial Development', *Association for Teachers of Italian Journal*, 29 (Autumn 1979), 62–75; Lucio Sponza, 'Italians in Leicester', *Association for Teachers of Italian Journal*, 33 (Summer 1981), 3–13.

¹¹² Bryan Reynolds, *Casalattico and the Italian Community in Ireland* (Dublin: UCD Foundation for Italian Studies, 1991), p. 140; See also Simone Cinotto, *Making Italian America: Consumer Culture and the Production of Ethnic Identities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

¹¹³ Gianfranco Cresciani, *The Italians in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. i.; Alessandra Campanari and Alessio Cavicchi, 'From the Rise of Authentic Italian Restaurants in America to the Creation of New Multicultural Food Tourism Experiences', *Tourism Culture and Communication*, 21.1

If earlier studies tended to unproblematically suggest that Italians bought into a petty capitalist work ethic, they also play down the individuality and cultural values of Italian migrants at home and at work. Invigorated by postcolonial studies that challenged the Eurocentric narratives of colonialism by proposing counter-narratives constructed from subaltern or subjugated voices, new studies engaged with theoretical models that placed migrant community's multi-ethnic values at the heart of their investigations. For the case of Italian migration, this revolved around exploring the cultural values and expressions of *italianità* (Italianness) at home and at work. This shift in attitudes is highlighted by the Italo-American migration historian Donna Gabaccia, who notes that:

[w]e can [...] identify and compare variations in the emergence, growth, definitions, and hegemony of national loyalties in multi-ethnic populations. [...] We can understand in a more precise and simultaneously more humane way the impact of international migrations on modern life. Scholars hope to represent worldwide migration in mind-numbing lists of statistics and multi-coloured arrows thrusting across maps of the world. The study of a diaspora focuses attention instead on migrations' impact on human culture and identity, and on the evolution of the human collectivities – nations, states, families, neighbourhoods, and home communities – that make life both human and culturally diverse.¹¹⁴

From the early studies that were interested only in studying institutional factors in migration (impacts on home economy, extents of migration), these studies instead shift to questions related to human experience (the evolution of human culture, strategies of identity formation, importance of individual experiences instead of generalised observations). The expression of culture is often studied with regards to physically tangible elements – the link between Italian food and identity is explored also by Gabaccia and by others in the field. But Gabaccia's study of Italian culture extends beyond objective factors to address subjective processes. In these cases, interest is shown in the private lives of individuals and on the contributions they make towards nation building.¹¹⁵

In the British context, the duality of integration into a local community and celebration of Italian cultural values became dominant as of the 1990s. The influential oeuvre by Terri Colpi, *The Italian Factor* (1991) notes this dualism.¹¹⁶ Her analysis of the Italian community in Great Britain demonstrates the gradual process by which Italians became increasingly integrated into Britain, in part due to the 'creativity linked to a

(2021), 5–16; Marco Giudici, 'A Bridge Across Ethnic Lines? Italian cafes in Welsh popular culture and public history'.

¹¹⁴ Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, p. 10.

¹¹⁵ Loretta Baldassar and Donna Gabaccia, *Intimacy and Italian Migration: Gender and Domestic Lives in a Mobile World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011).

¹¹⁶ Terri Colpi, *The Italian Factor. The Italian Community in Great Britain*, p. 258.

capacity for hard work and an appreciation of quality' that lead them to be 'recognised, appreciated, and indeed valued.'¹¹⁷ But her analysis also celebrates expressions of *italianità* and the performance of Italian cultural values, recognising in them their importance in articulating their Italian identities away from home.

These strands are reproduced in various studies such as those of the Italian communities of North-East England, Fife, Manchester, Bristol, and South Wales, demonstrating the increasing recognition in this period for a more complex reading of the links between the Italian communities, Italy, and the areas of Britain where they settled.¹¹⁸ Rather than focusing on the removal of expressions of *italianità* in a quest for 'assimilation' or 'integration', these studies recognise the multiple identities at play between the private (home) and public (work) sphere. The café sector is often held up as an example of this. Italians contribute to the building of the nation and enhance the areas they settle in, as argued by scholars such as Marco Giudici in his thesis on the Italians of Wales.¹¹⁹ But the café also acts as spaces of socialisation for Italians as well, where Italian identity can be articulated and transmitted between family members and other members of the community.¹²⁰

The performance of Italian cultural values and identification of citizens as being between Britain and Italy also appears to be an approach that several academics have employed in their own investigations of post-Millennium Italian communities. These studies typically draw on oral history approaches to explore the life choices and expressions of Italian and British identity amongst later generations, most commonly but not limited to the Italians who worked in the café trades in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These accounts identify common tropes and tangible markers of ethnic identities that document the interviewee's own relationship with cultural elements – most notably 'family, food, ethics, language, and religion.'¹²¹ Projects from

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹¹⁸ Norma Alari, *Italians in West Fife* (Cupar: Norma Alari Publishing, 2021); Hugh Shankland, *Out of Italy: The Story of Italians in North-East England* (Harborough: Troubadour Publishing, 2014); Anthony Rea, *Memories of the Italian Colony of Ancoats* (Manchester: Neil Richardson Publishing, 1988); Bruno Bottignolo, *Without a Bell Tower: A Study of the Italian Immigrants in South-West England* (Rome: Centro studi emigrazione, 1985); Colin Hughes, *Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla. The Italian Community in South Wales, 1881–1945*.

¹¹⁹ Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity: Italians and Nation-Building in Wales, 1940–2010'.

¹²⁰ Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings. Memory, Space, Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000); Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity'.

¹²¹ Rachel Haworth and Laura Rorato, 'Memory, Identity and Migrant Generations: Articulating Italianità in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Northern England through the Case of Kingston upon Hull', *California Italian Studies*, 9.1, (2019), 1–19, p. 3.

differing areas in Britain of post-war Italian migration– such as Hull, Peterborough, Scotland and Wales – highlight the process of reclaiming a sense of *italianità* by the third or fourth generation in spite of previous generations casting this aside in order to adapt the hardships of World War Two.¹²²

The quest for diversifying the state of knowledge regarding the working practices of Italians is also evident in the attempts to document professional experiences outside of the catering industry. In the British context, this is achieved to a limited extent, although studies investigating the Italian community of Bedford provide useful insights into the social practices of Italian bricklayers who migrated to Britain in the 1950s.¹²³ Scholars such as Marco Giudici have highlighted alternative sectors, such as Italian coal miners in Wales, but these are usually a secondary consideration in investigations that are dominated by a focus on the café industry.¹²⁴ As shown by works such as Francesco Ricatti's exploration of Italians in Australia or Donna Gabaccia and Franco Iacovetta's wide-ranging volume covering the working practices of Italians in a variety of sectors, an increased attention in the way that different occupations and the diverse experiences that stem from them have the potential to uncover alternative perspectives on Italian migration. In following this approach, in my thesis I aim to integrate the experiences of Italians from the diverse working scenarios of café workers, forced labourers as prisoners of war, and miners and metalworkers in the 1950s. Such a broad approach to Italians in Wales allows for the consideration of a workforce that encompasses differences in class, gender, and area of origin in Italy. As Francesco Ricatti argues in justification for how various working practices constitute diverse social realities for Italian migrants in Australia:

[m]igrant movements require transcultural skills and the ability of migrants to reorient themselves in different and ever-changing environments. The socio-economic goals that often motivate migration mean that there is a complex relationship between job opportunities, mobility, and emplacement. From this perspective, transculturation happens not only at the intersection of communicative, linguistic, and artistic exchanges,

¹²² Rachel Haworth and Laura Rorato, 'Memory, Identity and Migrant Generations'; Marco Giudici 'Migration, Memory and Identity', Ida Casilli, 'Challenging Stereotypes: *Moving Dreams* and the Italian Community of Peterborough, UK', *Migration and Stereotypes in Performance and Culture*, eds. Y. Meerzon, D. Dean and D. McNeil (London: Palgrave, 2020); Hugh Shankland, *Out of Italy: The Story of Italians in North-East England*.

¹²³ Russell King, 'Italian Migration to Great Britain', *Geography*, 62.3 (1977), 176–186. *Media and Migration - constructions of mobility and difference*, eds. King, R. and Wood, N.; Siria Guzzo, *A Sociolinguistic Insight into the Italian Community in the UK: Workplace Language as an Identity Marker*.

¹²⁴ Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory, Identity', pp. 106–128; 140–149.

but also in the everyday practices through which migrants find employment, work, socialise, create businesses, and accumulate various forms of capital.¹²⁵

Ricatti's analysis provides a framework that will be employed in the analytical chapters that follow. As per Ricatti's exploration of Italians in Australia, different workers constantly negotiate their identities based on their experiences in the workplace and society. They navigate social boundaries, such as racialised hierarchies at work between Australians and Aborigine workers, or the differences between themselves and their descendants. To survive different environments, they draw on a range of resources that impact their emplacement in the host country (Australia) and their links to Italy, such as developing transnational and translocal networks linking the two countries or engaging in cultural activities that link to their *italianità* and also cross cultural lines. These considerations are all applied in my own study of Italians in Wales who experience tensions and displacements caused by anti-Italianism or the Second World War and refer to multiple levels of identity that they draw on in the Welsh workplace and at home.

Another key strand regards the growing attention to traumatic episodes or instances of discrimination. For studies regarding Italian global migrations, this manifests most clearly in studies that focus on the impact of the Second World War. Work takes a less prominent role, although workplaces – most notably Italian cafes – are transfigured into 'social spaces of discrimination' where traumas occurred.¹²⁶ Lucio Sponza's investigation into the nature of Anti-Italian riots that occurred largely in front of Italian cafes throughout the country is one such example of this.¹²⁷ In linking his analysis to riots and the extent of economic deprivation present in the 1930s, Sponza's work tests the strength of reactions towards Italian citizens on the part of British locals and hypothesises that more extreme anti-Italian behaviour could be linked to wider socio-economic conditions as well as anti-Italian sentiment. Historical analyses also chart the effects of other flashpoints during the Second World War, such as the arresting and internment of Italian male citizens largely active in the refreshment industry in order to

¹²⁵ Francesco Ricatti, *Italians in Australia: History, Memory, Identity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

¹²⁶ Angelina Sánchez-Martí *et al*, 'Towards a Common Public Culture? Boundaries to Belonging in Catalonia', *Promoting Social Inclusive Experiences in Uncertain Times*, 10.2 (2022), 132–142, p. 134.

¹²⁷ Lucio Sponza, 'The anti-Italian riots, June 1940', *Racial violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries*, ed. Panikos Panayi (London: Leicester University Press, 1993; 1996).

limit the ‘threat’ of what were perceived as Fascist sympathisers.¹²⁸ Similarly, Rachel Pistol explores the theme of internment and provides examples about how Axis internees articulated their experiences in oral history interviews and cultural exhibitions.¹²⁹ These analyses are relevant as they challenge the ‘unproblematic’ integration narrative proposed in earlier studies by depicting the displacement experienced by Italians during the war. My own research builds on this theme by bringing the theme of work into consideration, allowing me to connect the way that the workplace gave visibility to Italian migrants in the country and conditioned their experiences at the time. The working practices of Italian female café traders, as I argue in Chapter One, rendered them visible to anti-Italian rhetoric in the form of critical newspaper articles during the Second World War, and those operating in coastal areas were forced to leave. By the same token, the need for workers during the Second World War resulted in the arrival of prisoners of war who, whilst initially were treated with suspicion and were thus visible to critical eyes, became a valued part of the Welsh workforce by 1945. Thus, work plays a key role in the wartime experiences of how Italians in Wales by rendering them visible or invisible depending on their representation in society, and thus modifying their trajectories while in the country.

A defining feature of the historical narrative of British-Italian communities is the *Arandora Star*, a warship carrying Axis prisoners of war that was sunk off the coast of Ireland on the 2nd July 1940 and resulted in the death of 470 Italian citizens.¹³⁰ Various studies have explored the legacy of the event in defining the British-Italians’ wartime experience and memory. Scholars point out the various ways that Italians negotiating the trauma and participate in memorialisation campaigns designed to recognise and commemorate the losses encountered. Bruna Chezzi’s analysis of oral history interviews from the Italian communities in Wales demonstrates the extent of silence amongst future generations as well as the narratives that emerged from Wales regarding internment and the *Arandora Star* amidst a prominent campaign starting from 2008 to commemorate the

¹²⁸ Lucio Sponza, *Divided Loyalties: Italians in Britain During the Second World War* (Lausanne: Peter Lang, 2000).

¹²⁹ Rachel Pistol, ‘I Can’t Remember a More Depressing Time but I Don’t Blame Anyone for That: Remembering and Commemorating the Wartime Internment of Enemy Aliens in Britain’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 53,1 (2019), 37–48. See also Terri Colpi, ‘Legacy and heritage of the *Arandora Star* tragedy in Britain and Italy: A transnational perspective’, *British Internment and the Internment of Britons: Second World War Camps*, eds. Gilly Carr and Rachel Pistol (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), 47–67.

¹³⁰ Maria Serena Balestracci, *Arandora star. Dall’oblio alla memoria* (Parma: Monte Università Parma, 2008).

sinking.¹³¹ Terri Colpi's article also identifies the prominence of the Arandora Star for the community, arguing that a symbolic narrative has been constructed that defines much of the British-Italian community's 'wartime experience and memory' through the creation of *pockets of affect* that link areas in Britain with localities in Italy.¹³² Wendy Ugolini's research concurs, acknowledging the traumatic impact and the ways in which British-Italians attempted to reclaim by *lieux de mémoire* to remember and memorialise such events.¹³³ These studies acquire even more significance in consideration for how they link into discourses of integration and identity. If contemporary historical narratives have focused on the 'success story' of Italian migration to Britain, then these events problematise this by pointing out the traumatic experiences Italians lived through in this period.

If the Arandora Star appears as the foundational event that defines much of the *pre-war* Italian communities of Britain, it cannot stand to represent the *only* experience related to the Second World War. In this field, comparatively less work has drawn attention to the historical experience of Italians both prior to Mussolini's declaration of war in 1940, and after the internment and sinking of the Arandora Star in July 1940. Research produced over the last decade has worked to amend this to some extent by focusing on Italians from alternative sectors who, through different working arrangements, had different experiences to the traumatic uprooting experienced by internment and the Arandora Star. Wendy Ugolini offers one such insight of this. Her research draws to light the trajectories of second-generation British-Italian soldiers who were called up into the British war effort as well as of Italian women in the British Home Front, with these testimonies further enriching both an understanding of the British-Italian war narrative and its collective memory.¹³⁴ More specifically for this thesis, some studies have also begun to piece together the histories of Italians who had no prior connections to the pre-war Italian communities but who found themselves in Britain as prisoners of war. Notable amongst studies investigating Italian prisoner of war experience is the volume composed by Isabella Insolubile, whose study *WOPS – I*

¹³¹ Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their cultural representations, 1920s–2010s*; see also Rachel Pistol, 'I Can't Remember a More Depressing Time, but I Don't Blame Anyone for That: Remembering and Commemorating the Wartime Internment of Enemy Aliens in Britain'.

¹³² Terri Colpi, 'Chaff in the winds of war?'.

¹³³ Wendy Ugolini, *Experiencing War as the Enemy Other: Italian Scottish Experience in World War II* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2011).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

prigionieri italiani in Gran Bretagna charts the ground towards constructing a historical narrative from enrolment to repatriation.¹³⁵ Similarly, the scholarship of Lucio Sponza, or Bob Moore & Kent Fedorowich offers insights of Italians prisoner-of-war experience in Britain from a British perspective¹³⁶ By paying attention to alternative working experiences, these studies shine a light on different phenomena, from societal tensions experienced through merit of being captured soldiers, to the challenge of negotiating hybrid identities between being British and Italian for second-generation soldiers.

A notion that this thesis engages with throughout its analytical chapters is its attempt to include alternative experiences of tensions from different working sectors throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The focus on the Second World War evidently figures as a defining point for the Italian caterers who had arrived before the Second World War. And yet, studied in isolation, there is the risk that they may be understood as reproducing a historical narrative that suggests that British-Italian experience was one of a successful integration disrupted temporarily by the Second World War. Jack Crangle's 2023 analysis of the Italian community of Northern Ireland represents a clear example of a way around this.¹³⁷ While acknowledging the importance of the Second World War, Crangle aims to construct a 'more complex and multi-faceted history' of the community by looking at xenophobia and sectarianism from the anti-Catholic rhetoric experienced by Italian café traders during the early twentieth century to the experience of the Troubles after the war.¹³⁸

In the Welsh context, the benefits of using a longitudinal approach similar to Crangle's study of Italians in Northern Ireland offers significant potential. Against the backdrop of a scholarship that has focused largely on the experiences of Italian caterers, their successful integration and working contributions to Welsh society in the 1920s and the 1930s, and later the internment of male workers during the Second World War, the ability to move beyond these frames of reference can unearth previously neglected aspects regarding what is currently known about the experience of Italians in the country during the twentieth century. This is most evident in this thesis' exploration of the

¹³⁵ Isabella Insolubile, *Wops. I prigionieri italiani in Gran Bretagna* (Naples: ESI, 2012).

¹³⁶ Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War, 1940–1947* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Lucio Sponza, *Divided Loyalties: Italians in Britain During the Second World War*.

¹³⁷ Jack Crangle, 'The Italian Community', *Migrants, Immigration and Diversity in Twentieth-century Northern Ireland* (London: Palgrave, 2023), 69–103.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

representations of Italian traders during the early twentieth century in the light of anti-Italianism and the Temperance Movement. This is an experience that is often acknowledged as being a part of the migration story of Italians in Wales but has received little consideration in academic works.

In sum, the studies from Australia and America chart a way forward that incorporates understudied aspects related to the working practices of Italians in their respective countries (such as their experiences as racialised minorities) in order to innovate the historical narrative of Italian global migration. These studies stand apart from those produced before them by proposing a more balanced and multi-faceted narrative of Italian migration. This is also achieved by looking more specifically at the working practices in less-studied work sectors, as opposed to those that focus on ethnic businesses. In this thesis, this is applied by widening the scope of the Italian communities of Britain to include different working sectors, enabling me to capture different insights that define their respective experiences. By paying attention, for example, to the experiences of miners and metalworkers, whose work in Wales has largely been neglected from the historical study of migration to the country, the thesis shines a light on factors specific to their circumstances, such as their continuous negotiation of a hazardous work environment and the performance of masculine values in a physical work sector. These considerations allow me to challenge the dominant historical narrative of Italian migration that largely focuses on the caterers during the twentieth century, and thus opens the space for a more complex one to emerge.

2. A Gendered Approach to Italian Migration

Another key pillar that this thesis revolves around is gender. The dynamics of gender have increasingly become a point of reference for scholars since the 1970s, challenging the dominance of male-oriented studies. The rise in gender studies had direct consequences for migration studies where scholars such as Judith Zinsser or Silvia Pedraza urged the importance of greater attention to the perspective of women who had tended to be neglected from analyses of world historians.¹³⁹ Women's working practices

¹³⁹ Judith Zinsser, 'Women's and Men's World History? Not Yet', *Journal of Women's History*, 25.4, (2013), 309–318; Silvia Pedraza, 'Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 17 (1991), 303–325.

were famously declared by Mirjana Morokvasic (1984) as ‘not always fit(ting) in the reigning ideology of work’, and that there was a historic bias towards studying migration from the perspective of male migrant workers.¹⁴⁰ Migration studies scholars have since endeavoured to resolve this omission by putting gender at the ‘centre stage’ of studies and by using intersectionality to better articulate ‘interlocking systems of oppression’ that are ‘constitutive of migration systems.’¹⁴¹ Attention to gender has also brought to light how masculinity and femininity are social constructions, allowing for a more nuanced reading into the performance of masculine and feminine values.¹⁴² These threads are explored with reference to this thesis’ intersectional approach by investigating the experiences of Italian women in the café sector, and Italian working-class male miners and metalworkers in the 1950s.

In early migration studies, investigations take as their unit of analysis an individual conforming to a certain identikit and who is part of a larger group of similar people. A migrant was largely considered to be male, usually coming from a country where there were fewer opportunities and arriving in an area where they could secure better economic prospects. This often involved migration from a rural area to a city and would be focused on migrants working in manual labour occupations. According to Robert Park, the cities were the site where ‘the grand division of labor is effected which permits and more or less compels the individual *man* to concentrate his energies, and his talents on the particular task he is best suited to perform.’¹⁴³ That such a focus is present, particularly in the first decades of the twentieth century, is hardly surprising; young men constituted the majority of the mobile work force, and thus men made up a quantifiable case study for these scholars.¹⁴⁴ But the strict following of such guidelines (young single man, migrating from a situation of relative poverty to relative privilege) limited whose perspectives were included in the historical narrative of migrations to a country,

¹⁴⁰ Mirjana Morokvasic, ‘Birds of Passage are also Women’, *The International Migration Review*, 18.4 (1984), 886–907.

¹⁴¹ Gioconda Herrera, ‘Gender and International Migration: Contributions and Cross-Fertilizations’, *The Annual Review of Sociology*, 39 (2013), 471–489.

¹⁴² Steven Maynard, ‘Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History’, *Labour*, 23 (1989), 159–169, p. 166.

¹⁴³ Robert Park, ‘Human Migration and the Marginal Man’, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 33,6 (1928), pp. 881–893. (Italics my own).

¹⁴⁴ Patrick Manning, ‘Modeling patterns of human migration’, *Migration in World History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005; 2013), 1–16.

excluding those that did not conform to this framework (such as the experiences of women).

Challenges to this limitation began to emerge in the 1980s when scholars distanced themselves from a 'add women and stir' approach, where the 'empirical analysis of gender' is limited due to an 'analysis of differences between men and women.'¹⁴⁵ By seeing gender as a 'system of relations which was influenced by migration', greater attention could be given to issues such as how gender 'permeates a variety of practices'.¹⁴⁶ This extends to the field of female workers: scholars have convincingly analysed contemporary instances concerning the working practices of migrant women and the impact of working on their subjective experiences.¹⁴⁷

In the field of Italian migration studies, these themes appear prominently in Gabaccia's 2002 work *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives – Italian Workers of the World*.¹⁴⁸ Gabaccia challenges the hegemonic image of Italian male labourers by drawing attention to the working practices of women who either remained in Italy whilst their husbands were overseas or were actively working throughout the world in a variety of contexts. As well as highlighting the agency of women – the collection of essays in the volume gives space as well to female resisters, radical exiles, rank-and-order militants, and community-based activists. Her work urges scholars to consider the different ways in which women developed national identities during migration differently to men, linking processes of identity formation to discourses of motherhood, labour, and political participation.¹⁴⁹ These themes are also developed elsewhere, particularly with reference to the American context. Diane Vecchio's 2006 work seeks to challenge the paradigm whereby Italian women were seen stereotypically as submissive wives and daughters whose labour was limited to the domestic sphere: instead, she focuses on the working practices in the ethnic labour market supporting the family business, or in the segmented labour market in light industries.¹⁵⁰ This is also the aim of Friedman-Kasaba's cross-

¹⁴⁵ Stephanie Nawyn, 'Gender and Migration: Integrating Feminist Theory into Migration Studies', *Sociology Compass*, 4.9 (2010), 749–765.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 750.

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, *Migration and Domestic Work: A European Perspective on a Global Theme*, ed. Helma Lutz (London: Routledge 2008).

¹⁴⁸ *Women, gender, and transnational lives. Italian workers of the world*, eds. Donna Gabaccia, and Franca Iacovetta (London: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁵⁰ Diane Vecchio, *Merchants, midwives, and laboring women: Italian migrants in Urban America* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

comparative research between Italian and Jewish women in New York, where the memories of these women are placed into dialogue with each other to comment on the everyday practices of those involved.¹⁵¹ These studies illustrate the drive to document the working experience of women and challenge the dominant narrative that sees them as housewives or working largely in gendered jobs.

Curiously, the study of Italian migration to Britain appears slow on the uptake to focus on the working practices of Italian women. Early works acknowledged how Italian women were represented as a 'fonte di reddito' (source of income) as early as 1964, as noted in Bruno Tonna's 1964 comparative analysis of the Italians of Bedford and Péronnes-Ressaix where he notes:

[l]a scoperta più significativa dell'inchiesta fu che le condizioni economiche di Bedford, permettendo alle mogli di divenire una fonte di reddito, stavano rivoluzionando la scala dei coniugi nelle famiglie italiane, mentre a Péronnes-Ressaix le mogli riportavano i mariti alla riadozione dei valori antichi.¹⁵²

[The most significant discovery was that, in allowing women to gain a source of income, the economic conditions of Bedford were revolutionising relationships in Italian families, whereas in Péronnes-Ressaix women led men to take up ancient values].

Tonna's article is more explicit in attributing to the role of work not only the central ideological value that Italian families in Britain appreciated, but that working practices were responsible for cultural shifts inside family households that were not present in other countries. This thread, however, remains undeveloped in subsequent academic studies related to Italians in Britain, with most either being constructed from the perspective of male migrants or those of the family. When women are referenced as working, they are often depicted in gendered roles as caregivers (Zontini, 2006; Martini, 2022) or assisting their husbands in Italian cafes (Chezzi, 2015).¹⁵³ Their experiences are typically studied as a part of a family unit – they work alongside and for their husbands, are 'deprived' of family bonds during the internment of men, and are depicted as gaining

¹⁵¹ Kathie Friedman-Kasaba, *Memories of Migration: Gender, Ethnicity, and Work in the Lives of Jewish and Italian women in New York, 1870–1924* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁵³ Elisabetta Zontini, 'Italian families and social capital: care provision in a transnational world', *Community, Work and Family*, 9.3 (2006), 325–345; Manuela Martini, 'Family, Care and Migration: Gendered Paths from the Mediterranean Italian Mountains to Northern Europe in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,'; Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*.

more responsibility during the Second World War.¹⁵⁴ Elsewhere, they are seen more for their role in 'maintaining ethnic ties' and transmitting cultural values.¹⁵⁵

Notable exceptions from this, where academics study the unique experiences of Italian women workers in Britain, provide fertile terrain of how the perspectives of women can innovate the historical narrative of Italian migration to the country. Wendy Ugolini notes how the voices of Italian women 'have been largely marginalised and silenced' due to a gender bias that has focused on the experiences of Italian men.¹⁵⁶ As a remedy, her analysis focuses on Italian women who volunteered for British military service during the Second World War or those who worked in the cafes. This leads her convincingly to conclude that 'the abuse, intolerance and prejudice faced by Italian Scottish women on the home front had a long-lasting impact both on the construction of personal identity and their perception of themselves as "outsiders."¹⁵⁷ Flavia Gasperetti's PhD thesis on Italian women in the textile industries of Manchester during the 1950s offers another example.¹⁵⁸ Her analysis of oral history interviews reveals key themes of women working in manual labour, such as recollections about workplace socialisation, their experiences of perceived racism or hostility towards them, and their participation in cultural activities associated with *italianità*.

With regards to the exploration of the working practices of women, this thesis seeks to move beyond the hegemony of the historical narrative of Italian men in the catering business. Whereas it has long been acknowledged that women played a significant role in the family businesses, their experiences have often been side-lined. Isolated examples emerge from time to time – Bruna Chezzi, for instance, notes an example where a woman is 'surprisingly' portrayed as the 'driving force behind the business' which allows her to project 'her role outside the walls of the domestic sphere and of cultural tradition from "domestic goddess" to a cunning and ambitious woman full of resources and with entrepreneurial skills.'¹⁵⁹ But, as emerges from my analysis of oral history interviews, these cases were perhaps more common than previously

¹⁵⁴ Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Emanuela Bianchera et al, 'Transnational mobility and cross-border family life cycles: A century of Welsh-Italian migration', p. 9.

¹⁵⁶ Wendy Ugolini, 'The Internal Enemy "Other": Recovering the World War Two Narratives of Italian Scottish Women', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 24.2 (2004), 137–158, p. 138.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁵⁸ Flavia Gasperetti, 'Italian Women Migrants in Post-War Britain. The Case of Textile Workers'.

¹⁵⁹ Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*, p. 89.

acknowledged. Chapter One addresses this lacuna directly by exploring women's agency in the café sector both before and during the Second World War, enabling it to recognise the complex realities that women experienced over this period separate from their male counterparts.

The thesis' interest in gender goes beyond looking at the experiences of women who redefine their social roles in Wales by becoming actively involved in the café sector. Another manifestation concerns masculinity. Despite many studies focusing on the working practices of Italian men in Britain, there is little focus on how they perform masculine values in the workplace. Masculinity appears at the margins of studies such as Anne-Marie Fortier's 2000 manuscript *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*, where she draws on Bruno Bottignolo's observations regarding Italian masculinity.¹⁶⁰ She notes how male migrant labour is described by Bottignolo as an 'emasculating experience' revolving around the movement of 'machine-minders, sweepers, diggers, cement mixers, cleaners, (and) drillers', and how they 're-become a man' by returning to Italy.¹⁶¹ If Fortier notes how Bottignolo's comments seem to suggest that men lost their masculinities by migrating, then Souhir Zekri's analysis of Joe Pieri's autobiographical stories and memoirs of running an Italian fish-and-chip shop in Glasgow challenges this notion completely by looking at how men performed masculine values abroad.¹⁶² Far from ceasing to be men, her work notes how the shop where Joe Pieri works is transfigured into a 'melting pot' where different masculinities meet, from the hegemonic masculine figures of father and policemen to the importance of social bonds between male friends in the area.¹⁶³ Taking inspiration from the latter study, the multiple masculinities and the way they condition Italians' experiences in Wales is addressed in the chapter dedicated to Italian miners and metalworkers. By studying a working sector historically associated to masculinity and male values, the chapter highlights how these workers perform multiple masculinities in Wales and recognises their importance in shaping their emplacement in workplace cultures and the wider community.

¹⁶⁰ Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*, p. 54.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁶² Souhir Zekir, "'Real Men Mark their Territory!'" Spatial Constructions of Masculinity in Joe Pieri's Autobiographical Narratives', *The European Journal of Life Writing*, VIII (2019), 47–68.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

3. Migrant Narratives Of and About Work

Another one of the common threads in this thesis is the link between work, migration, and narratives. Narratives in this thesis are understood as a universal practice whereby human beings actively transform lived events into a format that can be communicated (written or orally) via a variety of media. The transfiguration of these events into such a form can be considered a narrative.¹⁶⁴ Narratives are not necessarily direct re-enactments of the phenomena that transpired, but rather mediated versions of reality constructed by the individual. In crafting this narrative, the recollection of events is imbued with further meaning. How these stories are woven is influenced by ideological, subjective, and discursive constraints pertaining to the individual and collective level.¹⁶⁵ Storytellers – be they interviewees reflecting on the family histories of their ancestors or journalists publishing reports and editorials in the press – ‘interpret the world and experience in it; they select, organise, connect and evaluate events judged as meaningful for an audience’.¹⁶⁶ A narrative analysis is sensitive not just to the content of the story, but also to the strategies used in composing such stories, be it in terms of the deliberate linguistic and syntagmatic strategies used by the narrator, or to the positionality of the researcher and their impact on the composition of the story during interviews.

In the field of migration studies, narratives have been used extensively to investigate ‘narratives about migration processes including the causes and dynamics of international movement’, and ‘narratives about the life courses, experiences, behaviour, and effects of migrants settled in host countries.’¹⁶⁷ As Anna De Fina and Amelie Tseng suggest in their 2017 study, research on migrant narratives generally fall into two groups: one that focuses on the ‘the representations that migrants construct about their identities, experiences, values, and relations with out-groups, through storytelling’, and a second about ‘storytelling as a practice within migrant communities and institutions that deal with migrants.’¹⁶⁸ Christina Boswell *et al*’s 2021 article ‘The Emergence, Uses and

¹⁶⁴ Lynn Abrams, ‘Narrative’, *Oral History Theory*, p. 110.

¹⁶⁵ Jaber Gubrium + James Holstein, *Analyzing Narrative Reality* (London: Sage, 2009); Lynn Abrams, ‘Narrative’, *Oral History Theory*, 110–129.

¹⁶⁶ Catherine Kohler Riessman, ‘Narrative Analysis’, *Narrative, Memory & Everyday Life*, (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press, 2005), 1–7.

¹⁶⁷ Christina Boswell *et al*, ‘The Emergence, Uses and Impacts of Narratives on Migration: State of the Art’, *BRIDGES Working Paper*, 2021, < <https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/en/publications/the-emergence-uses-and-impacts-of-narratives-on-migration-state-o>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

¹⁶⁸ Anna De Fina and Amelia Tseng, ‘Narrative in the Study of Migrants’, *Routledge Handbook of Migration and Language*, ed. Suresh Canagarajah (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 381–396, p. 382.

Impacts of Narratives on Migration: State of the Art' develops these categories further, highlighting the difference between narratives *by* migrants (where personal narratives can help 'understand and communicate the complex factors shaping migration, decisions, and lived experience'), and narratives *about* migrants (which also includes how migrants are constructed, for example, by public institutions and the media).¹⁶⁹

The link between storytelling, identity negotiation, and experiences with other cultures can perhaps be best summarised by Anna De Fina, who has worked extensively with the narrative practices of migrants:

[t]he way we express our experiences is as part of those experiences as the material and psychological processes that prompted our telling of them. Storytelling [...] is seen here as situated discursive practice [...] in the sense that it both obeys and creates social rules, understandings, and roles. [...] Among the central functions of storytelling is that of presenting and representing identity. In this framework, narrating is a way of talking about the self, but also a way of practicing certain types of identity in specific interactional contexts.¹⁷⁰

Even if work does not always take a central role in migrant-produced narratives, the experiences of work provide valuable insights into the individual's representation of their identities. Various studies have focused on the ways in which migrants construct work identities in their recollections. Edwina Pio's analysis of the workplace narratives of Indian women in New Zealand provides one example of this. Having noted that the theme of work appeared in all the tales of migrant trajectories in New Zealand, Pio's analysis demonstrates how interactions with workers that transcend cultural boundaries, as well as the Indian women's navigating of the changing socio-economic circumstances, play a crucial role in ethnic identity negotiation.¹⁷¹ These identities are consistently renegotiated, as argued by Kaja Kazmierska's 2009 analysis of the autobiographical narrative interview with a Turkish woman in Germany demonstrating how 'critical incidents' and 'turning points' lead to identity changes.¹⁷² Different values are highlighted depending on the workplace roles, for example a greater attention to constructions of masculinity for working-class men in sectors such as mining (Moodie

¹⁶⁹ Christina Boswell *et al*, 'The Emergence, Uses and Impacts of Narratives on Migration: State of the Art', p. 12.

¹⁷⁰ Anna De Fina, *Identity in Narrative: A study of immigrant discourse*, p. 5.

¹⁷¹ Edwina Pio, 'Knotted strands: Working lives of Indian women migrants in New Zealand', *Human Relations*, 58,10 (2005), 1277-1299.

¹⁷² Kaja Kazmierska, 'Migration Experiences and Changes of Identity. The Analysis of a Narrative', *Historical Social Research*, 31.3 (2006), 72-89.

and Ndatshe: 1994) or low-paid jobs (Datta et al: 2009).¹⁷³ Marjo Rouvoet *et al's* insights of the narratives of Italian migrants in Holland points out how work was a 'source of fundamental (self-)identification with the Netherlands' and illustrated the duality between their desire to contribute to Dutch society and their experiences of 'subtle discrimination at work stemming from the majority group's fixation of ethnic othering.'¹⁷⁴ These studies demonstrate the value of studying narratives about work and how they relate to the representations of workplace identities.

If attention to identity formation in the narratives of work remains understudied, then the way that work narratives comment on the themes of inclusion and exclusion receives far more success. Francesco Ricatti's 2018 study of the Italian communities of Australia sketches the contours of the way in which the themes of work, migration, narratives, and integration intertwine:

(n)arratives about work and socio-economic upward mobility reflect Italian migrants' need to address different judgemental forms of social gaze by the broader Australian society. The Australian racist, classist, and sexist focus was, for decades, on Italian patriarchy, social and economic issues within the Italian-Australian community, and migrants' inability to integrate within the broader Australian society. Italians responded mostly with a rhetorical discourse around sacrifice; business initiative and socio-economic success; the purchase of a house and, when possible, investments in apartment or commercial buildings; the insistence on the importance of their children's education; and the belief in a moral, emotional, and affective superiority over Australians, especially in the realm of family life.¹⁷⁵

Ricatti's quote points to the way that migrants' narratives often touch on their having to negotiate societal expectations of the dominant society to assimilate and the clash of representations between how migrants saw themselves and how they were seen by others. This is a dominant theme in the scholarship of migration studies, where research has increasingly picked up on the narrative articulations of senses of integration and displacement (such as in Ingrid Løland's study of the stories of Syrian refugees) or experiences of workplace discrimination or tragedies (as seen in Francesca Cappelletto

¹⁷³ T. Dunbar Moodie and Vivienne Ndatshe, *Going for gold: men, mines and migration* (California: University of California Press, 1994); Kavita Datta *et al*, 'Men on the Move: Narratives of Migration and Work among Low-Paid Migrant Men in London', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 10.8 (2009), 853–873.

¹⁷⁴ Marjo Rouvoet, Melanie Eijberts and Halleh Ghorashi, 'Identification Paradoxes and Multiple Belongings: The Italian Migrants in the Netherlands', *Social Inclusion*, 5.1 (2017), 105–116.

¹⁷⁵ Francesco Ricatti, *Italians in Australia. History, Memory, Identity*, p. 49.

and Enzo Merler's exploration of the 'narratives of illness' of the Italian workers from the asbestos mines of Wittenoom, Australia).¹⁷⁶

The way that migrants working practices are represented by institutions is also notable, where numerous studies of institutions such as the newsprint media craft narratives that portray migrants in a more accommodating or less welcoming light – Ilaria Serra and Peter Vellon's explorations of the representations of Italian migrants in American newspapers are useful insights into how American society interpreted the growing presence of Italians and used the media to influence public opinion.¹⁷⁷ These narratives, also present in Laurie Brand's 2010 study, note the dynamics of how a dominant group marginalizes or silences groups who, 'for whatever reason, do not fit the characteristics or acquiesce in the regime's definition of "the people"'.¹⁷⁸

In sum, these considerations prove useful when assessing the experiences of Italians in Wales. Newspapers are commonly studied in historical investigations such as Marco Giudici's or Bruna Chezzi's to demonstrate anti-Italianism (particularly during the Second World War) or the defence of Italians (during the 1950s).¹⁷⁹ The contradiction between the two positions reminds of how the changing representation of migrants directly affected their experience in host countries and had real-world implications, such as the stirring up of anti-Italian sentiment during the Second World War culminating in rioting outside Italian cafes. The thesis takes this thread and explores representations of Italians in English-language newspapers in Wales, providing another example of the inclusion/exclusion dynamic at the heart of Italians' experiences in Wales during the twentieth century.

In the context of Italian migration studies, attention to the narrative practices of Italians abounds, but these largely focus on the cultural practices of Italians or the quest to define the historical narrative of a diasporic community. Scholars such as Wendy

¹⁷⁶ Ingrid Løland, 'Negotiating paradise lost: Refugee narratives of pre-war Syria – A discursive approach to memory, metaphors and religious identifications', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23,5, (2020), 749–767; Francesca Cappelletto and Enzo Merler, 'Perceptions of health hazards in the narratives of Italian mine workers at an Australian asbestos mine (1943–1966)', *Social Science & Medicine*, 56.5 (2003), 1047–1059.

¹⁷⁷ Peter Vellon, *A great conspiracy against our race – Italian immigrant newspapers and the construction of whiteness in the early 20th century*; Ilaria Serra, *The Imagined Immigrant: Images of Italian Emigration to the United States between 1890 and 1924*.

¹⁷⁸ Laurie A. Brand, 'National Narratives and Migration: Discursive Strategies of Inclusion and Exclusion in Jordan and Lebanon', *International Migration Review*, 44.1 (2018), 78–110.

¹⁷⁹ Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*, pp. 48–57; Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity'.

Ugolini, Anne-Marie Fortier, and Liz Wren-Owens debate what is meant by a ‘Welsh-Italian’ narrative or a ‘British-Italian,’ with their works sketching out the contours of what defines the historical experience of a community.¹⁸⁰ Narratives are used to chart the extents of belonging or exclusion to contemporary communities, from Flavia Gasperetti’s exploration of how food narratives evoked a sense of belonging to the Italian female textile workers in England, to Wendy Ugolini’s exploration of how second-generation Scottish-Italians over the twentieth century articulated a ‘sense of exclusion’.¹⁸¹ Giudici’s own use links narratives, Italian cultural practices, and the notion of inclusivity: these are ‘narratives of enhancement’ that look at the way Italians are depicted as making positive contributions to Welsh society, primarily through the Italian café-connection.¹⁸²

Additionally, there is enhanced interest in narratives regarding the experience of Italians during the Second World War, from Rachel Pistol’s analysis of ‘narratives of internment’ to Terri Colpi’s exploration of the evolution of the Arandora Star narrative.¹⁸³ The latter also pays attention to the narrative dynamics of whose voices are represented, with Colpi arguing that the ‘cohesive bonding capability’ of the Arandora Star narratives and the ‘powerful release’ when it emerged in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century led to the ‘engulfment’ of marginalised voices.¹⁸⁴ What these studies have in common is that they engage with what is meant to belong to the Italian communities of Britain, how important historical events should be recalled, and whose experiences are recounted.

There is also a growing focus on how the historical narrative is shaped by dominant voices within the community, and these are used as a means to offer counter-narratives regarding historical recollections about the Italian community, and works such as Elizabeth Wren-Owens’ interrogate the processes of ‘who can remember for a

¹⁸⁰ Wendy Ugolini, ‘Weaving Italian Experience into the British Immigration Narrative’, *Migrant Britain. Histories and Historiographies: Essays in Honour of Colin Holmes*, eds. Jennifer Craig-Norton, Christhard Hoffmann, Tony Kushner (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 117–127; Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*; Elizabeth Wren-Owens, ‘Remembering fascism. Polyphony and its absence in contemporary Italian-Scottish and Italian-Welsh narrative’; Liz Wren-Owens, ‘The delayed emergence of Italian Welsh narratives, or class and the commodification of ethnicity.’

¹⁸¹ Flavia Gasperetti, ‘Italian women migrants in post-war Britain. The case of textile workers’; Wendy Ugolini, ‘“Spaghetti Lengths in a Bowl?” Recovering Narratives of Not “Belonging” Amongst the Italian Scots’.

¹⁸² Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory, and Identity’, p. 313.

¹⁸³ Rachel Pistol, ‘I can’t remember a more depressing time but I don’t blame anyone for that’; Terri Colpi, ‘Chaff in the Winds of War?’; Derek Duncan, ‘Ill-apparent: Things in the Wake of the Arandora Star’, *Mobility and Material Culture*, eds. Chiara Giuliani and Kate Hodgson (London: Routledge, 2022).

¹⁸⁴ Terri Colpi, ‘Chaff in the Winds of War?’, pp. 400–1.

community, which voices are privileged and whether other narratives are allowed to emerge or are repressed in order to create a cohesive means of remembering'.¹⁸⁵ The ongoing debate about who 'speaks' for a community directly influences her research. This concern is also present in studies that explore the largest waves of Italian migration to specific areas in Britain, and the growing recognition of the need to adopt a translocal approach that links localities rather than nations.¹⁸⁶ Together, these works suggest a growing need to diversify from what is meant by Italian migration to Wales during the twentieth century by paying less attention to their Italianness, and more attention to other factors. Given the strength and quantitative scale of migration from certain areas of Italy to others in Britain, the studies challenge how regional and even local clusters have become associated with what is understood as Italian migration to the country. In response to this, the thesis intentionally moves away from a reading that focuses exclusively on the entrepreneurial Italians from Bardi in South Wales, privileging Italians from diverse locations such as Ferrara, Ornavasso, Torre del Greco, Terni, and Genova. These open a space for alternative reflections outside of the largest nodes of migration, creating a heterogeneous reading of Italian migration to the country.

What is thus under-represented is an investigation of how narratives about the working practices of Italian migrants in Britain display insights into aspects of identity formation and integration. A potential explanation for this can be found in Jennifer Burns' analysis of migration literature, where she notes that:

[l]abour is one of the crucial relations that migrant subjects establish with their new homelands and, in many cases, one of the most profound reasons which drive and shape their trajectories and experiences of migrations. Labour is not always thematised as such in migrant narratives: however, it is often there, in the foreground or in the background, as a presence or as an absence, with very different connotations (from exploitation to emancipation), concealed by more powerful tropes and motifs such as home, food, and language.¹⁸⁷

Burns' quote provides a key consideration about how, despite the plethora of studies that use oral history interviews to capture the experiences and memories about Italian migration to Britain, very few centre their analyses exclusively on the theme of work. Even fewer have used a narrative approach to explore the historical experiences of the

¹⁸⁵ Elizabeth Wren-Owens, 'Remembering fascism. Polyphony and its absence in contemporary Italian-Scottish and Italian-Welsh narrative', p. 74.

¹⁸⁶ Terri Colpi, 'Chaff in the Winds of War?', p. 394.

¹⁸⁷ Jennifer Burns, *Migrant Imaginaries* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), p. 14.

community outside of the war. Jack Crangle's 2023 study provides an insight into an alternative aspect of Italian migrants' experience in Northern Ireland throughout the twentieth century, identifying the 'narratives of struggle' regarding the families' 'poor beginnings as an impulse for migration', and how these are 'cemented in the community's collective construction.'¹⁸⁸ However, as with many of the other studies identified above, these are largely focused on the testimonies of Italian café keepers, rather than being explored as a general framework for Italian migration to Britain in general.

Drawing together the various strands, it is evident that there are significant gaps that can be filled in the historical narrative of Italian migration to Britain. Academic literature has proposed different narrative structures and how oral sources provide insights into senses of belonging and expressing Italian values, but these are largely focused on the narratives of the refreshment industry. This predisposition also is clear for wartime narratives, which be divided into the café traders who found themselves on the *Arandora Star* or were interned. This is at the detriment of other working sectors, as well as from voices outside of the dominant canon, e.g., from other areas of Italy who were under-represented (such as the Piciniscani in Wales, or Italian female café keepers). More can be done as well to study narratives *about* migration and the rhetorical strategies used by Welsh society to represent Italian workers, particularly outside of the Second World War. These are considerations that I deal with throughout the various chapters, where the narrative techniques from various working sectors are used to reveal how Italian migrants lose and gain agency ('narratives of loss and growth'; 'prisoner of war narratives') and challenge the dominant narratives by focusing on alternative experiences (e.g., Italian female traders, or early café traders).

¹⁸⁸ Jack Crangle, 'The Italian Community', p. 72.

CHAPTER ONE

Beyond the Bracchis: Alternative Perspectives on the Working Experiences of the Men and Women from the Italian Refreshment Industry (1880s – 1945)

1. Introduction

In a 2021 BBC Radio Wales programme entitled *The Last of the Bracchis*, the Welsh-Italian journalist Elena Cresci investigated the decline of a trade that had once dominated the Welsh socio-economic and cultural landscape. Describing the situation of the Italian café industry in Wales that her family had also worked in when they emigrated from Bardi, Cresci notes:

If you ask anyone in Wales over a certain age about their favourite Italian café or Bracchi, the memories come flooding back. [...] We all have our own personal connection with the Bracchis. [...] There was a time when every village and town in Wales had at least one Italian cafe, but today only a handful of the originals remain. Why do they still hold such a warm place in our hearts? And in an age of café culture, why have the Bracchis struggled to survive? Behind the face of shop windows, there are often life stories of tragedy, tension, and most of all, triumph.¹⁸⁹

Since their first opening in the latter years of the nineteenth century, the refreshment sector in Wales came to be dominated by Italians offering coffee culture to the inhabitants of Wales. As Cresci's quote suggests, the eponymous Bracchi cafe industry extended throughout Wales and was considered a vital part of 'every village and town in Wales'. More recently, media documentaries such as Cresci's, and museum exhibitions, have celebrated and recorded the impact of these businesses. They are feted as a 'great legacy of Wales' industry past' whose 'thriving businesses [...] have become part of the fabric of the communities they have served for generations', a place where 'lives were mapped out amongst copious amounts of tea, coffee and steamed pies.'¹⁹⁰ There is general consensus that the café industry was started by Giacomo Bracchi, an Italian café owner who settled in the Rhondda Valley in the county of Glamorgan in the late 19th century. In opening

¹⁸⁹ 'The Last of the Bracchis', BBC Radio Wales, 30th August 2021, emphasis my own.

¹⁹⁰ Nick Servini; David Prince, 'The legendary families who ran Wales' Italian cafes', *Wales Online*, 6th May 2022, <<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/nostalgia/legendary-familys-who-ran-wales-23865337>>, [last accessed 13th May 2022].

what has been described as the ‘first Italian café and ice cream shop in the country’, Bracchi would ‘pass into the annals of Welsh history as a trailblazer.’¹⁹¹

From an academic perspective, the majority of studies investigating Italian migration to Wales have analysed this prominent industry from a variety of perspectives. These range from the positive cultural contribution that these industries had in shaping Wales, to the sense of loss afflicted on the Italian community following the internment of Italian longstanding residents in Wales, amongst them numerous café owners, during the Second World War.¹⁹² The links between Wales and Italy, and those between the descendants of café owners and their entrepreneurial ancestors, have also been studied at great length, homing in on aspects of hybrid identity and transnational practices carried out by these families (as has been discussed in the literature review of this thesis).¹⁹³

The history of the evolution of the Bracchi cafe trade, constructed out of the various testimonies that appraise the impact of the businesses and the workers, has tended to celebrate the work of entrepreneurial Italian men and their families who opened café trades according to the model proposed by Giacomo Bracchi.¹⁹⁴ However, much work remains done to uncover the history of the business, particularly concerning the origins of the trade and the working experiences of women. Accordingly, this chapter sets itself apart from existing studies of the Italian refreshment industry in Wales through its focus on two unstudied phenomena: the working practices of Italians at the infancy of the trade in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the working practices of Italian women in these businesses.

This chapter is composed of five sections that explore the existence of alternative narratives from the refreshment industry. The first section provides initial historical

¹⁹¹ ‘The story of the Bracchi – when the Italians arrived in Wales’, *Nation Cymru*, 10th July 2021, <https://nation.cymru/culture/the-story-of-the-bracchi-when-the-italians-arrived-in-wales/> [last accessed 28th August 2023]; Emyr Edwards, *Bracchi* (1996), trans. from the original Welsh version by the author, music by Carol Parry Jones; ‘Ice cream, rugby, and a night at the opera’, *Wales.com* <<https://www.wales.com/about/culture/wales-and-italy>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; ‘Glamorganshire’, *Counties of Wales*, BBC Two, 13th November 2003; *Ciao Charlie Rossi*, BBC 2, 25th August 1986.

¹⁹² Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity’; Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*, 1920s–2010s; Liz Wren-Owens, ‘The delayed emergence of Italian Welsh narratives, or class and the commodification of ethnicity?’.

¹⁹³ Emanuela Bianchera, Robin Mann & Sarah Harper, ‘Transnational mobility and cross-border family life cycles: A century of Welsh-Italian migration’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*; Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity’.

¹⁹⁴ Joel Denker, ‘Italians in Wales. I Scream, You Scream: Italian Peddlers and Coal Miners’, *Food Passages*, <<http://www.foodpassages.com/italians-in-wales/>> [last accessed 28th August 2023].

contextualisation that documents the push and pull factors that stimulated Italian migration to Wales and the rise of the Italian catering industry from the 1880s to 1939. The second section challenges the epic historical narrative that situates Giacomo Bracchi as the pioneer of the Italian-run catering industry in Wales. Through archival research and oral interviews conducted by myself with Helen Way and Alan Edwards, fifth-generation descendants of early Italian traders, the analysis uncovers how the contribution of Italians in the sector actually predated the opening of the first Bracchi café in the late 1880s. It explores the reasons for the dominance of the narrative of Giacomo Bracchi and possible motives for the relative neglect of the other stories. In so doing, this section highlights the narrative strategies used in oral history interviews, TV documentaries, company websites, and newspaper articles by the descendants of Italian traders to recount the origins of the refreshment industry. It also shines a light on histories from outside of the dominant narrative by including alternative trades or locations outside of the area where Italian traders started businesses in larger numbers.

The third section focuses on the experiences of the early pioneers and situates them in the context of a highly religious Non-Conformist Wales under the Temperance movement where national campaigning groups advocated openly for teetotalism and the protection of Christian morals. This section draws attention to a series of tropes present in English-language newspapers such as *The Cambria Daily Leader*, *Llais Llafur*, and the *Rhondda Leader* about the Italian café industry at the time that were used to construct an anti-Italian narrative. Said tropes include the supposed irreligiosity of the Italian workers and the cultural differences between them and their Welsh clients.

The fourth section engages with entrepreneurial women and their family histories in the cafe industry. It explores the foundational role that these women had in developing their family businesses before the Second World War and the representation of these women in the stories of their descendants. I draw here on oral history interviews and personal communication between myself and three Welsh-Italian descendants living in Wales whose families worked in the café industry: Anita Arcari, Paulette Pelosi, and John Lusardi. These family histories are used as case studies to illustrate the narrative strategies to embed their ancestors in the history of twentieth-century Wales and reference their individual strength and ability in managing cafes. A focus on the way that these entrepreneurial Italian women are situated heroically in local histories, decide to migrate and run a café, and play a crucial role in the day-to-day activity of the business

thus rewrites how Italian women café traders have typically been portrayed. Rather than being neglected *in lieu* of testimonies constructed from a male perspective, the section foregrounds the important contributions and unique experiences of women in the sector.

The final section investigates the narrative strategies used in oral history interviews concerning Italian women between 1940 and 1941. This period coincides with a return of anti-Italian rhetoric that depicted Italian male and female traders as subversive elements of society due to the impact of the Second World War. In order to provide a counter-narrative to the newspaper articles containing said rhetoric, I employ oral history interviews with three descendants from the Welsh-Italian café traders to study how the testimonies regarding female café traders represent their experiences of working in the industry during the Second World War. I argue that a unifying feature of the family histories of Paulette Pelosi (Swansea), Nick Antoniazzi (Bangor) and André d'Ambra (London), whose families continued to work after the internment of male family members, is their use of a narrative structure based on the dichotomy between loss and growth. These testimonies reveal themes of displacement, resistance, and collective unity in response to the shifting perception of Italian traders in Wales at this time.

The thread that runs through the chapter, therefore, is the study of the different narratives regarding the refreshment industry. In the light of a dominant historical narrative constructed around a pioneering individual from Bardi whose successful café trade would lead to an unproblematic and successful integration of Italians until the Second World War, this chapter posits alternative perspectives. The analysis' focus in the second, fourth and fifth sections (the origins of the refreshment industry and testimonies of women before and during the Second World War) function as a counternarrative for the anti-Italian discourse anticipated in the first section and investigated in the third section. They also offer a valuable insight into the self-representation of Italian migrants in Wales by focusing on neglected perspectives, especially in the case of women.

2. The Origins of the Italian Refreshment Industry in Wales

2.1. Italian Migration to Wales

The journey of Italians to Wales in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been well-documented. Terri Colpi notes that the first Italians to arrive travelled to London and then progressed across Britain in search of new commercial opportunities.¹⁹⁵ The South Wales coalfield had undergone rapid industrialisation, triggering economic growth, modernisation, and increased migration over the latter half of the nineteenth century.¹⁹⁶ Wales was also a significant trading partner with other nations; throughout this period, ships exported coal to countries such as Italy from Cardiff, Swansea, and Barry.¹⁹⁷ Colin Hughes also claims that timber from Bardi, Emilia Romagna, was used as pit props in South Wales coal mines, although this has since been disputed by Bruna Chezzi who rightly points out that Bardi's remoteness would have made this unlikely.¹⁹⁸ Regardless, a direct economic link was formed in this period between Wales and Italy, and the fortunes of this industry are thought to have attracted the first wave of Italian traders in this period and their subsequent spread in Wales.

Many Italians who came to Wales to work in the industry originated from the rural communities surrounding Bardi (Parma) and Picinisco (Frosnion). Both were rural communities afflicted by relatively challenging economic conditions. The *mezzadria* (sharecropping) system – whereby landowners would hire casualised labour to work and live on their land in exchange for a fixed proportion of crop – reduced the opportunities for poorer Italians in both areas. Sharecropping has been since identified as obstructing national progress, preventing investment in land, and limiting the number of opportunities for socio-economic advancement for rural workers themselves.¹⁹⁹ Economic stagnation in rural areas was also caused by high taxation imposed after Italian Unification, with measures such as the grain tax of 1869 introduced as a means to finance the army or public infrastructure investments.²⁰⁰ These measures disproportionately hit agricultural communities who had not modernised or who depended on traditional forms of income, such as farming. The combination, then, of a high tax system, worsening living conditions, and a landowning system that favoured

¹⁹⁵ Terri Colpi, *The Italian Factor*, p. 57.

¹⁹⁶ Brinley Thomas, 'The Migration of Labour into the Glamorganshire Coalfield', *Economica*, 30, (1930), 275–294.

¹⁹⁷ 'Italian Consulate in Wales 1896–1939', GA, D938.

¹⁹⁸ Colin Hughes, *Lemon, Lime and Sarsaparilla*, pp. 17–18; Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*, p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ John Foot, *Modern Italy* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 117–118.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

wealthy owners, constituted key factors that prompted emigration after Italian Unification.

Historical analyses conducted by Italian scholars studying provincial migration patterns from Parma and Frosinone have also illustrated how workers from rural communities such as Bardi or Picinisco were accustomed to migrating for seasonal work before they began emigrating in larger numbers after Italian Unification. Corrado Truffelli's study on the history of migration in the province of Parma points out that 'centinaia di migranti dalle valli del Ceno e del Lecca si recassero a Cremona' (hundreds of migrants from the Ceno and Lecca Valleys would descend on Cremona) to work as of 1588.²⁰¹ Similarly, as Maria Rosa Protasi attests, the body of workers from Picinisco and Frosinone were also involved 'in forme di mobilità stagionale a corto raggio concentrate nel periodo delle festività natalizie e aventi come meta Roma e altre località dello Stato Pontificio.'²⁰² These comments suggest that migration was historically used by residents of Bardi and Picinisco as a means to earn income in response to difficult economic conditions. This practice to move for work was transformed with the advent of enhanced transportation into mobility further away from home, with Bardesans and Piciniscans emigrating in increasing numbers to countries such as Switzerland, France, America, and Britain after the 1870s.

The early migration of Italians to Wales towards the end of the nineteenth century was facilitated, as Marco Giudici notes, by the creation of a 'multitude of small family-based migration chains' and networks that linked two localities in the area.²⁰³ Chain migration has been understood as 'the movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous migrants.'²⁰⁴ The first Italians to arrive in the country were typically young men, as illustrated in the censuses below:²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Corrado Truffelli, 'Dal girovaghismo allo spopolamento. Aspetti dell'emigrazione parmense', *Storia di Parma. I caratteri originali*, ed. Domenico Vera (Parma: Monte Università Parma, 2008), p. 481.

²⁰² 'in forms of seasonal mobility nearby, especially during the winter months, and typically to destinations such as Rome or other municipalities in the Papal States' Maria Rosa Protasi, *Emigrazione ed immigrazione nella storia del Lazio, dall'Ottocento ai giorni nostri* (Viterbo: Sette Città Editore, 2011), translation my own.

²⁰³ Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', p. 38.

²⁰⁴ J. S. Macdonald and L. D. Macdonald, 'Chain Migration: Ethnic Neighbourhood and Social Networks', *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, 42 (1964), 82–96.

²⁰⁵ Colin Hughes, *Lemon, Lime and Sarsaparilla*, pp. 136–7.

TABLE 3: Italian-born men and women in Wales between 1871 and 1921

Year of census	Number of male Italian-born people in Wales	Number of female Italian-born people in Wales	Total
1871	220	23	243
1881	543	37	37
1891	510	57	567
1901	811	115	927
1911	1055 (+30 naturalised British citizens)	240 (+9 naturalised British citizens)	1295
1921	1105 (+ 59 naturalised British citizens)	426 (+33 naturalised British citizens)	1533

Once they had settled in the country, their families, friends, and neighbours would migrate to join them in Wales. This type of migration could also be defined as translocal chain migration, in which ‘emplaced communities become extended, via the geographical mobility of their inhabitants, across particular sending and destination contexts.’²⁰⁶ In demographic terms, this translated into the development of migration networks that connected Bardi (PA) with the Rhondda Valley and surrounding area of Glamorganshire, and the Swansea area with Picinisco (FR).²⁰⁷

On occasion, employers in the larger café trades would turn to an informal recruitment scheme under the *padrone* system to locate potential workers. A *padrone* was a notable member of the Italian diasporic communities responsible for facilitating migration to the country by assisting prospective migrants as they settled in their new environments. Not

²⁰⁶ David Conradson and Deirdre McKay, ‘Translocal Subjectivities: Mobility, Connection, Emotion’, *Mobilities*, 2.2 (2007), 167–174.

²⁰⁷ Anita Arcari, ‘Introduction, The Welsh-Italians and Immigration’, *People’s Collection Wales*, <<https://www.peoplescollection.wales/story/1364821>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

only were *padroni* responsible for helping Italians with bureaucratic procedures, but they also actively searched for potential recruits on behalf of employers.²⁰⁸ However, the system has historically been viewed as exploitative by external society for the cruel conditions imposed upon the workers recruited by *padroni*.²⁰⁹ Studies on the British-Italian community have already focussed on the role of the *padrone* in the late Victorian period.²¹⁰ The presence of *padroni* was also noted in Wales by Colin Hughes, who states that the restrictive migration laws of 1905 reinforced the dependence on the *padrone* system in Wales, allowing them to 'impose rigid adherence to the terms of employment, and exercise considerable power over the lives of those who worked for him.'²¹¹

A common strategy employed by *padroni* was to recruit adolescent workers for available posts, typically from the same area of origin. The censuses of 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921 would confirm that the *padrone* system was operating over these three decades. The number of adolescent boys working in the industry rose significantly from three in 1891 to 136 by 1921.²¹² While it is impossible to determine from censuses whether the individuals were recruited via the *padrone* scheme, it can be argued that the frequent practice of hiring adolescents from different families residing within the same geographic area can be an indication of this recruitment practice. This is most evident for the larger businesses whose staff were composed of several underage workers from Bardi, such as the Bracchi shop in Aberdare (6 members of staff aged under 18 out of a workforce of 12) or the Rabaiottis of Llanelli (6 out of 10 in 1921).²¹³

In sum, a combination of factors can be ascertained regarding the first wave of Italian migration to Wales. The socioeconomic conditions in their home regions, combined with prospects for greater ones available in Wales – as evidenced by recruiters / *padroni* and their stories evoking the riches of the country, played a significant role in facilitating migration. This contributed to bringing a new generation of Italians ready to work in the nascent Italian refreshment industry.

²⁰⁸ George Pozzetta, *Immigrant Institutions: The Organization of Immigrant Life* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1991), p. 11.

²⁰⁹ Gunther Peck, 'Reinventing Free Labor: Immigrant Padrones and Contract Laborers in North America, 1885–1925', *The Journal of American History*, 83.3 (1996), 848–871.

²¹⁰ Lucio Sponza, *Italian Immigrants in Nineteenth-century Britain: Realities and images*.

²¹¹ Colin Hughes, *Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla*, p. 41.

²¹² GBGRO, *Census of England and Wales, 1891*; GBBRO, *Census of England and Wales, 1901*; GBGRO, *Census of England and Wales, 1911*.

²¹³ GBGBRO, *Census of England and Wales, 1921*.

2.2. The Foundation of the Italian-run café industry in Wales

By the 1890s, the Italian-run refreshment industry found fertile ground in the mining valleys of Glamorganshire, when young men from the communes of Bardi, Emilia-Romagna or Picinisco, Lazio opened the first cafes in the area having migrated due to the economic prospects of the rapidly urbanising south Walian coalfields. The well-cited narrative of the origin of the Italian café industry stems from here, where the newly settled *Bardigiani* are said to have noticed the lack of a viable service sector for the miners who would work long shifts – often from early morning to midnight.²¹⁴ For Italians working in temporary, less remunerated jobs such as organ grinding or hawking, the prospect of opening a café of their own was seen as an opportunity for socio-economic enhancement. The cafe model would also fill a notable gap in terms of the model of socialisation in late-Victorian mining communities in Wales, which revolved predominantly around the trichotomy of work-home-church.

As has been documented in the literature review of this thesis, the decision to open these cafes was seen as an organic decision that could enhance the social fabric of the local communities. The early configurations of the Italian-run refreshment bars and cafés capitalised on a series of fortuitous economic circumstances such as an abundance of coal or cheap rent, all of which compensated for the lack of significant financial capital.²¹⁵ According to the 1891 census, some Italians worked in the houses where they were lodging with their landlords.²¹⁶ In other cases, wealthy families and landowners from Italy loaned entrepreneurs the investment needed to open a café, or money could be loaned from local banks.²¹⁷ There is anecdotal evidence that suggests that a transnational business model was formed whereby entrepreneurs from Bardi would buy cafés and rent them to other works for a period of twelve months, take a cut of the profits, and then take over the business after a year had passed.²¹⁸ The cost-effective nature of the start-up and the subsequent service provided ensured for the rapid reproduction of the cafes between the 1890s and 1910s (from 9 to 75). To this end, the financial capital required was

²¹⁴ Colin Hughes, *Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla*, p. 65.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.

²¹⁶ GBGRO, 1891 Census.

²¹⁷ Colin Hughes, *Lime, Lemon and Sarsaparilla*, p. 37

²¹⁸ See, for example, Interview with Angelo Conti, 25th October 2021.

typically received as a loan from investors in Italy or from British banks or was the result of accumulated savings earned from organ grinding as they travelled towards Britain.²¹⁹

The 1891 census for England and Wales provides an insight into the extent of the café trade outside of Cardiff. In Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare, the Berni and the Bracchis family owned the largest café businesses outside of Cardiff and employed eight people composed of family members, fellow Italians, and Welsh citizens.²²⁰ That is not to suggest that these were the only Italian enterprises that were operational at the time. Italian ice cream vendors were present in many of the large urban centres of the South, including Neath, Cardiff, and Swansea.²²¹

After 1891, the Italian-run café industry proliferated and increasing numbers of Italians sought similar opportunities to expand into the trade. These shifts are noted in Table Four²²²:

TABLE 4: Italians working in the refreshment industry in Wales in 1891, 1901 and 1911

	1891	1901	1911

²¹⁹ GBGRO, *Census of England and Wales*, 1891, 1901, 1911.

²²⁰ GBGRO, *Census of England and Wales*, 1891.

²²¹ A review of the census data indicates there were 6 – 8 businesses in Cardiff (Reggonico, Nolcini, Seneparti, Rebori, Bafico, Rizzi, plus various vendors), 2 in Swansea (Ferri, Cashimo, Mazzo) and 1 in Neath (Franchilli) in 1891. GBGRO, *Census of England and Wales*, 1891.

²²² Great Britain General Register Office (GBGRO), *Census of England and Wales, 1891* (London: HMSO, 1891); Great Britain General Register Office (GBGRO), *Census of England and Wales, 1901* (London: HMSO, 1901); Great Britain General Register Office (GBGRO), *Census of England and Wales, 1911* (London: HMSO, 1911).

Type of business	Number of businesses recorded	Number of workers documented in census	Number of businesses recorded	Number of workers documented in census	Number of businesses recorded	Number of workers documented in census
Confectioner / baker	5	5	6	24	25	73
Ice cream vendor / hawkers	7	10	12	43	12	43
Ice cream shop / manufacturer	2	11	2	9	10	42
Refreshment housekeeper / Temperance housekeeper	1	1	3	10	28	107
Coffee shop	1	6	/	/	/	/
Restaurants	/	/	2	3	2	7
Fish and chip shops	/	/	6	39	11	31
Total	16	33	31	128	88	303

The census data provided demonstrates the rapid growth of the refreshment industry from 1891 to 1911. The figures retrieved from the 1891, 1901, and 1911 censuses for Wales illustrate that the number of industries documented increased exponentially from 16 in 1891 to around 88 twenty years later. At the same time, the number of Italian employees rose almost tenfold over the same period. The period also corresponds to a diversification in the business model beyond the provision of ice cream and coffee, such as the offering of fish-and-chips, to gain a competitive advantage.

There is also evidence that Italians diversified their business model in line with larger political and cultural shifts. By this, the growth in the number of Temperance houses towards the end of the nineteenth century corresponded with the rise of the Temperance

Movement, a religious anti-alcohol and pro-morality movement that was particularly notable in Wales. The decision by Italians to open 'Temperance houses' instead of Italian cafes can thus be read as an attempt to provide a trading opportunity that complied with the norms expected under Temperance and Anti-Sunday trading. Thus, the data provides a holistic overview of the rapid growth of a business that, before 1891, was mostly limited to Cardiff. It also indicates the changing fortunes of a trade that, until 1939, would continue to develop.

3. The Italian Refreshment Industry in Wales before Bracchi

It is generally accepted that Giacomo Bracchi opened the first Italian café in Tonypany towards the end of the 1880s and beginning of the 1890s.²²³ A wide range of sources documenting the growth of the Italian café trade in Wales, from oral history interviews conducted by various researchers, other academic investigations, or media projects, cast the entrepreneur as a pioneer who was the first to open a café in Wales. These are typically organised around the epic narrative of Giacomo Bracchi, an example of which can be ascertained in oral interviews conducted by myself with Marco Orsi, a third-generation Welsh-Italian and owner of the Café Royale in Pontypridd:

Bracchi was definitely the first who came from Bardi. And the story goes, it's a well-known story [...] that the first Italian Bracchi came over to work in the mine, found that when he got here that [...] the local populace needed to be refreshed, and he started selling ice cream, then started coffee, tea [and] Bovril in one of the valleys in Wales. And then it just mushroomed from there.²²⁴

Similar epic narratives of entrepreneurial Italians who became founding fathers of the industry are present in the family histories of the Welsh-Italians who came over in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, where stories narrate how families are said to have 'walked' to Wales and opened a business (see Introduction of this thesis). In the case of Giacomo Bracchi, the epic narrative is constructed around the Italian's odyssey to Wales before his realisation that the local populace needed refreshment. From this act, Bracchi is portrayed as a heroic figure whose act of serving food and drink was the first

²²³ Marco Giudici, *'Migration, Memory and Identity: Italians and Nation-Building in Wales, 1940–2010'*.

²²⁴ Marco Orsi, interviewed by Gareth White, 27 October 2020.

step towards the development of a business empire. However, while it is important to acknowledge Bracchi's role as one of the first Italians to set up a successful business model that was replicated across Wales, it is now possible to assert that, even though Giacomo Bracchi undoubtedly had a fundamental role in shaping the business model, he was not the first Italian to operate in the sector.

As evidenced by the 1881 census, Italian refreshment businesses were documented before Bracchi arrived in the country, with three enterprises operating in Cardiff in this period (Bafico, Rebori, Nolcini).²²⁵ These early establishments were managed by wealthier Italians, and thus differed from the more ordinary model of the Bracchis that would become prominent later on by selling homemade ice-cream, cappuccino and British classics such as steam pies to members of the local community. Instead, the early establishments of Cardiff offered luxurious products to more affluent members of Welsh society and quickly established themselves in prominent central locations in the city centre. An example of these early businesses registered in the 1881 census was the Nolcini confectionery shop, which by 1893 was described in the following manner in the 1893 business catalogue *The Ports of the Bristol Channel – Wales and the West*:

Under Mr. Nolcini's vigorous and skilful control the business has already shown extraordinary developing tendencies, notwithstanding that it has always been the leading concern of its own under his kind and the regime of his immediate predecessor. The premises occupied are very extensive, and in every point of character and situation precisely adapted to the requirements of a very brisk business. They consist of a large and substantial four-storeyed building, the ground floor of which is admirably appointed as a high-class pastrycook's shop, and at all times presents a particularly inviting appearance from the elegant display made of plain and fancy breads, wedding, birthday, and ornamental cakes, for which the firm enjoy [sic] an unsurpassed reputation, and command a trade which extends to all parts of the Principality, and even beyond blancmanges, jellies, and other table delicacies, superior pastry and confectionery, British wines, and conserved fruit, much of the latter of which is grown at Mr. Nolcini's beautiful residence and estates, the Villa Pasatempo [sic], Lake of Como, Gravedona, in Italy. [...] The trade controlled is one of very considerable volume, extending to all parts of the town and its surroundings, and being principally cultivated amongst the resident aristocracy and gentry; and all its affairs are administered in a manner that is well calculated to preserve all the creditable traditions of the house and to sustain it in the high public favour which it has so long and so worthily enjoyed.²²⁶

The references here to the wealth of the Nolcini family, with their villa on Lake Como, also appear in the description of their premises in Cardiff, where the culinary provisions

²²⁵ Great Britain General Register Office (GBGRO), *Census of England and Wales, 1881* (London: HMSO, 1881).

²²⁶ *The Ports of the Bristol Channel – Wales and the West*, (London Printing and Engraving Co., 1893).

offered appear more similar to the *pâtisseries* of France. Having opened a confectionery shop in the dockside location of Stuart Street alongside three other Italians from the province of Varese before 1881, the entry for the 1893 business directory provides an overview of how the Nolcinis had already established a successful trade in the city around the same time as Giacomo Bracchi was said to have opened his first shop in Merthyr Tydfil.²²⁷

Also notable for having run a successful refreshment trade in Cardiff is Giovanni Battista Bafico. Originally arriving from Genova in the capital before 1873 with limited resources, Bafico accumulated the social and financial capital required to develop a veritable business empire in the city towards the end of the nineteenth century. Bafico's descendant, fifth-generation Welsh-Italian Helen Way from Cardiff, discussed the growth of the business towards the end of the nineteenth century in an oral interview with myself:

[f]rom there, they started to have businesses in Cardiff, which were confectioners, sort of rooms in hotels, B+Bs, cafes. At the same time also importing goods and selling them in auction houses. And these were Italian goods. [...] At one point, when they started to build the arcades in Cardiff [...] and these would have been brand new Victorian arcades, he would have a premises at one end and a premises at the other.²²⁸

The growth of the Bafico's business empire in Cardiff contrasts notably with the earlier description of having arrived in the city with 'a few pennies in his pocket'. It also challenges the assertion that Bracchi was the trailblazer of the refreshment industry. This is most explicit in the comment regarding the two premises in the prestigious Victorian Arcades constructed in 1887. An additional reference to being the 'first person to manufacture ice and introduce the sale of ice-cream as a luxury in Cardiff' in 1874 further suggests the provision of luxury goods to the wealthier citizens of the capital, with ice cream offered by an Italian trader being recorded two decades before its wider diffusion towards the end of the century.²²⁹ Both examples attest two successful Italian-run refreshment businesses in Wales before the eventual boom in the mining valleys at the beginning of the twentieth century. The fortunes of the Nolcini and Bafico empires appear to have been concentrated solely on Cardiff and eventually disappeared with the passing of their generation and the employment of their children in different occupations,

²²⁷ GBRO, Census of England and Wales, 1881.

²²⁸ Helen Way, interviewed by Gareth White, 7th October 2021.

²²⁹ 'Gave Cardiff Ice-Cream', *Western Mail*, 22nd November 1937.

potentially providing a reason as to why these industries are not remembered as also being pioneers of the refreshment trade.²³⁰

Another sector within the Italian-run catering trade in Wales that was active around the same time as the first Bracchi cafés opened in the Rhondda Valley was the fish and chips industry. Capitalising on the growing enthusiasm for fried fish and chips since its inception in London and Lancashire in the 1860s, the Italian fish and chip trade quickly spread throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland, especially in Glasgow and Edinburgh.²³¹ The early trade primarily consisted in itinerant ice cream vendors who, during the winter, sold fried chips.²³² By the 1880s, one of the first permanent fish and chip shops run by Italians was opened in Newport by Tommaso Vacara, the son of an Italian migrant from Campodonico, Genoa.²³³ Other trades who opened in the 1890s were focused in Newport and were opened by the Feccis and the Grande family.²³⁴

In sum, while it is important to acknowledge the role of Giacomo Bracchi in developing a business model that was applied across Wales in the early twentieth century, attention should be given to the way that these claims are framed. An epic narrative surrounding Bracchi's journey to Wales and the opening of the café industry persists. This runs at the detriment of the other traders who came from other areas such as Vacara and Bafico (Genova) or Nolcini (Gravedona), or those who offered luxurious goods to wealthier citizens, such as the Nolcini family business in Cardiff. The latter in particular contrasts with the popular business model offered by the Bracchis who initially targeted working-class coalfield communities in Glamorgan. Other closely linked explanations for this, as this section has demonstrated, lie in individual circumstances faced by the industries. In the case of the Cardiff-run businesses, the business closures early in the twentieth century meant that they could not capitalise on their successes outside the capital city. Similarly, a widening of the semantic category of the 'Italian café industry' to include other business sectors where refreshment was served, such as the

²³⁰ Helen Way, interviewed by Gareth White, 7th October 2021.

²³¹ John Walton, *Fish and Chips and the British Working Class* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994) pp. 37-38.

²³² Panikos Panayi, *Fish and Chips: A History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), p. 124.

²³³ Alan Edwards, John Alonzi and John Celesti, interviewed by Gareth White, October 29th 2020.

²³⁴ Laura Clements, 'The story of Feccis and the brilliant Italian brothers who own the most famous chippy in Tenby', *Wales Online*, 30th June 2021, < <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink-news/story-feccis-brilliant-italian-brothers-20907040>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; GBGRO, 1891 Census.

fish and chips sector, capture alternative origin stories, such as that of the Vacaras of Newport.

From humble beginnings, the multiple facets of the Italian-run refreshment industry would continue to develop over the course of the twentieth century. However, their rapid expansion was not unproblematic, and traders in Wales in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would encounter their first real obstacle in the form of Temperance and Nonconformism, as the next section will explore.

4. Anti-Italian Trader Discourse in English language newspapers in Wales during the Early Twentieth Century

In her analysis of the Scottish-Italian community, Wendy Ugolini (2004) offers an overview of the representation of Italian migration to Britain throughout the twentieth century.²³⁵ Recent investigations have pointed out that Italians in Britain have been seen as a 'model community' who adapted seamlessly to their new environment.²³⁶ Referring to the Scottish context, Ugolini challenges this assumption by drawing attention to the difficulties Italians faced while attempting to integrate into society. The model used to refer to their immigration, she contests, is one that depicts Italians as 'jolly peasants from sunny Italy giving a rendition of "O Sole Mio"', and in which the Second World War is presented as an 'isolated rupture' that disrupted an otherwise peaceful integration. Ugolini, on the other hand, argues that this interpretation is overly simplistic and 'subtly neglects pre- and post-war incidences of hostility towards Italian immigrants and ignores the wider context of domestic anti-alienism and sectarianism.'²³⁷

Ugolini's reading of the difficulties encountered by Italians in early twentieth-century Britain corresponds to other works that have confirmed the existence of similar obstacles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most notably, Lucio Sponza has already demonstrated how public opinion towards Italians in London hardened in light of four societal issues during the late Victorian period: begging children, organ-grinding,

²³⁵ Wendy Ugolini, 'Internal Enemy Other', p. 142.

²³⁶ Marco Giudici, 'Immigrant narratives and nation-building in a stateless nation: the case of Italians in post-devolution Wales.'

²³⁷ Wendy Ugolini, 'Internal Enemy Other', p. 142.

overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions, and perceived criminality.²³⁸ Referring to the Welsh context, Anne Kershen notes that:

Though the Welsh referred to ‘our Italian friends’, these migrants were not always regarded as such. There were those, such as a witness to the 1903 Royal Commission, who reported that Italian ice creams were made in ‘filthy conditions’, and others who associated Italians with criminality and anarchism. At best, in the years before the First World War, the British attitude towards the Italian community could be described as ambivalent.²³⁹

Kershen’s quote here offers a crucial insight into how certain members of Welsh society viewed Italian traders at the turn of the century. In Wales, there is little evidence that suggests that Italians were subjected to legislative restrictions nor were victims of mass discrimination, although some conflicts did occur during the early late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Isolated incidents of the local court reveal tensions between individual Welsh citizens and Italian traders, some of which culminated in violence.²⁴⁰ Family narratives from Welsh-Italians often include stories of ancestors having to pay fines and encounter obstacles to the trades in this period, from over-zealous police officers to being forced to relocate as the ‘smell of fried food’ displeased local churchgoers. As Alan Edwards, whose ancestor Andrea Vacara emigrated from Genoa and opened a fish and chips shop in Newport, recalls in our oral interview:

They didn’t like the smell. The congregation in Saint Paul’s church apparently objected to the smell of fish... fried fish. And in those days, you could get a petition to get a business closed. This was 1888. And they got a petition [...] for my great grandparents to shut the business. And if they didn’t, they’d get fined one shilling for every day that they kept the business open.²⁴¹

Many of the obstacles faced by Italian traders in this period, as documented by Colin Hughes, stemmed from the perception of the café trade by religious proponents of Welsh Nonconformist society and the Temperance Movement.²⁴² The latter originated in America in the early decades of the nineteenth century, where several factions of the Christian Church campaigned for ‘stricter enforcement of the laws against public

²³⁸ Lucio Sponza, *Italian Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Realities and Images* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), p. 7.

²³⁹ Anne Kershen, ‘Immigrants, Sojourners and Refugees’, *A Companion to Early Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. Chris Wrigley, (Hoboken: Wiley, 2008), 136 – 151, p. 141.

²⁴⁰ See, for example, ‘Italians Disagree: Affray Between Newport Organ Grinders’, *Evening Express*, 10th July 1903; ‘Alleged Assault by Italians’, *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent*, 4th January 1907; ‘Stabbing at Beaumaris: Charge Against an Italian’, *North Wales Express*, 5th October 1906.

²⁴¹ See Alan Edwards, John Alonzi and John Celesti, interviewed by Gareth White, 29th October 2020. See also Chris Moruzzi, interviewed by Gareth White, 29th September 2021; Angelo Conti, interviewed by Gareth White, 1st November 2021; and John Lusardi, interviewed by Gareth White, 3rd November 2021.

²⁴² Colin Hughes, *Lemon, Lime and Sarsaparilla*, pp. 52–59.

intoxication and [...] a reduction in the number of taverns.’²⁴³ In a society where ‘liquor corrupted elections, wife beating, and child abuse were common, and many crimes were committed while the perpetrator was under the influence’ of alcohol, abstinence and temperance were seen as ways to ensure ‘the preservation of the covenant, the salvation of their families, and the spreading of God’s kingdom.’²⁴⁴

From America, similar movements were established in English-speaking countries, first arriving in Holywell, North Wales in March 1832.²⁴⁵ The movement became increasingly popular in Wales over the course of the nineteenth century. Kenneth Morgan notes that, by the 1870s, ‘taking the pledge’ of abstinence ‘became for chapel boys what Bar Mitzvah was for Jews.’²⁴⁶ The late 1870s also marked the arrival in Britain of the Blue Ribbon Movement, a ‘leading force in the Gospel Temperance Movement’ whose members wore blue ribbons ‘to announce that they had signed a pledge to abstain from alcohol.’²⁴⁷ This was deemed as ‘an immediate success and claimed millions of supporters’ in Wales.²⁴⁸

Invigorated by the support of the Blue Ribbon Movement, religious non-conformists in Wales built on the success of the movement by campaigning for legislative interventions built around preserving religious values, with their most successful intervention being that of the passing of the 1881 Sunday Closing Act in Wales.²⁴⁹ Built around the desire to mark the ‘proper observance of the Sabbath’, the act enforced the closure of all public houses on Sundays, with churches being the only place where people could congregate.²⁵⁰ Together, the efforts of the Sunday Closing Act of 1881 and the campaigns against alcohol attempted to mould Welsh society by strengthening Christian values and by eliminating any temptation to deviate. The Temperance Movement and Nonconformity in Wales was dominant throughout the latter decades of the nineteenth

²⁴³ James Rohrer, ‘The Origins of the Temperance Movement: A Reinterpretation’, *Journal of American Studies*, 24.2, (1990), 228 – 235, p. 231.

²⁴⁴ W. J. Rorabaugh, *Prohibition: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 2; James Rohrer, ‘The Origins of the Temperance Movement: A Reinterpretation’, p. 231.

²⁴⁵ W. R. Lambert, ‘The Welsh Sunday Closing Act, 1881’, *Welsh History Review / Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru*, 6 (Jan 1972), 161–189.

²⁴⁶ Kenneth Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880 – 1980*, p. 36.

²⁴⁷ Jack Blocker, David Fahey and Ian Tyrrell, *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: A Global Encyclopedia*, Volume One (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2003), p. 107.

²⁴⁸ Lilian Lewis Shiman, ‘The Blue Ribbon Army: Gospel Temperance in England’, *Historical Society of the Episcopal Church*, 50.4 (1981), 391–408, p. 391.

²⁴⁹ Morgan notes that this marks the first time that a ‘distinct legislative principle’ is applied uniquely to Wales, instead of to the United Kingdom as a whole. See Kenneth Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880 – 1980*, p. 36.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

century, although this began to decline in the early decades of the twentieth century due to a combination of factors such as the upheaval of the First World War and the dwindling number of non-conformists between 1900 and 1930.²⁵¹

As Bruna Chezzi notes, there is little evidence that demonstrates Italian direct support or participation in the Blue Ribbon Movement.²⁵² However, the cafes, fish and chip shops, and Italian bars were the subjects of intense scrutiny on the part of a combative non-conformist society. Even though they did not sell alcohol on their premises, many cafes offered non-alcoholic hot and cold drinks just in case their activities were seen as a threat. Some even classified their premises as ‘Temperance Bars’ rather than cafes, although this was deemed more as a ‘clever commercial manoeuvre’ that allowed them to continue trading as opposed to moral support for the movement.²⁵³

In Britain, the rise of anti-alienist thought – the perception that ‘alien’ migrants constituted a ‘threatening presence’ to society – is another key coordinate that likely shaped some societal attitudes towards Italians.²⁵⁴ Liberal policies regarding migration passed in the 1870s had transformed the country into a ‘haven for political refugees and economic migrants from the Continent’.²⁵⁵ This would swiftly change in the 1880s as mass Jewish immigration to the country introduced suspicion of migration into the political field.²⁵⁶ Successive parties soon began to pursue legislative change along an anti-alienist stance. In the 1890s and 1900s, election campaigns and parliamentary debates were characterised by attempts to enshrine into British legal procedures policies that would limit the extent of migration to the country. By 1905, the Aliens Bill of 1905, the first anti-migration bill, was formally passed in parliament. As a result, as David Cesarani observes, ‘public concern, demonstrations and the anti-alien vote’ were ‘localised’, and anti-alienism had an ‘exaggerated effect’ that was fanned on by members of Conservative civic society wishing to influence public opinion.²⁵⁷ Anti-alienism largely affected Jewish and Black migrants in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century, although some

²⁵¹ D. Ben Rees, ‘Notes on the historical and Sociological Reasons for the Decline in Nonconformity in England and Wales’, *Evangelical Quarterly*, 3 (1979), 163–170.

²⁵² Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*, p. 4.

²⁵³ Lucio Sponza and Arturo Tosi, *A Century of Italian Emigration 1880 – 1980* (Reading: University of Reading, 1993), p. 54.

²⁵⁴ David Cesarani, ‘An Alien Concept? The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society before 1940’, *Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, 11.3 (1992), 24–52, p. 27.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

manifestations of it appear to be directed towards Italians. This is most evident during the Second World War.²⁵⁸ However, my analysis of newspapers such as *Llais Llafur*, *Merthyr Express* or the *Rhondda Leader* demonstrates that said discourse appears sporadically before this.

The socialist-leaning *Llais Llafur* was founded in 1898 and is credited as 'represent(ing) the fusion of socialist journalism' with in-depth knowledge of the South Wales coalfields in the Swansea Valleys.²⁵⁹ *Llais Llafur* was active throughout the 1898 coal strike and gained notoriety by championing miners' rights in the area.²⁶⁰ In the 1914 article 'Italian Traders in Welsh Mining Valleys: Sunday Opening Menace, Effect Upon the Youngsters', the journalist discusses the rise of the café trade in the industrious coalfields. Surprisingly for a paper that defended socialist causes, the article focuses in depth on the supposed immorality of Italian cafe owners rather than a legitimate defence of workers' rights:

A casual visitor to the Rhondda police courts cannot help being struck by the *numerous* Antonios and Dominicos and other Italian names which are called by the court officers. Never a week and never a court goes by without the picturesque cognomens, which conjure up a vision of sunny Italy, cropping up *in profusion*. The question then arises, "What are these Italians doing in the Valley, and what brings them under the ban of the law?" The answers are to be found *in every street and on every day*. Throughout the Valley there are *scores* of Italian refreshment houses where Antonio serves forth cooling ices in summer, warm drinks in winter [...] On Sunday he is as busy, indeed, busier than on Saturday, and the sight of the crowds of youths who *besiege* the door and *crowd* the premises gives ground for serious reflection as to the rising generation's want of regard for the sanctity of the Sabbath [sic].²⁶¹

The journalist immediately draws attention to the quantity of Italians whose activities preoccupied proponents of Welsh religious society, with the article opening with the use of indeterminate quantifiers such as 'numerous' Antonios and Dominicos, 'scores' of Italian refreshment houses, and on 'every' street and on 'every day'. This is also reinforced through the inclusion of the metaphor 'cropping up in profusion'. In so doing, the author gives prominence to the scale of the business in the Valleys area, setting the scene for the suggestion that the trade had become a widespread problem that is present

²⁵⁸ Lucio Sponza, 'The Internment of Italians 1940–1945', *Totally Un-English? Britain's Internment of 'Enemy Aliens' in Two World Wars*, ed. Richard Dove (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2005); Wendy Ugolini, 'Weaving Italian Experience into the British Immigration Narrative'.

²⁵⁹ Martin Wright, *Wales and Socialism: Political Culture and National Identity Before the Great War* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), p. 104. The paper was later renamed as *Labour Voice* in 1915 – 1927, and later the *South Wales Voice* after 1927.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ Italian Traders in Welsh Mining Valleys: Sunday Opening Menace, Effect Upon the Youngsters, *Llais Llafur*, 3rd January 1914. Emphasis my own.

throughout South Wales. As scholars such as Charlotte Taylor and David Cisneros remark, this hyperbolic use of indeterminate quantifiers is a conventional strategy that has historically been employed in newspaper articles globally to modify the perception of migration.²⁶² Of concern to the article writer is also the ‘crowd of youths’ who ‘besiege the door and crowd the premises’, with the use of war vocabulary in ‘besiege’ and ‘crowd’ seeming to connote an attack on traditional values.

Having established the scale, the article focuses on the figure of Antonio, who embodies the typical representation of the Italian trader in the eyes of the writer, in order to highlight the immoral practices of the trade. By personifying the worker in this manner, the journalist attempts to apply a stereotypical image relatable to Italian traders throughout the country. As such, through reference to the various Antonios and Dominicos, there is a failure to recognise the individual nature of each worker. This serves to dehumanise the Italian trader for the reader.

The extract also contains anti-religious imagery that implies perceived distance from Welsh traditional cultural values of Nonconformism. If before, the journalist uses *antonomasia* to portray a stereotypical embodiment of an Italian trader, here he transfigures the Italian into an anti-Christian figure whose working practice destabilises the area in the name of self-prosperity:

The slot machine with prizes or blanks goes far to inculcate a love of gambling. Meanwhile Antonio smiled broadly and grows fat. The application of the ancient and, truth to tell, unsatisfactory Lord’s Day Observance Act is to him a blessing in disguise. The poor widow struggling to maintain herself and family by the tiny shop in an obscure street sells a halfpenny candle or maybe a pennyworth of sweets on Sunday and pays the penalty which closes her door henceforth for ever on Sunday. With even her poor competition removed Antonio, with his well-lighted and spacious premises in the main street, goes on from strength to strength. He educates his sons, purchases houses, invests his surplus, and in the course of comparatively few years returns to the country of his birth a prosperous gentleman.²⁶³

The first image worth noting here is linked to riches and financial wealth. Gambling has historically been condemned by monotheistic religions such as Christianity and interpreted as ‘deviations from the “true creed”’ when consumed in excess.²⁶⁴ The drawing of attention to gambling thus indicates how the working practices of Italians

²⁶² Charlotte Taylor, ‘Metaphors of migration over time’, *Discourse and Society*, 32.4 (2021), 405–413; David Cisneros, ‘Contaminated communities: The metaphor of immigrant as pollutant in media representations of immigration’, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 11.4 (2008), 569–601.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ P. Binde, ‘Gambling and religion: Histories of concord and conflict’, *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 20 (2007), 145–166.

were recast as providing opportunities to sin. It also further reinforces the notion that the profits had been acquired via illegitimate means. This is in contrast to the 'poor competition' of the widow whose inclusion in the anecdote seems to suggest the author's viewpoint that local businesses were being starved of opportunities due to the growing Italian trades.

Additionally, the article evokes other religious imagery for its commentary on the Italian café trade by referring to gluttony and greed when describing Antonio. This further deprives him of his religious identity and presents him as being against Welsh Nonconformist values. By presenting the practice of opening the café on Sundays as a violation that had the potential to corrupt Welsh society through vices, the author employs anti-Italian trader rhetoric in an attempt to limit the success of Antonio's business. It also portrays the distance between Welsh cultural values of non-conformism and those of the supposedly sinful Italian. The devaluing and denigrating representation of Italians thus appeals to the reader to cease frequenting the businesses to remain morally responsible and in solidarity with their British compatriots.²⁶⁵

Another strategy used is the recourse to polarised ideological discourse structures. For Teun Van Dijk, these are discursive features that refer to the differences between fundamental categories defining social groups.²⁶⁶ The polarisation, as he argues, 'may also appear in the specific social attitudes' and in the 'mental models and discourses' used to express them. In this case, the newspaper articles draw explicitly on positive representations of the in-group (citizens of Wales) in contrast with negative representations of 'Others' (Italian traders). While the poor and presumably Welsh widow and her family of dependents are forced to close forever, Antonio grows fat from the profits gained through trading on Sunday. A similar point can be noted regarding the scale of the shops – the Welsh widow's shop is 'in an obscure street' and is 'tiny'; this is in contrast with Antonio's 'well-lighted and spacious premises in the main street'. Finally, from the profits earned through trading, the lack of attachment to Welsh cultural values is highlighted through the article writer's investing of the surplus before eventually returning to Italy as a 'prosperous gentleman'. This suggests that, rather than wishing to become a part of Welsh society, Antonio's desire is upward social mobility to be enjoyed

²⁶⁵ Katerina Strani and Anna Szczepaniak-Kozak, 'Strategies of Othering Through Discourse Practices: Examples from the UK and Poland', *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 14.1 (2018), 163–179, pp. 164–5.

²⁶⁶ Teun A. van Dijk, 'Socio-cognitive discourse studies', *The Routledge Handbook for Critical Discourse Studies*, eds. John Flowerdew and John Richardson (London: Routledge, 2018), 26–44, p. 32.

in Italy rather than Wales. By contrasting the fortunes of the widow – who is portrayed empathetically to the readership – with those of the Italian trader, the article writer attempts to cast Antonio as a figure worthy of antipathy whose trade is harmful to Welsh businesses. In remembering that Antonio stands for the ‘several Antonios and Dominicos’ referenced at the beginning of the article, the writer affirms his view that the ambitions of Antonio are matched by the ‘scores’ of businesses in Wales.

A second example that constructs an anti-Italian trader narrative using polarised discourse and hyperbolic language can be noted in the liberal *The Cambria Daily Leader*, a daily English language paper widely circulated in South and West Wales. The newspaper was one of the first to publish daily in Wales in 1861 and is credited as having ‘created a new and less religiously or politically fragmented newspaper readership’ through its coverage of local, general, and foreign news and sports reporting.²⁶⁷ On this occasion, the article reproduces the speech of Reverend H. M. Hughes during a theological seminary at the Bala-Bangor College in 1913. The narrative used by Hughes evokes anti-religious imagery that serves to accentuate the cultural differences between the Italian café traders and Welsh religious society:

£15,000 Profits: Italian Sunday Traders at Swansea

In four Italian sweet shops 193 boys under eighteen were found during Sunday hours of worship, and in two of them gambling and card-playing was going on. The Italians were the men they had to watch. One of them confessed he was going back to Italy with £15,000 gained mainly by Sunday trading. The sanctity of the Sabbath was being endangered, especially in South Wales, and unless the public made strenuous efforts during the next two years there was a danger that they would lose its benefits altogether. They must take care that the leadership of this country did not slip from the hands of its safe guides, to which it owed so much, and fall into the hands of irreligious men.²⁶⁸

Interestingly, Hughes’ speech does not limit its criticism to Italians. The comments about the ‘gambling’ and ‘card playing’ youths strongly rebuke the perceived immorality of younger generations with different values. This is reinforced in Hughes’ comment about the ‘benefits’ of the Sabbath being lost if ‘strenuous efforts’ were not made, further connoting the sense of distance between moral religious campaigners and the cafes’ clientele. Regardless of this, the immorality of the 193 boys is strongly juxtaposed with

²⁶⁷ Aled Jones, ‘Print, Language and Identity: Newspapers in Wales since 1894’, *68th IFLA Council and General Conference*, ed. by (Edinburgh: IFLA, 2002), available at <<https://origin-archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla68/papers/048-127e.pdf>>, (last accessed 18th May 2023).

²⁶⁸ ‘£15,000 Profits: Italian Sunday Traders at Swansea’, *The Cambria Daily Leader*, 21st June 1913.

that of the 'irreligious men' depicted as violating the 'sanctity of the Sabbath.' The narrative then uses the anecdote of a trader who had earned £15,000 through his trade to reinforce this. The comment that the trader would return to Italy with his 'spoils' suggests that the observance of Welsh religious values is secondary to the pursuit of individual betterment. The speech then transitions to openly declaring the author's fear of foreigners directly attacking Welsh societal values. This is expressed in his call to the leadership of the country to take a firmer stance to prevent power from transitioning from 'the hands of its safe guides' to those of 'irreligious men'. By suggesting that Italian businesses could alter the moral fabric of the local community, Hughes thus attempts to warn the audience of the dangers associated with patronising their businesses. He draws on the trope of invasion and erosion of Welsh cultural values and casts the Italian trader as responsible for the perceived loosening of morals. The speech's reproduction in the paper enables it to reach a wider audience than the conference attendees, while it also links into ongoing debates regarding the perception of the café trade in Wales in this period.

The 1913 extended article 'Are Italian Traders Treated Harshly? Sunday Trading Crisis in the Rhondda' represents a further example of how certain English language newspapers in Wales homed in on the imagery of the immoral and irreligious Italian at odds with Welsh society. The article was published in the weekly liberal and labour newspaper *The Rhondda Leader*, a paper which circulated in the Rhondda Valley between 1899 and 1908 and primarily focused on social issues and coal mining.²⁶⁹ The writer uses the pseudonym 'Anti-Humbug', potentially utilising the conceptualisation of the humbug as an individual who 'seems to be indispensable for the smooth working of life and for the maintenance of tolerable human relations', but who actually deceives others for personal gain.²⁷⁰ Anti-Humbug published letters occasionally in printed media across Wales and was mainly concerned with religious matters.²⁷¹ Here, they discuss in depth the growth of the Italian cafés in the Welsh coalfields and rhetorically asks the reader with whom should sympathy be bestowed, the Welsh citizen, or the Italian trader:

Would it be a difficult task even for a stranger passing through Porth, Tonypany, or Ystrad, on any Sunday to conscientiously conclude who is the greatest sinner – the Welsh or the

²⁶⁹ 'The Rhondda Leader', <<https://newspapers.library.wales/browse/3826298>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

²⁷⁰ 'About Humbug', *The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard*, 11th December 1908.

²⁷¹ 'Are We To Have Continental Sundays?', *South Wales Daily News*, 28th August 1890; 'Sunday Harvesting in Wales', 14th September 1891, *South Wales Daily News*.

Italian? There is a vast difference in the motives of both Welsh and Italian with regard to Sunday trading. In every instance throughout the Rhondda the Welsh man or woman [...] who are engaged in the sale of sweets and other delicacies are thus engaged in a mere living, and a [sic] honest one, rather than be supported by parish relief or become a burden on sons and daughters and other relatives. It is grim necessity which compels them supply a few pennyworths on each Sunday to the children of neighbours. They have a high rent to pay and a [sic.] honest living to make, and they can ill-afford to refuse a single penny.²⁷²

Here, the article writer offers contrasting representations between Welsh and Italian traders operating on a Sunday. The use of the rhetorical question of asking who the greater sinner is between the Welsh or the Italian instantly frames the two groups and also ties the actions of both into the wider rhetoric of religious observance and sinful behaviours. The attitudes towards Sunday trading by both groups are explicit – the plight of the Welsh man or woman, who is part of the ‘in-group’, is that of engaging in an honest trade in their interest of making a ‘mere living’. The justification for their trading on Sunday – which itself directly contradicts the principles of the Observance of the Sabbath – is that of a ‘grim necessity’ to avoid becoming a burden to local society and the parish community. As such, the ‘sin’ of Sunday Trading by Welsh traders is linked to discourses of economic hardships and is designed to foster the empathy of the reader.

In contrast to this, the Italian trader is presented as a manipulative entrepreneur, as Anti-Humbug continues:

What of the Italian? Who is he? In a large number of cases, he is an army officer in his native land, receiving a reservist pay which he has economised, and with which he emigrates to other lands to try and make a fortune. The Rhondda is his El Dorado in Wales. He selects a suitable spot which may be occupied by a Welshman, he approaches the owner and makes terms with him through obtaining a lease or buys the property outright. He makes his shop as attractive as possible, and with different kinds of musical instruments and games he commands a large number of youths and does a “roaring trade”. [...] It is a fortune the Italian desires, and he does it in every corner of Wales at the expense of cheap Italian labour and the folly of Welsh youths, who prefer to patronise a foreigner than an old disabled Welsh collier. Has he the least regard for the Christian Sunday? None whatsoever. Never had at home. The suggestion of a conference means that the Italian fortune-hunter is to rule the morals of the Rhondda.²⁷³

In this text, a series of tropes depict the Italian trader as an immoral being who did not conform with Welsh cultural values. As in the article from *Llais Llafur*, this is achieved through the references to financial wealth and treasure present in the text, such as the

²⁷² ‘Are Italian Traders Treated Harshly? Sunday Trading Crisis in the Rhondda’, *The Rhondda Leader*, 14th June 1913.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

‘reservist pay’ that the writer believes the Italian trader has, his ability to ‘pay outright’ for a property, or his constant desire for fortune. These values would have been in contrast with the abject poverty in South Wales in the early 1910s, particularly following the riots of nearby Tonypany in 1911 where miners undertook industrial action after exploitative bosses deliberately kept wages low.²⁷⁴ Far from being young men seeking to create a living in Wales, the Italians are re-cast as former army officers through the comment of the reservist's pay, thus linking to discourses of threats and war. The fact that both socialist leaning *Llais Llafur* and liberal *The Rhondda Leader* contained similar themes would suggest that these discourses had reached across political parties and into public debate at the time. Furthermore, it also could hint at a variety of societal attitudes, from the rise of nationalism prior to World War One, or an attempt of early capitalist Wales to pin social unrest in the work field on Italian migrants who were perceived to be undercutting local workers.

It is interesting to note as well that the Italian's religiosity is called into question. The American context provides some insight into this phenomenon. Peter D'Agostino observes that many Italian Americans recount that their ‘particular “style” of religiosity was met with harsh criticism from fellow Catholics in the United States.’²⁷⁵ He attributed this conflict to a series of motives, such as links to paganism, and Italian cultural rituals and practices at odds with the American Catholic church. Anti-Humbug's questioning of whether ‘Antonio’ has ‘any regard for the Christian Sunday’ and how he ‘never had at home’ can therefore be read as a comment on how the Italian traders’ were perceived as not complying with Non-Conformism in Wales. This comment also fails to understand the different religious observance of the Italian workers in Wales, many of whom were practising Catholics and even attended Catholic masses.²⁷⁶

‘Anti-Humbug’ also employs discursive and linguistic strategies that casts the Italian worker as a tempter whose business ventures aim to lead unsuspecting youths astray, consistent with the articles presented above. This is made explicit through the references to how he ‘makes his shop as attractive as possible’ with ‘different kinds of musical instruments and games’. The language here – in evoking images of sin and the

²⁷⁴ See, for example, David Smith, ‘Tonypany 1910: Definitions of Community’, *Past & Present*, 81 (1980), 158–184.

²⁷⁵ Peter D'Agostino, ‘“Utterly Faithless Specimens”, Italians in the Catholic Church in America’, *Anti-Italianism, Essays on a Prejudice*, eds. William J. Connell and Fred Gardaphé (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 33–39.

²⁷⁶ Terri Colpi, *The Italian Factor*, pp. 230–241.

devil who ‘commands a large number of youths’ - serves in demonising the worker, thus rendering him a subject who, in Anti-Humbbug’s opinion, should be excluded from Welsh society. In addition, there is a renewed attempt to compare the working experiences of Welsh and Italian traders. If this was previously achieved by noting the dissimilarity between the honest Welsh man or women and the Italian, the discourse in the latter section of the article focuses on physicality and strength, with the ‘able-bodied army officer’ compared to the ‘old and disabled former Welsh collier’. The supposed weakness of the Welsh former collier affected by age and disability once again seemingly implies that the youths should prioritise supporting the Welsh figure as opposed to the Italian.

The attempts to obstruct the practices of the Italian café traders in the early twentieth century do not solely call for the non-frequenting of these industries by patrons in Wales. Given that trading on Sunday was a punishable offence in Wales, the campaigners attempted to call for greater militancy from the police when handling Italian café owners. A particularly vocal call to arms can be found in a letter published in the *Merthyr Express*. Founded in 1864, the *Merthyr Express* is a weekly newspaper covering local affairs that operated in the coal and iron producing areas of Merthyr Tydfil area (Glamorgan).²⁷⁷ On this occasion, a citizen using the pseudonym *Pro Bono Publico* – ‘For the Public Good’ – where the Sunday Trading matter is discussed at length:

It cannot fail to notice that of late a large foreign element has been ported into our midst in the shape of the Italian ice cream men, and while they confine themselves to legitimate trading I would not say a word against them. But I fail to see the justice of these men being allowed to desecrate our Sabbath, and place wholesale facilities in the way of our young people to follow their evil example. Why don’t our police take this matter up, and make an example of one or two of the worst offenders?²⁷⁸

The themes of immorality and the lack of Italian identification with Welsh cultural values are again present in the text, with the article author referring to the ‘evil example’ provided by the Italian ice cream men. This is reinforced through the use of possessive pronouns that clearly defined the in-group – ‘our Sabbath’ and ‘our police’ – with the out-group – ‘their example’. A sense of scale is also referenced, with the ‘large foreign element’ seeming to tap into societal fears of mass immigration. What makes the text stand apart here is the suggestion of ‘making an example of one or two of the worst offenders’, with

²⁷⁷ ‘The Merthyr Express’, <[91](https://newspapers.library.wales/browse/3814638#:~:text=A%20weekly%20newspaper%20circulating%20in,%2C%20Harry%20Wood%20Southey%20(d.> [last accessed 28th August 2023].</p>
<p>²⁷⁸ ‘Sunday Trading in Merthyr’, <i>Merthyr Express</i>, 21st July 1894.</p>
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the implication being that the potential intimidation of these workers could only be beneficial 'for the public good'. The deliberate use of the pseudonym 'Pro Bono Publico' (For the Public Good) ties into the representation of the author as a potential spokesperson for the whole community on a pressing societal issue (in this case, the perceived threat of the Italian trade). The use of pseudonyms such as 'Pro Bono Publico' and Anti-Humbug in newspapers in Wales in the twentieth century was a tactic that enabled social critics to comment on other pressing issues, such as the 'immorality' of a local ratepayers' association for having associated themselves with gambling and dancing, or the use of the Welsh language and exclusion of monolingual English speakers during an English religious meeting.²⁷⁹

By campaigning actively to legal institutions to participate directly in the enforcement of the Sunday Closing Act, these religious proponents attempted to marginalise traders by casting them as outlaws and criminals worthy of police attention. The Reverend T. Jones in the Rhondda area is quoted as remarking that 'these foreigners were more responsible than others for Sunday trading', and that they should either 'be compelled to close on Sunday' or 'be subjected to deportation.'²⁸⁰ Following the election of Garrod Thomas as the President of the National Free Church Council of Wales in 1918, a motion was moved by the attendees of the conference that resolved to send 'a deputation' to the Home Office in light of the 'growing menace of Sunday trading' in the 'Italian shops in Cardiff, Abertillery, and other South Wales towns.'²⁸¹ A similar address at the Monmouthshire Welsh Baptist Association in 1920 'protested against Sunday trading especially by Italians', and called on the British government to do 'everything in their power to relieve the intolerable and cruel strain.'²⁸² The discourse of Italian traders as 'menaces' and 'cruel stains' on society who should be 'deported' for their trades taps into the anti-Italian and anti-migration rhetoric. It also demonstrates the strength of feeling that was expressed in these newspapers to what was perceived by concerned members of society as a threat capable of changing the status quo. The persistence of this discourse could also have played a role in ensuring that police interventions persisted in this period.

²⁷⁹ A total of 24 letters were published in the Merthyr Express from writers using the *nom de plume* 'Pro Bono Publico' between 1878 and 1940. See, for example, 'Rhymney Ratepayers Social', *The Merthyr Express*, 15th July 1922; 'British and Foreign Bible Society Annual Meeting', *The Merthyr Express*, 6th November 1909.

²⁸⁰ 'The Campaign Against Sunday Trading', *The Rhondda Leader*, 8th March 1913.

²⁸¹ 'Italian Sunday Trading', *Western Mail*, 16th October 1918.

²⁸² 'Monmouthshire Baptist Association. President's Address. Democracy and Safety', *The South Wales Gazette*, 28th May 1920.

Between the 1890s and the 1920s, countless court cases against Italians who were charged with Sunday Trading by the local police were made.²⁸³

Thus, the analysis reveals a series of tropes present in English language newspapers in Wales that tap into an anti-Italian rhetoric to comment on the refreshment industry.²⁸⁴ The newspaper articles analysed became a platform where devout religious campaigners attempted to influence public opinion about the fledgling trades. These are constructed around the supposed irreligiosity of the Italian traders and how their working practices were perceived as being at odds with Nonconformity in Wales. They also drew heavily on representations that aimed to marginalise Italians in Wales by portraying them as being culturally different from Welsh locals and from their cultural values: this is most clearly exemplified in polarised ideological discourse structures that emphasise the distance between Welsh and Italians. The rhetoric of the newspapers, thus, offers an insight into the context in which the new trades were working and the obstacles they encountered, challenging the unproblematic narrative that suggests that Italians seamlessly integrated into the local community until the Second World War.

The section's focus on anti-Italian discourse has drawn attention to the representation of Italians by the Welsh press, revealing the narrative strategies used by proponents of the Temperance Movement in an attempt to affect their businesses. Whereas this section has highlighted largely negative tropes published in certain newspaper articles, the following acts as a counter-narrative by exploring how Italian café workers are represented by their descendants in oral history interviews. Rather than irreligious, immoral, and opportunistic, the key motives of strength, entrepreneurial spirit, and resistance emerge.

5. Narratives of Strength and Entrepreneurial Spirit of Italian Women in the Refreshment Industry

²⁸³ As of yet, no statistical evidence concerning the exact number of Italians who were tried in court for Sunday Trading exists, although some conclusions can here be drawn from the various newspaper articles that document local court cases across Wales. In terms of comparison with the number of court cases regarding the trading of alcohol on Sundays the *Cardiff Times* reports that, by June 1900, '625 men and 613 women had been sent to prison for supplying their friends with a glass of beer on Sunday, and £1,890 had been paid in fines'. See 'Welsh Sunday Closing. No Chance for the Bill this Session', *Cardiff Times*, 23rd June 1900.

²⁸⁴ For the purposes of this chapter, only English-language newspapers were considered due to the availability of primary sources.

Despite being considered *family businesses*, the working practices of Italian women in the café industry have received considerably less attention from academic investigations and popular culture. As noted in the literature review of this thesis, the histories of the Italian traders of Wales have tended to be studied from the perspective of the patriarchal head of the family. Research has focused on their involvement and the successful impact of the businesses or the legacy of internment during the Second World War. In the Welsh context, the contribution of women is understudied. Among the few examples, Manuela Martini's (2022) or Bruna Chezzi's (2015) recognise that women played an active role in the family businesses. Martini comments that women and children were 'systematically employed at the counter in the refreshment houses', and that some women were able to draw on previous experiences of working as waitresses in the family business.²⁸⁵ However, as Martini's study is primarily interested in the maintenance of transnational care networks, the working practices in the cafés of Wales are given comparatively less space.

Bruna Chezzi's research offers considerably more attention to women working in this industry. Chezzi employs a thematic approach to analyse memories and manifestations of the lasting trauma caused on family members following the internment of male family members in 1940. She also studies cultural representations of Italian women in Anglo-Welsh literary production, and analyses family photographs from the 1920s and 1930s to document the contribution of women to the trade. Discussing their involvement in the work sector, she notes that:

Quite often, especially during the First and Second World Wars, Italian women and children alike were given responsibility for looking after family and business while their men either went back to Italy to fight for their country or were serving in the British army. Women took on even more responsibilities and made sacrifices during the Second World War when Italian men were arrested as enemy aliens, and some never came back.²⁸⁶

Research is beginning to engage with the working contribution of women, but significant gaps remain. The general perception would appear to be that women only started running the businesses on their own during the Second World War, and that they 'had rarely experienced running a business on their own' before the war.²⁸⁷ Even though this was likely the case for many Italian women, it is also true that women would also manage Italian cafes alongside and, at times, without their husbands.

²⁸⁵ Manuela Martini, 'Family, Care and Migration', p. 435.

²⁸⁶ Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*, p. 31.

²⁸⁷ See Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', p. 45.

The importance of capturing oral histories related to the working experiences of women acquires greater value when considering the dominant narrative of Italian migration to Wales. In order to explore how families of Italian café traders narrated their histories, I gathered a corpus of their histories and carried out a quantitative narrative synthesis. The histories were sourced from my oral history interviews or my email exchanges with respondents to various social media appeals on Facebook as part of the data collection phase. These were integrated with other family stories published on company websites or included in documentaries about Italians in Wales.²⁸⁸ What transpires is that many follow the histories of a male entrepreneur who sets up the family business. The family members of the man arrive in Wales and the business grows. The café's growth is then stunted by the impact of the Second World War and experienced internment, displacement, or disappearance on the *Arandora Star*. For instance, Teo Belli, a Welsh-Italian living in Chicago whose family migrated to Wales in the 1900s, describes his family history in the following manner in our exchange of emails about the Bellis of Swansea:

I'm told my great grandfather and his siblings would travel to London in the winter months to work stoking boilers, as well as laying mosaic tile. Including supposedly at the old royal naval college. He ran/worked in a cafe in London at some point also. Prior to WWII, my great-grandfather (Giovanni) founded a cafe/fish and chip shop in Swansea [...] My Nonno ran the fish and chip shop until retirement in the 1980s. From what I know, he was a bit of an entrepreneur with a launderette or two, ice cream vans, making crisps, and more over the years. While he was interred in Canada during the war, he told me that he worked as a lumberjack, and remembered ice skating on the frozen river in the winter [...] My Nonna is from Lugagnano Val D'Arda and came to Wales in the years after WWII, where she met my Nonno. They went to have two children, including my Dad. Both of whom left Wales to pursue education and have been successful in their careers. My dad, being of Italian stock, fell in love with motor racing and still works in the industry. His sister became a doctor in London.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ 'Episode One: The Welsh Italians', *The Welsh Italians*, BBC One, 22nd March 2015; 'The Last of the Bracchis', BBC Radio Wales, 30th August 2021; 'The Sidolis Story So Far', <: <https://sidolis-icecream.co.uk/the-sidolis-story-so-far/>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; 'The story of Feccis and the brilliant Italian brothers who own the most famous chippy in Tenby', *Wales Online*, 27th June 2021, <<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink-news/story-feccis-brilliant-italian-brothers-20907040/>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; 'The Italian who walked to Wales to open a café and his granddaughter who is continuing her family legacy', *Wales Online*, 27th December 2022, <<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink-news/contis-cafe-clydach-italian-swansea-25754762/>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; 'In Memory of Giovanni Tambini', *History Points*, <<https://historypoints.org/index.php?page=in-memory-of-giovanni-tambini>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; 'Servini's Café', <<https://www.servinis.com/>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; 'Parisella's ice cream kiosk and parlous, Conwy', *History Points*, <<https://historypoints.org/index.php?page=parisella-s-ice-cream-kiosk>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; 'Former MC Café, Neath', *History Points*, <<https://historypoints.org/index.php?page=former-mc-cafe-neath>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

²⁸⁹ Teo Belli, email to Gareth White, 23rd August 2023.

In what can be described as a family business, family narratives of Italians in Wales pay comparatively less attention to women as protagonists. Some are framed from the perspective of the pioneering young man who developed the family business, such as Teo Belli and the men of the family. In these narratives, men marry women, and their wives join the family business. An alternative strategy is that family narratives follow two protagonists, a husband and wife, who move over together and start the business. Far fewer are cases where the family narratives follow the experiences of the women of the family independently from or alongside men.

Between 1881 and 1921, the number of Italian men and women in the country increased exponentially, from 220 men and 23 women in 1881 to 1164 and 464 respectively in 1921.²⁹⁰ Determining the exact number of traders active in the industry proves slightly more problematic, at least officially. Often, women were informally expected to assist in the running of the family businesses, although recognition of this employment does not appear to the same extent in the censuses. The 1921 census notes a total of 23 women whose official work designation was as an assistant in the family business.²⁹¹ This would seem to confirm the hypothesis of Erin Hatton (2017) that the working practices of women, in general, were invisible in three ways.²⁹² Firstly, their work was considered invisible from a sociocultural perspective in that their labour was ‘devalued by virtue of hegemonic cultural ideologies of gender, race, etc.’²⁹³ Secondly, their contributions were invisible sociolegally, meaning that their labour typically fell beyond the definition of legal work.²⁹⁴ And thirdly, they were invisible from a sociospatial point of view due to the labour being ‘physically segregated from a culturally defined worksite’.²⁹⁵ Even though they worked and lived in the family café/dwelling, they may have been responsible for working away from clients doing tasks such as preparing food in the kitchen or doing record-keeping. They also balanced work with caregiving and housekeeping duties, thus potentially limiting the amount of time spent working.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁰ GBRO, Census of England and Wales, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921.

²⁹¹ GBRO, Census of England and Wales, 1921.

²⁹² Erin Hatton, ‘Mechanisms of invisibility: rethinking the concept of invisible work’, *Work, Employment and Society*, 31.2 (2017), 336–351, p. 336. See also Barbara Rowe and Gong-Soog Hong, ‘The Roles of Wives in Family Businesses: The Paid and Unpaid Work of Women’, *Family Business Review*, 13.1 (2000), 1–13.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Manuela Martini, ‘Family, Care and Migration’.

These reasons would seemingly confirm the idea that the contribution of women to the industry was invisible and also explain the discrepancy between the number of women officially reported in the censuses as employees and those who effectively did work in the business.

In the interviews I conducted with the descendants of Italians who worked in the café industry in Wales during the first half of the twentieth century, some of the interviewees who had indicated in pre-interview questionnaires that their female ancestors were active in the café industry in the early twentieth century were asked to narrate their family history from the point of view of their mothers, grandmothers, or great-grandmothers. The decision to do so is motivated by the research of Eleanor Hamilton (2006) on the narratives of women in family businesses in the United Kingdom.²⁹⁷ Hamilton's study of oral interviews revealed that 'the domestic partner of the founder seemed to play an important role in the founding and development of the business,' and that the stories of the (predominantly male) owners were 'intricately interlaced' with the story of the women.²⁹⁸ As a result, Hamilton paid greater attention to the narratives of women and asked them to recount their working experiences instead. Retelling family stories from the perspective of women can thus unearth new perspectives as to their working practices and the presentation of their identities.

The written documentation that I have gathered through email exchanges with Anita Arcari, whose family hailed from Picinisco, offers insight into the telling of the family story from the perspective of women. The history of the Arcaris has been well-documented already; their granddaughter Welsh-Italian author Anita Arcari has published both novels and short biographical extracts for museum exhibitions.²⁹⁹ The Arcaris first arrived in Merthyr Tydfil in the late nineteenth century after an initial working experience with an ice cream hand cart in Whitstable Sands, England. They later moved to Swansea to be closer to their relatives from the Pompa family, who already owned a successful Italian café in the area. As part of the correspondence, Anita Arcari was asked to describe the working practices of the women of the family, and she

²⁹⁷ Eleanor Hamilton, 'Whose Story is it Anyway? Narrative Accounts of the Role of Women in Founding and Establishing Family Businesses', *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*. 24.3 (2006), 253–271.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

²⁹⁹ Anita Arcari, *The Hokey Pokey Man* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2010). See also 'Arcari Family', *The People's Collection*, < <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/1356931#?xywh=-10%2C-232%2C878%2C891> >, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

commences the narrative of her grandmother Angela Rosa Arcari's journey to Wales in the following manner:

My grandmother (born Grilli) was expected to help out with the family chores, as a young girl. [...] After marriage to my grandfather Arcari [...] her tasks in Italy remained similar on the Arcari farm, but she accompanied her husband to the UK seasonally [...] At first, she helped with making the ice cream, which he took to Whitstable Beach in a handcart. [...] The enterprise was very successful, and at that time, when her children were born and they were becoming more affluent, they employed a young servant girl.³⁰⁰

Throughout the opening, her grandmother is presented as a hard worker. Her carrying out of family chores already foregrounds themes that appear on numerous occasions in the interview by demonstrating the importance of her collaboration in family life. Her identity before her marriage into the Arcari family is also reinforced through reference to her maiden name ('born Grilli') which here can be interpreted as suggesting a separate identity from that of the Arcari family she would later marry into. This would also conform to Italian cultural standards that women would maintain their maiden surnames, even upon marriage, thus reinforcing the link to the family of origin. Her testimony then continues to comment on her work duties. Finally, through the reference to the hiring of a young servant girl, Anita Arcari suggests upward socio-economic mobility acquired through migration and hard work.

With regards to the family's move to South Wales and the eventual opening of their café, the themes of upward socio-economic mobility and entrepreneurial spirit for the women of the Grilli / Arcari family continue:

Some of the money was saved and used to fund their dream of opening *their* own business. Initially, they came to Swansea, where my grandfather's sister and her husband, who later died aboard the *Arandora Star*, were located. They began with a small café in the Morriston suburb, but after a short time, moved to bigger and more lucrative premises in Swansea. Although the business officially belonged to my grandfather, my grandmother was the brains behind the business, and the one who managed the finances. She worked alongside her husband in the café, which opened at 5 am, and closed late in the evening. As her daughters grew older, they were also expected to help out and took trays of ice cream to the theatre opposite to sell before and during the performances.³⁰¹

The first element that strikes is Anita Arcari's immediate reference to the fact that the decision to open a café was 'their dream'. The use of the plural pronoun here strongly connotes how the decision to open the business was a joint aspiration of the married

³⁰⁰ Anita Arcari, email to Gareth White, 4th June 2021.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.* Emphasis my own.

couple, as opposed to one driven exclusively by her husband. The reference would also seem to confirm Hamilton's hypothesis of women being active in the foundation of the family business. The theme of unity is carried on – both husband and wife are depicted as working together as equal partners. This is explicitly stated with reference to how 'she worked alongside her husband in the café' throughout the operational hours of their business, with the use of the preposition 'alongside' strongly suggesting equality between the genders. The result of this collaboration here is the realisation of the couple's dream, with the comments regarding the transition from the ice cream cart to the lucrative premises firmly charting the Arcaris' continuing socio-economic enhancement. Anita Arcari also recognises the contribution of her grandmother in the tale through use of the metaphor 'brains behind the business'. Its use in this recollection clearly reinforces the image that Angela Rosa Grilli /Arcari was a driving force in the management of the family business.

Finally, the narrative of the strength and entrepreneurial spirit of the women of the family appears to move full circle with the inclusion of Angela Rosa Arcari's daughters in the family history. By stating that the next generation of women was expected to help by bringing ice cream to the theatre opposite the café premises, her granddaughter draws attention to the shifting fortunes of the family. In remembering that Angela Rosa Arcari's chores as a young girl were helping with family rural life in Picinisco (cooking, helping, scrubbing clothes with stones in the river), Anita Arcari affirms how family responsibilities had evolved to adapt to the professional environment. There is also the foregrounding of the continuity of the family business, where subsequent generations are portrayed as being active in the trade.

Another example of an influential Italian woman whose professional activities were interpreted as the driving force of the family business was Amabile Lusardi. Originally from Casaleto near Bedonia in Emilia Romagna, she moved to Ogmore Valley in 1916 with her husband and three children. The Lusardi family business would eventually develop, with the family later owning several cafes, grocery shops, a hair salon, and a toy shop. They would also assist Italians who emigrated later to the collieries and provide them with loans to set up their cafes in the area. Amabile Lusardi's story was recounted during my oral interview with her grandson, John Lusardi. Recalling the arrival of the Lusardi family in Wales, John Lusardi states that:

Gareth White: [...] I was wondering whether we could start by touching on her experience initially (in Italy).

John Lusardi: She basically left Casaleto [...] due to poverty. Quite a lack of food and money and resources in our area at the time. And she made her way to Wales basically where the mining industry hadn't long really started and there was work there and possibilities for a better future.³⁰²

In response to the question of what her life in Casaleto was like before emigrating, John Lusardi begins the story by describing the poorer living standards and economic conditions that were accessible in the natal rural village in Emilia Romagna. The second sentence suggests that migration is both a response to the lack of opportunities in Casaleto but also that the decision to migrate was organic (she 'made her way' to Wales here representing her agency in being able to travel to the new country). Her decision to migrate is also linked to the theme of work in the interview – the references to the mining industry, availability of work, and possibilities all strongly foreground the importance of being able to work for Amabile Lusardi.

When prompted about who opened the family business, John Lusardi responds by highlighting the important role played by his grandmother in establishing the family business:

My grandmother had some friends who came to Wales before them. The guy's name was Moruzzi, and my grandmother made some arrangements with him so that if they came here, she could start a business with him. I think my grandmother was the push toward the business side of things, not my grandfather. She was the one that sort of drove it along. She went into business with Moruzzi and they opened up a café in Nant-y-moel in the Ogmere Valley, about 10 miles north of Bridgend. And that was the business they started there.³⁰³

The recollection here contains several action verbs such as 'push' and 'drove' that are used to describe Signora Lusardi's role in the business. The presentation of Amabile Lusardi's identity is also contrasted here with the male figures she encounters. By drawing attention to how it was his grandmother, and not the grandfather, who was responsible for 'the business side of things', John Lusardi constructs an image of his grandmother as an entrepreneurial figure whose involvement in the café was responsible for advancing the business.

³⁰² John Lusardi, interviewed by Gareth White, 3rd November 2021.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

The presentation of Amabile Lusardi as an influential figure whose shrewd business spirit continues throughout her grandson's account, culminating in the recollection regarding her activities during the 1926 miner's strike. In May 1926, the Trades Union Congress called a general strike to combat the threat of wage reductions and worsening conditions for 1.2 million coal miners. The 1920s had already been difficult for South Walian miners, who had previously been locked out en masse in 1921 for refusing to work for lower rates of pay.³⁰⁴ The strike was strongly felt in the South Wales coalfields due to it being a significant exporter in the country. The strength of the Trade Unions had also rendered the area particularly 'militant', which corresponded to strong participation in the area. Class solidarity, as Sue Bruley (2010) argues, was present in both genders in the area, and women were also active during the General Strike and the Miners' Lockout of 1926.³⁰⁵ Bruley demonstrates this with an oral history analysis of the testimonies of women during the 1926 strikes, arguing that these were 'to a large extent submerged' due to the dominance of male sources on the topic.³⁰⁶ In our interview, John Lusardi's account of his grandmother also pays reference to her working practices during the 1926 strike:

It was tough times in those days, and the people of the Valley looked at (the café) as a social hub then. It turned into a social hub as well as a café and somebody's business. Especially during the 1926 strike, when people didn't have money or didn't have a lot of food. I know my grandmother helped out a lot of people in the Valley by letting them have food and loaning some money. She didn't always get paid back, but still... and it gained my grandmother in those early days – and up until about 1960, it gained my grandmother in the Valley a lot of respect with a lot of local people. She was really well-liked, and my grandfather as well.³⁰⁷

The interview here moves on to consider both the importance of the café and of Amabile Lusardi in the local Ogmore Valley community. The ordering of the functions of the building (social hub; café; family business) links into the way that Italian cafes were, as Chezzi suggests, 'hybrid spaces', that of family home and business, which fulfilled multiple functions beyond serving food and beverages to customers.³⁰⁸ Furthermore, the comment of the café being primarily a 'social hub' evokes the idea of *social space* in the

³⁰⁴ Keith Laybourn, *The General Strike of 1926* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

³⁰⁵ Sue Bruley, *The Women and Men of 1926: A Gender and Social History of the General Strike and Miners' Lockout in South Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), p. 15.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁰⁷ John Lusardi, interviewed by Gareth White, 3rd November 2021.

³⁰⁸ Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*, p. 30.

Lefebvrian sense, of sites where social relationships are produced and reproduced by individuals who carry out social actions.³⁰⁹ But it is the representation of the protagonist that is of particular interest here. From her initial presentation as a humble farmer in Casaletto, she is transfigured into an active supporter of the strike who was able to use her affluence to assist the striking miners and their families. John Lusardi also makes clear that his grandmother's participation was salient in securing lifelong respect amongst her fellow citizens and further cements the presentation of his grandmother as an entrepreneurial figure whose working practices were influential in the social fabric of the community.

One final story that paid particular attention to the gender dynamics within the café trade was recounted by Paulette Pelosi. Similar to Anita Arcari, Paulette Pelosi is a Welsh-Italian writer and researcher who was particularly active in the ongoing campaigns revolving around the Arandora Star.³¹⁰ She is also an active volunteer for the Women's Archive of Wales. In our oral history interview, she framed the narrative of the Pelosi family history in Wales by focusing on the working lives of the women, starting with her great-grandmother Crocifissa DiMarco who walked over to Deptford from Picinisco in the 1880s for seasonal work as an organ grinder. The interview then shifted to consider the individual successes and talents of the women of the Pelosi family, from the grandmother who would generously 'cook a lot of chickens' to take home to Picinisco, to the aunt who would act as a model for her brother's sculpting of masks. Paulette Pelosi's act of worldbuilding by noting the successes of these women sets the ground for the narrative to come regarding the establishment and running of a popular café in Swansea opened by her grandparents Carmela and Giuseppe Pelosi in the 1910s. This act is relevant as it helps her challenge the social invisibilisation of Italian women by shining a light on the working practices of numerous female family members.

When asked about the division of labour between husband and wife into running the café and domestic duties, Paulette Pelosi starts by presenting a photo of the physical building of the café and uses it to testify as to the impact of her grandmother Carmela Pelosi in the family business:

³⁰⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Wiley Publishing, 1974; 1991).

³¹⁰ Paulette Pelosi, 'Schoolbooks in Spaghetti Paper', *Even the Rain is Different*, ed. Gwyneth Roberts, (Aberystwyth: Honno, 2005), 223–229. See also 'Treftadaeth Gymreig-Eidalaid / Welsh-Italian Heritage', *People's Collection*, < <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/users/45341> >, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

And by 1919, when they had their biggest shop in Mumbles, I always point out to people. [...] (at this point, Pelosi shows a photo of their shop). So, the sign writing it's C and G Pelosi. And so, C was for Carmela. Now I don't know whether that's just a fluke, that her name C is first, but I just get the impression that she had to do a lot of stuff.³¹¹

The fact that attention is consciously drawn to the positioning of Carmela's initial, C, before that of her husband, is offered as initial proof that she was active in the industry. In considering that the naming of many of the Italian cafés followed a patronymic system (such as Belli Bros, Fecci and Sons, Marubbi and Son), the placing of Carmela's initial on the signage of the door can indeed be interpreted as a physical testament to her collaboration in the family business. The notion that Carmela more than just supported her husband and was instead actively managing the café is continued in a later anecdote that explicitly presents her grandmother as an efficient entrepreneur:

When he was going back to Italy for a couple of years, for whatever reason, then my grandmother was in charge. [...] They had a shop in the same street as the Albert Hall in Swansea, Craddock Street. And before he went to Italy, he arranged that they would, as a family, be supplying the ice cream for the Albert Hall theatre. But it would have been my grandmother (who) would have been keeping a constant eye out to see that all of that was working successfully.³¹²

The opening line of this anecdote firmly presents Carmela Pelosi as not only playing an important role in establishing the family business but also managing it in her husband's absence. Paulette Pelosi then details the business agreement of providing ice cream for the theatre which, whilst formally agreed by her husband before his departure, is then managed by his wife. In being responsible for the logistical and managerial aspects in her husband's absence, Paulette Pelosi once again presents her grandmother as a shrewd, entrepreneurial figure who played an active role in the success of the trade.

In summary, far from being passive agents or invisible workers, these women are depicted as being facilitators in migration and driving forces in the businesses where they worked. Anita Arcari's, John Lusardi's, and Paulette Pelosi's accounts all integrate the women of their families into wider political events such as the 1926 depression and draw on narratives of strength and heroic narrative structures to depict the protagonists as strong, intelligent individuals. This kind of narrative structure continues in stories about their role during the outbreak of World War II, as I will analyse next.

³¹¹ Paulette Pelosi, interviewed by Gareth White, 29th April 2021.

³¹² *Ibid.*

6. Narratives of Loss and Growth in Wartime Experiences of Italian Female Café Workers

The inter-war years marked a significant boom in terms of the success of the Italian-run café trade in Wales.³¹³ Technological advancements, such as ice-cream vans or enhanced equipment, enabled businesses to improve their production techniques and means of distribution.³¹⁴ With the increased financial capital, café owners invested in further business ventures, allowing them to open several premises or even experiment with alternative projects.³¹⁵ From relative obscurity, the café industry increased its presence in the towns and villages of Wales, becoming much-loved places within the communities. This would change, however, following the declaration of war on Britain and France issued by Benito Mussolini on the 10th June 1940.

The declaration of war and commencement of hostilities prompted the war government under Winston Churchill to enact legislature aimed at protecting the country from what were believed to be subversive elements of society. British secret services had already been monitoring the activities of the Italian *Fasci*, who had become more prominent over the 1930s, and produced lists of suspected fascist sympathisers. Fearing a potential reaction that could undermine the British war effort, the War Cabinet used lists of 'dangerous characters' composed by MI5 and organised for their arrests.³¹⁶ Even though 1,500 Italians had been designated on these lists, in reality, 4,200 Italian men between eighteen and seventy who had settled in the United Kingdom were rounded up indiscriminately and interned.³¹⁷

In Wales, the impact of these internments was widespread. The following report published in the national paper *The Western Mail* provides an overview of the number of Italians arrested on the night of the 10th June 1940:

Since Italy declared war between 60 and 70 Italians have been placed under detention by Cardiff Police and about 160 in Glamorgan. In Newport, 17 men of military age and one woman, a member of the Fascist organisation, were taken into custody, and at Merthyr 13

³¹³ Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*, p. 18.

³¹⁴ Manuela Martini, 'Family, Care and Migration: Gendered Paths from the Mediterranean Italian Mountains to Northern Europe in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century', p. 434.

³¹⁵ One such story is that of Paul Marubbi, whose family diversified their working practices to include garages and even tourist accommodation on Black Rocks Beach, Porthmadog. See Paul Marubbi, interviewed by Gareth White, 14th October 2020.

³¹⁶ Terri Colpi, 'Chaff in the Winds of War'.

³¹⁷ Lucio Sponza, 'The Internment of Italians in Britain'; Elizabeth Wren-Owens, 'Remembering Fascism: Polyphony and its absence in contemporary Italian-Scottish and Italian-Welsh narrative,' p. 76.

men and one woman were taken into custody. A number of those rounded up in Swansea included persons whose political activities have been under observation for some time. At Neath, about two dozen Italians were dealt with.³¹⁸

In North and mid-Wales, small numbers of Italians were also arrested overnight. The *North Wales Weekly News* reports how ‘five hotel employees in Llandudno’ and ‘one resident in the Colwyn Bay police division’ were arrested in the Conwy area.³¹⁹ In the city of Bangor, a small Prisoner of War camp was constructed where Italians were detained shortly before being transferred to the Isle of Man.³²⁰ Italians were also rounded up in Aberystwyth, where police took into custody members of the Italian community and ‘no attempts at demonstrations’ were reported from the locals.³²¹

The café industry quickly found itself on the front of the internment drive. Reports indicate that mobs gathered outside several cafés in densely populated urban areas such as Cardiff and Swansea, resulting in stones being thrown and shops looted. Café owners and their staff were targeted, especially those who openly expressed fascist views or who had sponsored events run by the British Fasci in the area. Longstanding members of the community, intimidated by the potential consequences of hostilities, openly declared themselves British to distance themselves from fascism. This culminated in the events of the 10th June 1940, when policemen throughout the country presented themselves in family homes to take the male members of the family to prison.

The men arrested were temporarily detained in local jails before being deported to locations away from Wales. Many of the Italians were sent to internment camps in Douglas on the Isle of Man. However, a small group of Italians from all over Wales was placed on the repurposed cruise ship the SS *Arandora Star*. During the transportation of Axis prisoners of war and internment emigrants to Canada, a German U-boat torpedoed the battleship off the coast of Ireland on the 2nd July 1940.³²² In total, the sinking of the *Arandora Star* led to the death of 734 lives, 470 of which were Italians. The death of fifty-three members of the Italian community in Wales left a significant impact, becoming an

³¹⁸ ‘Round Up of Italians in Wales’, *Western Mail*, 12th June 1940.

³¹⁹ ‘Round-up of Italians at Llandudno and Colwyn Bay’, *North Wales Weekly News*, 13th June 1940.

³²⁰ Nick Antoniazzi, interviewed by Gareth White, 2nd November 2020; Michelle Valla, interviewed by Gareth White, 4th January 2021.

³²¹ ‘Italians Interned: Police Round-Up in Aberystwyth’, *Welsh Gazette*, 13th June 1940.

³²² Terri Colpi, ‘Chaff in the Winds of War?’.

‘unmentionable incident’ for many South Walian families.³²³ Until 1940 women had worked alongside men in the trade or had become sole proprietors as a result of temporary absences or, in some instances, the death of their spouses; the internment of the men resulted in a larger-scale sense of displacement that prompted family businesses to have to reconfigure in order to survive.

Both in terms of legislative procedures and the reactions of local citizens, the effects of the outbreak of war were more keenly felt by Italians residing in the South Wales coalfields and the larger coastal cities of Cardiff and Swansea. The most violent reactions were noted in the Swansea areas where there were ‘quelling raids on Italian shops’ that resulted in windows being broken and attempts made to pillage goods.³²⁴ In the weeks that immediately followed, the Aliens (Protected Areas) (No. 5) Order was issued, leading to women who had been designated as ‘enemy aliens’ having to relocate from coastal areas.³²⁵ Certain newspaper articles published in the summer of 1940 adopted a hard line against the remaining practices that were kept open by the families who were not forced to abandon their homes, as can be discerned in the following article published in the *Neath Guardian*:

There are some things we do not like, and one of them is the continued trading of Italians in our midst. We always understood that trading with the enemy was an offence punishable by fine or imprisonment, and accordingly, it is with no little surprise that we notice that shops in Neath and elsewhere, owned – or until recently owned – by Italians remain open and do business.

Possibly this is permitted because of the fact that the businesses have been transferred to Italian females who have been given British nationality, or by some legal fiction, but in any case, there can be no doubt that the businesses are carried on for the benefit, at least in most cases, of the Italian persons who have been interned as aliens or alien enemies.

This trading is offensive to us and to many of our readers, who have expressed themselves strongly on the matter, and we hope legislation will be introduced to prohibit the continuation of these businesses. We can hardly imagine that such license would be afforded to British people in Italy, whether they had obtained Italian nationality or not.

But even if legislation is not introduced, the desired object could be effected [sic] by the general public using discretion in making their purchases. They should buy from shops that are one hundred per cent British, and from these only.³²⁶

³²³ See Bruna Chezzi, ‘Wales Breaks Its Silence: from Memory to Memorial and Beyond. The Italians in Wales during the Second World War’; Terri Colpi, ‘Chaff in the Winds of War?’; Wendy Ugolini, ‘Untold Stories of Loss: Mourning the ‘Enemy’ in Second World War Britain’, *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, 8.1, (2015), 86–102.

³²⁴ Bruna Chezzi, ‘Wales Breaks its Silence: from Memory to Memorial and beyond. The Italians in Wales during the Second World War’, p. 377.

³²⁵ Wendy Ugolini, ‘Internal Enemy Other’, p. 150.

³²⁶ ‘The Battle of Britain’, *Neath Guardian*, 21st June 1940.

Written shortly after the passing of the Aliens (Protected Areas) (No. 5) Order, the article captures the *zeitgeist* by discussing openly the opinion that the continued work of these practices under women was, in the words of the article writer, 'offensive to us and our readers'.³²⁷ The article taps into nationalistic rhetoric, drawing on the same strategies that were outlined earlier in this chapter as a means to create a discourse that sought to negatively influence the perception of these trades. More specifically, there are elements of the 'Us vs Them' strategy ('buy from shops that are 100% British'), as well as language that strongly evokes the imagery of war, with the women being cast as 'the enemy'. There is also some suggestion of scepticism towards the notion that the women were British citizens, as mentioned in the phrase 'by some legal fiction'. In sum, the article represents an insight into the mentality of war-time Wales in the weeks that shortly followed the commencement of hostilities between Italy and Britain and can be read as part of a larger trend in these newspapers that openly called for Italians to be immediately returned to Italy.

The testimonies concerning the Italian women in the café trades of the coastal areas of Wales in particular from 1940 to 1941 recorded as part of this thesis' data collection touch on the frames of alienation and 'Italians as enemies' when recounting experiences.³²⁸ In general, there is an initial sense of displacement from their businesses, followed by their return and recommencement of the café trade in 1941 when the representation of Italy by Welsh people began to shift away from the initial frame of 'Italians as enemies'.³²⁹

The Pelosi family from Swansea was one of those greatly impacted by the loss of male members to internment. The experiences of another member of the family, Annunziata Tortalani, were recounted by third-generation André d'Ambra. In the oral interview I conducted with him, the effect of Italy's declaration of war on the women and children of the Pelosi family is discussed in detail. Immediately after, André d'Ambra's uncle Luigi Pelosi was arrested and sent to the Arandora Star; the family were forced to relocate to Hay. André D'Ambra narrates the relocation in the following manner:

³²⁷ Wendy Ugolini, 'Internal Enemy Other', p. 150.

³²⁸ Joe Moruzzi, interviewed by Gareth White, 13th October 2021, Anita Arcari, email to Gareth White, 12th August 2021; Paulette Pelosi, interviewed by Gareth White, 29th April 2021.

³²⁹ In addition to the quotes below, we can add here the testimonies of the Alonzis of Newport who were forced to move to Monmouth and the Moruzzis who moved to Talypandy. See Alan Edwards, John Alonzi, and John Celesti, interviewed by Gareth White, 29th October 2020; Joe Moruzzi, interviewed by Gareth White, 13th October 2021.

So, there was a period of time when she was doing that – from what I can understand, she was running the business, or always had some control of the money from what I could gather. Obviously, she must have taken cash with her when she went to Hay to live – she must have taken more than 250 pounds because you could buy a house with 250 pounds. But she must have taken everything in cash with her because I’m thinking she was probably thinking that she didn’t know what was going to happen to her from there. So, she had control over all the money.³³⁰

Throughout this first anecdote, there is the sense that the circumstances surrounding the enforced departure of Annunziata Tortalani from Swansea and subsequent relocation are narrated not so much through direct transmission of the facts, but of a potential reconstruction through conjecture. The references to ‘must have taken everything in cash’ and ‘probably thinking that she didn’t know what was going to happen’ indicate intimate knowledge of likely behaviours, both of which serve in presenting his grandmother as a shrewd and resourceful individual in the face of the physical and emotional uncertainty affected by the war. The recollection itself of the relocation is linked closely to Pelosi’s control of the finances of the café (another acknowledgment of her active involvement in the industry, thus conforming to Paulette Pelosi’s recollection earlier in this chapter). The fact that it both opens and closes with the justification of always having control of the money, therefore, is transformed into an essential skill that contributed to her ability to adapt to the challenges of displacement and enable her to purchase a house successfully.

Whereas André D’Ambra’s story draws on the practicalities associated with his grandmother’s displacement, Paulette Pelosi focuses on the loss of individual liberties. It is interesting to explore how this sense of loss is presented and how it contrasts both with her grandmother’s return to Swansea in 1941:

I’ve been told by other people that they had to leave, particularly if they were in a coastal area. [...] If they were on the coast and they were Italian and their men had been taken away and interned, if they had a bicycle and a radio, you get the feeling that they were highly suspicious, potentially dangerous characters, the women. So, they were told to leave. I know for a fact that my grandmother went to the lower Swansea Valley, Godrergraig. She went there with her one brother, Domenico DiMarco, and her daughters and Domenico’s wife.³³¹

As in D’Ambra’s account, there is a sense that the story is constructed through conjecture and relying on information learned about the general experiences of Italians within this

³³⁰ Andre d’Ambra, interviewed by Gareth White, 29th September 2021.

³³¹ Paulette Pelosi, interviewed by Gareth White, 29th April 2021.

period. This is made evident both by the acknowledgment of what other people ‘told her’, as well as what is ‘known as a fact’. That little else is recounted about the experience would suggest trauma and a reluctance to speak about Paulette Pelosi and Andre’s D’Ambra’s grandmothers’ direct experiences of the war with their descendants. The reference to the women being ‘suspicious, potentially dangerous characters’, if they met the criteria that are listed in Paulette Pelosi’s account, acts as a reminder of how British society portrayed Italian women. These narratives of strength, loss and growth counteract the anti-Italian narratives present in public discourse in 1940 by rendering visible their displacement and difficulties, but also ultimately displaying an ability to rise above the obstacles associated with being an ‘enemy alien’. Ultimately, the very qualities that defined her as successful in the eyes of her descendant are warped into subversive qualities due to the pressure of political events.

As the narrative of the Pelosi family approaches its end, the theme of loss is strongly presented, but also that of collective unity amongst the women who continued to work without the men of their families. Paulette Pelosi here narrates this in the following manner:

I know that they all came back to that (café), the biggest one in South End in Mumbles, and they all gathered together, particularly when Auntie Filomena had found that her own café in Goat Street was completely gone. And I know that they had a refreshment bar in Denever Place in Swansea. The main objective was for them to survive while Grandfather Giuseppe was existing in the internment camp in Australia [...] There was an awful lot of strain on the women. Mental health must have suffered, but they didn’t show it. They put on the *bella figura*, the brave face, and just got on.³³²

In the closing remarks here about the working practices of the war years, the theme of loss is pertinent – both physically (loss of premises) and emotionally (due to the internment of Giuseppe). This contrasts strongly with the continued presentation of the successes obtained by the Pelosi family traders before the war. The narrative thus assumes a posttraumatic growth structure, where ‘profound challenges to the fundamental schemas of survivors’ lives’ are followed by ‘reports of positive personal transformation.’³³³ Consistently with Paulette Pelosi’s narrative strategy constructed around the experiences of the women of the family, this final anecdote is populated by entrepreneurial women, with the inclusion of Aunt Filomena and her loss of the café in

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ Robert A. Neimeyer, ‘Fostering Posttraumatic Growth: A Narrative Elaboration’, *Psychological Inquiry*, 15.1 (2004), 53–59.

Goat Street serving not only to attest to another example of a successful woman in the café trade but also allowing for parallels to be drawn between Carmela and Filomena Pelosi. Finally, the narrative of strength continues to permeate the testimony. This is most particularly exemplified by Paulette Pelosi's deliberate use of the Italian expression *bella figura* – 'cutting a beautiful figure' – which is rooted in matters of 'how individuals uphold social norms, follow local codes of conduct, or display appreciation, respect, and civility.'³³⁴

Paulette Pelosi's wartime narrative evokes both a sense of loss, but also growth and resilience in the face of difficulties. This would echo the findings of Wendy Ugolini, whose own study of oral history interviews with Italian-Scots women revealed that as well as 'narratives of loss and dislocation', their stories 'also highlight the growth, in the face of more overt prejudice, of spontaneous support networks amongst some Italian women.'³³⁵ In the Welsh context, this can also be found in the story of John Lusardi, whose grandmother Amabile Lusardi was discussed earlier in this chapter. When recounting his grandmother's wartime experiences, Lusardi conveys a narrative of loss–growth narrative structure to define this period:

They banded together this time and helped each other out because most of these women, their husbands and sons were sent away to the Isle of Man or somewhere else. So [...] they were alone at the time. So, they banded together and helped each other out. My grandmother would travel to the Rhondda family to help out a friend over there. I can't remember her first name, but her surname was Balestrazzi. And that family ran a business in Treorchy for years [...] And she had some other friends down towards Neath. [...] And they would come up and help my grandmother as well, so it was a bit of all get together and help each other.³³⁶

The above account is preceded by John Lusardi's explanation of the impact of the Arandora Star on his family, which resulted in his father and uncle being arrested at the Nant-y-Moel café by a police officer who knew the family well. In the face of such loss – evidenced in the above anecdote by the reference to how the 'husbands and sons were sent away' – Lusardi reinforces the sense of solidarity and unity among the Italian women

³³⁴ Denise Scannell Guida, 'Bella Figura: Understanding Italian Communication in Local and Transatlantic Contexts', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication* (2020) <https://academicworks.cuny.edu/ny_pubs/561/> (accessed 11th May 2021). This theme is also touched upon by Giovanna Fecci. See Remo, Giovanna and Gianluigi Fecci, interviewed by Gareth White, 25th February 2021.

³³⁵ Wendy Ugolini, 'Internal Enemy Other', p. 151,

³³⁶ John Lusardi, interviewed by Gareth White, 3rd November 2021.

traders who would assist each other. This is stressed here by the repetition of the phrase 'they banded together', as well as the statement that they would 'all get together and help each other out.' It could also be argued that these phrases echo narratives of wartime resistance or solidarity, with the women here presented as collectively active in light of the upheaval of the war.

The loss and growth narrative structure used to suggest the collective agency amongst Italian women studied in this chapter is also present in the other testimonies collected from the descendants of Italian traders. The sense of collective unity extends beyond Italian women, and several family members spoke about the strength of relationships between Italians and their Welsh neighbours. Whereas the extent of loss and trauma was perhaps more keenly felt in the more populous regions in South Wales, there are equally narratives that offer alternative insights into the impact of the wartime internments on the Italian families from North Wales.

One such story concerning the impact of war on Italian families in North Wales was recounted by Nick Antoniazzi, a third-generation Welsh-Italian and proprietor of Antoniazzi's café in Bangor, Gwynedd. During our oral history interview, Nick responded to a question about the experience of the Antoniazzis during the Second World War by commenting on the experiences of his grandmother, Rosa Antoniazzi. With her husband already owning several successful cafes throughout Wales prior to the Second World War (most notably in Aberystwyth), Rosa Antoniazzi moved to Bangor from Bardi in around 1928 following her husband's decision to open a café in the North Wales city. By the time of Mussolini's declaration, the family had lived in the city for 12 years, having bought a larger café in 1934. When the police officer arrived to escort the family to a detention camp set up near Bangor seafront before being sent to the Isle of Man, local members of the community are said to have defended Rosa Antoniazzi and argued against the decision to arrest the entire family:

[i]t was a shame because my grandmother was left with three boys, you know. She was taken down to the prisoner-of-war camp and all. But [...] she said, well who's going to look after my children? She said you can't [...] just leave them alone. So, when the police went up there, they just said to the officers, 'no, she's good, she's not going to cause any problems, come on.' So, they just let her go. And anyway, she came back to work, and she actually opened up the café herself and ran it by herself.³³⁷

³³⁷ Nick Antoniazzi, interviewed by Gareth White, 2nd November 2020.

Nick Antoniazzi's anecdote provides an additional manifestation of the loss-growth narrative structure used to discuss the wartime experience of women Italian traders. The tale starts with the arrest of Andrea Antoniazzi (Rosa's husband) by the local police officer from Bangor High Street, who is reported as having alerted him in advance that he would have been interned and had to prepare himself and his family. The amicable relationship with the local Welsh police officer is thus used to underscore what would later happen to Rosa Antoniazzi. The testimony includes examples of presumed direct speech which provide agency to the imprisoned woman ('who's going to look after the children. You can't leave them alone'); this contrasts with the use of the past simple in the tale that is later used to describe the circumstances of her eventual return. The voicing of the police officer as well, who comments that she would not cause problems and was 'good', provides similar agency against the voiceless army officers guarding the camp and also reinforces the suggestion of a positive bond between the local police officers and the Antoniazzi family. Finally, having gone through such an experience, Rosa Antoniazzi is presented as being released and immediately returned to work and 'ran it by herself'. In doing so, she is portrayed as similarly resisting the turbulent impact of the war by continuing to work and running the business.

These narratives of loss and growth about the experience of entrepreneurial women during the Second World War thus echo those of female strength and entrepreneurial spirit prior to the war, in that there is typically a strong-willed individual whose business skills allow the cafés to continue in this period. The physical displacement and emotional trauma undoubtedly affected the protagonists analysed above, but these obstacles are tackled through individual resistance and collective unity with other women. In using this 'loss-and-growth' narrative structure, therefore, the family members are able to articulate the feats of their ancestors and illuminate previously neglected aspects related to the experiences of Italian women in this period.

7. Conclusion

The chapter has overall challenged the dominant narrative of the refreshment industry. My exploration of oral history interviews, family histories published in business websites, newspaper articles, and media documentaries sketches the contours of how the history of the Italian café trade in Wales has focused on the epic narrative of pioneering

individuals such as Giacomo Bracchi and male figures of the family who opened family businesses. Accordingly, their hard work and perseverance allowed their businesses to flourish until the Second World War disrupted their working practices in the form of arrest, internment, and displacement.

Conversely, alternative perspectives have been included in order to expand this frame of reference. Moving beyond the parameters of the Bardesan Bracchi business model in Wales revealed new origin stories regarding *Italian catering* in the country, from wealthy café owners in Cardiff to Genovese fish-and-chip shop owners in Newport. The unproblematic experience during the first half of the twentieth century is challenged by the chapter's consideration of the representation of Italian workers in certain newspaper articles. And finally, rather than a history of the business that focused almost exclusively on the perspective of Italian men, the chapter has drawn out new perspectives of entrepreneurial women.

An analysis of anti-Italian trader discourse in the early media coverage of the Italian café trade during the Temperance Movement revealed how external representations of Italians were constructed. These centred on the use of figurative language that attempted to portray Italians as culturally distant and disdainful of Welsh cultural values. Religion, in particular, appears as a frequent motif in the articles studied, as evidenced by the reporting of criticism around the non-observance of the Sabbath and the supposed irreligiosity of the traders. The exploration of these strategies in the sample articles, therefore, provides an insight into how certain elements of Welsh conservative and non-conformist society attempted to use the press to influence public discourse regarding the café trades. In looking at these examples, it has been possible to address Wendy Ugolini's observation about pre-war hostility, while also shining a light on an area of Welsh-Italian history that has been previously neglected.

Another key strand running through this chapter was its attention to the working experiences of Italian women. In response to criticisms that the history of the cafés and the Italian communities of Britain have largely been studied from a male perspective and thus neglected the historic working practices of women, the chapter engaged with the family narratives concerning women workers in the industry. By opening a dialogue with the works of scholars such as Erin Hatton and Eleanor Hamilton, who looked at the narratives and contributions of women in the workplace, the chapter draws to light the working practices of entrepreneurial women who were active in founding and

developing family businesses. Furthermore, it looked at the presentation of these women from the family histories of members of the contemporary Welsh-Italian community. An analysis of three case studies in particular (Angela-Rosa Arcari, Amabile Lusardi, and Carmela Pelosi) reveals a series of narrative tropes that could be applied to other members of the Italian community. The narratives of strength and heroic narratives integrate the women into significant historical events and challenge the social invisibilisation of working women by shining a light on their working practices.

The working practices of women in this period were portrayed in a way that reflected the values of strength, a hard work ethic, and business-mindedness. These tropes, as the chapter has analysed, were present before and during the Second World War. An exploration of family histories from throughout Wales reveals a common 'loss-growth' narrative structure to discuss the experiences of the affected women. These stories touch on the extent of individual losses (physically and emotionally), which were then redeemed in the tales by circumstances that led to development. The circumstances in the four case studies used in this section - Carmela Pelosi, Annunziata Tortalani, Amabile Lusardi, and Rosa Antoniazzi – show how these accomplishments and responses differed, from collective organisation and resistance among the women who were left behind, to narratives of community solidarity between sympathetic Welsh neighbours and Italian women traders. Regardless of geopolitical events, however, one of the common threads from before and during the war is one of the individual strength of the women workers in the industry as an integral part of the family business.

The chapter has thus marked a first step towards a rewriting of the historical narrative of Italian migration to Wales from its early incarnations in the 1880s through to the Second World War, paying attention to the neglected experiences of Italian workers in the country in this period. The outbreak of war would also bring about a new wave of Italian movement to work in the country in the form of captured prisoners of war. It is their narratives that the following chapter turns to.

CHAPTER TWO

Agency, Identity and Transculturality in Italian Prisoner of War Narratives from Henllan Bridge Camp 70

1. Introduction

In 2013 the *South Wales Echo's* longstanding correspondent Dan O'Neill wrote an opinion piece in the national newspaper *Wales Online* investigating the legacy of Italian and German prisoners of war in Wales. As well as focussing on the infamous escape of German prisoners from Island Farm Camp in Bridgend in March 1945, the journalist presented the following overview of the significant contribution of Italian prisoners during the war:³³⁸

Not so much prisoners as glamorous Italian visitors

They were the enemy, but, really, no-one thought of them like that. This enemy had the familiar face of the bloke behind the counter in the Bracchi, rather than that of the reincarnated all-conquering Roman legionary existing only in the mind of Il Duce. [...] They made themselves right at home, a friendly bunch who were relieved to be out of Monty's way. In fact, so much at home that years later, in 1985, their association [...] presented a trophy to be competed for at the National Eisteddfod. [...] There were plenty of arias echoing round our fields when our guests – not many locals thought of them as enemy soldiers – brought a touch of sunny Italy to the Vale as they entertained the kids who always clustered round. [...] For the land girls these were pretty glamorous co-workers. After all, Italy was the land of Valentino, still regarded 70 years ago as the ultimate heart throb.³³⁹

The article is an example of how the historical narrative of Italian prisoners of war has focused on the positive impact of Italian soldiers and the cultural synergy between the Welsh and the Italians. The stereotypical imagery encapsulates cultural representations of Italian prisoners of war and Italy itself, from the reference to singing arias to Rodolfo Valentino.³⁴⁰ The rhetoric that emerges as a result shifts Italian prisoners away from being captured soldiers and instead imbues conviviality and uncomplicated integration.

³³⁸ 70 German prisoners escaped through a tunnel dug under a perimeter fence on the night of the 10th March 1945.

³³⁹ Dan O'Neill, 'Not so much prisoners as glamorous Italian visitors', *Wales Online*, 10th September 2013, <<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/news-opinion/not-much-prisoners-glamorous-italian-5861924>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

³⁴⁰ Joseph Cosco, *Imagining Italians. The Clash of Romance and Race in American Perceptions 1880 – 1910* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003).

The risk of these assumptions is that the historical narrative of Italian POWs could slide towards a romanticised view that does not reflect the harsh realities encountered. While undoubtedly the images proposed by journalists such as O'Neill touch upon anecdotal evidence and significant historical events, such as the return of Italian POWs to Wales in 1985, these claims require greater contextualisation.

In response, this chapter posits two counter-narratives that revolve around the working experiences of Italian prisoners of war in the country. Firstly, I draw on Barbara Hatley-Broad and Bob Moore's conceptualisation of 'prisoner of war narratives' as a way of assessing the prisoners' associations with the war and their captivity.³⁴¹ Building on historical research that has paid greater attention to how subjects write about their experiences during imprisonment, the chapter moves away from a simplistic reading of Italians as 'glamorous visitors', focusing instead on the psychological impact of being prisoners and their attempts to rebuild their identities in a new environment. Secondly, I cast a more critical eye on the 'positive impact' of Italians and their contribution to the local community. I here use the term 'transcultural narratives' – narratives that are 'capable of crossing the fault lines between cultures and societies, bridging the gaps, overcoming suspicion and prejudice [and] contrasting the logic of oppression that often stems from emotional dynamics' – as a fruitful way of studying interactions and cultural contact between Italian prisoners and Welsh employers.³⁴²

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section consists of a historical contextualisation that introduces the key coordinates regarding Italian prisoner of war experience in North Africa and Great Britain from 1935 to 1946. Given that many of the Italian prisoners of war transferred to Britain had been captured in Northern Africa, a brief overview is provided of Italy's colonial mission in the area under Mussolini, culminating in failure by 1943. British and Allied policies regarding the handling of prisoners are also discussed before introducing the Welsh context.

The second section demonstrates how, over the past half a century, academics studying prisoner of war experience have shifted away from a positivist and Allied-centric historical narrative that uncomplicatedly presented prisoners as individuals whose labour could be used to stimulate a country's economy. These studies also

³⁴¹ Bob Moore and Barbara Hatley-Broad, *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace. Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

³⁴² Maurizio Ascari, *Literature of the Global Age: A Critical Study of Transcultural Narratives*, p. 13.

challenge an oversimplified reading that counterposes the civilised treatment of Axis prisoners by Allied forces with the supposed brutality experienced by Allied prisoners in Axis countries. The section charts the deconstruction of this strand of thought and its replacement by new fields of inquiry, such as the obstacles encountered by prisoners during twentieth-century conflicts. It also highlights the growing trend whereby academics increasingly turn to prisoner of war narratives as a means to understand subjective processes, such as how they conceptualised themselves in 'time and history'.³⁴³ This aspect is relevant in my own reading of POW narratives, where prisoners try to find and reformulate their identities in the context of captivity.

The section then offers an exploration of the diverse historical narratives used to describe the experience of Italian prisoners in Wales. Fleshing out many of the characteristics glimpsed in O'Neill's article above, it displays how a twenty-first-century understanding of Italian prisoners in the country is shaped as much by romanticised images as it is by a political stance that has tended to celebrate the positive contribution of Italian prisoners and downplays their associations with the war. The section lays the ground for the analytical sections by arguing the case for a counter-narrative of Italian prisoner of war experience in Wales founded on how individuals conceived themselves and experienced their captivity and work in Wales.

The third section employs four case studies in order to analyse how the testimonies of Italian prisoners and their families craft a narrative built around the themes of the loss and recovery of their identities. I use two memoirs (Mario Ferlito and Vittorio Bonucci) and testimonies sourced from my oral history interviews with Antoni and Emlyn Schiavone, and Sonia Ferlito to explore the journey of the individuals from arrival to insertion into the workplace. In my analysis, the loss of identity captures the moments in which prisoners deal with the psychological burden of the dehumanising experience of captivity, where individuals lose their individuality by having to conform to the protocol of being POWs. This is later alleviated with prisoners acquiring agency as they reconstruct their identities in line with whom they used to be before becoming soldiers. This is made possible by finding outlets that allow them to reconnect with their past selves and apply transferable skills to a challenging new context, be that in terms of working in similar occupations or taking part in projects related to Italian cultural values.

³⁴³ Grace Huxford, "Write your life!": British Prisoners of War in the Korean War (1950–1953) and Enforced Life Narratives, *Life Writing*, 12.1 (2015), 3–23, p. 14.

Lastly, the fourth section proposes an enhanced reading of the narratives of conviviality typically used to describe relationships between Welsh and Italian subjects. Crucially, I use the concept of ‘transcultural narratives’ to explore the significance of cultural contact that emerges through the exchanging of food, material objects, music, and religion. These are used to identify critically how these markers bring about reflections between employers and prisoner-labourers regarding individual cultures and their links to the war. This has been investigated in my analysis of the two memoirs used above (Vittorio Bonucci and Mario Ferlito), my interview with Emlyn and Vito Schiavone, and a further oral history interview conducted with the descendants of an Italian prisoner of war (Bianca Laura and Flavio Benetti).

Regarding the typology and number of camps to be analysed, the chapter focuses exclusively on Henllan Bridge Camp 70 in Carmarthenshire. The motivation for this lies in the growing mediatic interest surrounding the camp amidst its preservation and the sense of community fostered around it. Henllan Bridge has been the subject of Jon Meirion Jones’ 2007 novel *Y Llinyn Arian* and Owain Llyr’s 2009 film *La Casa di Dio*.³⁴⁴ It also acquired fame for the conservation of a chapel built by Italians, as well as a *fresco* of Leonardo Da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* carried out by Mario Ferlito.³⁴⁵ Henllan Bridge is the subject of an online community that organises commemorative visits and exchanges information about family members, both Italian and Welsh.³⁴⁶ Italian prisoners also returned to Henllan Bridge as part of Jon Meirion Jones’s project to preserve the history of the Chapel and most famously donated a trophy to the 1986 Eisteddfod.³⁴⁷ The links with Henllan Bridge also extend beyond Wales; the former prisoners organised annual rallies in Northern Italy between the 1970s and 1990s, and some of their descendants are actively working on projects such as publishing the memoirs of their families.³⁴⁸ The demographic make-up of the camp is another motivation for a study exclusively focussing

³⁴⁴ Jon Meirion Jones, *Y Llinyn Arian*; Owain Llyr, *La casa di Dio*, (Bwcibo, Llandysul, 2009).

³⁴⁵ ‘Prisoners of War’s labour of love’, *BBC Wales*, 20th October 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/midwales/hi/people_and_places/religion_and_ethics/newsid_8306000/8306541.stm, last accessed 25th June 2021; Brendan McFadden, ‘Inside secret WW2 chapel built by Italian POWs in a remote British village’, *Daily Mirror*, 25th August 2019.

³⁴⁶ ‘Henllan POW Camp’, <https://henllanpowcamp70.com/> (last accessed 7th February 2023); see also ‘Henllan Bridge Prison of War Camp 70’, *Facebook*, <https://www.facebook.com/henllanbridgepow70> (last accessed 7th February 2023).

³⁴⁷ Jon Meirion Jones, *Y Llinyn Arian*; Marco Giudici, ‘A “Positive” Displacement? Italian POWs in World War II Britain’, *War and Displacement in the Twentieth Century, Global Conflicts*, eds. Angela K. Smith and Sandra Barkhof (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2014), 89–101.

³⁴⁸ Sonia Ferlito, interviewed by Gareth White, 3rd June 2021; Flavio and Bianca-Laura Benetti, interviewed by Gareth White 2nd June 2021; Paola Scarante, interviewed by Gareth White 17th February 2021.

on Henllan Bridge. Between 1943 and 1946, Henllan Bridge was populated only by Italians, as opposed to other mixed-nationality camps.³⁴⁹ The prospect of studying Italian prisoner of war narratives is, therefore, an opportunity to investigate what could be interpreted as a largely self-contained Italian community in Wales where some Italians returned to after the war.

2. Historical Context: from the Sands of El-Alamein to the Hills of Carmarthenshire

Since Benito Mussolini's ascension in 1922, Italian foreign policy had mobilised towards transforming the country into a colonial power by making a series of strategic territorial gains in North and East Africa. During the early stages of the Second World War, Mussolini sought to consolidate on the previous success of the Ethiopian campaign (1935-36) by attempting to expand Italian influence beyond its territorial borders and into Egypt.³⁵⁰ Considered 'the missing piece' in his African empire, an Italian presence in Egypt would result in strategic control of the Suez Canal while also providing a base that could link Italy both with the Middle East and the Indian Ocean.³⁵¹ In 1940, with Britain preoccupied with a potential German invasion, the Italian army advanced into Kenya, Sudan, and British Somaliland, as well as into Alessandria from Libya.³⁵² In hoping that Britain would have preferred to negotiate with Italy and legitimise its acquisitions rather than engage in open warfare with the country, Mussolini misread the reaction of the other global powers.³⁵³ Between 1941 and 1943, Allied forces under the British inflicted a series of defeats upon the Axis forces, with 'more than half a million Italian servicemen [...] taken prisoner by British forces, and a further 130,000 by their American allies.'³⁵⁴ From a position of near dominance, Mussolini's African campaign ended in complete capitulation with substantial numbers of Italian soldiers becoming prisoners of war.

In the autumn of 1942, the coastal towns of El-Alamein, Tobruk, Sidi el Barrani and Marsa Matruk became a major theatre of war in the battle for control of Egypt. Under General Erwin Rommel, Italian and German forces attempted to defeat defending Allied

³⁴⁹ 'Henllan Bridge Prisoner of War Camp', *Coflein* <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/419278/>, (last accessed 7th February 2023).

³⁵⁰ Haile Larebo, 'Empire Building and its Limitations: Ethiopia (1935-1941)', *Italian Colonialism*, eds. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005), 83- 94.

³⁵¹ John Gooch, *Mussolini's War: Fascist Italy from Triumph to Collapse, 1935-1943*, p. 283.

³⁵² Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and Its Italian Prisoners of War*, p. 2.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 2

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

soldiers in August 1942. This was followed by a counter-offensive by British and American soldiers that resulted in the capture of 100,000 Italians and the 'collapse of the Axis forces' in Northern Africa by 1943.³⁵⁵ Imprisonment was met with the opportunity for Italians to confront their engagement with fascism, and viewed capture 'as a frustration, a disappointment or as a personal humiliation' or as a 'blessed release from the dangers of warfare and fighting for a cause in which they did not believe.'³⁵⁶ These sentiments were documented in a memorandum written by the British Secretary for State for Foreign Affairs in 1943, where the growing delusion to fascism following various defeats experienced by Italy is discussed:

[r]eports from the Italian Prisoner of War Camps in this country, in Africa, and, above all, in India, show that during the last few months, there has been a considerable increase in the number of officers and men who are antagonistic to the Fascist regime. It is legitimate to assume that the increasing antagonism is in proportion to the decrease of faith in an Italian victory.³⁵⁷

With the African campaign over and a large body of enemy soldiers designated as prisoners of war, attention soon turned to the management of the German and Italian soldiers. British policy before 1941 was to transfer all prisoners of war to the dominions of the British Empire for fear that the presence of captured soldiers would prove 'dramatic in the event that Axis forces managed to invade the British mainland'.³⁵⁸ As such, by the end of March 1941, Allied forces reached agreements with other Commonwealth nations in terms of the number of prisoners of war that they could accept. 30,000 soldiers were thus sent to India, 17,822 to Kenya, 41,000 to Sudan, 10,000 to South Africa and 2,000 to Ceylon.³⁵⁹ Negotiations between Britain and Australia in this period also occurred, with an agreement eventually reached that witnessed 18,400 Italians and Germans who were sent to Australia between 1941 and 1945.³⁶⁰ And by spring 1941, in a change of policy, discussions in the British War Cabinet soon shifted in favour of bringing a selected group of prisoners to the United Kingdom.

³⁵⁵ Jonathan Fennell, *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign – The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 26; Isabella Insolubile, *Wops, I prigionieri italiani in Gran Bretagna*, p. 4.

³⁵⁶ Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and Its Italian Prisoners of War*, p. 3.

³⁵⁷ 'Italian Prisoners of War: Memorandum of Secretary for State for Foreign Affairs', 18th February 1943, TNA, CAB 66/34/23.

³⁵⁸ 'drammatica(a) nel caso in cui le forze dell'Asse fossero riuscite a sbarcare sulle isole'. Isabella Insolubile, *Wops, I prigionieri italiana in Gran Bretagna*, p. 6 [translation my own].

³⁵⁹ Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and Its Italian Prisoners of War*, p. 21.

³⁶⁰ Cited in Francesco Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, History, Memory, Identity, p. 28.

The decision to bring Axis prisoners of war to Britain stemmed from a growing need to address labour shortages in the British workforce by 1941, since 4.5 million men and women had transferred into war occupations by 1943 to the detriment of essential industries.³⁶¹ The War Cabinet failed to 'secure sufficient labour allocations' as a result of the redeployment of the active workforce, which itself had a significant effect on wartime agricultural labour.³⁶² The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries reported losses of 30,000 to 35,000 farm workers by March 1940 alone, and labour shortages were reported across the United Kingdom.³⁶³ In response, an early pilot scheme involving the transfer of '2,000 – 3,000 North Italian peasants' from Libya to Britain was launched in January 1941, with the workers involved in 'urgent drainage, ditching, and reclamation work.'³⁶⁴ This would later be expanded to 25,000 Italians by June 1941 to produce weapons for the British or to work on war defence projects, such as the Churchill Barriers in Scapa Flow, Orkney Islands.³⁶⁵

Initially, Italian prisoners were preferred to Germans by the British War Cabinet. They were generally seen as 'una fonte di manodopera inestimabile e apparentemente inesauribile' ('a valuable and infinite workforce').³⁶⁶ On the one hand, German POWs were deemed a 'serious security threat', especially in light of the potential German invasion of Britain; the Italians were, on the other hand, 'considered to pose less of a danger'.³⁶⁷ Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich hypothesise that the preference for Italians could also have been due to intelligence reports from Middle East command who noted that 'many Italian Colonial Army prisoners thought the war unnecessary, were sympathetic to Britain and were virulently anti-German', as well as openly identifying as 'fascists by force'.³⁶⁸ Positive evaluations of the pilot scheme resulted in the increase of Italian prisoners throughout the Second World War to 74,900 Italians in 1943, 140,000

³⁶¹ Margaret Gowing, 'The Organisation of Manpower in Britain during the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 7,1/2 (1972), 147–167.

³⁶² Johann Custodis, 'Employing the enemy: the contribution of German and Italian Prisoners of War to British agriculture during and after the Second World War', *Agricultural History Review*, 60, II (2012), 243–265, p. 249.

³⁶³ Alan Malpass, "'Disastrous" and "Detrimental": The National Union of Agricultural Workers' Complaints against the Employment of Axis Prisoners of War, 1939–1948', *History*, 104,363 (2020).

³⁶⁴ Cabinet Office, 'Italian Prisoners of War for Land Reclamation Work', 13th January 1941, *The National Archives*, CAB 67/9/6.

³⁶⁵ Johann Custodis, 'Exploiting the enemy in the Orkneys: The employment of Italian prisoners of war on the Scapa Flow Barriers during the Second World War', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 31.1 (2011), 72–98.

³⁶⁶ Isabelle Insolubile, *Wop: I prigionieri italiani in Gran Bretagna*, p. 6.

³⁶⁷ Johann Custodis, 'Employing the enemy', p. 245.

³⁶⁸ Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War*, p. 31.

by November 1944, and 162,000 at its peak in June 1945.³⁶⁹ These numbers were eventually supplemented by German prisoners of war who, after 1944, were transferred to the country when the supposed threat and necessity for greater numbers of workers altered the previous veto on their recruitment.³⁷⁰

The unprecedented increase in the number of Italian prisoners of war between 1943 and 1944 coincided with the end of hostilities between Britain and Italy. On the 8th September 1943, the signing of the Armistice of Cassibile effectively brought the war between Italy and Britain to an end. By this time, however, the British government had realised that captured prisoners played a fundamental role in supporting the domestic economy as the war continued with Germany. In communications aimed at motivating the continued imprisonment of Italians after 1943 and the increased number of prisoners to work in the country, the War Office declared:

[t]he cessation of hostilities with Italy as a result of the signing of the Armistice does not of itself make any difference under International Law to the status of Italians held in this country. They remain prisoners of war. We shall continue to treat them with respect and all consideration. Discipline must however be maintained and orders obeyed. Italians must realise that their country is short of food and necessities, in obtaining which she must look to the United Nations for assistance. They are urged to work hard in this country and by so doing they will be helping their families in Italy.³⁷¹

As reflected above, camp commanders were advised to respond to inquisitive Italians asking about their release from imprisonment that they should 'work hard' to 'help their families'. Captivity was thus recast as an opportunity to provide financial stability to their families in exchange for their continued cooperation. The British government, as stated by the remark that the 'end of hostilities' would make no difference in terms of the status of the Italians in the country, valued Italian labour highly and saw the prisoners as a vital part of the British workforce. This is also suggested by Winston Churchill in a meeting in 1943, where the importance of an Italian workforce in the United Kingdom is addressed more specifically:

[w]here are [sic] the great mass that we have taken? Over 250,000 were captured by General Wavell alone. It would be rather difficult to move to England, men taken after the armistice who have done their best to help us or have not resisted at all, but we have these larger pools to draw on, and work in the UK is more important than in India or South Africa.

³⁶⁹ CO, 'Employment of Italian Prisoners of War in the United Kingdom, 10th September 1943, TNA CAB 66/40/42; CO, 'Employment of Italian Prisoners of War', 24th November 1944, TNA, CAB 66/58/36;

³⁷⁰ By August 1945, 381,000 German POWs were employed in Great Britain. See Alan Malpass, *British Character and the Treatment of German Prisoners of War, 1939–48* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

³⁷¹ CO, 'Position of Italian Prisoners of War After Armistice', 14th September 1943, TNA, CAB 66/40/45.

... I certainly look forward to getting 100,000 more Italians into England for work purposes during 1944.³⁷²

As a means to capitalise on the end of hostilities with Italy in 1943, policy soon shifted to offering all Italian prisoners the chance to become official *collaborators* in the British war effort shortly after the signing of the armistice. In accepting the status of ‘co-belligerent’, Italian workers could transition from the predominantly agricultural work that they had originally been limited to and commence professional engagement as part of Italian Labour Battalions.³⁷³ The volunteers who accepted these terms would be ‘directly connected with the operations of war’, and in exchange received improved working conditions such as greater remuneration, the cessation of the obligation to remain in prison camps, and even acquire essential rights such as the protection of income in cases of sickness.³⁷⁴ The alternative for those who either feared reprisals against their families or whose ideological convictions of how working for the British war effort contradicted their loyalties to Italy would be the continuation of their experience as prisoners of war.³⁷⁵

Conditions in the POW camps were regulated by the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War ratified in July 1929. The Convention was responsible for creating an environment that fostered the positive treatment of detainees during the Second World War and provided clear regulations for signatory powers regarding the accommodation requirements, cultural activities, and status of prisoners. It also provided clear guidelines for the employment of prisoners. ‘Physically fit’ workmen prisoners could work for belligerents in any industry that was not linked directly to the war (such as munitions production or transportation).³⁷⁶ They would receive payment in the form of tokens or a small wage in exchange for their work, were granted rest days (‘preferably on Sunday’) and were entitled to rights such as sick leave.³⁷⁷ The Convention provided protection from labour exploitation and, whenever

³⁷² Churchill to Lord Pres., ‘Future status of Italian prisoners’, 16 September 1943, TNA, PREM 3/364/2.

³⁷³ Isabella Insolubile, ‘More than just prisoners: la cooperazione’, *WOPs, I prigionieri italiani in Gran Bretagna*, pp. 111–223.

³⁷⁴ Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War, 1940 – 1947*, p. 151.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ For employment regulations, see Section III, Articles 27–34 of ‘Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27th July 1929’, available at < <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/assets/treaties/305-IHL-GC-1929-2-EN.pdf>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

infringements occurred, provided a legal backbone to any strike action undertaken by prisoners.³⁷⁸

One of the countries to benefit from prisoner of war labour was Wales, which witnessed a steady increase in the numbers of engaged Italian POWs proportionate to elsewhere in the United Kingdom.³⁷⁹ However, in the Welsh case, it could be claimed that the requirement to recruit Italian prisoners of war was driven both by a reduction in the active workforce and a series of policies that expanded the country's agricultural economy. Welsh historians such as John Graham Jones and Stuart Broomfield, in their own studies of wartime Wales, point out that the Second World War transformed the Welsh economy and drastically reduced unemployment (down from 145,867 in 1939 to 7,302 by 1944).³⁸⁰ This coincided with the rise in female employment in the country, rising from 94,000 women working in industrial Wales in 1939 to 204,000 by 1945.³⁸¹ The quota for arable agricultural land in Wales also increased from 215,000 hectares to 500,000 between 1939 and 1944 to feed the nation.³⁸² The 'increase in the home production of human foodstuffs' caused 'the need for more labour', as reported by a paper published in the *Welsh Journal of Agriculture* in 1943.³⁸³ This need was resolved in part by an alternative coalition of women, university students, former soldiers, and prisoners of war.³⁸⁴

From a quantitative point of view, Wales received comparatively few – 7,262 – of the 153,233 Italian prisoners recorded in 1944. However, as Giudici notes, this number acquires more significance in consideration of the relatively small population of Wales (an estimate of 2,626,000 in 1941).³⁸⁵ A total of twenty-three sites were designated as prisoner-of-war camps in the country, of which seven camps are noted to have housed primarily Italians. Henllan Bridge (Camp 70) and Llanddarog Camp (Camp 102) were populated exclusively by Italians between 1943 and 1946. Pool Park Camp, Ruthin (Camp 38), Greenfield Camp, Presteigne (Camp 48), Glandulas Camp, Newtown (Camp 101),

³⁷⁸ For accounts of strike action taken by Italian prisoners, see Lucio Sponza, *Divided Loyalties*, pp. 220–2.

³⁷⁹ Marco Giudici, 'Memory, Migration and Identity', p. 51.

³⁸⁰ John Graham Jones, *The History of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014; Stuart Broomfield, *Wales at War: The Experience of the Second World War in Wales* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009).

³⁸¹ Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

³⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 20 – 22.

³⁸³ *Welsh Journal of Agriculture*, 17/18, (1943), p. 51.

³⁸⁴ 'Help for Farmers', *Western Mail*, 11th August 1942.

³⁸⁵ Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity,' p. 52.

Mardy Camp, Abergavenny (Camp 118), and Pabo Hall Camp, Llandudno (Camp 119) were all registered as containing significant numbers of Italians.³⁸⁶

With specific regard to Henllan Bridge, the camp was originally built between 1940 and 1941 as a purpose-built facility to detain Italian prisoners. The camp consisted of 35 dormitory huts, a kitchen, a hospital, bathing facilities, and a theatre.³⁸⁷ The first deployment of Italian soldiers from Libya and Tunisia arrived at the local train station in 1943; from then, the presence of Italians in Henllan would continue until the eventual repatriation in 1946 after which the camp was populated exclusively by German prisoners of war.³⁸⁸ The number of Italians present in the camp varied throughout this period, although archival documents suggest a capacity of approximately 1,200 Italians who were based at the camp.³⁸⁹

Boosted by the initial successes of the trial schemes involving prisoner-of-war labour in the British agricultural sector, discussions soon began to focus on ways of improving productivity and resolving the logistical problem caused by the lodging of prisoners in central camp locations.³⁹⁰ Under the prior arrangements, the Italians of Henllan would be ‘dropped off in the mornings’ and ‘driven back to the prisoner of war camp’ in the evenings with the presence of an armed guard.³⁹¹ The farms would be located in the neighbouring counties of Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, in some cases over an hour away from the central location.³⁹² In order to reduce the travel times and to increase the yield of the workers, a series of solutions were proposed by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. A series of *hostels* (satellite camps) was established in the autumn of 1941 that would be situated in the vicinity of the *parent camp*, allowing groups of between 30 and 50 men to live closer to the workplace.³⁹³ It was not until 1942, with the positive evaluations of the War Office Directorate of Prisoners of War and the Ministry of

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ ‘Henllan Bridge Prisoner of War Camp, Henllan’, *COFLEIN*, <<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/419278/?term=henllan&pg=2>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

³⁸⁸ ‘Henllan Bridge Prisoner of War Camp, Henllan’, *COFLEIN*, <<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/419278/?term=henllan&pg=2>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; Foreign Office (FO), ‘PoW Camp List 20th February 1947 inc PoW Camp 70’, 30th October 1947, TNA, FO 1120/183; FO, PoW Camp 70 Henllan Bridge – Inspection Report’, 12th January 1948, TNA, FO 939/151.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Alan Malpass, *British Character and the Treatment of German Prisoners of War, 1939 – 1948*, p. 109.

³⁹¹ Mark and Maria Belotti, interviewed by Gareth White, 28th October 2021.

³⁹² John Meirion Jones, email to Gareth White, 24th September 2021.

³⁹³ The National Archives, War Office, 1941 September – 1942 January, WO 199/406.

Agriculture suggesting that restrictions on Italians working in agriculture would be further relaxed, that a more radical solution was proposed: lodging Italians directly in the farms where they worked.³⁹⁴

Under the conditions of the *billeting* system, the farmers hosting Italians would be responsible for the room and board, and could claim the expenses from the government (40 shillings per week for the first three months, increasing to 48 thereafter).³⁹⁵ Billeting was seen as a favourable solution for all parties: the government saw it as a means to 'save the costs of guarding, accommodation, transportation and food, shifted responsibility to the farmer, and increased net working time.'³⁹⁶ The farmers would gain financial benefits in exchange for the provision of a space for the workers within their farmholds, and the workers who enjoyed agricultural life could stay on-site rather than return to life behind barbed wire in the camps.

Over time, the Italian prisoners would reportedly make a 'great contribution to the local economy and life.'³⁹⁷ Many returned to Italy after 1946, although a small number did return to the area to settle due to the lack of economic opportunities in Italy and their positive experiences in Wales.³⁹⁸ The themes of POW treatment and experience are discussed in the following section.

3. Historical Narratives vs Prisoner of War Narratives

A review of the literature regarding the experiences of prisoners of war reveals parallels with the evolution of the field of work and migration studies (see literature review of this thesis). The historical narrative of prisoners of war throughout the twentieth century tends to focus on two critical aspects. Firstly, prisoners are considered as individuals who would be beneficial for a country's economy by constituting an exploitable workforce. Their general experiences are configured within the historical development of their captors' nations, mirroring the way that migrant workers fitted into the arrival country's

³⁹⁴ Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War, 1940 – 1947*, p. 34.

³⁹⁵ Isabella Insolubile, *WOPs, I prigionieri italiani in Gran Bretagna*, p. 24.

³⁹⁶ Johann Custodis, 'Employing the enemy', p. 251.

³⁹⁷ 'Henllan Bridge Prisoner of War Camp, Henllan', *COFLEIN*, <<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/419278/?term=henllan&pg=2>>, last accessed 17th June 2021.

³⁹⁸ Interviews with Emlyn and Antoni Schiavone, 4th and 18th February 2021 ; Toni Sarracini, 17th February 2021; TS, 18th February 2022; Mark and Maria Belotti, 28th October 2021; Tony Vasami, 10th December 2020.

national histories. Secondly, a narrative of tolerance emerges that argues that, compared to Axis countries, Second World War prisoners were treated 'well' by Allied powers. The first of these strands can be identified in Gerald Davis' 1977 article, where he outlines the role of the prisoner of war in twentieth-century economical systems:

[h]e is more than a casualty to be subtracted out of a war's history, more than a neutralised vehicle of propaganda, object of charitable relief, or pawn of diplomatic relations. [...] As a soldier without dishonour (usually) under the power and care of the enemy, his experience as a prisoner may best be documented in foreign archives. As a worker who may legitimately play a positive role in the enemy's economy, his greatest historical impact may indeed be to benefit the enemy.³⁹⁹

Davis' assessment of how prisoners 'benefit the enemy' clearly frames the debate surrounding the matter. The narrative of prisoner of war experience is constructed from the perspective of the captor, who dehumanises POWs by considering them as 'enemies'. This is countermanded by the perception that the captors allowed prisoners to be resourceful and help their enemy's causes. This framework runs through several investigations produced in the decades after the Second World War. Howard Levie points out how military powers throughout history took advantage of captured soldiers to financially sustain themselves, and even draws on how Italian prisoners of war in the Mediterranean theatre were 'the only thing which made it possible for the United States to sustain simultaneously both the Italian campaign and the invasion of Southern France, thereby hastening the downfall of Germany.'⁴⁰⁰ Prisoners are identified as being fundamental to creating a 'developed, surplus economy', rather than being killed in battle.⁴⁰¹

As for the narrative of the benevolence of Allied Powers, this is also perpetuated across the latter half of the twentieth century. Studies such as the aforementioned Gerald Davis' are quick to not only discredit claims of mistreatment (linking them instead to propaganda), but also foreground how the 'fair treatment' of German POWs' in America was fundamental towards protecting Americans 'in German hands.'⁴⁰² The historical narrative proposed focuses on the contrast between tolerant Allies and savage Axis, such as how Simon McKenzie notes the tendency of earlier works to point out the 'brutal

³⁹⁹ Gerald H. Davis, 'Prisoners of War in Twentieth-Century War Economies', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12, (1977), 623–644, p. 623.

⁴⁰⁰ Howard S. Levie, 'The Employment of Prisoners of War', *American Journal of International Law*, 57.2 (1963), 318–353, p. 323.

⁴⁰¹ I. J. Gelb, 'Prisoners of war in early Mesopotamia', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 32.1/2 (1973), 70–98.

⁴⁰² Gerald Davis, 'Prisoners of War in Twentieth-Century War Economies', p. 625.

behaviour' experienced by Allied prisoners in Japanese POW camps compared to the 'fair treatment' of Japanese POWs by Americans.⁴⁰³ Similarly, the 'harsher treatment endured' by American POWs in 'Axis hands' is contrasted to the 'high standards' Axis prisoners encountered in America.⁴⁰⁴ Together, these early interventions reveal an Allied-centric viewpoint built around the notion of tolerant captors humanely engaging prisoners in work activities.

The stance that this chapter adopts when considering prisoner of war experience derives from the paradigmatic shifts that invigorated the field of Prisoner of War Studies. As of the 1990s, scholars increasingly debunked the previous historical narratives discussed above. For instance, the 'benevolent Allies' narrative is challenged in country-specific research produced in the South African, British, American, and Australian contexts.⁴⁰⁵ Positive treatment is noted, but there is often a contextualisation regarding societal reactions from natives living near the camps. Francesco Ricatti's study of the Italians in Australia over the twentieth century offers one such telling reminder. Ricatti does note that the scheme of allowing Italians to work on private farms helped them 'build good and respectful relationships with the farmers', and has generally been hailed as a 'great success'.⁴⁰⁶ But these are juxtaposed with references to Italians stereotypically described as being 'lazy' or 'blood-thirsty fighters', and how 'episodes of violence and sedition organised by fascist POWs' occurred in the camps.⁴⁰⁷ In these studies, positive treatment is generally ascribed to cultural experiences available to prisoners such as arts and crafts projects, orchestras and workshops. These are often balanced with recollections of war antagonism or sexual jealousy, implying a push to objectify the study of prisoner of war experience.

Other studies directly take issue with the 'benevolent Allies/brutal Axis' narrative by either focusing on positive experiences of POWs in Axis countries, or by examining

⁴⁰³ S P Mackenzie, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II', *The Journal of Modern History*, 66.3 (1994), 487–520.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

⁴⁰⁵ Cecilia Kruger, 'The Zonderwater Italian Prisoners of War 1941– 1947: Fifty Years Down The Line', *South African Journal of Cultural History*, 10.2, 1996, 88–104; Flavio G. Conti and Alan R. Perry, *Italian Prisoners of War in Pennsylvania – Allies on the Home Front, 1944 – 1945* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016); Susan Badger Doyle, 'German and Italian Prisoners of War in Albuquerque 1943 – 1946', *New Mexico Historical Review*, 66.3, (1991), 327 – 340; Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, 'Farming Down Under': Italian POWs in Australia, 1941 – 3', *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War, 1940 – 1947*, pp. 72 – 91.

⁴⁰⁶ Francesco Ricatti, *Italians in Australia, History, Memory, Identity*, p. 61.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

negative treatments experienced by Axis POWs in Allied countries. A notable example of this concerns investigations around the 'Shackling Crisis'. In 1943, British and German prisoners were chained in an ever-escalating series of retaliations, constituting another area of research that problematises the narrative of Allied forces as benevolent captors and depicting them as equally susceptible of mistreating their captives. Both sides were accused at this time of placing chains on captured soldiers, prompting much indignation amongst the British public and almost escalating into a breakdown in terms of the treatment of captured enemy soldiers.⁴⁰⁸ Studies such as Alan Malpass' or Simon McKenzie's disrupt the assumption that the treatment of Axis prisoners by the British was overwhelmingly positive by foregrounding the role played by Allied and Axis forces in the ensuing diplomatic standoff.⁴⁰⁹ This also manifests in studies focusing on the experiences of Italian POWs in Lamb Holm camp, Orkney Islands, where Johann Custodis highlights instances of the exploitation and supposed manipulation of Italian prisoners employed to assist in the construction of Churchill Barriers, despite the direct involvement of POWs in war-related occupations being a contravention of the Geneva Convention of 1929 regarding the treatment of prisoners of war.⁴¹⁰

The counter-narrative of prisoners of war highlighted above depends much on the integration of direct testimonies and new historical sources into the study of POW experience. The previous body of studies adopts a thematic approach, looks at the treatment of prisoners by their captors, and is interested largely in the *general* experience of prisoners.⁴¹¹ More recent academic work, on the other hand, is driven by a quest to capture their *individual* experiences, and draws heavily on the analysis of personal narratives in letters, diaries, and oral histories to achieve this. These are used to provide novel perspectives regarding conditions and challenge the simplified narratives of earlier studies. As such, new narratives have been proposed that more accurately capture POW experience, decontextualise them from an Allied-centric perspective, and highlight subjective processes, hardships encountered, and unique trajectories.

⁴⁰⁸ See Alan Malpass, *British Character and the German Prisoners of War*. See also S. P. Mackenzie, 'The Shackling Crisis: A Case-Study in the Dynamics of Prisoner-of-war Diplomacy in the Second World War', *The International History Review*, 17.1 (1995), 78–98.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ Johann Custodis, 'Exploiting the Enemy in the Orkneys'.

⁴¹¹ Karen Horn, 'Narratives from North Africa: South African prisoner-of-war experience falling the fall of Tobruk, June 1942', *Historia*, 56.2 (2011), 94–112.

The quest to define these experiences manifests in the attempts of scholars to define what can be understood as ‘prisoner of war narratives’. Studies related to global twentieth-century conflicts have attempted to identify the ‘sequential stages’ of the testimonies of former prisoners as they try to negotiate their experiences of captivity.⁴¹² These are typically related to his ‘combat experience before his capture’, the ‘sense of shame of being taken prisoner’, the ‘inactivity and deprivations suffered during military internment’, and the ‘hostile or welcoming reception on his return’.⁴¹³ As Robert Doyle notes:

[o]ne gains from POW narratives an appreciation for the realities of life-and-death conflicts, the struggles between personal and institutional concepts of duty, visions of individual heroism, and ultimately, the paradigmatic shift from defeat to victory in the captive’s thinking about the nature of the experience itself.⁴¹⁴

POW narratives have increasingly been used to pay greater attention to the subjective processes associated with imprisonment. They highlight how prisoners tackle the defeat of their countries and the ‘series of failures which degrade their protagonists’ core social and personal autonomy and identity, such as in Christopher Lloyd’s exploration of French POW narratives from World War Two or Frank Biess’s investigation of returning German POWs narratives from Russian POW camps.’⁴¹⁵ They also pay attention to the changing relationship of the former POW with the country where they were captured, as documented in Karen Horn’s study of the way that South African soldiers tended to write more positive accounts of Italy based on a ‘more sympathetic view of their Italian captors.’⁴¹⁶

Crucially, as I argue in this chapter, prisoner of war narratives are used to provide insights into how individuals composed and reformulated their identities during imprisonment. Grace Huxford’s analysis of British POW narratives in Korea during the Korean War of 1950 – 1953, or Clare Makepeace’s work on British soldiers in Germany

⁴¹² Robert C. Doyle, *Voices from Captivity: Interpreting the American POW narrative* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1994), p. 5.

⁴¹³ Bob Moore and Barbara Hatley-Broad, *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace. Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II*, p. 5.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴¹⁵ Christopher Lloyd, ‘Enduring Captivity: French POW Narratives of World War II’, *Journal of War & Cultural Studies*, 6.1 (2013), 24–39, p. 27; Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Post-war Germany* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁴¹⁶ Karen Horn, ‘Narratives from North Africa: South African prisoner-of-war experience falling the fall of Tobruk, June 1942’, p. 111.

and Italy during the Second World War are relevant case studies in this matter.⁴¹⁷ Huxford is attentive to the narrative practices of British soldiers imprisoned in Korea. She ‘unsettles assumptions about the agency of self-narration’ by exploring how British soldiers were forced to write their life histories in diaries to ‘reconceptualise (themselves) and (their) role in time’ as part of their imprisonment during the Korean War (1950–1953).⁴¹⁸ Elsewhere, Clare Makepeace’s analysis of British soldiers’ testimonies recorded in camp logbooks and diaries from German and Italian POW camps investigates the ways that capture and imprisonment linked into expressions of masculinity and emancipation.⁴¹⁹ The two works are relevant as they suggest greater inspection of narratives are needed in order to consider the circumstances in which POW narratives were created, the way that these frame the individual temporally and physically, and how they pay attention to multiple aspects of identity – for instance, as soldiers, individuals, or men.

3.1. Italian Prisoner of War Narratives in Wales

The contemporary narrative regarding Italian POW experience in Wales has focused on a dominant theme: the conviviality and cultural contribution of Italians to the country. This is echoed in twenty-first century newspaper reports, as well as in historical websites, theatre plays, and academic literature. A narrative synthesis on this topic typically draws on the specific case of Henllan Bridge prisoner-of-war camp and the exploits of Mario Ferlito, a Venetian soldier who is renowned for having painted a fresco of Leonardo Da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* on the roof of a chapel converted from former army barracks. Several news articles, but also history books such as Welsh author Jon Meirion Jones’ *Y Llinyn Arian*, focus extensively on Mario Ferlito’s history.⁴²⁰ This notion

⁴¹⁷ Grace Huxford, “‘Write your life!’: British Prisoners of War in the Korean War (1950–1953) and Enforced Life Narratives,” pp. 3–23.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴¹⁹ Clare Makepeace, *Captives of War: British Prisoners of War in Europe in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁴²⁰ Jon Meirion Jones, *Y Llinyn Arian; Owain Llyr, La casa di Dio*, (Bwcibo, Llandysul, 2009); ‘Prisoners of War’s labour of love’, *BBC Wales*, 20th October 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/midwales/hi/people_and_places/religion_and_ethics/newsid_8306000/8306541.stm, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; Brendan McFadden, ‘Inside secret WW2 chapel built by Italian POWs in a remote British village’, *Daily Mirror*, 25th August 2019; ‘Italian POW Chapel founder

is clearly illustrated in a 2019 news report published in the British tabloid *The Mirror* concerning the history of the chapel:

[m]ore than 1,200 Italians captured in Libya and Tunisia arrived in Henllan [...] in 1942 and were held in huts and sheds. Their camp was equipped with a hospital, theatres, football pitches, tennis courts, a bowling green and kitchens. Many of the Italians were deeply religious and asked military bosses if they could build a Roman Catholic church in one of the huts in the camp. Stunning images show the inside of the church which is all that remains of the camp and was decorated entirely by the prisoners. They show stunning religious paintings painted by a prisoner, Mario Ferlito, who taught himself to paint when h(is) family were unable to pay for him to go to art school.⁴²¹

The historical narrative that emerges in these comments stresses cultural enrichment and positive treatment. This is in line with Marco Giudici's assessment of prisoner of war testimonies. Drawing on Katherine Goodnow's term of *enhancement narrative*, Giudici argues that the testimonies 'highlight what minorities add to a country, particularly in the form of new food, music and crafts.'⁴²² There is a particular focus on 'architectural and artistic accomplishments, not for risking their lives for the nation.'⁴²³ They also revolve around prisoner of war associations and their continued engagement with the sites where they were located (similarly to Kruger's study of Zonderwater), such as the return of former Italians to a Welsh Eisteddfod in 1986 to present the *Tlws yr Eidalwyr*. In 1977, a delegation of former Italian prisoners, including Mario Ferlito and Manfredo Benetti, returned to Wales to visit the camp. In 1986, they 'symbolically donated' a special trophy of peace known as the *Tlws yr Eidalwyr* (The Italians' Trophy). Local press coverage, as Giudici notes, argued that the trophy was 'a special thank you from all those prisoners who returned to Italy when peace was declared', further confirming the narrative of friendship and conviviality.⁴²⁴

Enhancement narratives provide one insight into the focus on cultural betterment and positive treatment. Another can be determined in the political agendas of Allied countries and the historical narratives of World War Two. Marco Giudici's thesis engages in great depth with how late twentieth and twenty-first century Wales' political stance is

dies', *BBC News*, 1st May 2009, < <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/mid/8028750.stm>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; 'The ugly industrial estate tin box that has a breathtakingly beautiful secret inside', *Wales Online*, 25th August 2019, < <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/ugly-industrial-estate-tin-box-16809864>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

⁴²¹ Brendan McFadden, 'Inside secret WW2 chapel built by Italian POWs in a remote British village', *The Mirror*.

⁴²² Marco Giudici, 'A "Positive" Displacement? Italian POWs in World War II Britain', p. 93.

⁴²³ Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings. Memory, Space, Identity*, p. 92.

⁴²⁴ See Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', p. 118.

emphasised by the theme of ‘tolerance’ and inclusivity proposed by post-devolution Wales.⁴²⁵ This is echoed in Anne-Marie Fortier’s findings about the historical narrative of Italian prisoner-of-war experience presented during anniversary celebrations. She notes:

[a]nniversary celebrations that took place on these sites cancel out past enmities by highlighting past and present friendship and conviviality between English and Italians: honouring an English veteran, or praising the legacy of Italian POW, represented as artists or laborers rather than enemy soldiers.⁴²⁶

What unites these works is a reframing of POW experience to a political narrative aimed at tolerance, where commemorative events rewrite moments of enmity into co-existence.⁴²⁷ This is exemplified as well by efforts that distance POWs from being enemy soldiers, and instead depicts them as ‘artists’, ‘labourers’, or ‘visitors’. By reconceptualising captured soldiers in this way, these works can play on the aspects of conviviality and tolerance that Giudici critiques. However, these initiatives also risk airbrushing prisoner of war experiences. The removing of associations to war and focusing on positive aspects in these narratives cancel how Italian prisoners themselves negotiated their associations with the war and their captivity in Wales by ‘underestim(ing) the *military* dimension’ and ‘overestim(ing) their *human* dimension.’⁴²⁸ This framework is also in danger of reproducing the oversimplified schema of ‘positive treatment of Axis prisoners’ vs ‘brutal treatment experienced by Allied soldiers’ identified earlier in this section. Re-introducing this military dimension by interpreting the experience of Italian POWs as prisoner of war narratives has the potential to address this potential imbalance.

It is worth noting that there is an emerging narrative that revolves around romance stories between Italian prisoners and Welsh women.⁴²⁹ This can be read as a sub-group of the political narrative of conviviality centred around romantic attachments during the war. Family anecdotes offer glimpses of budding love stories that transcended bellical boundaries. One such example, documented in Welsh-Italian chef and TV personality Michela Chiappa’s BBC documentary series *Our Food, Our Family* (2019), concerns the

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴²⁶ Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings. Memory, Space, Identity*, p. 92.

⁴²⁷ Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity’, p. 106.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 110 (emphasis in original).

⁴²⁹ Kelly Williams, ‘How family recipe unearthed love story between Italian prisoner of war and Welsh woman’, *Daily Post*, 23rd November 2019; Polly Wright, *Friends of Enemies*, (Birmingham: The Hearth Centre, 2019).

Algieri family from Denbighshire.⁴³⁰ In an interview about their family history, third-generation Welsh-Italian Hugo Algieri recalls the following story about his Italian grandfather and Welsh grandmother's war story:

Hugo Algieri: My Taid Vincenzo was a prisoner of war. He was brought to North Wales, that's where he was stationed, and through that, he met my Nain. He used to work on the farm that my Nain grew up on and they essentially fell in love there.

Michela Chiappa: But true love's course did not run smooth. Betty's father disapproved of the relationship and after the war, Vincenzo was repatriated back to Italy where his family encouraged him to marry a local girl. But they couldn't bear being apart and against both families' wishes, Vincenzo returned to Wales in 1947 and eloped to Anglesey with his sweetheart.⁴³¹

The Algieri family story is one example of a love narrative between prisoners and Welsh women. These are, at times, imagined as Casanova-esque narratives framed around the stereotypical image of the good-looking Italian man who wins the heart of the farmer's daughter or granddaughter.⁴³² Insurmountable obstacles are placed in their paths, usually in the form of repatriation.⁴³³ In some cases, the couple is triumphantly reunited and lead fruitful lives after the war. When the Italian man is unable to return or starts a new life in Italy, the love narrative acquires an unrequited dimension.⁴³⁴ Given that these stories are often recounted by family members, their means of framing POW experience as the story of how their relatives met have implications for the present (i.e., the narrator's own role in the life story having been born as a result of these encounters). Another explanation could be due to the 'silence' that surrounded the direct transmission of memories of former prisoners and their children⁴³⁵ Rather than focusing on the difficulties of being a prisoner, it is possible that the shifting of focus to how two individuals met and fell in love in challenging circumstances appears an easier story to tell.

⁴³⁰ 'Episode 1'. *Our Food, Our Family with Michela Chiappa*, BBC One, 13th November 2019.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

⁴³² "'All my life I will remember you": Woman finds grandmother's love letters written by handsome Italian prisoner of war in 1945... then tracks down his family', *Daily Mail*, 5th October 2015; Vittorio Bonucci, *POW, Quasi una fantasia* (Viterbo: Edizioni Cultura Viterbo, 1987).

⁴³³ Many examples of this can be found on *Henllan Bridge Prison of War Camp 70's* Facebook page, where members of the community post anecdotal stories looking for information about their families. See *Henllan Bridge Prison of War Camp 70*, < <https://www.facebook.com/henllanbridgepow70>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

⁴³⁴ Polly Wright and Mara Lensi, interviewed by Gareth White, 3rd February 2021.

⁴³⁵ Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War*, p. 9.

An outlier from the Welsh perspective regards Sian Melangell Dafydd's 2020 book *Filò*.⁴³⁶ Unlike the above works, Dafydd's text is constructed around the concept of prisoners telling stories about their lives before the war and of their captivity in Wales.

Clywais straeon y lleill yn fy nghlustiau – bois oeddwn i prin y neu hadnabod yn adrodd straeon am bobl eraill estron, a straeon wedi'u hadrodd hefyd gan bobl fwy estron byth, cyn ein hamser ni. Fel hyn, roedd y byd yn lle enfawr o'n caban – *in questo modo – il mondo è stato grande*. Ac o'r caban, *in questo modo*, y byddem yn newid y byd.⁴³⁷

[I heard the stories of others in my ears, from boys I hardly knew telling stories of other people that they hardly knew, telling stories that had also been told by people who were strangers to them, before our time. Like this, the world seemed like such a big place from our cabin. And from our cabin, *in this way*, we could change the world.]

Filò's use of prisoners recounting life stories *à la* Canterbury Tales successfully draws attention to the diverse trajectories that individual Italian soldiers had. It astutely deals with the psychological legacy of imprisonment as the subjects negotiate Welsh working environments and the challenges of adapting to a new culture. It also portrays prisoners away from romanticised images of labourers or farmers by depicting them as Italian men dealing with their associations with the war and fascism. And finally, it innovates the historical narrative of Italian POW experience in Wales by recounting the story from the perspective of prisoners, as opposed to Welsh individuals who encounter Italian POWs.⁴³⁸ These are themes that emerge in the following section in my analysis of oral history interviews with former Italian POWs in Wales and their families.

4. Narratives of Loss and Recovery of Identity

The case for realigning prisoner of war narratives to focus on the direct and reported accounts of captivity has the potential to unlock new perspectives that are at risk of disappearing. Captivity is often portrayed as the moment that not only 'challenges individual prisoners to continue wartime conflicts with the captor' but also 'to face

⁴³⁶ Sian Melangell Dafydd, *Filò* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2020), p. 16.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16. (translation my own).

⁴³⁸ Marco Giudici draws attention to the interactions of Welsh citizens with Italian POWs, noting the examples of the 1984 S4C series *Joni Jones*, the 1990 comedy series *C'Mon Miffild* and Angharad Price's 2010 novel *O! Tyn y Gorchudd* as instances where Italian POWs interact positively with Welsh subjects. See Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', pp. 106–110.

conflicts with themselves and with others in a community of prisoners.’⁴³⁹ As Bob Moore and Barbara Hatley-Broad posit:

[i]n personal narratives, captivity often figures as a watershed between active participation in the violence of war, or the shame of defeat, and reintegration into civilian life. Captivity can figure as a form of regeneration through asceticism and celibacy, introspection or religious conversion. It is a formative experience of male bonding and solidarity and allows for the collective elaboration of narratives and personal defence strategies against accusations of collective guilt.⁴⁴⁰

Captivity is thus depicted as a conduit that links the individual with the ‘violence of war’ and their ‘reintegration into civilian life’, but also acts as a bridge where the individual confronts their past and present lives. In the period of imprisonment, the individuals are forced to re-elaborate their trajectories between capture and internment and their relationship with time and history. Taking broadly the concepts of how individuals are confronted with a quest for lost identity as they conceptualise their pasts, presents, and futures, it is possible to apply Northrop Frye’s framework about identity formation in literary narratives:

[t]h(e) story of the loss and regaining of identity is, I think, the framework of all literature. Inside it comes the story of the hero with a thousand faces [...] whose adventures, death, disappearance and marriage or resurrection are the focal points of what later become romance and tragedy and satire and comedy in fiction. [...] Literature not only leads us toward the regaining of identity, but it also separates this state from its opposite, the world we don’t like and want to get away from.⁴⁴¹

Frye’s conceptualisation of the loss and regaining of identities is used to explore how writers such as William Wordsworth or D. H. Lawrence have engaged with the idea of trying to reclaim a sense of a golden age, a ‘garden of Eden’ that had become lost.⁴⁴² While less epic than the quest to rediscover such utopic spaces, the framework of losing and regaining identities appears in prisoners’ testimonies as they deal with the past they ‘want to get away from’ (their condition of being prisoners and associations with the war), and their individual quests to rediscover a lost sense of self (their identities before the war).

The theme of loss and regaining of identity appears in the autobiographical account written by Mario Ferlito. One of the most celebrated Italians in Wales for having

⁴³⁹ Robert C. Doyle, *Voices from Captivity: Interpreting the American POW narrative*, p. 3.

⁴⁴⁰ Bob Moore and Barbara Hatley-Broad, *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace. Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II*, p. 5.

⁴⁴¹ Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 55.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

painted a copy of Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* on the ceiling of the Italian chapel built in the camp, Mario Ferlito was captured in Tunisia around 1942 and sent to Scotland.⁴⁴³ He was later transferred to Wales in 1943, where he would remain until 1946. Years after his imprisonment in Wales, Mario Ferlito collaborated with his daughter, Sonia Ferlito, on a manuscript called *Papà raccontami. Breve storia di un guerriero mancato*. Drawing on letters sent to family members, his recollections of the war, documents collected from Wales, and collective stories recounted with other Italian prisoners who had also been based at Henllan Bridge, the account of Mario Ferlito's experience as a soldier and later a POW depicts his time from conscription to his return to Italy. The unfinished version was sent via Sonia Ferlito to me following our oral history interview conducted in June 2021. The section regarding his experiences in Britain commences with his recollections of being in a sorting camp in Scotland, where the text details how his imprisonment was 'ufficializzata' ('made official'):

[m]algrado indossassero la divisa ufficiale da prigionieri, molti cercavano di apportare un tocco di personalità a quella conformità. Mario cucì sul bavero del giubbotto le mostrine del vecchio reggimento di Novara, che conservava gelosamente nel portafoglio, una striscia bianca in campo verde del 54° Fanteria. Altri, appartenenti all'Aviazione, sfoggiavano un'ala stilizzata sul taschino del giubbotto o sulla manica. Forse era per ricordare chi erano stati! Qualche giorno dopo, furono radunati per le definitive registrazioni ufficiali, con fotografie e una specie di Carta d'Identità. Uno alla volta venivano fatti sedere su una panca, con un cartello appeso al collo, su cui erano stampati i numeri di matricola. Quello di Mario era 252286. Così era ufficalizzata la prigionia.⁴⁴⁴

[Even though they were all wearing the official prison uniform, many tried to reduce the sense of conformity by adding personal touches. Mario sewed onto his jacket a collar patch of his old regiment of Novara, a white stripe on a green field representing the 54th Infantry; he had guarded the collar patch jealously in his wallet. Those who were in aviation proudly bore a stylised wing on the breast pocket of their jackets. Perhaps it was to remember whom they used to be. A few days later, they were rounded up for the official registrations, where their photos were taken and they were given an identity card. One by one they were made to sit on a bench, with a sign around their neck that had their enrolment number printed on it. Mario's was 252886. Thus, his imprisonment was made official.]

The start of the anecdote about Mario Ferlito's imprisonment centres around the loss of identity caused by the formalising of his capture and his official prisoner of war designation. The text uses dehumanising language to describe the process of becoming a

⁴⁴³ 'Italian PoW chapel founder dies', *BBC News*, 1st May 2009, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/mid/8028750.stm>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

⁴⁴⁴ Mario Ferlito, *Papà raccontami. Breve storia di un mancato guerriero* (unpublished manuscript), p. 57, (translation my own).

prisoner of war, with the listing of actions in the passive voice such as ‘venivano fatti sedere’ (‘they were made to sit down’) and photographed marking the moment when camp procedures and laws stripped the Italians of their individuality. The use of passive voice in particular connotes the lack of agency, as though suggesting that a mass group were forced by an implied subject (camp authorities) to face this process. This is finalised with the linking of Mario Ferlito receiving an official prisoner designation (252286). By portraying these acts in a ritual-esque manner, Mario Ferlito emphasises the importance of the moment when he was forced to accept his status as a prisoner and the loss of his previous identity.

When recounting his early experiences in Henllan Bridge camp, Mario Ferlito’s account reveals how the former soldier grapples with the concept of his self-presentation as a prisoner of war. This emerges more prominently in an episode that occurred on a farm where he worked alongside other Italians cleaning stables and aiding with the harvest. When a drunk sergeant demands that a small group of Italians dug vegetable-patches in the hostel where they were posted, the prisoners refuse due to the rain, stating that the work is in contravention to their rights. This sets in motion a series of circumstances that reinforces the psychological trauma felt by Mario’s perception of the loss of his identity:

[i]l martedì ci fu il processo per la loro disubbidienza al Sergente di Eglwysrwr, in un contesto molto serio, che stupì Mario. Furono convocati nell’ufficio del Colonnello britannico, poco distante dalla prigione, con il Capitano e il Sergente, interpreti d’italiano, più due militari britannici e il Comandante italiano del Campo, il Maresciallo. Un apparato per quel processo che incuteva timore. Mario pensava a chissà quali conseguenze che la sua mente ingigantiva e pure gli altri due imputati tradivano inquietudine, mentre in piedi nel corridoio aspettavano di essere chiamati.

“Avanti il numero 252286” : era la voce del sergente interprete. Mario restò impietrito, era il suo numero di matricola; per la burocrazia militare era diventato un numero. Improvvisamente si sentì nessuno, senza identità e la vita prendeva un sapore squallido.⁴⁴⁵

[On Tuesday there was the trial for their disobedience of the Sergeant at Eglwysrwr. It was a serious affair, which shocked Mario. They were summoned to the office of the British colonel just outside the camp along with the (Italian) Captain and the Sergeant, Italian interpreters, plus two other British military officers and the Italian Field Marshal, who was the Camp Commander. It was a display that instilled fear in them. Mario thought about all types of consequences that were blown out of proportion in his mind. Even the other two accused soldiers seemed worried as they all stood out in the corridor waiting to be called. “Forward number 252886” came the voice of the Sergeant Interpreter. Mario froze. It was his enrolment number. He had become a number for the purposes of military bureaucracy. He suddenly felt like nobody, without an identity, and his life took a dreary turn.]

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–2.

The setting of the military tribunal represents another battlefield where Mario's ongoing debate about his identity is called into question. The evocation of his official prisoner identity constitutes the most damaging circumstance of the trial. The dehumanising language continues in this recollection – rather than being presented as an individual, the text uses impersonal references such as Mario feeling like 'un numero' ('a number') and like 'nessuno, senza identità' ('nobody, without an identity') as part of the ongoing military bureaucratic proceedings. The effect felt at being called '252886' rather than by name – present in the verb 'impietrito' ('froze') – suggests shock, with the resulting emotions compounding the sense of pain felt by the protagonist at having lost any trace of individuality and identity. For Mario Ferlito, his struggle in dealing with his status as 252886 symbolically represents the site where the loss of identity is keenly felt.

A similar account that touches on this theme concerns Vittorio Bonucci. Born in Viterbo, Tuscany, Bonucci was captured in Tobruk in January 1941 by Australian troops and was perhaps among the first Italian troops to arrive in Henllan Bridge camp. Unlike Mario Ferlito, Vittorio Bonucci's memoirs were formally published in the 1985 manuscript *POW, Quasi una fantasia* by local historical publishers Edizioni Cultura Viterbo.⁴⁴⁶ The text reflects on his experiences working on Welsh farms and the 'general kindness and solidarity with which the Welsh population treated the Italian POWs who worked on local farms.'⁴⁴⁷ Writing about his arrival, it is revealed that Bonucci played an instrumental role in the organisation of cultural activities in Henllan, as evidenced in a particular anecdote that recounts how he procured musical instruments for the camp's nascent orchestra. He also briefly worked as an interpreter – selected for his knowledge of English and for having studied at a *liceo classico* (classical high school).

With reference to the moments of conflict where Vittorio Bonucci deals with the legacy of the war, these are framed in the book's preface and permeate throughout the first chapter dealing with his transport from North Africa direct to Wales. From the outset he outlines his stance on imprisonment:

[l]'autore è al centro della storia, ma umilmente, dimessamente, giacché nella storia porta sulla giubba un numero e sulle spalle una sigla, POW, prisoner of war. E difatti resta soprattutto un numero, all'esterno: egli è un prigioniero, come milioni d'altri sparsi per il mondo, impaniato dentro la criminale rete della guerra.'⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Vittorio Bonucci, *POW – Quasi una fantasia*, pp. 125–126.

⁴⁴⁷ Kathryn N. Jones, Carol Tully, Heather Williams, *Hidden Texts, Hidden Nation: (re)discoveries of Wales in Travel Writing in French and German (1780 – 2018)* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), p. 193.

⁴⁴⁸ Vittorio Bonucci, *POW – Quasi una fantasia*, p. 5.

[The author is the main character in this tale, but unpretentiously and simply, especially as he carries a number on his jacket and initials on his shoulders. POW. Prisoner of war. And he is indeed a number to the outside world. He's a prisoner, like millions of others around the world who were caught up in the criminal net of war.]

The initial comments in the preface are significant as they refer to the ongoing conflict experienced by Vittorio Bonucci. Far from imprisonment being 'resolved' through positive treatment, their conditions are only alleviated. The theme of dealing with his association to war is also inferred here – the author uses the phrase 'la criminale rete della guerra' ('the criminal net of war'), suggesting how Italians such as himself were figuratively caught without any choice in a conflict that they deemed immoral. By presenting himself as a POW who 'carries a number on his jacket and initials on his shoulders' in the preface of his text, Vittorio Bonucci affirms two notions. Firstly, the markings on his jacket are transfigured into metaphorical burdens that he is forced to wear at all times, implying an Atlas-like struggle that the author strongly felt in the past and whose ramifications were still felt in the present (by merit of this being included in the preface, where the contemporary writer introduces his work). Secondly, by including dehumanising language – his presentation as a number, or of being one of 'milioni d'altri' ('millions of others') – Vittorio Bonucci situates himself in a narrative including a significantly larger group of Italians who underwent similar experiences of losing their identities and becoming prisoners.

The theme of the loss of identity and the author's struggle with his status as a prisoner emerges in a confrontational manner while working informally on the camp staff as an interpreter. If Mario Ferlito is figured as being 'impietrito' ('petrified'), Vittorio Bonucci's recollection focuses on a clash with Terni, an Italian high-ranking military official who offers him a post working as part of the camp staff. This leads to him declaring:

'[c]ome osate parlare di dignità voi, che mi destinate a fare lo sguattero ai sottufficiali, che voi stesso avete definiti, 'sono informato, bada!', presuntuosi e pelandroni? Questo è l'unico punto su cui siamo d'accordo. È falso che raccogliere patate o scavare fossi sia un lavoro umiliante; poi non posso sottrarmene, per legge internazionale, mentre nessuno mi può costringere a fare il piantone a chicchessia, meno che mai voi. Vero, non ho mai lavorato in campagna, ma penso che sarà più facile imparare a cavar patate di quanto non lo sia stato imparare l'inglese 'bene', come voi dite a torto. Poi non tutti i lavori consisteranno in quella bisogna, gli inglesi avranno molto da apprendere dai nostri contadini, coi quali 'voglio' unirmi, e credo che sapremo farci apprezzare per quello che sapremo fare. Infine vi informo, caso mai ancora non lo sappiate, che i tempi di "dictat" sono finiti, tramontati da

un pezzo, ed il vostro è il più ridicolo e stupido tra tutti i diktat, al quale rispondo che il piantone non lo farò mai!’⁴⁴⁹

[‘How dare you speak of dignity! You, who destine me to be a minion for the officers who you defined as presumptuous and idle with your ‘I’m informed, mind’ comment. This is the only thing we agree on. It’s not true that harvesting potatoes or digging ditches is a humiliating job. I can’t back out of doing that job as per international law. But nobody can force me to be a sentry for anybody, least of all you. It’s true, I’ve never worked on a farm, but I think that it will be easier to learn how to dig for potatoes than it was to learn English ‘well’, as you wrongly said. And not all jobs will be about that. The British will be able to learn a lot from our farmers who I want to join, and I think we will make ourselves appreciated for what we’re able to do. Lastly, I’ll tell you this, just in case you don’t know it yet. The times when you could boss us around are over, long over. And your order is the most ridiculous and stupid of them all, to which I’m telling you that I’ll never be a skivvy’.]

In response to being offered the role of Terni’s ‘interprete di fiducia’ (‘trusted interpreter’),⁴⁵⁰ Vittorio Bonucci’s recollection highlights several aspects of his self-presentation. The text once again uses dehumanising language that denotes a loss of individual identity, with terms such as ‘sguattero’ (‘minion’) or ‘piantone’ (‘skivvy’) presenting Vittorio Bonucci as seemingly losing agency and having to carry out menial tasks on behalf of the camp. The confrontation that follows symbolically frames the moment when he fights back against the loss of his identity and his association with the war. The presentation of the confrontation at the end, where the protagonist derides the military commander’s ‘tempi di “diktat”’ and refuses to accept the job, confirms this. Furthermore, the use of the word ‘diktat’ links to how the author perceived the war as being quasi-dictatorial without popular consent. The resulting narrative that emerges from this recollection is one that focuses on the pain of the dehumanising effects of being a prisoner of war and a refusal to conform or identify with the Italian camp official who offered him the job, nor with the wider system of imprisonment at play.

The two examples presented thus far have examined how individuals explicitly experienced a loss of identity, and how symbols such as numerical designations or their status as POWs represented the clash between this loss and their status as prisoners. A third example which deals with the theme of the loss of identity in a more implicit manner concerns Vito Schiavone. In two oral history interviews I conducted with Vito Schiavone’s sons, second-generation Welsh-Italians Antoni and Emlyn Schiavone from Cardiganshire, the brothers reconstructed the working experiences of their father. Vito Schiavone was

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–5.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

born in Montaguto, Calabria, was captured in North Africa in 1942 and was subsequently posted to Henllan Bridge. While there, he frequently worked on farms in Lampeter, Cardiganshire. The start of Antoni and Emlyn Schiavone's testimony presents their father as a young man from a rural background swept up by the agitations of war. He is conscripted and sent to the barracks in Naples and told to board a ship to North Africa immediately. When asked to describe his father's experiences of camp life at Henllan Bridge, they said:

[w]hat was made clear to us is that he didn't enjoy being in the camp. And when the members of the camp were offered the opportunity to work on local farms, he was one of the many who jumped at the chance. And I think that's partly because being idle was very, very difficult. [...] But the work ethic was very, very strong. So, he was keen to get to work and he enjoyed it. And so, it is a way of trying to improve his standard of living.⁴⁵¹

Similarly to the testimonies of Mario Ferlito and Vittorio Bonucci, there is a running thread regarding the loss of Vito Schiavone's sense of identity and his condition of being a prisoner. There are clear inferences about this, with the contrast between being 'idle' and possessing a strong work ethic posited as reasons for his dislike of life in the camp. It is only later in the interview that the link between idleness, imprisonment, and a loss of identity is expressed more clearly:

[b]ut I think for me, the biggest distinction for my father (was this). When he was in Italy, he was effectively a free man, but coming to Wales, he was a prisoner of war. And I think leaving the camp brought a bit more normality to him, because if you're in the camp, obviously you have reminders every second of every day that you're a prisoner of war. Whereas if you're out working on a farm, then there's more (of a) sense of normality, of being a part of that community. So, I think he relished leaving the camp, trying to be himself as opposed to just having the status of being a prisoner of war.⁴⁵²

The anecdote contains several references that draw upon the loss of identity, where Vito Schiavone is depicted as having to deal with the legacy of being a prisoner. Having already foregrounded their father's dislike of the inactivity of captivity, the brothers explicitly highlight the burden of being a prisoner. The repetition of quantifiers in 'every second of every day' temporally extends imprisonment into a boundless time that had a significant psychological impact on their father. In addition, the testimony engages with the conflicting nature between camp life and working outside on a farm. The comments of being a 'prisoner of war', a condition which Vito Schiavone is depicted as having felt more strongly by being idle and reminded of while physically inside the camp, further

⁴⁵¹ Antoni and Emlyn Schiavone, interviewed by Gareth White, 4th February 2021.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

underlines the presentation of imprisonment as a psychological burden that corresponded with a loss of identity.

Another common strand in all three cases regards the subsequent regaining of identity. In the case of Vito Schiavone, the testimony draws heavily on the importance of work towards the representation of his identity. Given that Vito Schiavone is noted by his sons in our interview as having worked and lived in a close-knit rural community, there is a sense of continuity with their father's free life in Campania before the war and the opportunities afforded to him through the scheme of working on Welsh farms.⁴⁵³ The example above encapsulates this theme effectively by including references to Vito Schiavone's past life before the war, where he is depicted as a 'free man', and he pursued a 'sense of normality' by working on Welsh farms. The confrontation between Vito Schiavone's life before war, as a captive prisoner, and as a prisoner worker demonstrates how he acquires a sense of agency by conducting an activity that allowed him to reconnect with who he used to be.

The theme of regaining a lost identity by engaging in activities linked to a previous sense of self also emerges in the memoir of Mario Ferlito. This comes to the fore in accounts where he is actively involved in the cultural activities within the camp. In his free time, he is detailed as working on several projects that were fundamental for the social organisation of the camp, from designing stage dressings for the camp's theatre to working on the camp's Italian-language newspaper. These individual projects allow him to be active in Italian cultural activities and distance himself from associations of being a worker or a soldier.⁴⁵⁴ The importance of these tasks, sandwiched between moments of work, emerge strongest in a passage describing the moment he finished painting the church:

[a]lla fine, dal fondo della Chiesa, il colpo d'occhio era appagante e Mario incredulo di essere arrivato alla fine di quel lavoro. Si meravigliava ancora di esserne l'autore [...] Arrivò al punto di persuadersi che ciò che aveva fatto non fosse granché, quantunque in fondo al suo cuore, ricordando il suo modesto passato, una velata gratitudine andava verso chi gli aveva dato quell'antico e quasi impellente amore per il disegno e la pittura. Ricordava un vecchio pittore del suo paese, al quale portava la cassetta dei colori, mentre andava per le brughiere sopra il lago, a dipingere angoli e scorci...⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ Italian cultural collective projects, organised voluntarily by prisoners during their spare time, appear to be a common practice in other POW camps in Britain. In Camp 61, Italian prisoners built a monument to commemorate Guglielmo Marconi, whereas in Lamb Holm Camp 60, Italians working alongside Domenico Chiocchetti built a similar Italian Chapel.

⁴⁵⁵ Mario Ferlito, *Papà raccontami. Breve storia di un mancato guerriero*, p. 67, (translation my own).

[In the end, from the bottom of the church, it was a sight worth seeing, and Mario was amazed that he had finished the job. He marvelled at how he had managed to do it. [...] He managed to persuade himself that what he had done wasn't all that much. And yet, recalling his modest past, he felt a private sense of gratitude in his heart towards those who had given him that timeless and almost compelling love for art and painting. He remembered an old painter from his town for whom Mario used to carry the box of colours as he went to the heaths above the lake to paint...]

The completion of the painting acts as a significant moment where Mario Ferlito is able to use personal skills acquired when he was young and apply them during his time as a prisoner. This is conveyed by the inclusion in the passage of his private thoughts, which are directed towards his experiences as a young man assisting an old painter in his local town. By including this aspect, as well as the reference to the 'gratitudine' ('gratitude') towards the people from the past that had transmitted to him his love of art and painting, the account comes full circle. It allows the subject to unify his past life before the war with the current project of transforming a former military barracks into a makeshift Catholic Church. It also enables him to alter his association of being a prisoner and former soldier, and thus distance himself from the traumatic aspects by feeling fulfilled. These are expressed through the adjective - 'incredulo' ('amazed') - and the verb 'si meravigliava' ('he marvelled') that connote individual achievement. Thus, by actively choosing to conduct activities that allowed him to reconnect with his youth, Mario partially resolves the feeling of dehumanisation and identity loss by reconnecting with who he used to be before becoming involved in the war.

The ability of prisoners to use transferable skills to adapt to difficult environments and regain their identities appears elsewhere in recollections about Mario Ferlito's imprisonment in Henllan Bridge. In our oral history interview, Mario Ferlito's daughter Sonia Ferlito from Ornavasso, Piedmont, describes how Mario's fellow prisoners, under the direction of the Italian priest Don Italo Padovan, were able to tap into skills learned from before the war and use them to help build the chapel:

Sonia Ferlito: [t]utti collaboravano. Perché c'era chi ha fatto l'imbianchino e il decoratore (che ha detto) 'ma io sono capace di dipingere bene la parete'. 'Io prendo la lattina' - usava le lattine del corned beef e l'ha trasformata in un candeliere. [...]

Gareth White: E perché era importante costruire questa chiesa nata da questa collaborazione di tutti i membri del campo?

Sonia Ferlito: Perché praticamente (la chiesa) era pronta ad accogliere la devozione di quelli che volevano entrare a raccogliersi con i loro pensieri e cercare di dare un senso alla loro vita.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁶ Sonia Ferlito, interviewed by Gareth White, 3rd June 2021.

[Sonia Ferlito: Everyone worked together. Because there were those who had worked as painters and decorators who said, 'I'm able to paint walls well'. "I'll take this can" – they used a can of corned beef and transformed it into a chandelier. [...]

Gareth White: And why was it important to build this church born out of the collaboration of all the members of the camp?

Sonia Ferlito: Because practically it was ready to welcome the devotion of those who wanted to go inside and gather themselves and their thoughts, and who wanted to try and make sense of their lives.]

Sonia Ferlito's interpretation of the building of the church corresponds with her father's memoirs in that both indicate the importance of Italians using skills learned from before the war to collaborate on a collective project. Mario Ferlito's anecdote displayed the importance of his childhood experiences of assisting the artist to complete the painting; Sonia Ferlito on the other hand references the jobs of other prisoners and their creativity to achieve similar results. These references to painters and chandelier makers, rather than prisoners, allows for the Italians to be realigned with occupations possessed before the war, and thus reconnecting the workers who helped build the church with a previous version of themselves. The relevance of the project is contained in the final admission, where Sonia Ferlito discusses the importance of an Italian church for the community of the camp. The realisation of the church creates a space where the Italian prisoners of Henllan Bridge could partake in the performance of Italian cultural values, and thus reconnect with an aspect of their identities denied to them on account of being prisoners. Thus, cultural activities are depicted as another outlet where individuals regain lost senses of identity and challenge the dehumanisation of captivity and their associations with the war.

As well as via cultural projects or working in professions directly linked with their pasts, another strategy that leads to the regaining of a lost sense of identity concerns individuals actively choosing their destinies and resisting the dehumanisation and idleness of captivity. For Vittorio Bonucci this is expressed clearly when, after spending time assisting in a doctor's office, he chooses to resign from the job, citing a desire to work on the farms alongside Welsh men and women:

[m]a io ero più che deciso ad andar fuori, correre, zappare, parlare, oltre che con gli uomini, debbo essere sincero, anche con le donne, quelle gentili creature che, nelle rare occasioni che mi era capitato di avvicinare, mi erano parse belle, dolci, sorridenti. [...] Dichiarai semplicemente che non avevo più intenzione di lavorare in quell'ufficio, perché pur non essendo un lavoro bellico, la sua natura era tale che, sempre ai sensi della convenzione di Ginevra, non poteva considerarsi obbligatorio. Per conseguenza nessuno poteva

obbligarmi, e quindi quelle erano le ultime parole che pronunciavo e, davanti all'esterrefatto Cpt. Gadsby, staccai il berretto e me ne andai.⁴⁵⁷

[But I was more convinced than ever to get out there, to run, to dig, to speak. More than with men, to be honest, I wanted to speak with the women. Those gentle creatures who, on the rare occasions that I had been lucky enough to get close to, had seemed beautiful, kind, smiling. [...] I simply declared that I no longer wanted to work in that office because, even though it wasn't a war-related job, its nature could be considered as such; in accordance with the Geneva Convention, it wasn't obligatory that I did it. Therefore, no one could force me to do it, and these were the words I said before I took my beret off my head in front of a shocked Cpt. Gadsby and walked out.]

This recollection brings about a sense of the individual wanting to actively shape the course of their imprisonment. Bonucci invokes the Geneva Convention and his overwhelming desire to work outside (emphasised via the list of motivations for wanting to work on the farms) in order to leave the post. The distancing from the military and the war effort is physically symbolised here in the removal of his beret, which marks the transition that allows the Tuscan to return to nature. In so doing, he resolves the tensions caused by the loss of his previous identity and inner conflict towards the war by actively shaping his destiny and choosing to work outside instead of being an interpreter as part of his quest for individual self-fulfilment.

Drawing together the strands from the testimonies of Mario Ferlito and Vittorio Bonucci and the family narratives recounted by Sonia Ferlito, and Emlyn and Antoni Schiavone, a chronological reading of the experiences of these soldiers from capture to integration into work in the Welsh community reveals a common narrative structure framed around the themes of the loss and regaining of identities. In this optic, lives are presented in a cycle. Imprisonment and idleness bring about painful reflections on their links to war and fascism in what can be identified as the 'loss' phase of their testimonies. These range from explicit confrontations with military officials (Bonucci) about the 'dictat' of fascism to the implicit burden of being held at a prisoner of war camp. In the regaining of identities phase of their testimonies, the individuals reconstruct their identities and reconnect with versions of themselves before becoming soldiers, from assistant artists (Ferlito) to farm workers (Schiavone). These skills allow them to distance themselves from the war and find individual meaning in captivity. Cultural initiatives and practices also acquire value – projects carried out outside of working times is revealed as an important outlet where individuals could challenge dehumanisation and

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

the loss of their identities by tapping into previously acquired skills and undertaking projects that allow them to express their Italian cultural identities. This proves even more significant for the encounters they will have with their employers, as will be discussed in the next section.

5. Transcultural Narratives of Interactions between Welsh Farmers and Italian Prisoners

Much of the literature concerning prisoner-of-war experience in the UK has centred around the cultural and economic contribution of captured prisoners. These often took the form of 'enhancement narratives' which 'emphasise the migrants' contribution to society in a way that reinforces the allegedly tolerant image of the receiving country.'⁴⁵⁸ The limits of conceptualising prisoner-of-war narratives as 'enhancement narratives' mean that it predisposes positions. In this instance, Italians make a positive contribution to Welsh culture, and are perceived as benefitting from favourable treatment as a result. This perspective neglects other aspects of cultural transfer. Firstly, as Fernando Ortiz famously points out with his study on transculturation, not all cultural contact is positive; some result in the 'loss or uprooting of a previous culture.'⁴⁵⁹ Secondly, it pays little reference to how Welsh individuals were affected by Italian prisoners and changed as a result of these encounters. And thirdly, it focuses in great depth on the contribution of migrants who, in receiving beneficial treatment, aid in the self-conceptualisation of the host nation as being tolerant and inclusive. As a consequence, it pays less regard to how cultural contact affects the Italians' conceptualisation of themselves and their links to the war.

In light of this, this section uses a transcultural framework that depends on assessing bilateral cultural transfers, particularly as many of the testimonies dedicate ample space to the interactions between Welsh employers and Italian workers. Transcultural narratives involve the 'willingness of two or more individuals to reflect on their own social and institutional locations in ways that allow them to identify how their identities intersect.'⁴⁶⁰ They are sensitive to the dynamic forces (generative or destructive) at play when two differing cultures interact. In her framework for what

⁴⁵⁸ Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', p. 9.

⁴⁵⁹ Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban counterpoint: Tobacco and sugar*, trans. by Harriet de Onís (London: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 102.

⁴⁶⁰ Hartej Gill and Vincent White, 'Decolonial pedagogy through transcultural narrative inquiry in the contact zone', *Cultural and pedagogical inquiry*, 5.2 (2013), 25–38.

constitutes a transcultural narrative, Arianna Dagnino outlines a series of characteristics.⁴⁶¹ She notes that individuals find themselves in a situation where they are between states: they experience the feeling of 'precariousness'; they find themselves in a realm of 'new possibilities' and of being 'in place' and not 'out of place'.⁴⁶² In the contact zone that is created, boundaries are blurred, both in terms of the division between 'self' and 'Other' and the limits of 'cultures and geographical entities.'⁴⁶³ This brings about the weakening of 'traditional hegemonic centres', a sense of 'playful experimentation', and 'enrichment occurs' through 'interaction and immersion in multiple cultures.'⁴⁶⁴ The result of this transcultural contact is the 'empowering' but sometimes 'distressing dialogic process of mutual transformation and cultural confluence', as identities are reshaped.⁴⁶⁵

Even though transcultural narratives have more widely been used to study interactions between and beyond different races, I argue that the application of the concept to prisoner of war narratives reflects the traditional hegemonic centres between individuals on either side of a war. Transcultural storytelling and narrative practices have already successfully been identified by Jessica Senehi in how Northern Irish storytellers narrate their experiences of the Troubles.⁴⁶⁶ The Second World War and the unique case of captured soldiers working freely in Welsh farms has the potential to unlock new perspectives of this period.

An initial example concerns Manfredo Benetti's experience in Wales. Originally from Ferrara in Emilia-Romagna, Manfredo Benetti was a mechanic in Carthage before being captured by the British and sent to Henllan Bridge. While there, he aided with the harvesting on Welsh farms and also worked in the camp. During discussions about farm life in our oral history interview, Benetti's children, Flavio and Bianca Laura, recounted the following anecdote as symbolising the typical experiences that their father encountered with his employers:

Flavio Benetti: È andato a finire in una fattoria in cui c'era solamente il vecchio, probabilmente i figli erano in guerra e aveva un trattore che non funzionava più. E allora

⁴⁶¹ Arianna Dagnino, *Transcultural writers and novels in the age of global mobility* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2015), p. 193.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴⁶⁶ Jessica Senehi, 'The role of constructive, transcultural storytelling in ethno-political conflict transformation in Northern Ireland', *Regional and Ethnic Conflicts. Perspectives from the Front Lines*, ed. by Judy Carter, George Irani and Vamik D, Volkan, (London: Routledge, 2009), 945–993.

lui intendendosi di motori gli ha chiesto se poteva vedere cos'era il problema. Ha smontato la testata del motore. E ha visto che la guarnizione non teneva più, era rovinato [...] Quando ha richiuso il cilindro dentro, il motore ha funzionato. Allora questo anziano ha detto: "sì, tu grande meccanico!" l'ha accolto per mangiare insieme a lui, ha mangiato a tavola con lui.⁴⁶⁷

[**Flavio Benetti:** He ended up on a farm where there was this old man by himself; his sons were probably at war. He had a tractor that didn't work anymore. As (my dad) knew a thing about engines, he asked the old man if could see what the problem was. So, he took apart the cylinder head of the engine and saw that the gasket was ruined. When he closed the cylinder inside, the engine worked. So, the old man said to him "Yes. You good mechanic!" and he invited him to eat with him. He ate at the table with the old man.]

The anecdote starts with a reminder of the opposing sides of the war – this is expressed by the description of the old man whose sons, it is presumed, had gone to war against Axis forces. This contextualisation is relevant as it frames the potential for mistrust or impossibility for people on opposing sides to find common ground together. The reference also projects a sense of family throughout, with Manfredo Benetti later having to carry out the job that the farmer's sons would have done (repairing the broken-down tractor). When the motor is successfully repaired, Flavio Benetti recounts how the farmer appraised his father, which takes the form of 'Tu grande meccanico!'.⁴⁶⁸ The simplified linguistic structure in the exclamation stands for the farmer's attempt to communicate across linguistic boundaries, even though it is uncertain what language this exchange took place in originally. The change in circumstances is finally resolved when Benetti is invited to share a meal with the family, with the repetition of this in the testimony serving to underline the importance of the event:

Bianca Laura Benetti: L'ha voluto ripagare tenendolo a tavola con loro. Questa è una delle storie che noi ci ricordiamo, hai capito? perché come ti dicevamo lui ricordava queste cose proprio molto positive. Questi episodi sono rimasti probabilmente anche a lui perché sono accadute cose molto più positive di altri, ma poi penso che la sua vita fosse quella di andare a lavorare.⁴⁶⁹

[**Bianca Laura Benetti:** The old man wanted to pay my father back by having a meal with them. This is one of the stories that we remember, you, see? Because as we told you, he remembered these very positive things. These episodes probably stayed with him because they were very positive things that happened to him, but I think that his life there was going out and working.]

⁴⁶⁷ Flavio and Bianca Laura Benetti, interviewed by Gareth White, 3rd June 2021.

⁴⁶⁸ In the notes sent across by Flavio Benetti, this is expressed in English – 'great mechanic'. Its translation in the interview conforms more to the shared language between the interviewer (myself) and the interviewee. Flavio Benetti, email to Gareth White, 28th September 2021.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

The conclusion to the anecdote, as expressed by Bianca Laura Benetti, reinforces the transcultural narrative constructed around positive interactions between their father and members of Welsh society. Bianca Laura Benetti adopts a different approach to her brother Flavio's to express this point. Flavio Benetti actively describes the events as they occurred; Bianca Laura Benetti instead reflects on the significance of these events in the overall narrative of her father's time in Wales. The 'very positive' things that occurred around the dinner table in this exchange between her father's Welsh employer and her father appear to be significant themes in the family narrative of their father's working experiences in Wales, as is implied by her interpretation that 'his life was going out and working' and how 'these episodes probably stayed with him'. The plural demonstrative pronoun 'these' also suggests that occasions would have happened repeatedly as opposed to being an isolated incident. Finally, the meal itself is given importance. Food has often appeared as an important marker for cultural exchanges and experiences in migrant narratives. Food practices – intended as preparation and consumption – are arenas where cultural norms can be reproduced, challenged, and reinvented.⁴⁷⁰ They 'connect across time and place', serving as a link that enables them to preserve 'transnational relationships and enact their companionship with those back home.'⁴⁷¹ As Paulette Schuster observes:

[t]he practice of food consumption and the ensuing social interactions between migrants and locals play an important role in integrating communities, giving new meaning to places, creating opportunities that are influenced and shaped by local idiosyncrasies and culture. Each physical and cultural location created contributes to the development of new forms of eating that are evolving and changing for all involved.⁴⁷²

The meal between Manfredo Benetti and the Welsh farmer, therefore, creates a space for new social opportunities and the challenging of wartime stigmas in bringing together the two subjects.

A similar transcultural narrative is recounted by Antoni Schiavone regarding his father Vito Schiavone's time working at the farm of Joseph Thomas, a Welsh farmer in

⁴⁷⁰ Gwen Chapman and Brenda Beagan, 'Food practices and transnational identities', *Food, Culture and Society*, 16. 3, (2013), 367–387, p. 382.

⁴⁷¹ Helen Vallianatos and Kim Raine, 'Consuming food and constructing identities among Arabic and South Asian immigrant women', *Food, Culture and Society*, 11.3, (2008), 353–373.

⁴⁷² Paulette Schuster, 'Interconnectivities: mobility, food and place', *Handbook of Culture and Migration* (Cheltenham: Elgar Publishing Limited, 2021) 386–395, p. 393.

Lampeter. Antoni Schiavone's recollection focuses on the sharing of cultural values regarding hard work and honesty that bring about a reflection on the state of war:

[d]uring the time that he worked on the farm, he wasn't the only farm worker there, but [...] the son of Joseph Thomas was actually an airman who was shot down when he was in Italy and lost his life. But my father was a bit of a favourite on the farm. [...] One of the reasons was that he got into a big argument with another Italian prisoner of war who was stealing some of the eggs from the chickens. And anyway, sometime after Joseph Thomas' son died, they passed on some of the clothes to my father. He had a suit off the man, shirts and things.⁴⁷³

As with the testimonies of Flavio and Bianca Laura Benetti, common themes emerge. The initial reference to Joseph Thomas's son acts as a boundary that could potentially divide Vito Schiavone from Joseph Thomas by merit of remarking on the mirrored circumstances that a young Welsh man had been shot down in Italy, and an Italian man was working as a guest in a Welsh farm. However, these limits do not appear to have impacted the relationship between the Welsh and Italian farmers: Antoni Schiavone's testimony repeatedly stresses his father's hard work while at the farm and lack of discrimination experienced. In the events that follow, Vito Schiavone is portrayed as being in between the Italian prisoner who tried to steal eggs and his Welsh employer. By chastising the thief, Vito Schiavone demonstrates further shared values with Joseph Thomas. This culminates in the gifting of his deceased son's clothes to Vito Schiavone. In physically passing the material objects of the suit and other items to Vito Schiavone, Joseph Thomas is depicted as crossing the bellical boundary as well. This act serves two purposes. Firstly, it signals acceptance and peace on the part of the Welsh farmer, who seemingly accepts Vito Schiavone as a surrogate son figure and does not hold him accountable for the death of his own son. And secondly, it brings the two men closer together and marks Vito Schiavone's integration into the household. The fact that Joseph Thomas would later act as Vito Schiavone's best man at his wedding in Cardiff a few years later serves as a confirmation of the erosion of the cultural distance between the two men and the positive transculturation that occurred while Vito Schiavone worked there.⁴⁷⁴

On another farm in the vicinity, a memorable episode revolving around a shared meal for Vittorio Bonucci provokes similar meditations on the state of the war and the erosion of cultural and bellical boundaries. He eventually finds himself posted at the Morgan family farm in Llanybydder, where he becomes integrated into the family. One evening,

⁴⁷³ Antoni and Emlyn Schiavone, interview with Gareth White, 4th February 2021.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Bonucci and the other Italians working there decide to organise an Italian meal for the Welsh family to try. This is recounted in his memoir in the following manner:

[I]o zenith di quella serenità arcadica fu raggiunto quando, dopo ripetute richieste da Madam, desiderosa di conoscere la natura di questi 'celebri' spaghetti, credendo che crescessero sui campi, pressappoco come il grano e l'orzo, il famoso cuoco si decise a fornire un saggio della sua arte, pur consapevole della disperata mancanza di alcuni fondamentali ingredienti. Quando la capace tavola si rivelò insufficiente per gli otto POWs e tutto il clan Morgan, l'allegria era sovrana, soprattutto allorché gli indigeni, nel tentativo di imitarci, mal maneggiando la forchetta, imbrattarono i candidi vestiti rimessi a nuovo per quella irripetibile circostanza.⁴⁷⁵

[The peak of that Arcadian peace was reached when, upon the repeated requests of Madam, who wanted to know all about these 'famous' spaghetti and believed that they grew in fields just like corn and barley, the famous chef decided to share his art with everyone, albeit well aware of the unfortunate lacking some of the essential ingredients. When the large table wasn't enough for the eight POWs and the Morgan family, the sense of glee was absolute, especially when the native Welsh – in trying to copy us – proved unable to handle the spaghetti on their forks and got the clean white clothes that they had just put on dirty.]

The potential for food to act as a conduit for cross-cultural exchange is highlighted regarding the Italian rite of the *spaghetтата*.⁴⁷⁶ In keeping with Dagnino's criteria of transcultural narratives, it is possible to ascertain how Italian prisoners and Welsh employers are presented as two separate entities who engage in the playful experimentation of cultures through eating spaghetti. This is touched upon repeatedly throughout the recollection, with comments such as their inability to handle the spaghetti or their ignorance of their origin proving moments where the Morgan family partake in cultural rites beyond their own, marking the phase of 'playful experimentation' of foreign concepts.⁴⁷⁷ The table also acquires central value by uniting the eight POWs and the various members of the Morgan family together, allowing it to constitute a social space for contact between two cultures. Finally, the text strongly echoes bucolic imagery. The reference to 'Arcadia' evokes the Virgilian sense of the word as 'the idealized land of country life, where youth is eternal, love is the sweetest of all things even though cruel, music comes to the lips of every herdsman, and the kind spirits of the countryside bless even the unhappiest lover.'⁴⁷⁸ This frame further links into the notion of the family home setting and its pastoral, utopic connotations facilitating positive cultural interactions

⁴⁷⁵ Vittorio Bonucci, *POW – Quasi una fantasia*, pp. 125–126.

⁴⁷⁶ A 'spaghetтата' refers to a collective act, usually for parties or large groups of people who eat spaghetti together.

⁴⁷⁷ Arianna Dagnino, *Transcultural writers and novels in the age of global mobility*, p. 193.

⁴⁷⁸ Richard Jenkyns, 'Virgil and Arcadia', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 79 (1989), 26–39, p.27.

among the participants of the meal. In linking into Arcadian harmony and the pastoral simplicity of the event, Vittorio Bonucci suggests a complete deterioration of the hegemonic divisions between captured prisoner and Welsh employer, conveying instead innocent individuals enjoying a shared moment that transcended cultural boundaries.

The success of the Welsh-Italian *spaghetтата*, according to Bonucci's testimony, causes a reflection regarding the wider state of the war, in keeping in line with how transcultural narratives bring about the hegemonic weakening of societal positions through cultural contact. This can also be read as one additional confirmation of his self-presentation throughout which, as argued, was an open-minded individual to whom religion was important and who wanted to distance himself from the war:

[a]lla fine della serata tutti eravamo invasi da un senso di tristezza, al pensiero che quella era la prima volta, dopo anni di guerra, che due comunità, aventi nel cuore la comune fede, ed auspicanti la buona volontà 'dall'alto dei cieli', si abbandonavano alla più completa fraternizzazione. Perché quella fede aveva tradito i nostri leaders?⁴⁷⁹

[At the end of the evening, they were all filled with a sense of sadness at the thought that it was the first time that, after many years at war, two communities who shared the same religion and the same God had allowed themselves to fraternise completely with the other. Why had that faith betrayed our leaders?]

The *spaghetтата* concludes with Bonucci meditating on the nature of war and its ability to divide people sharing similar traits. This is portrayed here with the comment on how the Welsh and Italians shared the same Christian faith and his questioning how political leaders had forgotten about the similarities between the opposing sides. In doing such, the Tuscan writer presents himself as an Italian Catholic with a pacifist mindset who shares several cultural values with his Welsh hosts, while also challenging the futility of war in driving a metaphorical wedge between them. Furthermore, in linking faith and war to the sharing of a meal together, he reflects on the power of cultural exchange and contact. In this figurative 'breaking of bread', the Italian workers and their employers disrupt the polarisation of the war and regain a sense of lost humanity, one built around building positive relationships and discovering of points in common.

The significance of these cross-cultural encounters in the personal and family narratives of Italian prisoner-of-war experience in Wales gains greater importance when considering the stance of the British war government regarding *fraternisation*. One of the initial conditions of the entry and employment of Italian and German prisoners of war in

⁴⁷⁹ Vittorio Bonucci, *POW – Quasi una fantasia*, pp. 125–126.

the United Kingdom was the strict prohibiting of the nature of contact between them and British civilians, with the Defence Regulations of September 1939 criminalising acts of transgression.⁴⁸⁰ This was often interpreted to forbid 'any intercourse with (prisoners) except insofar as it be strictly necessary for the efficient performance of the work allotted, with a strict caution being added that sought to prevent liaisons between prisoners of war and British women and girls.⁴⁸¹ National newspaper reports would document the instances of infringement of these norms, highlighting the importance of the forbidding of amicable relations between British people and the Italian prisoners.⁴⁸² These proved impractical to manage under the billeting system, and was almost entirely abandoned in the case of contacts with Italian prisoners in the area after the signing of the Treaty of Cassibile in 1943 that ended Italy's role as an enemy power.⁴⁸³

The impact of the increased liberties experienced by Italians towards the end of the war is documented in Mario Ferlito's *Breve storia di un guerriero mancato*. He notes the moment when, taking advantage of the newfound freedoms acquired by the Italians of Henllan Bridge, the young Piedmontese artist integrates into the wider Welsh community. This occurs in early 1945 when, along with his friend Adriano, he begins to frequent a fish and chips shop in Newcastle Emlyn – 'the French Café' - run by a camp workshop worker and his wife from Northern France. Their first entry into the French Café provokes surprise on the part of the local people – the memoir states that 'si allontanarono' ('they moved away from them') – but this sense of mistrust is soon resolved:

[i]ncominciarono a prendere confidenza con l'ambiente. Mario aveva la stessa impressione della prima volta che ebbe la libera uscita a Novara. Assaporava quasi il profumo della libertà, perché sia lui che Adriano erano chiusi in Campo da un anno. Mario, parlando un poco il francese, incominciò a dialogare con la signora Susanna e così anche Adriano e il signor Phil furono ben presto coinvolti. E siccome la simpatia è contagiosa, seduti davanti ad una tazza di buon tè e gustose patatine fritte, si instaurò una amicizia che coinvolse emotivamente tutti. Fu un piacevole approccio a quel mondo che credevano ormai precluso.

⁴⁸⁰ Alan Malpass, *British Character and the Treatment of German Prisoners of War*, pp. 107–146.

⁴⁸¹ TNA, MAF41/117 Minutes: Fraternisation with Prisoners of War by Members of the Public, 20 August 1942.

⁴⁸² See Bob Moore, 'Illicit Encounters: Female Civilian Fraternization with Axis Prisoners of War in Second World War Britain', 742–760. Examples of this can be noted, with reference to the Welsh context, in: 'Italian P.O.W.'s at Port Talbot', *Porthcawl Guardian*, 24th November 1944; 'Italian Prisoners Entertained: Port Talbot Soldier Complains', *Porthcawl Guardian*, 31st August 1945; 'Sent to Approved School', *Glamorgan Gazette*, 21st December 1945; 'Letters to War Prisoner: North Wales Charges', *North Wales Weekly News*, 4th February 1943.

⁴⁸³ Isabella Insolubile, *Wops, i prigionieri italiana in Gran Bretagna*, pp. 87-101.

Oltre tutto, ciò che stupiva Mario e Adriano, era la mancanza di acredine verso di loro, ex nemici, da parte degli abitanti, che salutavano abbastanza cordialmente.⁴⁸⁴

[They started to feel comfortable in the place. Mario had the same feeling the first time they were allowed to go out in Novara. He could almost taste the smell of liberty, especially as Adriano and himself had been closed in the camp for a year. As he could speak a bit of French, Mario started speaking with Mrs Susanna, and soon Adriano and Mr Phil got involved. And since congeniality is contagious, as they were set there with a good cup of tea and some delicious chips, a friendship was born that emotionally involved everyone. It was a pleasant approach to a world they believed was shut off to them. More than anything, what surprised Mario was the lack of acrimony towards them – former enemies – from the locals who spoke rather kindly with them.]

The start of the anecdote frames the newfound liberties granted to the Italians in Henllan Bridge by comparing it to the sense of freedom encountered during Mario's 'libera uscita' ('leave') as part of his military service at home in Novara. The evocation of home in this comparison is not insignificant and suggests that, by this point in the account and due to his experiences in Carmarthenshire, Ferlito began to consider Wales as a home. The recollection then discusses the importance of cross-cultural exchange. As with the case studies above, this manifests in this initial anecdote in the form of language (Mario tried to speak French to Mrs. Susanna) and also food (eating and drinking British national foods together). Food plays a central role in bringing the café owners and the Italian labourers together in this contact zone, granting access to a world which was 'ormai precluso' ('cut off from them'). Finally, the anecdote of their first day out concludes with Ferlito meditating on the significance of their outing. The specific reference to 'mondo' ('world') here epitomises a reality in which relationships were possible between individuals without the previous ramifications of the war. This aspect conforms to the characteristic of transcultural narratives as opening up 'new possibilities' through movement, and thus empowering the individuals.⁴⁸⁵ This ends with the contestation that Mario and Adriano no longer felt judged as being 'nemici' ('enemies'), with this final admission reflecting on the alignment between their self-presentation and external representation from society. This final remark in particular recalls the practice of transcultural narratives whereby identities are constantly changing as a result of the erosion of cultural boundaries: by partaking in these acts, Mario Ferlito and Adriano are

⁴⁸⁴ Mario Ferlito, *Breve Storia di un mancato guerriero*, unpublished manuscript, p. 73.

⁴⁸⁵ Arianna Dagnino, *Transcultural writers and novels in the age of global mobility*, p. 193.

presented as weakening their representation as ‘enemies’ and feel accepted by the community.

Ferlito’s encounter in the French Café is followed by one further recollection from the following day when the themes of cross-cultural contact and their ability to rewrite their self-presentations continue to appear:

[i]l giorno successivo era di lunedì, quindi la libera uscita era solo dalle diciannove e trenta circa. Questa volta venne anche Carlino a rallegrare la brigata. Forse non ebbero mai clienti così rumorosi. Carlino, conoscendo bene il francese, si accaparrò la signora Susanna in una chiacchierata interminabile, mentre Mario e Adriano aiutavano il signor Phil a sbucciare e tagliare patate, con l’apposita macchinetta. Poi Carlino si servì del pianoforte, che era all’angolo della saletta, per intrattenere i presenti con alcuni pezzi del suo repertorio. [...] Quel locale era diventato casa loro, tanta la simpatia trovata.⁴⁸⁶

[The next day was Monday, so they could only go out after 19.30. This time Carlino also came to join in the fun. The French Café had probably never had such noisy clients! As he spoke French well, Carlino struck up a never-ending conversation with Mrs Susanna, while Mario and Adriano helped Mr Phil to peel potatoes with the machine. Then Carlino helped himself to the piano that was in the corner of the room to entertain the clientele with songs he knew. [...] That place became a home for them, especially given the happiness they found there.]

Once again, Ferlito’s account stresses the importance of cultural elements and demonstrates how the Italian prisoners of war navigated the cultural interfaces to build positive relationships and integrate into local society. Language is a key feature here, but music acquires central value in the anecdote. Studies such as Rolf Lidskog’s have convincingly pointed out that music fulfils multiple functions for individuals such as how ‘it can allow people to understand themselves, form and maintain social groups.’⁴⁸⁷ It is also a ‘cultural and expressive practice that [...] can cross boundaries between social identities and shape new ones.’⁴⁸⁸ Carlino’s performance of songs from his repertoire can therefore be interpreted in the narrative as the opportunity for the Italian to express an Italian cultural identity, but also facilitating further interactions between the Italian workers and Welsh customers of the French Café. The conclusion to the anecdotes about their time in the French Café recalls the initial contestation of Mario’s sense of freedom during excursions from the barracks in Novara: a sense of home and freedom acquired in Wales.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁴⁸⁷ Rolf Lidskog, ‘The role of music in ethnic identity formation in diaspora: a research review’, *International Social Science Journal*, 66, 219–220, (2017), 23–38, pp. 24–25.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

Thus far, the transcultural narratives analysed here have focused on elements of favourable cultural contact and the way that these bring about the convergence between Italian prisoners and Welsh farmers. However, transculturation is not only an ‘enabling’ force, but is also a ‘destructive’ one that brings about negative cultural contact.⁴⁸⁹ If positive transcultural narratives depend on the superseding of hegemonic centres and cultural boundaries, then a failed transcultural narrative can be understood as the opposite: one where boundaries between individuals and cultures are negatively reinforced. An example of this can be noted in *POW – Quasi una fantasia*, where Vittorio Bonucci describes the tense encounter with a local farmer when his relationship with Verona Morgan of Llanybydder is discovered. Here, the jealous farmer draws on a series of racially charged images to show his depreciation of the love story between Bonucci and Rona Morgan:

Eccolo finalmente, il grande conquistatore, il celebre Don Giovanni, l'autentico erede di Casanova; ci mancava solo lui, e doveva venire proprio da quel bel Paese... Ma riesci minimamente ad immaginare l'enormità del tuo comportamento? Tutto è chiaro, ormai: questo ero il tuo scopo; vatti poi a fidare di certa gente... vagli a fare del bene. La PRIGIONE, la GALERA ci vuole, per simulare canaglia. [...] Non soddisfatti di averci pugnalato nel momento più difficile della nostra storia; ora osate... contaminare, voi, miserabili scorpioni dalla pelle scura... osate odorare perfino il profumo della nostra pelle, della purezza della nostra razza.

[And here he is. The great seducer, the famous Don Giovanni, the actual successor to Casanova; of course, only he would be missing, and he had to come from *that* country. Are you even able to imagine at all the consequences of your behaviour? By now it's all clear. This was your objective all along. Getting other people to trust you, doing good for others. PRISON. JAIL. That's what such a lowlife deserves. [...] Not happy with having stabbed us in the back in the most difficult moment in our history, you now dare ... contaminate us! You, like wretched scorpions with your dark skin... you dare to smell the perfume of our skin, the purity of our race!]⁴⁹⁰

Initially resorting to stereotypical images of the Italian race as being overly amorous – such as the examples of Don Giovanni and Casanova, the language quickly morphs into a direct attack on the labourer. The reference to the ‘pelle scura’ (‘dark skin’) whose ambition, as perceived by the farmer, was that of ‘contaminare’ (‘contaminating’) the ‘purezza della nostra razza’ (‘purity of our race’) racially ostracises Bonucci, an image which is furthered through the recurrence to the metaphor of the Italian labourers as ‘miserabili scorpioni’ (‘wretched scorpions’). The fact that negative representations

⁴⁸⁹ Vince Marotta, “The Multicultural, Intercultural and the Transcultural Subject”, *Global Perspectives on the Politics of Multiculturalism in the Twenty-first century*, ed. Fethi Mansouri and Boulou Ebanga de B'éri (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 94.

⁴⁹⁰ Vittorio Bonucci, *POW – Quasi una fantasia*, p. 111, (translation my own).

regarding fraternisation occurred in Wales is well-documented in Marco Giudici's thesis, who points out that even though the Welsh population responded positively to Italian POWs, there were accounts of 'hostile attitudes' triggered by 'war-related hostility, negative stereotypes and sexual jealousy.'⁴⁹¹ These emerge in the description of Mr. Richard's verbal attack on Vittorio Bonucci. Sexual jealousy for his relationship with a Rona Morgan acts as a fuse that prompts war-related hostility and negative stereotypical imagery. As a response to the accusation, Vittorio Bonucci responds in like manner:

E non mi ressi. Non era tanto l'orgoglio ferito, ma solo il disgusto per la sua ipocrisia, che trasudava da ogni poro della 'sua' pelle di preteso osservante metodista. E quella giornata si concluse con una parola, SOLA, ma tonante, scagliata sul suo viso, dopo averlo costretto con violenza a smettere di vomitare odio: "RAZZISTA".⁴⁹²

[And I didn't hold back. It wasn't so much a case of my wounded pride, but my disgust for his hypocrisy that oozed out of every pore of 'his' skin. His so-called (pure) devout Methodist skin. And that day ended with me thunderously exclaiming just ONE word, flung at him after having forced him with violence to stop vomiting hatred. "RACIST".]

Vittorio Bonucci's response serves as the reinforcing of cultural boundaries that emerged from the farmer's verbal attack, with the key frame in this occasion being religion. The earlier encounter of the *spaghetтата* with the Morgan family is portrayed as bringing a reflection on the same God being forgotten by British and Italian leaders. On this occasion, Vittorio Bonucci's highlighting of the hypocrisy of the racist attitude of the farmer despite his state as a Methodist serves to separate the two men religiously between the presentation of the good-mannered Catholic and the derogatory Methodist. The recollection uses vocabulary that links to the semantic field of contamination in 'trasudava' ('ooze') and 'vomitare' ('vomit') as well as the field of violence – 'tonante' ('thunderously') and 'odio' ('hate'). These serve in emphasising Vittorio Bonucci's disgust at the situation and mark the reinforcing of the boundary between the two men. Finally, there is ambiguity in the text with the reference to how Vittorio Bonucci stopped the man with 'violenza' ('violence'). While it is unclear whether this refers to a physical attack or a verbal defence, the implication suggests the deterioration of the relationship between the two men, and thus of a failed moment of cultural contact.

Thus, the analysis of the four accounts (Benetti, Bonucci, Schiavone, Ferlito) reveals a transcultural narrative structure used to describe the treatment experienced by Welsh-

⁴⁹¹ Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', p. 120.

⁴⁹² Vittorio Bonucci, *POW – Quasi una fantasia*, pp. 111–2, (translation my own).

Italian prisoners-of-war. The individuals are presented as belonging to two ideological extremes caused by their associations with the war. Through their working practices, circumstances arise that bring the Italian prisoner and their Welsh employer into contact with each other, leading to an episode that changes the relationship and modifies the perceived cultural distance between the two subjects. This has emerged in the recollections involving the exchanging of tangible cultural elements (food, language, religion, music) that lead to a transfer of intangible elements (such as exchanges on common values). The result leads to a new relationship that reconfigures the original ideological polarisation between enemy-prisoner-worker and host-employer. In the personal and family narratives studied, these relationships are completely rewritten, and a sense of home and belonging in Wales is acquired by fraternisation. However, not all the moments of cultural contact were constructive. By bringing into play the destructive nature of transculturation as well as its generating ability in creating positive cultural contact, it is possible to interpret moments where negative outbursts resulted in the reinforcing of cultural boundaries and the inability of the individuals to connect with each other. These episodes are less frequently present in the prisoner of war narratives from Wales, but their infrequent appearance necessitate consideration as instances of failed transcultural narratives.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with a re-assessment of the contemporary narrative of Italian prisoners of war in Wales by integrating insights from war studies and postcolonialism. As demonstrated by my review of newspaper articles, television programmes, and oral history interviews, the representation of Italian POW experience in the country risks sliding into an unproblematic narrative built around conviviality, romance, and cultural contributions. In lieu of this, my analysis posits two alternative readings that capture different facets of the time spent as prisoners in the country.

The first narrative structure identified concerned the opposition between the perceived loss and regaining of identities and was used to understand the trajectory of subjects from capture to integration into a new working scenario. It draws directly on the insights of scholars from War Studies and their increasing interest in prisoner of war

narratives to highlight the subjective processes that occur during imprisonment. The case studies of Mario Ferlito, Vittorio Bonucci, and Vito Schiavone illustrate the passage from the alienation and confrontation of the individuals' links to war and fascism, through to their reclaiming of a sense of self linked to pre-war identities. The reading of these passages suggests the importance of paying particular attention to the shifting identity work at play as the prisoners negotiate the new context from soldiers to prisoners and finally to workers. This largely depends on two factors. My analysis demonstrates the dehumanising effect felt by prisoners, who are depicted as losing their individualities as a result of the annihilating disciplinary force represented by the camp and imprisonment. During captivity, the individuals regain a sense of agency by choosing to do activities that allow them to use transferable skills learned from before they became soldiers and, as such, determine their fates. This allowed them to reshape their identities and reconnect with who they used to be. Outlets such as the importance of work or the individuals' participation in Italian cultural projects, such as the building and attendance of the Italian Church, act as key markers where the regaining of their identities is completed.

The second narrative structure is framed around transculturality and explores instances of cross-cultural contact that emerged while working in Wales. Work is represented as an opportunity for contact with others. It is a conduit that allows for expressing Italian cultural identities, but it also provides access to a social world that was previously excluded from them. Cultural exchanges occur in workspaces, kitchens, the camp, and the café. Various examples from the interviews and memoirs illustrate this, from the piano performances in the French café for Ferlito and his colleagues to the meal shared between Manfredo Benetti and the Welsh farmer. This process allows for largely meaningful relationships to be constructed between the individuals involved. Whereas work plays a central role in reconfiguring individual senses of alienation for the prisoners, the interactions that emerged with others as a result of working have the power of generating moments for change and associations with the war.

Common to all the case studies offered is the central role that work plays in the prisoner of war narratives. Work, whether as artists or agricultural labourers, allows for the individuals studied to reclaim a sense of pre-war identity or to experience an alternative identity that differed from being merely prisoners. It brings about opportunities to reflect on the state of the war and the differences between the belligerent powers, as well as a chance to critically engage with their understandings of

belonging. And finally, it acts as a vehicle where cultural values are practiced and performed. This is demonstrated in the chapter with reference to how Italians were involved in cultural projects such as an Italian chapel or theatre project (Ferlito) or enjoyed food together (Bonucci, Benetti).

Not all cultural contact was positive, as the case study of Bonucci demonstrates. The positive transcultural narratives, present in the encounters of Schiavone, Ferlito, and Benetti, focus on the erosion of cultural boundaries and the convergence of individuals as they engage in the 'empowering' process of 'mutual transformation and cultural confluence'.⁴⁹³ In contrast, an episode of racial violence is interpreted as a failed transcultural narrative, where boundaries between individuals are reinforced.

The chapter has focused exclusively on the case study of Henllan Bridge POW Camp 70 and used the unique situation of a prisoner of war camp dedicated only to Italian soldiers between 1943 and 1946 as a means to explore the experiences of an 'enforced diaspora' of Italians as opposed to a mixed community of Italian and German soldiers.⁴⁹⁴ Nevertheless, evidence gathered in oral history interviews I conducted from Pool Park, Ruthin, Denbighshire (Camp 38), Glandulas Camp, Newport (Camp 101) and Wynol's Hill, Gloucester (Camp 61) – whose prisoners also worked in Wales – suggest similar trajectories.⁴⁹⁵ These readings have the potential to draw to light new perspectives on Second World War Italian experience in Wales and its contemporary legacy.

Thus far, the thesis has tackled dominant narratives regarding the well-feted refreshment industry and the lesser-known case of prisoner of war labourers. The final chapter addresses a case that has largely been neglected in the historical narrative of Italian twentieth-century migration to Wales: heavy industry workers in the 1950s.

⁴⁹³ Arianna Dagnino, *Transcultural writers and novels in the age of global mobility*, p. 193.

⁴⁹⁴ Bob Moore, 'Enforced Diaspora: The Fate of Italian Prisoners during the Second World War', *War in History*, 22. 2 (2015), 174–190.

⁴⁹⁵ Polly Wright and Mara Lensi, interviewed by Gareth White, 3rd February 2021; John Roberts, interviewed by Gareth White, 21st July 2021; Valentina Mazzoleni, interviewed by Gareth White, 6th August 2021.

CHAPTER THREE

Men of Steel: Representation of Masculinities of Italian Heavy Industry Workers in Wales (1945–1957)

1. Introduction

No less than six years after a war that had seen Britain and Italy positioned on opposite sides of the conflict that had entangled most of Europe, the chairman of the Welsh Board for Industry, Sir Percy Thomas, made the following announcement during a press conference held in Port Talbot about the prospects of achieving industrial prosperity in post-war Wales:

Italian workers brought to the South Wales steel and tinplate industries are playing a vital part towards achieving industrial prosperity. [...] “Several hundred more Italian workers will be introduced to South Wales industries very shortly. [...] There are 380 Italians employed in Wales at present and it is proposed to have 250 more, some of whom are already on their way here”. Sir Percy said Italians were being introduced to South Wales on a short-term policy but those who had been here a year could renew their contracts. There were few married men among them.⁴⁹⁶

The transformation from ‘enemy alien’ to what was deemed as a ‘vital part’ of the workforce corresponded with a rapid change in circumstances that saw increasing economic cooperation between Italy and other foreign powers in the early 1950s, whereby young Italian single men formed part of a pioneering wave of unskilled labour destined to work in the industries necessary for post-war reconstruction. Italian workers thus increasingly began to populate work sectors previously in decline. The new generation of Italian migrants was aided by the Italian government, which saw migration as a chance to rebuild its economy through the financial contributions that would return from abroad.⁴⁹⁷

This appraisal of the Italian workers in Wales is far from an isolated incident. As Marco Giudici points out, the British press in general supported recruiting schemes; in the Welsh context, the Conservative-leaning *Western Mail* ‘repeatedly stuck up for Italian miners’.⁴⁹⁸ An editorial published on August 11th 1955 pointed out that the ‘foreign workers in South Wales pits’ had become ‘accepted members of the community’ and that

⁴⁹⁶ ‘Italians vital part in Welsh steel industry’, *Western Mail*, 30th October 1951.

⁴⁹⁷ Marco Colucci, *Lavoro in movimento. L'emigrazione italiana in Europa 1945–1957*.

⁴⁹⁸ Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity’, p. 145.

there was ‘room for more, in South Wales and other coalfields in the country.’⁴⁹⁹ The same newspaper also gave voice to comments of Italian workers, such as the ‘resounding vote of confidence in their country of adoption’ given by the men to their lives in Wales, and thus fostering a sense of the positive relationship between Wales and the Italian metallurgic workers.⁵⁰⁰

Recently, metalworkers appear to have been afforded little space in the historical narrative of Italians in Wales during the twentieth century. Giudici notes with reference to the 2009 cultural exhibition *Italian Memories in Wales* that ‘unlike POWs, internees and café-keepers, they have almost entirely been forgotten in Welsh popular culture and public history.’⁵⁰¹ A review of the literature on Italian migration in Wales appears to confirm this trend. Except for Giudici’s brief exploration of Italian coal miners in his thesis, J. K. Chadwick Jones’s 1964 study on the adaptability of Italian workers in a steel-laying plant in South Wales, and a historical article about Italian lead miners in Cardiganshire in 1900, academic works have yet to sufficiently investigate the experiences of Italian heavy metal workers during the twentieth century.⁵⁰² This also appears to be the case in newspaper articles about them. Whereas the previous two chapters have demonstrated the extent of how newspaper articles, documentaries, and personal testimonies emphasise the cultural contributions made by Italians in the refreshment industry or as prisoners of war, there are significantly fewer articles about Italian coal miners, tinsplate workers and steel-layers.⁵⁰³ This is in part remedied in this chapter where their testimonies are given central space, allowing me to argue the importance of their greater inclusion within the study of twentieth-century Italian migration to Wales.

Over the course of three sections, the chapter engages with the representations of Italian working-class masculinity in the testimonies of and about Italian miners and heavy metal workers. This is motivated by Laurie Mercier and Jaclyn Gier’s research into gender and mine work, which identifies that mining is ‘usually portrayed as the oldest

⁴⁹⁹ ‘Room for Foreign Miners’, *Western Mail*, 11th August 1955.

⁵⁰⁰ ‘Italian workers like Wales – so they stay on’, *Western Mail*, 24th September 1957.

⁵⁰¹ Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity’, p. 148.

⁵⁰² Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity’; J. K. Chadwick-Jones, ‘The acceptance and socialization of immigrant workers in the steel industry’; Meic Birtwistle and Dafydd Llyr James, ‘When the party was over: Welsh and Italian lead miners in dispute, Cardiganshire’, *Llafur*, 12.1 (2016), 9–24.

⁵⁰³ ‘How the Italians found a new home in South Wales’, *Wales Online*, 20th April 2010, <<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/showbiz/how-italians-found-new-home-1924428>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

and most masculine of industries' and offers a way 'to understand how gender, or the social construction of sex roles for men and women, operate[s] in communities and industries.'⁵⁰⁴ By working-class masculinity, I refer to the following definition from Craig Heron:

At any given moment in most societies, there is a "hegemonic" masculinity that attempts to articulate and organize appropriate male behavior and to rationalize male power. It is articulated by dominant elites, and disseminated and reinforced through the structures of their power. Within the same society, there may also be a number of "subordinate" masculinities, which share some part of the dominant form but develop their own dynamics.⁵⁰⁵

This chapter integrates testimonies regarding Italian heavy industry workers in Wales (coal miners, steelworkers, tinplate layers, and iron ore miners) within a larger debate about the articulation and reproduction of masculine values. Heron's consideration of working-class masculinity also hints at multiple forms, and these are uncovered in the chapter as being related to what I posit as a specific Welsh-Italian working-class masculinity, but also oscillating between what Stephen Meyer terms 'rough' and 'respectable' forms.⁵⁰⁶ The working-class aspect is implicit in the reference to the struggles between 'hegemonic' and 'subordinate' masculinities. For Ava Baron, industrial capitalism 'altered class and gender relations' in the twentieth century, 'precipitating a crisis in masculinity' where working-class individuals began to perform an overtly and overly sense of masculinity in reaction to increasing mechanisation and changing gender dynamics.⁵⁰⁷

The first section provides a historical contextualisation of Italian labour migration in the 1950s by charting key coordinates related to Italian metalliferous migration to Wales. I touch upon post-war Italian and Britain migration policies that saw migration to bolster their respective economies; the history of Italian mining and metalwork in Wales from the 19th century onwards, and finally their arrival in Wales in the 1950s. The section also synthesises changes in the historiography of the historical narrative of metalworkers and miners in Wales during the twentieth century, one that transitions from the

⁵⁰⁴ Laurie Mercier and Jaclyn Gier, 'Reconsidering Women and Gender in Mining', *History Compass*, 5.3 (2007), 995–1001, pp. 995–996.

⁵⁰⁵ Craig Heron, 'Boys Will Be Boys: Working-Class Masculinities in the Age of Mass Production', *International Labour and Working-Class History*, 69 (2006), 6–34, p. 8.

⁵⁰⁶ Stephen Meyer, 'Work, Play, and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930–1960', *Men and Masculinities*, 2.2 (1999), 115–134.

⁵⁰⁷ Steven Maynard 'Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History', p. 160.

ideological battle of miners against capitalism to an approach centred on the individual trajectories and studies of communities, masculinities, and subjective processes.

In the second section, I analyse representations of masculinity that focus on discourses of corporality, as well as experiences of hard work and workplace dangers. I draw on case studies sourced from oral history interviews conducted by myself in 2021 and 2022, and by Italian historian Flavia Virgilio as part of the Archivio Multimediale Emigrazione Regionale (AMMER) project in 2008. I explore how discourses of physicality, where testimonies focus on the body and health, express the workers' productivity and suitability to a challenging workplace. I then look at how testimonies describe the nature of hard work and workplace dangers, identifying expressions of stoicism and tolerance that are other manifestations of working-class masculinity. Finally, I investigate how this endurance is framed in the case studies. By looking at how work in Wales is often framed between difficult socio-economic conditions in Italy and enhanced ones in Wales, I explore the psychological motivations of the workers.

The third section focuses on the homosociality between Italian workers as another area where working-class masculine values can be performed and reproduced. Three sites of intercultural interaction are explored: within workplace groups, in the larger culture of the workplace regarding workers' trade unionism, and finally between groups of other Italians outside of work. My analysis unearths representations of camaraderie and competitiveness in the testimonies, where workers portray themselves as being part of a cohesive group where 'ethnic lines' are blurred, bouts of violence are linked to 'rough masculinity' and expressions of strength, miners and metalworkers are united against greater causes (such as the defence of workers' rights and demands for safer conditions at work), and Italian men's homosociality allows them to enact cultural values related to the individual and collective expressions of masculinity.

2. Italian Metalliferous Migration to Wales during the Twentieth Century

2.1. Post-war Italian Emigration Policies

Rebuilding Italy's fortunes after the war proved no easy task, and several issues highlighted the extent to which ambitious plans were required. The economy was largely constrained due to the scarce availability of oil, iron and coal needed to fuel its

regrowth.⁵⁰⁸ Protectionism, considered a 'principal pillar' of Fascism, was rejected due to the likely effect of stagnation of the country's economic system and, in its place, the government pursued a policy of free trade and internationalism.⁵⁰⁹ The state of the economy before the interventions also required addressing urgently: industrial output was 29% below those prior to the war, the infrastructure was 'shattered', food prices were at record high levels, and inflation levels had been severe as of 1943.⁵¹⁰ Economic instability aggravated the problems of disproportionate industrialisation and modernisation in rural areas that had stunted development since the unification.⁵¹¹

The mass levels of unemployment predicted after the war represented another significant issue that required action. Already in 1943, the *Istituto per la ricostruzione industriale* (Institute for Industrial Reconstruction) had forecast a total of approximately two million workers without employment.⁵¹² Preparations would also have to be made, it argued, for the return of 'traumatised soldiers, including hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war', many of whom would require reintegrating into the workforce.⁵¹³ With the increasing number of repatriations after 1946 on top of the problems indicated above, discussions focussed on the potential benefits of emigration.⁵¹⁴ As highlighted in the 1944 *Appunto per un piano di ricostruzione economica dell'Italia*:

Il deflusso degli emigranti, per quanto possibile controllato, non dovrà essere impedito. [...] In seguito alla guerra l'attrezzatura di beni strumentali è stata gravemente decurtata e vi è quindi esuberanza di mano d'opera rispetto ai beni produttivi. [...] Forse sarà anche necessario alleviare la disoccupazione mediante la disciplinata emigrazione: ciò recherà pure vantaggi alla nostra bilancia dei pagamenti, che non avrà certo molte partite attive sulle quali poter fare affidamento.⁵¹⁵

[The flux of emigrants, if it can be controlled, should not be restricted. [...] As a result of the war, the state of capital goods has been severely cut short, and there is therefore an excess of labourers compared to the number of productive goods. [...] Perhaps it will be necessary to reduce unemployment via controlled emigration: this will certainly bring benefits to our finances, which we should certainly not count much on.]

⁵⁰⁸ Donald Sassoon, *Contemporary Italy: Economy, Society and Politics since 1945* (London: Longman Publishing, 1997), p. 16.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ John Lamberton Harper, *America and the Reconstruction of Italy, 1945–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; 2002), p. 1.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹² Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in Movimento*, p. 42.

⁵¹³ Francesco Ricatti, *Italians in Australia: history, memory, identity*, p. 27.

⁵¹⁴ Guido Tintori and Michele Colucci, 'From manpower to brain drain: emigration and the Italian state, between past and present', *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy: History, politics, society*, eds. Andrea Mammone, Ercole Giap Arpini, Giuseppe Veltri (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 37–48.

⁵¹⁵ 'Appunti e relazioni varie 1943-1945', *Prospettive per la ricostruzione economica nel dopoguerra*, republished in Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in Movimento*, p. 42.

In recognition of these benefits, political consensus began to be gained for encouraging emigration, ideally of a temporary nature, to European countries that were also rebuilding their economies. The centrists under Alcide De Gasperi and the *Democrazia Cristiana* had noted the importance of emigration ‘per assicurare a tutti i popoli le condizioni indispensabili di esistenza’ (‘to guarantee for the population of all countries the conditions that were necessary for their continued existence’).⁵¹⁶ Politicians from the *Partito Socialista Italiano*, such as Ludovico D’Aragona and Ugo La Malfa, were also favourable to the ‘massima libertà di movimento’ (‘maximum freedom of movement’) under the condition that Italian workers were not exploited as a cheap labour force that would lower national salaries in the countries where they migrated to.⁵¹⁷ Many wished to reproduce the success of the *rimesse* scheme that, as in the years prior to the ascension of Mussolini in 1923, had triggered significant economic development as a result of the monthly payments sent back to families in Italy from abroad.⁵¹⁸ Together, these reasons outline the rationale behind post-war governmental policies in establishing the mechanisms for a state-controlled migration system. Thus, as Guido Tintori and Michele Colucci point out, the objective was ‘twofold’: ‘to relieve pressure on the Italian labour market’ and ‘to ease the social tensions that could easily have erupted with such a large number of unemployed.’⁵¹⁹

As of 1946, the Italian government began discussions with other European countries regarding the possibility of organising bilateral schemes.⁵²⁰ In exchange for sending workers, Italy would gain much-needed financial capital and natural resources. Rather than uncontrolled individual migration, the state opted for a policy of *emigrazione assistita* (assisted emigration), understood as emigration that was controlled and organised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Foreign

⁵¹⁶ Cited in Michele Colucci, ‘La nuova politica migratoria’, *Lavoro in movimento*, pp. 41–96, [translation my own].

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ See *Verso l’America*, ed. Andreina De Clementi, *Il prezzo della ricostruzione: l’emigrazione italiana nel secondo dopoguerra* (Rome: Laterza, 2010).

⁵¹⁹ Guido Tintori and Michele Colucci, ‘From manpower to brain drain? Emigration and the Italian state between past and present’, p. 40.

⁵²⁰ It should be added here that the assisted migration of Italians to countries under the bilateral system was not the only form of migration that occurred after the end of the Second World War; individual, uncontrolled migration continued to Europe and, in some instances, grew to include new destinations across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Between 1946 and 1957, emigration to the Americas and Australia totalled 380,000 for Argentina, 166,500 in Canada, 160,000 in the U.S., 138,000 in Australia, and 128,000 in Venezuela. See Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943–1988* (New York: St. Martin’s Publishing Group, 2003), p. 211.

Affairs.⁵²¹ A significant bilateral agreement was concluded with Belgium on the 23rd of June 1946, whereby for every 1000 Italian workers employed in the coal mines, Italy would receive each month between 2,500 and 5,000 tonnes of coal depending on the overall production levels.⁵²² Other bilateral agreements with its European neighbours soon followed. The agreement with France was signed on the 21st of March 1947 and sought to regulate the flow of agricultural workers who – legally or clandestinely – were attracted by the surplus of jobs in the French fields.⁵²³ A similar contract with Switzerland was ratified on the 22nd of June 1948.⁵²⁴ The following table indicates the extent of inter-European migration that resulted:⁵²⁵

TABLE FIVE: ITALIAN EMIGRATION TO EUROPE (1946 – 1957)

	<u>Belgium</u>	<u>France</u>	<u>United Kingdom</u>	<u>West Germany</u>	<u>Luxembourg</u>	<u>Switzerland</u>
<u>1946</u>	24,653	28,135	/	/	/	48,808
<u>1947</u>	29,881	53,245	365	/		105,112
<u>1948</u>	46,365	40,231	2,679	/	346	102,241
<u>1949</u>	5,311	52,345	6,592	/	23	29,726
<u>1950</u>	4,226	18,083	3,451	74	139	27,144
<u>1951</u>	33,308	35,099	9,967	431	1,423	66,040
<u>1952</u>	22,441	53,810	3,522	270	453	61,593
<u>1953</u>	8,832	36,687	5,502	242	1,168	57,326

⁵²¹ Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in movimento*, p. 6.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁵²³ See Eric Vial, 'Gli italiani in Francia', *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, pp. 134–147; Andreina de Clementi, *Il Prezzo della ricostruzione: l'emigrazione italiana nel secondo dopoguerra*, pp. 30 – 35.

⁵²⁴ Barbara Lüthi and Damir Skenderovic, *Switzerland and Migration. Historical and Current Perspectives on a Changing Landscape* (Cham: Springer International, 2019).

⁵²⁵ Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in movimento*, p. 5

<u>1954</u>	3,278	28,305	7,787	361	904	65,671
<u>1955</u>	17,073	40,713	10,400	1,200	5,700	71,735
<u>1956</u>	10,395	87,552	11,520	10,907	6,500	75,632
<u>1957</u>	10,552	114,974	10,595	7,653	8,874	78,882

The numbers above provide an outline of the fluctuating nature of migration that occurred in the years before two significant geopolitical events that would reconfigure Italy's position on the global stage: the Italian 'economic miracle' between the 1950s and the 1960s, and the signing of the Treaty of Rome that brought about the creation of the European Economic Community in 1957. The impact of the bilateral trade agreements can be seen in the sudden increase in workers arriving in Belgium between 1946 to 1948 (an increase of 88.07%) or more noticeably by the surge in Italians arriving in the United Kingdom (+1706.03%) from 1947 to 1949 as well as to West Germany (+14639.19%) between 1950 and the signing of the bilateral agreement with the Federal Republic in 1957. These increases attest to the efficacy of the schemes that, as demonstrated, resulted in consistent numbers of Italians emigrating across Europe.

A criticism of the bilateral agreement scheme raised by academics studying Italian labour migration in the 1950s is the imbalance of power and precarious stance of Italy in these contracts. This proved to be the case most notably in Belgium.⁵²⁶ Even though the treaty stipulated that Italians would benefit from the same conditions of employment as Belgian workers, concerns were soon raised that the standard of accommodation was inferior – in many cases being 'hidden away' on the outskirts of cities in sites previously used as prisoners of war camps.⁵²⁷ Workers were also vocal about unsafe work conditions, and disobedience and insubordination were often met with imprisonment in

⁵²⁶ Toni Ricciardi, *Marcinelle, 1956: Quando la vita valeva meno del carbone* (Rome: Donzelli editore, 2016); S. Rinauro, 'La memoria pubblica dell'incidente di Marcinelle in Italia: un pretesto per parlare d'altro', *Minatori di memorie. Memoria e culture della memoria delle miniere e della migrazione italiana in Limburgo (belga e olandese) e Vallonia* (Bologna: Pàtron Editore, 2017); Michele Colucci; Lorenzo Di Stefano, 'Da Roma a Marcinelle (1946–1956), 'I lavoratori italiani nelle miniere del Belgio: il ruolo dei sindacati', *Diacronie, Studi di Storia Contemporanea*, 22.2 (2015), available < <https://journals.openedition.org/diacronie/2060> > [last accessed 28th August 2023].

⁵²⁷ Anne Morelli, 'Gli italiani in Belgio', *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, pp. 159–170.

Brussels before their eventual repatriation.⁵²⁸ Mortality rates at the workplace were also a grave issue in this decade, with the catastrophe at the Marcinelle coal mine where 132 Italian miners were killed on the 8th August 1956 marking the apex of several years of work-related accidents across the world.⁵²⁹

2.2. Britain and Migrant Labour (1945–1957)

The signing of the Potsdam Agreement in August 1945 meant that Britain could no longer depend on captured enemy soldiers as part of the workforce, as there was no longer an enemy to fight. Post-war governments concluded that the continuous use of foreign labour would be a source of ‘diplomatic embarrassment’ and set about the repatriation of captured Italians and Germans.⁵³⁰ This was also in line with policies followed by other European countries, that had begun to recruit foreign labour freely after the war and cease using prisoner labour.⁵³¹

At the same time as the return of the Italian and German prisoners to their countries, the forecasts provided by the Foreign Labour Committee to the newly elected Labour government under Clement Attlee in early 1946 were alarming. Across the country, a deficit was noted in terms of the number of workers available in industries deemed essential for post-war reconstruction and recovery – namely in agriculture, coal mining, textiles, construction, foundry work, health services, and institutional domestic service.⁵³² In an economic survey published in January 1946, the Trades Union Congress estimated that between 600,000 and 1.3 million workers were required and that Britain was facing a balance-of-payments deficit of £750 million.⁵³³ The total working population of the country between 1945 and 1946 decreased by 1.38 million, a backlog of essential maintenance and repairs required carrying out, and approximately 750,000 houses were

⁵²⁸ See Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in movimento*, pp. 136–153.

⁵²⁹ Colucci indicates that ‘accanto alla ripresa dei flussi, aumentò anche la quantità degli incidenti sul lavoro’ [concurrent to the restarting of emigration was the increasing number of accidents at work] and draws reference to mortalities in Quaregnon in 1951 (5), John Cockerill di Frameries in 1953 (18, of which 11 Italians) and finally Bois du Cazier, Marcinelle (262, of which 136 Italians). See Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in movimento*, pp. 149–153.

⁵³⁰ Joseph Behar, ‘Diplomacy and Essential Workers: Official British Recruitment of Foreign Labor in Italy, 1945–1951’, *Journal of Policy History*, 15.3 (2003), 324–344, p. 326.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁵³² Kathleen Paul, ‘Recruiting Potential Britons’, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Post-war era* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 67.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

either severely damaged or had been destroyed during the war.⁵³⁴ In order to kickstart the economy and resolve the myriad of issues, the British government cast its gaze to Europe to recruit workers that could, as the prisoners and pre-war migrants had done, become valuable members of the British workforce.

Over the course of the Attlee government between 1945 and 1951, the Foreign Office strongly encouraged European migration, and both took advantage of and founded schemes designed to attract as many workers as possible to Britain. Firstly, the war had displaced citizens across Europe who were not willing to return to or wished to stay in their homeland due to a lack of identification with the country's political values. This was most notably the case of countries in Eastern Europe incorporated into the USSR. Schemes aimed to recruit people from these countries were subsequently created. In May 1946, the British government created the 'Polish Resettlement Corps' to assist the Polish servicemen and their families who had fought alongside the Allies during the war. By 1949, 150,000 Polish workers had settled permanently in the country and were retrained, financially supported, and given opportunities for employment.⁵³⁵

Concurrently, camps of displaced people and political refugees throughout Europe provided another recruitment source. The *European Volunteer Workers* (EVWs) counted 74,511 men and women, amongst which were Ukrainians, Germans, Austrians, and Italians.⁵³⁶ Two additional schemes created between 1946 and 1947 targeted workers from Eastern Europe. *Balt Cygnet* was responsible for bringing a contingent of 2,126 Latvian women to work in the textile industry, and *Westward Ho!* facilitated the migration of 79,000 individuals of both sexes from Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Latvia, Bulgaria, and Slovakia.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁴ Linda McDowell, *Working Lives: Gender, Migration and Employment in Britain, 1945–2007* (Oxford: Wiley and Blackwell, 2013), p. 75.

⁵³⁵ Kathy Burrell, *Moving Lives: Narratives of Nation and Migration Among Europeans in Post-War Britain* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor and Francis 2017); Keith Sword, Normal Davies and Jan Ciechanowski, *The Formation of the Polish Community in Great Britain 1939–1950* (London: University of London Press, 1989); Agata Blazczyk, 'The resettlement of Polish refugees after the second world war', *Forced Migration Review*, 54 (2017), 71–73.

⁵³⁶ John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1993); Diana Kay and Robert Miles, 'Refugees or Migrant Workers: The Case of the European Workers in Britain (1946–1951).

⁵³⁷ It is worth noting that the preference of the British government for European workers in the post-war period came at the detriment of workers originating from British colonies, most notably from the British Caribbean. Although some workers did arrive – most notably aboard the SS. Empire Windrush in 1948 – academics have pointed out that the British government were privately attempting to discourage the arrival of Black British citizens in the country. See John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Britain*; Ian R. G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge,

As a sign of the 'role of the state in the reproduction of the national labour force on behalf of capital', the British government attempted to manage the extent of migration through the semantic classification of the new arrivals.⁵³⁸ By this, displaced workers were not considered as migrants or displaced persons but were classified with new terms with positive connotations such as 'volunteer workers' who wanted to be part of the British workforce.⁵³⁹ The British also tapped into several labour markets, shifting their attention to a new country whenever a previous agreement began to be 'inefficient'.⁵⁴⁰ The awarded contracts were 'unilateral government programs and employer-based recruitment' as opposed to the bilateral state agreements of her European neighbours.⁵⁴¹ This decision allowed Britain to 'kill two birds with one stone': it recruited the essential workers needed without committing to financially supporting the sending country, and also contributed to solving the 'dramatic problem' of European displacement.⁵⁴² Early manifestations of these unilateral government agreements targeted displaced women, resulting in the *Blue Danube Scheme* (Austria), the *North Sea Scheme* (Germany) and the *Official Italian Scheme* (Italy). These ran until the early years of the 1950s when they were eventually wound up and replaced by schemes organised independently by individual companies as opposed to the state.⁵⁴³

Even though the *Official Italian Scheme* was short-lived, the Italian domestic situation was interpreted as providing advantageous conditions for British industries wishing to recruit workers. The first agreement for Italians to arrive in the country as part of the post-war labour migration wave was formalised shortly after the end of the Second World War; in 1946, 450 tinplate workers were recruited for work in Wales, and 2,800 foundry workers were employed in England.⁵⁴⁴ Of these, only 440 physically arrived in the country, and many of those were repatriated a few weeks later due to

1997); Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵³⁸ Diana Kay and Robert Miles, 'Refugees or Migrant Workers: The Case of the European Workers in Britain (1946–1951)', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 1.3/4 (1988), 214–236, p. 231; Flavia Gasperetti, 'Italian women migrants in post-war Britain: The case of textile workers (1949–61)'.

⁵³⁹ Kathleen Paul, 'Recruiting Potential Britons', *Whitewashing Britain*, p. 85.

⁵⁴⁰ Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in movimento*, p. 186.

⁵⁴¹ Jeannette Money and Sarah Lockhart, *Migration Crises and the Structure of International Cooperation*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), p. 117.

⁵⁴² Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in movimento*, p. 185.

⁵⁴³ Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Post-war era*.

⁵⁴⁴ Joseph Behar, 'Diplomacy and Essential Workers: Official British Recruitment of Foreign Labor in Italy, 1945–1951', p. 327.

problems in adapting to the new country and work environment.⁵⁴⁵ A pilot scheme conducted between 1949 and 1951 brought a total of 1,655 Italian women workers to occupy positions in the textile mills in Northern England and the Midlands, with Italian women being specifically targeted not only for the transferable skills for the workplace but also as potential mothers to 'future Britons'.⁵⁴⁶

Over the next decade, industry-run schemes where recruitment would occur independently from the state were successful in bolstering the numbers of the Italian labour force in the United Kingdom. These were bulk-recruitment schemes, where industries would specifically target workers, most notably from Italy in the Southern regions of Campania and Calabria, in response to labour shortages as and when they arose. After 1952, under the newly elected Conservative government of Winston Churchill, the decentralisation of arrangements that allowed companies to independently contract workers marked a rise in the number of new arrivals into the workforce in the country at a time when the successes of the previous labour migration schemes under Labour were beginning to peter out. The brick industry of Bedford is often highlighted by scholars studying Italian migration to the United Kingdom in the 1950s as being an area that benefited greatly from the new bulk recruitment scheme; as a result, the engagement *en masse* of 10,000 migrants predominantly from southern Italian regions led to the creation of an Italian diasporic community in the area.⁵⁴⁷ Other areas of the working sectors of England and Wales would benefit too: the coal industry also employed significant numbers of Italian workers under the bulk recruitment scheme, peaking at 2,500 workers who were distributed most prominently in Yorkshire and Wales.⁵⁴⁸

The bulk recruitment scheme was not the only means through which workers for these industries arrived in England and Wales. A secondary, complimentary method often employed by British companies was through *group recruitment schemes*. Whereas the bulk recruitment scheme would provide a fixed number of workers that the *Ministero del Lavoro* would randomly select from various municipalities across Italy, the group

⁵⁴⁵ Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in movimento*, p. 185; Umberto Marin, *Italiani in Gran Bretagna*, p. 93.

⁵⁴⁶ Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in Post-war Britain*, p. 87; Flavia Gasperetti, 'Italian women migrants in post-war Britain: The case of textile workers (1949-61)', p. 38.

⁵⁴⁷ Siria Guzzo, *A Sociolinguistic Insight into the Italian Community in the UK: Workplace Language as an Identity Marker*; Russell King, 'Italian Migration to Great Britain'.

⁵⁴⁸ It should be noted that there were no bulk recruitment schemes in Scotland in the 1950s. See Terri Colpi, *The Italian Factor: The Italian Community in Great Britain*, p. 144; Umberto Marin, *Italiani in Gran Bretagna*, p. 94.

recruitment scheme targeted Italians from the same geographic area to come over in groups.⁵⁴⁹ Terri Colpi notes how group recruitment schemes served as ‘top up’ groups for ‘buoyant’ industries in this period, and draws reference to the employment of Tuscan lumberjacks from Barga to work near Glasgow, Sicilians from Mussomeli and Acquaviva Platani to work in the Lee Valley in Northern London, and Lombards from Bergamo and Brescia to work on the expansion of the national electricity grid.⁵⁵⁰ In Wales, the impact of the group recruitment scheme was most felt in the Llanharry Iron Ore mine, where groups of Italians from near Cividale del Friuli were recruited together.⁵⁵¹ It is the involvement of Italians in Wales that we now turn to.

2.3. Italian Metalliferous Migration to Wales

Italian involvement in the metal and mining industries of Wales far predates the second wave of migration that, in the 1950s, brought workers to Wales to be employed in large numbers in these sectors. Already in 1881, a total of five Italians worked in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire as furnace labourers, coal miners, ironwork labourers and copper miners.⁵⁵² This number increased to twelve in 1891 in the same geographic areas, with one Italian in the Welsh village of Blaina listed as a blast furnace manager responsible for a team that included other Italians.⁵⁵³ It was not until the first years of the twentieth century, however, that larger numbers of Italians began to take up employment in this sector.

As well as the constant presence of a small cohort of Italians in Welsh coalfields, a notable example of Italian involvement in the heavy metal industry concerns the Italians at a lead mine in Frongoch, Pontrhydygroes in 1899. The mine was acquired by the

⁵⁴⁹ Terri Colpi, *The Italian Factor*, p. 150.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵¹ ‘L’emigrazione regionale nel Regno Unito’, *Archivio multimediale della memoria dell’emigrazione regionale*, < <http://www.ammer-fvg.org/aspx/RisRicerche.aspx?source=EMI&tipoRic=0&paese=Regno%20Unito> > [last accessed 28th August 2023].

⁵⁵² GBGRO, *Census of England and Wales*, 1881.

⁵⁵³ This would be Eugenio Montefameglio, who is listed in the 1891 census as a blast furnace manager boarding with Valerio Montefameglio, Bernando Chiaffredo and Giuseppe Dalbesio. 1891 census; see also Gwenfair Parry and Mari A. Williams, *The Welsh Language and the 1891 Census: A Social History of the Welsh Language* (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 1999), pp. 42–3.

Société Anonyme Minière in Liege and entrusted to Bernardino Nogara.⁵⁵⁴ Under Nogara's custodianship, approximately 80 Italians were recruited from mines in Bergamo and Massa Marittima to work alongside local Welsh miners. The experiment under Nogara and the Liege Company was short-lived: the exploitation of the workers and a climate that veered between amicable relationships and escalated tensions culminated in the abandonment of the project in 1901, with Nogara convinced that he was the 'capro espiatorio' ('scapegoat') of 'gente che disprezza' ('ungrateful people').⁵⁵⁵ Nogara's management of Frongoch attracted significant interest due to ongoing disputes regarding unsafe working conditions and wages. The Welsh and Italians found themselves on 'opposite sides' of workers' strikes despite the mediation attempts by Nogara, including a tea party held between all workers.⁵⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the Frongoch-Italian community was to many extents a success.⁵⁵⁷ A *de facto* community was constructed in the area at the time. Family members were transferred over, local Italian Catholic priest Padre Clemente presided over masses for the workers, and the Italians organised impromptu concerts in the barracks where they were hosted.⁵⁵⁸ Some of the Italians who originally migrated to work in Frongoch stayed in the area after its closure in 1901, although most returned to Italy at the end of their contracts.⁵⁵⁹ Furthermore, there are suggestions that tensions in Frongoch were exacerbated by the media, such as in the *Evening Express* article 'Latins versus Celts'.⁵⁶⁰ Welsh locals even went on strike with Italians against, it could be posited, a capitalist opportunistic system seeking to exploit cheap labour for profit.

After the Second World War, the Welsh metallurgic and mining industries were in a paradoxical position. Post-1945, there was a 'substantial extension of government

⁵⁵⁴ Nogara was the Vatican's financial advisor between 1929 and 1954, as well as the first Director of the Special Administration of the Holy See. He was originally recruited by the Société Anonyme Minière de Liège to manage the mine between 1899 and 1901.

⁵⁵⁵ See Giordano Sivini, *Il banchiere del Papa e la sua miniera. Lotte operaie nel villaggio minerario di Cave del Predil* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009); Meic Birtwistle and Dafydd Llyr James, 'When the party was over: Welsh and Italian lead miners in dispute, Cardiganshire'.

⁵⁵⁶ Meic Birtwistle and Dafydd Llyr James, 'When the party was over', pp. 19 – 20.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁸ 'Italian village in Wales', *Western Mail*, 4th August 1900.

⁵⁵⁹ GBGRO, 1901 Census.

⁵⁶⁰ Birtwistle and James' article indicates the ambiguity surrounding the nature of the strikes, as did local historian Simon Hughes in an interview with the BBC in 2007. See 'Claims of industrial unrest and racial conflict between Welsh and Italians lead miners in the early 20th century could be examined in a TV drama', *BBC*, 12th July 2007; 'Frongoch Lead Mines. Latins versus Celts. Alleged Conflict', *Evening Express*, 6th April 1900. See also 'Frongoch Mine', *Welsh Gazette and West Wales Advertiser*, 12th April 1900 that describes the 'savage' fight between miners.

involvement' in economic affairs in Wales as well as a 'greater diversification of industry' in the South.⁵⁶¹ The nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947 heralded the start of a new phase, with older and smaller mines being closed due to the 'exhaustion of workable reserves' or the 'uneconomic productivity' of the site.⁵⁶² At the same time, modernisation was pushed through on a mass scale: new mines and factories were constructed in the South that enhanced the production and sourcing techniques. Many of the older plants were kept in operation in the 1950s and, as local workers tended to prefer working in the newly constructed plants, employers turned to migrant labour to plug the gaps. Local workers also had expressed concerns regarding the substandard working conditions, leading to a recruitment drive focussed on hiring men from Poland and Italy.⁵⁶³

Following the train journey that took prospective workers from Italy to a ferry crossing at Calais and then a final train to South Wales, the new workers would then be transported to the local area with whom they had signed their contract back in Italy. Many of the sites for whom the *Ministero del Lavoro* recruited workers for the tinsplate industry were located either in the boroughs of Swansea (Upper Forest and Worcester Steel, Morriston) and Neath (Eagle Bush; Baglan Bay; Briton Ferry Steel) or in the surrounding rural communities (Glynhir Tinsplate in Pontardulais; Claytons Tinsplate Works in Pontardulais; John Player and Sons, Clydach; St David's Tin Works, Loughor).⁵⁶⁴ A significant employer in this period were the Steel Company of Wales, a nationalised steel and tinsplate company whose factories in Trostre (Llanelli), Margam (Port Talbot) and Velindre (Swansea) recruited at least 98 Italians between 1953 and 1954 alone.⁵⁶⁵ Outside the steel and tinsplate industries, groups of Italians were recruited to rural locations: the Glamorgan Hematite Iron Ore Company employed at least 41 Italians to work in the iron ore mines located around the rural village of Llanharry, Rhondda Cynon Taf; and the coal industry under the National Coal Board drafted workers to the collieries that were also located in South Wales, such as the Pontardawe area.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶¹ D. Gareth Evans, *A History of Wales 1906–2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 143.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

⁵⁶³ Martin Johnes, *Wales since 1939*, p. 50.

⁵⁶⁴ 'Italian Workers for the Tinsplate Industry in South Wales, 1950–1954), TNA, LAB 26/274.

⁵⁶⁵ These numbers only indicate the Italians who were formally recruited via bulk recruitment schemes, and do not include those who transferred from one workplace to another nor those who arrived outside these schemes in this period. See 'Italian Workers for the Tinsplate Industry in South Wales, 1950–1954)', TNA, LAB 26/274.

⁵⁶⁶ 'Italian Labour – General Papers', GA, D561/1/9/1/54.

As accommodation for workers was often difficult to find, a variety of solutions were prepared in accordance with the availability of resources that could be mobilised. For many of the Italians, this would involve accommodation in temporary hostels such as those available in Morriston (Swansea) or in the Pencoed hostel of Llanharry.⁵⁶⁷ These locations, often of a rudimentary nature consisting of ‘asbestos roof, wooden hut’, were provided by the companies themselves and at times accommodated workers of other nationalities, although Italians constituted a large part of the resident workforce in these locations.⁵⁶⁸ After a short period of time living within the temporary accommodation, they would typically move into smaller housing with a group of other Italians they worked with, although some lived alongside Welsh host families as lodgers due to a lack of readily available accommodation.⁵⁶⁹ These arrangements allowed Italians to become part of the local communities where they worked.

2.4 Writing the Welsh Twentieth-Century Metal and Mining Industries

Much has changed in the way that historical investigations have portrayed the experiences of mining and metalworking communities and workers in Wales during the twentieth century. In a critical assessment of the analyses of Welsh historians in the work produced throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Bleddyn Penny notes the following traits:

[t]he Marxist-inspired analysis of historians, such as Hobsbawm, provided a pertinent framework for the new generation of Welsh historians who [...] passionately presented the case for a new, albeit highly politicised, historical understanding of modern industrial Wales. Industrial conflict figured prominently in their analyses of the creation of an industrial Welsh society and a politically aware Welsh proletariat.⁵⁷⁰

Largely written against a backdrop of miners’ strikes in Britain from 1969 to the infamous industrial action led by Arthur Scargill in 1984–85, historical investigations produced in this era employed an epic narrative structure revolving around the workers’ struggle against the forces of capitalism or the state. At the heart of Hywel Francis and

⁵⁶⁷ Morriston Hostel’, 7th November 1953, TNA, LAB 26/274; Pencoed Hostel’, 27th April 1953. TGA, D561/1/9/1/54.

⁵⁶⁸ Morriston Hostel’, 7th November 1953, TNA, LAB 26/274.

⁵⁶⁹ Difficulties regarding the capacity of the hostel are documented in exchanges between the Ministry of Labour and National Service in Cardiff and the Glamorgan Hematite Iron Ore Company, the company responsible for the Llanharry Iron Ore Mine. See Letter to Brynmor Davies, 25th August 1953; ‘Pencoed Hostel’, 27th April 1953. TGA, D561/1/9/1/54.

⁵⁷⁰ Bleddyn Penny, ‘Class, Work and Community. Port Talbot’s Steelworkers, 1951–1958’, (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Swansea, 2020), 129 – 130.

Dai Smith's *The Fed* is the role of the South Wales Mining Federation (SWMF) who were at the forefront of the miners' struggle against closures since its inception in 1898.⁵⁷¹ Their work is driven by an investigation of the spirit of 'compromise' and 'defiance' of local miners in the community and paints an epic narrative of their struggles against capitalist forces.⁵⁷² A similar drive to portray episodes of industrial action and civil unrest in Welsh history was conducted in Gwyn Williams' *The Merthyr Uprising*.⁵⁷³ Written in 1979, the text focuses on the working-class rebellion during the Merthyr Riots of 1831 when miners protested against the worsening of work conditions imposed by local industry bosses. These texts promoted a historical narrative of twentieth-century industrial Wales as being founded in the ideological struggles of the working classes.⁵⁷⁴

The stance that I adopt in this thesis revolves around the importance of studying the individual trajectories and subjective processes of Italian workers in these industries away from epic narratives of industrial action in the sector. This is concurrent with the insights of scholars such as Martin Johnes who argue that, while the aforementioned texts are useful in providing an 'appreciative history of miners' trade unionism' and perspectives of class consciousness in the wake of social and political unrest in Wales, they are also bound by their focus on the macro-narrative of the battles between the Welsh proletariat and other classes.⁵⁷⁵ In equating the history of trade unionism with that of the workers of Wales, the texts risk missing out on alternative experiences or perspectives from the industries. Firstly, as Johnes notes, the 'significant base of oral sources' employed in books such as *The Fed* are as much as a telling of the 'social and political history of the (male) coalfield as they are of the history of the SWMF'.⁵⁷⁶ This suggests that there should be an increased focus to the individual trajectories of the workers, away from a general macro-narrative of their supposed involvement in trade unionism. Secondly, the focus on class consciousness and its universalistic imagining of entire cohorts of workers united in ideological combat does not necessarily represent the diverse perspectives of the workforce. Alongside those who were politically active, 'there

⁵⁷¹ Hywel Francis and Dai Smith, *The Fed: A history of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980).

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵⁷³ Gwyn Williams, *The Merthyr Uprising* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978).

⁵⁷⁴ Bleddyn Penny, "'The Affluent Striker': Industrial disputes in the Port Talbot Steelworks, 1945–1979", *New Perspectives on Welsh Industrial History*, ed. Louise Miskell (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, p. 129.

⁵⁷⁵ Martin Johnes, 'For Class and Nation: Dominant Trends in the Historiography of Twentieth-Century Wales', *History Compass*, 8.1 (2010), 1257–1274, p. 1259.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

were always those more interested in their pint than their politics', as Johnes states to refer to how the miners were far from being a 'homogenous group united by the politics of the left'.⁵⁷⁷ And thirdly, whereas such texts celebrate 'the miners' international proletarian solidarity' and support of campaigns against fascism, they also fail to acknowledge instances of xenophobic discrimination against foreign workers in Wales.⁵⁷⁸ While trade unionism invariably forms a part of the life stories analysed in this chapter as well, it is not identified as a central pillar of their experience.

In the 2010s, Welsh historians interested in the country's industrial past sought to invigorate the state-of-the-art by employing new approaches to capture and analyse miners' and metalworkers' experiences. Scholars began to 'look beyond the working-class experience and the twin economic pillars of coal and iron' by investigating alternative industries, such as the copper or steel industries.⁵⁷⁹ Rather than workplace staff, studies such as Michael Lieven's *Senghenydd, The Universal Pit Villages, 1890–1930* focused on the social issues encountered by the community of the mining village itself.⁵⁸⁰ There is a growing interest in the perspective of gender relations and the role of women, as Sue Bruley's study of the role of women during the 1926 Miners' Strikes demonstrates (see Chapter One of this thesis).⁵⁸¹ And finally, new interventions in the field avail themselves of new frameworks, such as the construction of masculinity in workers.⁵⁸²

The approach employed by Bleddyn Penny in his analysis of the experiences of Welsh steelworkers in Port Talbot from 1951 to 1988 closely resonates with this thesis' investigations of the experiences of Italian metallurgic workers and miners during the 1950s. When referencing how British labour historiography has tended to 'create mythological pasts for political purposes', Penny argues that:

[s]uch interpretations bear witness to much of the existing historiography on work and class in Britain, accentuating the commonality and constancy of the industrial experience, rather than its variety and plurality. The trend in traditional labour histories to equate the history of workers with that of trade unionism has further reinforced this reinterpretation

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1258.

⁵⁷⁸ Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', p. 141.

⁵⁷⁹ Louise Miskell, *New Perspectives on Welsh Industrial History*, p. 12; Michael Lieven, *Senghenydd, Universal Pit Village, 1890–1930* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1994).

⁵⁸⁰ Michael Lieven, *Senghenydd, Universal Pit Village, 1890–1930*.

⁵⁸¹ Sue Bruley, *The Women and Men of 1926: A Gender and Social History of the General Strike and Miners' Lockout in South Wales*.

⁵⁸² Stephanie Ward, 'Miners' Bodies and Masculine Identity in Britain, c. 1900–1950', *Cultural and Social History*, 18.3 (2021), 443–462.

and, perhaps, marginalised individual experiences of work and the personal meanings they held.⁵⁸³

Similarly to Penny's approach, I argue the case for studying the experience of these workers through the categories of ethnicity (their *italianità*), their gender (masculinity) and their class (working-class). Penny draws on research related to the experience of Scottish labourers in post-war Britain and focuses on the 'nature of work and the condition of the workplace', as well as 'considerations of how workers identified with their work, understood it, and how class-based conceptions of work relate to identities and divisions.'⁵⁸⁴ These are applied to a study of Welsh workers and unveils a wealth of insights, such as the work and leisure lives of local steelworkers, gender roles in the family, work and community, and workplace social systems at play in the Abbey Works steelworks. These are all key considerations that will be explored with reference to the Italian metal workers and miners of Wales.

3. Discourses of Physicality, Hard Work, and Workplace Dangers

The association between manual labour and the construction of masculinity is one that frequently appears in the analysis of labour historians over the course of the twentieth century. This has tended to focus on what Stephen Meyer terms 'rough masculinity', where working-class male labourers are depicted as enacting a series of behaviours centred around a 'crude' and 'swaggering' masculinity.⁵⁸⁵ Markers of 'rough masculinity' were typically 'religious and ethnic identity, vice and violence, alcohol and drinking, brawling and roughhousing, physical prowess and risk taking, sport and gambling, female dependency and subordination, and strong egalitarianism and opposition to employers.'⁵⁸⁶ There is often a focus on the 'incubation, reinforcement and reproduction of *macho* values and attitudes', as highlighted in studies such as Johnston and McIvor's study of Glaswegian steelworkers or Steve Meyer's research into working cultures in

⁵⁸³ Bleddyn Penny, "'The Affluent Striker': Industrial disputes in the Port Talbot Steelworks, 1945–1979', p. 91.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁵⁸⁵ Stephen Meyer, 'Work, Play, and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930–1960', p. 117.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

American car factories.⁵⁸⁷ For scholars such as Craig Heron or Stephanie Ward, working-class masculine values are ‘learned’ and ‘practices’ behaviours acquired through lifelong exposure to male cultures.⁵⁸⁸ Accordingly, images of embodied masculinity, such as the strong worker, abounded in these communities, defining the trajectories of the next generation who would enter these workplaces.⁵⁸⁹

Whereas rough masculinity is identified as being dominant in workplace cultures, interventions in the twenty-first century have identified the presence of several forms of masculinity in these contexts. One such form revolves around ‘respectable masculinity’. If rough masculinity focused on an at times exaggerated version of masculinity as well as the ‘roughness of physical strength and dangerous work’, then ‘respectable masculinity’ centred on a potentially more grounded form based on ‘respect, manhood, and citizenship’.⁵⁹⁰ While ‘not immune’ to the temptations of rough masculinity, respectable masculinity was constructed around values such as ‘pride in craft’, ‘control’ and ‘independence’.⁵⁹¹ These two categories of masculinity, for these studies, are not mutually exclusive – both are depicted as being present in workplace cultures and even within certain individuals.⁵⁹²

The blending between rough and respectable masculinities also appears in studies focusing on the construction of the Italian migrants’ working-class masculinity. Linda Reeder’s analysis of Sicilian migrants in America between 1880 and 1930 evokes this hybridity between the two masculinities, writing that:

[i]ndustriousness was a virtue, as was pride in work well done. However, pride in craft did not translate into the glorification of work and financial wealth as the principal manifestation of an individual’s virtue, self-control and manliness. Sicilians worked hard

⁵⁸⁷ Steve Meyer, ‘Rough Manhood: The Aggressive and Confrontational Shop Culture of U.S. Auto Workers during World War II’, *Journal of Social History*, 36.1 (2002), 125–147; Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor, ‘Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies: Masculinity in the Clydeside Heavy Industries, c. 1930–1970s’, *Labour History Review*, 69.2 (2004), 135–151.

⁵⁸⁸ Craig Heron, ‘Boys Will Be Boys: Working-Class Masculinities in the Age of Mass Production’, p. 6; Stephanie Ward, ‘Miners’ Bodies and Masculine Identity in Britain, c. 1900–1950’.

⁵⁸⁹ Jussi Turtiainen and Ari Väänänen, ‘Men of Steel? The Masculinity of Metal Industry Workers in Finland after World War II’, *Journal of Social History*, 46.2 (2012), 449–472. Stephanie Ward, ‘Miners’ Bodies and Masculine Identity in Britain’.

⁵⁹⁰ Joshua Freeman, ‘Hardhats: Construction workers, manliness, and the 1970 pro-war demonstrations’, *Journal of Social History*, 26 (1983), 725–44.

⁵⁹¹ Stephen Meyer, ‘Work, Play, and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930–1960’, p. 118.

⁵⁹² Stephen Meyer, *Manhood on the Line. Working Class Masculinities in the American Heartland* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

and constantly, but that was a fact of life and a matter of personal pride. Wealth alone did not translate into respect and status.⁵⁹³

Linda Reeder's case study provides insights into the complexity of Italian migrants' sense of masculinity. Stripped from the context of 'rural Sicilian ideas of masculinity grounded in a system of honor', Sicilian migrants 'could not maintain their status as men dependent on their familial and social relations'.⁵⁹⁴ Uprooted from their home cultures, Italians had to negotiate alternative forms of masculine values, such as the Italian Americans 'homosocial physical affection' versus the 'bodybuilding figure of the macho man' in twentieth-century America.⁵⁹⁵

In line with these studies, I argue that expressions of Italian migrants' masculinity in Wales evoke both a sense of rough and respectable masculinity that sits apart from expressions of 'crude masculinity' that glorify overly machoistic behaviours. Whereas the testimonies in the thesis all outline different constructions of masculine values, the case studies do not refer to the same working culture of 'recklessness' or 'bravado' suggested in some of the testimonies of Welsh highlighted by Bleddyn Penny.⁵⁹⁶ Instead, by focusing on the similarities (attitudes to work) and differences (performance of Italian cultural values), the chapter reminds of the complex nature of migrants negotiating masculinity in a context away from their own, bringing about new forms that sit apart from the values of the working class of the dominant nation.

A common feature in the testimonies of working-class men, 'rough' or 'respectable', is the recurrence of imagery related to the body, strength and health. For Stephanie Ward, the body is a 'site for the constructing gendered identity'.⁵⁹⁷ Its importance for working men is paramount: its physical strength generated incomes for families and was seen as 'tools of labour' by employers.⁵⁹⁸ Physicality also suggested belonging to a workforce and was seen as a valued characteristic in workplace groups.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹³ Linda Reeder, 'Men of Honor and Honourable Men: Migration and Italian Migration to the United States from 1880–1930', *Italian Americana*, 28.1 (2010), 18–35, p. 21.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

⁵⁹⁵ Fred Gardaphé, 'Italian American Masculinities', *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, eds. William Connell and Stanislao Pugliese (New York: Routledge, 2018), 552–564.

⁵⁹⁶ Bleddyn Penny, 'Class, Work and Community', p. 145.

⁵⁹⁷ Stephanie Ward, 'Miners' Bodies and Masculine Identity in Britain', p. 444.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁹ Jussi Turtiainen and Ari Väänänen 'Men of Steel? The Masculinity of Metal Industry Workers in Finland after World War II', p. 462.

An example of this can be found in the testimony regarding Arcangelo d'Alessandro, whose experiences were shared with me during an oral history interview conducted with his son, second-generation Welsh-Italian Fernando d'Alessandro. Arcangelo D'Alessandro's trajectory towards the Swansea Vale Works of the National Smelting Company starts with the impact of the Second World War, where he is depicted as a 'refugee' and a 'witness' of the Battle of Montecassino that resulted in the bombing of his family home. Driven by the need to rebuild after the war and the lack of stable work in his hometown of Sora (Frosinone), Arcangelo D'Alessandro emigrated to Wales in 1952 to work in the steel industry. The first references to male culture appear during the medical checks conducted in Frosinone before leaving Italy:

They sent English, or British doctors to give them a medical check-up. And he went to the local provincial capital of Frosinone, and he told me, I remember him telling me that very vividly how they checked his height. You know, chest measurements and all the rest of it. And then he said, but the most important part of the check-up was when they looked at my hands, he said, because his hands were like thick, solid callous skin. He was doing labouring work and farming work, so his hands were very tough. And he said the doctor said: "This guy will do for us". And clearly a good candidate for the heavy work he was going to go and do. That was the visit.⁶⁰⁰

Whereas some testimonies gathered in the data collection focused more on the emotions associated with their recruitment (such as participating in recruitment drives in the *questura* or the local *piazza*), Fernando D'Alessandro shifts immediately from stating the labour shortage in Wales to the medical examination with the doctor.⁶⁰¹ The recollection abounds with references to the body, which serve to depict the suitability of Arcangelo D'Alessandro for heavy manual labour in Wales. These are expressed in particular by adjectives such as 'thick, solid and callous' skin and 'tough' hands that underline physical strength, which are used to suggest how Arcangelo D'Alessandro was deemed as a good candidate for steelwork. The explanation of being a farm worker further consolidates the representations of Fernando D'Alessandro's ability to be a potentially productive worker in Wales by presenting hard work as a defining feature of his father's life both before migrating and upon moving to Swansea.

References to the body are also present in the testimony concerning Pietro Di Maio. Similarly, his experience in Italy was conditioned by the war: the situation at home was

⁶⁰⁰ Fernando d'Alessandro, interviewed by Gareth White, 14th October 2021.

⁶⁰¹ Gina Cirillo, interviewed by Gareth White, 25th April 2022; Angela Pockley, interviewed by Gareth White, 8th April 2022.

‘dire’, prompting him to eagerly accept the prospect of working at the Felindre Tinplate Works in Morriston, Swansea in a recruitment drive in his hometown. Pietro Di Maio spent a few years working in the metallurgic industries, initially at Felindre before moving to the steelworks in Eagles Bush, Neath. He later changed jobs through an opportunity presented to him and his wife: the Di Maio family were on good terms with the Cavallis from Bardi, who owned cafes in the Neath area, and one of these was given to the Di Maio family to run. The Di Maio family narrative was recounted to me in an oral history interview with second-generation Welsh-Italian Angela Pockley from Caerphilly. When describing her father’s working practices, Angela Pockley employs figurative language that taps into the discourse of masculinity and the male body:

Until I was 16 months old, he worked in the steel, in the Eagles Bush in Neath, and we lived directly opposite. And so, he used to do loads and loads of double shifts. He was basically never at home, and he used to send money back to Italy and save some himself. And but I think it was really hard, sort of, you know, difficult manual work. Not that he ever said that, but he was always called for overtime because he was ambidextrous, which meant that he could use the machine and the rollers on both sides. So, he was like, quite a big asset to them. I don't know the exact machine or anything, but something to do with the rollers. So, he just worked his socks off, basically.⁶⁰²

The anecdote avails itself of discourses of productivity, which is noted as being a ‘marker of manliness’ in the testimonies of working-class men in metalliferous industries.⁶⁰³ The excessive work carried out (reinforced in Angela Pockley’s repetition of ‘loads and loads of work shifts’) is linked directly to financial reward, but also implies participation in a culture of overwork. His ability to work the machine twice due to him being ambidextrous is associated with him being ‘an asset to the company’, rather than an anonymous worker who was part of the process. The focus on strong hands and the ability to use both effectively are viewed as ‘admirable traits’ in the workplace eyes, but also remark on his uniqueness in Angela Pockley’s recollection. The references all connote the enhancement of status within the workplace group.

A third example is notable in the testimony of Vincenzo Passalacqua from Abruzzo. Originally from a farming family, he emigrated in the mid-1950s due to wanting a new start through emigration. He initially worked in Baglan Bay Steelworks in Briton Ferry before opening a fish and chips shop in Port Talbot. Vincenzo Passalacqua’s life history was recounted to me by his daughter, second-generation Welsh-Italian Diane

⁶⁰² Angela Pockley, interviewed by Gareth White, 8th April 2022.

⁶⁰³ Thomas Miller Klubock, ‘Working-Class Masculinity, Middle-Class Morality, and Labor Politics in the Chilean Copper Mines’, *Journal of Social History*, 30.2 (1996), 435–461, p. 441.

Davies. When asked to describe her father's working environment, she links discourses of health, the body, and productivity:

And he was saying he was quite strong. And sometimes, if anybody was ill, he'd be the first one that they'd go and ask to fill in. So, he would do extra work to his own shifts because they'd call on him to fill in other people's shifts because he was quite a hard worker.⁶⁰⁴

The contrast between the illness of other workers and the good health of Vincenzo Passalacqua acts as another representation of masculinity. Good health and strong bodies are seen as markers that allow workers to generate income and gain further opportunities. This is expressed in several ways. By referring to his physical strength and the notion of being 'the first one they'd call', Diane Davies portrays her father as a physically reliable worker who was highly trusted by his bosses. In addition, he is considered a productive worker by merit of working additional shifts. It confirms a sense of status in the workplace by being known for his strength and willingness to work extra shifts, qualities which were highlighted above as being highly desirable for employers and employees, as well as participation in a workplace culture that revolved around overwork. The testimony also taps into potential discourses of exploitation – by being the first one to cover for illnesses in the workplace, he is presented as an adaptable worker who employers knew would not refuse the opportunity to do additional work and cover for absent colleagues.

Discourse regarding bodies and productivity is thus outlined as one outlet for suggesting the suitability of the Italian men to their respective workplaces. Another important marker is attitudes towards hard work. The testimonies gathered in my oral history interviews draw abundantly on the rhetorical figure of the 'hard-working man' as a means to describe their relatives' working experiences in Wales.⁶⁰⁵ This recalls Jussi Turtiainen and Ari Väänänen's study of metal industry workers in Finland. They draw on metal workers' life stories from the Finnish metal industry between 1945 and 1969 to explore how the 'biographies and narratives entangle and negotiate between the ideal of a "hard-working man" and the real circumstances of industrial work.'⁶⁰⁶ Their analysis

⁶⁰⁴ Diane Davies, interviewed by Gareth White, 13th April 2022.

⁶⁰⁵ These emerge in my interviews with Antonio Romanello (27th October 2021), Diane Davies (13th April 2022), Fernando D'Alessandro (14th October 2021), Gina Cirillo (25th April 2022), Linda and Kevin Cudicio-Hall (22nd April 2022), TI (24th January 2022) and Adriano Fantini (16th September 2021), but also email exchanges with Joe Maiello (6th May 2022), Rosie Cartwright (13th December 2021), Antonio Manna (6th April 2022), and Sarah Kibble (14th March 2022).

⁶⁰⁶ Jussi Turtiainen and Ari Väänänen, 'Men of steel? The masculinity of metal workers in Finland after World War Two'.

points out the following regarding the typical way in which men described their working lives:

[m]en write about the dirtiness of work, about being worn out, and about the overwhelming difficulties that they faced in their jobs. The ideal working-class man had to tolerate a physically hard job, and the heavy industry required a good working capacity and physical endurance. Having “good hands” and learning to withstand hard working conditions were considered admirable traits.⁶⁰⁷

An in-depth example of the ‘hard-working’ man trope emerges in the testimony regarding Antonio Toscano. Originally from a farming family and raised in Pomigliano d’Arco in the province of Naples (Campania), Toscano was recruited to work in a colliery in Pontardawe on the outskirts of Swansea, where he spent ten years before changing jobs. At this time, several members of his extended family would arrive in the country, creating a *de facto* Southern Italian enclave near Port Talbot.⁶⁰⁸ The Toscano family history was recounted during my oral history interview with Antonio Toscano’s children, second-generation Welsh-Italians Felice and Serafina Toscano, both of whom live in Torre del Greco, Naples. Their story starts with their father’s decision to emigrate to Wales, and they swiftly frame the rest of their testimony by foregrounding the image of their father as a hardworking man. When asked to reflect on his experiences in the coal mines, Felice and Serafina Toscano draw on a range of images to interpret their father’s working life:

Felice Toscano: Well, when my father compared the intensity of work, physical, he said that work in Wales was a pleasure. He was a very hardworking person...

Serafina Toscano: My father worked too hard. For him the workload was never a workload. It wasn’t a load.

Felice Toscano: Because he always compared it to Italy.

Serafina Toscano: It was a pleasure for him. But it was heavy going because, my aunt told me the other day that, in fact, I wrote it down. (She talked about) long, long, hours, they worked very long hours. It was usually what they did. It was night shifts. Many of them worked nights. And my uncle Michael and my dad and zio Giovanni, Uncle Giovanni as well. They all worked long hours and night shifts. And it was dirty work, obviously not being able to use the mind they used their hands.⁶⁰⁹

Taking the findings from Finland, it is possible to see how similar concepts can be found in the recollection about Antonio Toscano. Serafina Toscano’s testimony contains several references to the challenging nature of the workplace, with work depicted as being ‘dirty’ in nature and ‘long night shifts.’ These serve to contrast the difficult working environment underground and her father’s tolerance of the workplace. In using the repeated comment

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 460.

⁶⁰⁸ Felice and Serafina Toscano, interviewed by Gareth White, 30th March 2022.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

that work was a 'pleasure', Felice and Serafina Toscano both avail themselves of the rhetoric of positive emotions such as 'pride in craft' used to describe respectable masculinities.⁶¹⁰

The discussion regarding hard work also is present in the life history of first-generation Mario Cicigoi from the rural village of Drenchia, Udine, during an oral history interview conducted by the Italian historian Flavia Virgilio as part of the AMMER project.⁶¹¹ In the 2008 project 'L'emigrazione regionale nel Regno Unito', Mario Cicigoi recounts his life story from his upbringing in Italy to his experiences of living and working in Wales. Cicigoi was originally recruited to work at the Glamorgan Hematite Iron Ore Co. Ltd in Llanharry, Rhondda Cynon Taf, having decided to emigrate due to the lack of jobs in the area. At the end of his first work contract, he obtained other manual labour jobs in the country and chose to settle in South Wales. When discussing the work conditions in the iron ore mine, Cicigoi describes his work routine in the following manner:

Flavia Virgilio: E come era il lavoro?

Mario Cicigoi: Lavoravo con il cavallo a tirare fuori il ferro. Così. Il cavallo si usava per [...] tirare fuori i carrelli di ferro verso il centro dove c'era la macchina che li tirava fuori.

Flavia Virgilio: Era pericoloso?

Mario Cicigoi: Era pericoloso. Si usava la lampada a carburo. Il gas sotto non c'era. I cavalli delle volte non erano tutti bravi: qualcuno faceva capricci e scappava. Insomma, era pericoloso. [...]

Flavia Virgilio: Quante ore lavoravate?

Mario Cicigoi: Si lavorava dalla sera alla mattina, fino alle due, o dalle due alle dieci. [...]

Flavia Virgilio: A che profondità lavoravate?

Mario Cicigoi: Sarò stato circa 250 metri sottoterra... ⁶¹²

[**Flavia Virgilio:** What was work like?

Mario Cicigoi I worked with a horse to pull the iron out. Like this. The horse was used to pull the carts of iron towards the centre where there was a machine that pulled the iron out.

Flavia Virgilio: : Was it dangerous?

Mario Cicigoi: It was dangerous. We used carbide lamps. There was no gas below ground. Sometimes, the horses weren't on their best behaviour: some of them would play up or run away. It was dangerous.

Flavia Virgilio: How many hours did you work?

Mario Cicigoi: We worked from the evening to the morning until two, or from two to ten. [...]

Flavia Virgilio: How deep down did you go to work?

Mario Cicigoi: I would have been 250 metres underground.]

⁶¹⁰ Stephen Meyer, *Manhood on the Line. Working Class Masculinities in the American Heartland*, p. 33.

⁶¹¹ 'Archivio multimedia della memoria dell'emigrazione regionale', <<http://www.ammer-fvg.org/aspx/Home.aspx?idAmb=107&idMenu=-1&liv=0>>, (last accessed 17th July 2023).

⁶¹² Flavia Virgilio, 'Interview with Mario Cicigoi,' 25th November 2008, < <http://www.ammer-fvg.org/aspx/RisProfilo.aspx?idScheda=2117&tabActive=1&valueSearch=cicigoi&paese=Regno%20Unito&tipoRic=0>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023], (translation my own).

There are only fragments in the dialogue as to what constituted a difficult work environment – represented here by the reference to the night shifts, the fact of working 250 metres underground, or the horse who would run away. These references are suggestive of the challenges encountered, but the fact that Mario Cicigoi does not directly answer the question by focusing on actual dangers confirms the Italian's sense of endurance in the workplace. This suggests Mario Cicigoi's conformity to male working-class values, where dangers are minimised as being part of the 'accepted reality' associated with heavy metal work.⁶¹³

The stoic self-presentation of Mario Cicigoi continues when Flavia Virgilio openly asks him whether working in Llanharry was difficult:

Flavia Virgilio: Era un lavoro duro?

Mario Cicigoi: No. Non come avrei ... insomma, una serie di turni. Avevo le sere libere, andavo a casa mi mettevo su la cravatta per andare fuori, era un paradiso...

Flavia Virgilio: Confronto al tritolo, un paradiso.

Mario Cicigoi: Sì, perché, prima di venire qui, senza soldi, insomma, senza vestiti per andare fuori, senza ... non c'era niente... allora quando la cosa cambia, cambiare dal male al meglio, sempre.⁶¹⁴

[Flavia Virgilio: Was work hard?

Mario Cicigoi: No. Not as I would have... in the end, it was just a series of shifts. I had the nights off, I went home, I put a tie out and went out. It was paradise...

Flavia Virgilio: Compared to dynamite, a paradise.

Mario Cicigoi: Yes. Before coming here, I had no money, I had no clothes to go out, I didn't have anything. So, when things change, they changed from the bad to the good.]

Mario Cicigoi's anecdote provides a useful insight into a key pillar regarding the construction of Italian male migrants' approach to work by focussing on the reasons for their tolerance of difficult working conditions. Hard work is presented as being only a 'series of shifts', suggesting a sense of tolerance by downplaying the dangers and focusing instead on the physical activities and general descriptions of his time in the iron ore mine. At the same time, hard work is presented as being tolerated for two reasons. It is seen as a better option to what Mario Cicigoi had experienced before (as suggested in the repeated use 'senza' to emphasise lack of money and clothes while in Cividale del Friuli), and a means to acquire the conditions he gained in Wales (represented by actually possessing these items). This strategy recalls Francesca Cappelletto and Enzo Merler's

⁶¹³ David Bradley, 'Oral History, Occupational Health and Safety and Scottish Steel, c. 1930–1988', *Scottish Labour History*, 46 (2011), 86–101, p. 91.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*

study of the oral narratives of Italian men in the asbestos mines of Wittenoom, where they argue that the ‘endurance of Italian migrants’ should be seen in light of ‘economic and social considerations.’⁶¹⁵ The trade-off between accepting difficult working conditions for enhanced material circumstances thus can be interpreted as explaining Mario Cicigoi’s tolerance of the hard work he faced. His presentation as a hard worker suggests conformity to a workplace culture centred around toil and physical labour; his internal acceptance of these conditions remarks on the psychological factors that motivated him to put up with the experience of working in Llanharan.

Similar themes are also noted in my oral history interview with Adriano Candelori. A celebrated Italian sculptor who settled in Llanelli, Adriano Candelori migrated from Terni, Umbria to Wales in the early 1950s to join his sister and brother-in-law, who had emigrated to Llanelli after the Second World War.⁶¹⁶ His decision to migrate was linked to the scarcity of work in his hometown, especially as the local economy struggled to recover after the Second World War. This prompted him to travel to his sister’s and eventually obtaining a work contract for three years at the Old Castle Tinplate Works in Llanelli. His work as a *behinder* was the first of many jobs – Adriano Candelori settled in Llanelli after the expiry of his contract with the Steel Company of Wales.⁶¹⁷ Much of the interview was spent discussing in detail his various jobs as a bartender, art teacher, and sculptor. When eventually asked about the nature of his job with the Steel Company of Wales, Candelori recalls the factory routine in the following manner:

[q]uel periodo del tinplate era tanto pesante perché io facevo qui il doubler. Io tiravo fuori le lamiere e poi le mettevo... cioè il fireman prendeva il pezzo di ferro, *very thick*, e lo dava a quello che stava dalla parte dei cilindri. Lui lo passava sotto e veniva più fino. Poi io lo prendevo e arrivavo a lui fino a che non veniva *fine fine* ed ogni volta che lo ritirava lo piegava doppio. E dopo quella doppia ripassata faceva due lamiere. Quando era ritirato via [sic], (c’erano) un mucchio di lamiere e lì lavoravano le donne, le donne con i guanti di pelle.⁶¹⁸

[My time in the tinplate works was heavy because I worked as a doubler there. I worked as a doubler. I pulled out the sheets of iron and I put them... the fireman got the piece of iron out, *very thick, very thick*, and gave it to the person who was by the rollers. He then passed it under, and it made the iron thinner. Then I got it out and passed it to him under it became thinner and thinner, and every time he pulled it out, he would fold it in half. And after he

⁶¹⁵ Francesca Cappelletto and Enzo Merler, ‘Perceptions of health hazards in the narratives of Italian mine workers at an Australian asbestos mine (1943–1966)’, 1047–1059.

⁶¹⁶ For an overview of Candelori’s career, see ‘Adriano Candelori’ <[http://www.candelori.org/Candelori_Webpages/Sculpture_Adriano_\(English\).html](http://www.candelori.org/Candelori_Webpages/Sculpture_Adriano_(English).html)>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

⁶¹⁷ A *behinder*’s role was to take folded metal sheets from a ‘doubler’ (the man who folded the sheets) and pass them back to a ‘rollerman’ (the individual who inserts the sheets into metal rollers).

⁶¹⁸ Adriano Candelori, interviewed by Gareth White, 1st April 2022.

did that there would be two sheets of iron. When it was all pulled out, there was a pile of these sheets, and then the women would come in with their leather gloves.]

Adriano Candelori starts his recollection of his time working for Castle Tinsplate Works by framing the heavy nature of the job. He mechanically lists the tasks carried out by himself and the fireman, recalling the objective nature also used by Mario Cicigoi regarding his experiences of the Welsh workplace. By objectifying the procedure in his recollection, Adriano Candelori removes any emotional presentation of his time in the tinsplate factory, concentrating instead on his emplacement within the workplace culture. This strategy in itself constitutes stoicism, another aspect of working-class masculinity identified in the narratives of Scottish steelworkers where individuals 'were fully cognisant of the environment in which they worked and the risks that it entailed, and the inevitability of accidents.'⁶¹⁹ It also hints at potential estrangement by not identifying himself firmly in the recollection of his time at work, as evidenced by the choice to construct his anecdote from the perspective of the metal that was passed around rather than the workers who manipulated the tinsplate.

When asked explicitly whether conditions were difficult, Adriano Candelori confirms this, but then shifts the focus towards the social opportunities gained as a means to justify the challenges he faced:

[e]rano tanto difficili. Ma a quel tempo era un lavoro. Bisognava lavorare e io l'ho sempre osservato come un lavoro. Andavo al lavoro, andavo a casa. E basta. Nel frattempo, c'erano vari divertimenti [...], c'erano escursioni fuori, [...] dopo mi sono comprato l'automobile.

[(The working conditions) were very difficult. But at that time, it was a job. You had to work, and I always saw it as a job. I went to work, I came home. And that's it. At the same time, there were fun things to do. [...] There were trips out. [...] I later bought a car.]⁶²⁰

Consistent with the other testimonies presented, there is a downplaying of the difficult work conditions. The motivation to accept these conditions outlines his psychological motivation for accepting the hard work. By including leisure trips and the ability to buy a car, Adriano Candelori transfers attention away from the hazards and instead onto the better socio-economic and cultural opportunities on offer.

⁶¹⁹ David Bradley, 'Oral History, Occupational Health and Safety and Scottish Steel, c. 1930–1988', p. 90.

⁶²⁰ Adriano Candelori, interviewed by Gareth White, 19th July 2021.

The resilience towards difficult and dangerous working conditions also appears in the testimony regarding Pietro Di Maio. When asked whether work was dangerous, Angela Pockley responds in the following manner:

I know that it was very, very heavy danger - what these days we would call probably dangerous work - but he never complained. He never... to him it was an opportunity and he wanted to work as much as he could. I've learned a bit since about what the working conditions were like, but not from him. You know, he never ever mentioned it. He just said that it was hard work. [...] And I imagine I speak for most of the people in his situation. I think they're just accepted it was hard work and had to be done. You know, otherwise, you go home and start logging trees again, you know, or whatever you can find. He certainly never envisaged that he'd be running and owning a cafe or two cafes. That was never in his plan.⁶²¹

By explicitly stating that 'he never complained' and 'never mentioning it', Angela Pockley represents her father as portraying similar working-class masculine values that downplayed hazards and accepted the risks of manual labour. This implies compliance in a South Wales workplace culture that 'operated on the basis of what was deemed an "acceptable" level of risk.'⁶²² Her admission of 'otherwise you go home and start logging again' is critical in providing another insight into the construction of this form of masculinity. The suggestion that hard work was better than the hardships previously experienced by the protagonist and that could await were he forced to return to his previous life in Italy, can be interpreted as an important aspect of why Italian male migrants accepted the difficult conditions. Given the high levels of unemployment in Italy in the 1950s and relative poverty that the individuals studied in this chapter thus far reported prior to emigrating, this takes the form of a sense of gratitude for having a job and the opportunity to get better socio-economic possibilities.

The case studies thus far have explored a silent acceptance of the dangers and nature of the workplace, positing that the non-description of their physical circumstances can be read as representations of working-class masculinity. Similar themes also emerge in testimonies where individuals spoke more openly about the challenging conditions they faced while working in Wales. This is exemplified in the family narrative of Carmine Giannini, who emigrated to Llanelli from Benevento in 1954 to work in the steelworks. My oral history interview with Carmine Giannini's grandson, third-generation Welsh-Italian Antonio Romanello, touches on the history of the Romanello family and their

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*

⁶²² Ben Curtis, 'The South Wales Miners' Federation and the perception of risk and danger in the coal industry, 1898-1947', *Morgannwg*, 58, (2014), 71-88.

propensity to emigrate throughout the twentieth century. Various ancestors had previously moved to Argentina or America; he and his brother Tonino chose Wales on the back of the advertisement campaigns and recruitment drives in Campania at the time. After the initial experience in the steelworks, the Romanello family opened a popular fish-and-chips shop in Gorseinon, Swansea in 1973, which continues to trade today.⁶²³ When the conversation shifts to the conditions at the steelworks, Antonio Romanello recounts the following:

I remember him telling me he hated it, the safety levels of it. [...] Every footstep in that place you had to watch you don't fall into something that could burn you alive, and he didn't like it. But you know, he got on with that. He would start very early in the morning, and I think it was shift-related work. [...] After a number of years, he managed to save up money and moved house closer to work so he wouldn't have to walk so far.⁶²⁴

Many of the traits identified above are visible in Antonio Romanello's recollection, such as Carmine Giannini's acceptance of the difficult working nature, as evidenced by the phrase 'he got on with that' and the way the challenging nature of work is tolerated as it grants access to social bettering – in this case, the ability to initially buy a house closer to work. What differs here is the clarity used to describe the work conditions themselves. Aspects such as poor safety levels or the risk of burning alive – which also appear in Bleddyn Penny's analysis of Welsh steelworkers' narratives from Port Talbot between 1955 and 1988 – appear openly in Antonio Romanello's testimony.⁶²⁵ Their appearance may be explained by the impact on his grandfather's health, especially when it is suggested that work had a detrimental effect, and a link is drawn to the lack of safety gear available.⁶²⁶ And yet, the admissions of fire and inadequate safety levels all reinforce the representation of Carmine Giannini as a hardworking individual who tolerated work and embodied the tough work culture surrounding manual labour.

In conclusion, an exploration of representations of working-class masculinity to describe the experience of Italian workers in the heavy metal and mining industries of Wales reveals similar themes. The commonly espoused image of the 'hard working' man finds manifestations in different forms, from a silent acceptance of difficult working conditions to a sense of 'pride in craft' regarding hard work. Central to these

⁶²³ Katie Hoggan, 'The Italian family who started with nothing and created a fish and chip shop empire in a small Welsh town', *Wales Online*, < <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink-news/roma-2000-fish-chips-swansea-26500380> >, 19th March 2023, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

⁶²⁴ Antonio Romanello, interviewed by Gareth White, 27th October 2021.

⁶²⁵ Bleddyn Penny, 'Class, Work and Community.', 105–110.

⁶²⁶ Antonio Romanello, interviewed by Gareth White, 27th October 2021.

representations is the focus on the body, where discourses associated with productivity and strength manifest in descriptions about ambidexterity, strong bodies, and good health. A key motivator for the tolerance of the nature of the workplace appears to be comparisons between the social realities the individuals left in Italy (relative economic poverty) and enhanced conditions on offer abroad. By situating their work in Wales in a continuum between past and future and drawing also on themes of gratitude and opportunity, the individuals also suggest belonging to a form of masculinity that differs from similar attitudes among Welsh workers, where working in similar positions was almost seen as part of the workers' family legacy.⁶²⁷ The differences and common points between Welsh and Italian working-class masculinity in these sectors follow in the final section.

4. Narratives of Homosociality, Camaraderie and Competitiveness

The homosociality of workers represents another key aspect of working-class masculinity. For Sharon Bird, homosociality involves 'nonsexual attractions held by men (or women) for members of their own sex', promoting 'clear distinctions between women and men through segregation in social institutions.'⁶²⁸ These social bonds find clear expression in the testimonies of manual labourers, where working environments are built around the 'centrality of sociability and camaraderie.'⁶²⁹ Workplace groups built from male solidarity constituted social spheres complete with shared cultural values between workers, where the 'instinctive co-operation on a crew' [...] put into practice the understanding shared 'vulgarness' created and excluded 'any worker, male or female, who could not take it.'⁶³⁰ The camaraderie between workers provided a sense of unity, bringing together people from different ethnicities, ages, and class contexts and uniting them into a shared group.⁶³¹ As Kathryn Edin and others write in their analysis of the importance of social bonds:

⁶²⁷ Bleddyn Penny, 'Class, Work and Community', pp. 94–5.

⁶²⁸ Sharon Bird, 'Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity', *Gender and Society*, 10.2 (1996), 120–132, p. 121.

⁶²⁹ Bleddyn Penny, 'Class, Work and Community', p. 127.

⁶³⁰ Judith Modell and John Hinshaw, 'Male Work and Mill Work. Memory and Gender in Homestead, Pennsylvania', *Gender and memory*, eds. Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thompson (Abingdon: Oxford University Press, 1996; 2017), 402–448, p. 422.

⁶³¹ Maxim Bolt, 'Camaraderie and its Discontents: Class Consciousness, Ethnicity and Divergent Masculinities among Zimbabwean Migrant Farmworkers in South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36.2 (2010), 377–393.

[o]ngoing attachments to work, family, and religion connected working-class men to social bonds and defined identities that kept them in the formal labour market and forestalled health problems. Conversely, precarious attachments to these key social institutions [...] may now dilute their power to shepherd and shift men's trajectories and may place them at risk of a host of negative outcomes.⁶³²

In the testimonies gathered as part of this thesis, the importance of social bonds where masculine values were practiced emerges in three separate types of interaction: within workplace groups between colleagues of mixed nationalities; in trade union meetings in a context of the wider workplace staff; and amongst members of the Italian diasporic communities of Wales.

A key area where masculinity comes to the fore concerns the relationships within work groups, where interactions between colleagues vary between camaraderie and competitiveness. Several scholars have advanced the hypothesis that social distinctions of ethnicity or age were suspended in the context of manual labour. Bleddyn Penny suggests that the 'variety of occupations and processes' within the plant would 'symbolically unify steelworkers as a group'.⁶³³ Ad Knotter concurs, noting how 'the ethnic divisions in the workforce' would be 'blurred with divisions of skill and hierarchy'.⁶³⁴ By this, individual strength, ability to carry out the job professionally, and participation in a shared workplace culture form the basis of social relationships between workers. The relative lack of importance to ethnicity gave rise to sentiments of international solidarity, where workers from different countries are depicted as part of a multinational workforce united in the task of manual labour. This unity was also achieved by bringing workers together against a common cause, as suggested by Duncan Money and Limin Teh's study of Central African coalmine cultures where mechanization 'disrupted more than "blurred" existing racial hierarchies'.⁶³⁵

An initial example in this thesis concerns Nicesio Fantini. Born in Torreano di Cividale, Udine, in 1928, Nicesio Fantini was recruited in 1951 by an English manager who had previously recruited stonemasons to build dams in England and Wales immediately after the war. He was determined to support a large family growing up in a

⁶³² Kathryn Edin *et al*, 'The Tenuous Attachments of Working-Class Men', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 33.2 (2019), 211–228, p. 211.

⁶³³ Bleddyn Penny, 'Class, work and community', p. 129.

⁶³⁴ Ad Knotter, *Migration and Ethnicity in Coalfield History, Global Perspectives, International Review of Social History*, 60 (2015), 13–39, p. 39.

⁶³⁵ David Money and Limin Teh, 'Race at Work: A Comparative History of Mining Labour and Empire on the African Copperbelt and the Fushun Coalfields, ca. 1907–1945', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 101, 100–117.

rural context and migrated to work for the Glamorgan Hematite Iron Ore Company in Llanharry, Bridgend. In my oral history interview with Nicesio Fantini's son, second-generation Welsh-Italian Adriano Fantini from Bridgend, emphasis is placed on the strong bonds between the Welsh and Italian workers operating in the iron ore mines in the area in the 1950s:

It was mixed. It wasn't just purely a shift of Italians. It was that they integrated everybody. [...] Obviously at first, he would stick to the Italians like everybody would, because obviously they spoke the same language. But ultimately, he got on well with all of them. [...] But as a supplement to mining, (my father) used to give haircuts (and) a lot of the miners would use him to have their haircuts as well. So that's how he started barbering. He'd do it for the Italians and then suddenly they were, 'well, can you come and cut my hair?'. So he would have the Welsh people as well having their haircut or the other. [...] But as time progressed, when he was down the mines, he became part of the first aid team with the St. John's Ambulance. And the majority of those were Welsh miners. So, he integrated as part of a team as well then to do first aid underground.⁶³⁶

The testimony of Adriano Fantini about his father's working practices reveals attention to the different roles that his father played. By marking the transition between his initial relationships (largely amongst Italians) to working alongside Welsh miners in a variety of capacities, Adriano Fantini represents his father as holding several roles and fitting in with a multinational work culture between Welsh, Italian, and Polish workers. This is also suggested by the repeated references to the extent of his integration, further cementing the idea of acceptance and being welcomed into the local area. Finally, by taking on various roles such as a barber or volunteer medic, Adriano Fantini draws on tropes of 'respectable masculinity'. His work for St. John's Ambulance in the mine situates him as a politically active and responsible individual who gave up his free time for the benefit of his colleagues, whereas his distinction as a hairdresser (a role which challenges the crude masculinity notion by focusing on workers' physical beauty) suggests another form of 'pride in craft' and appearance.⁶³⁷

Whereas several testimonies gathered for this thesis are quick to point to similar positive integration with Welsh workers, this does not mean that the ethnic lines had vanished completely. The Welsh workplace, like others, was not immune to racial tensions, and these flared up at times between workers. Some of the oral history interviews describe these circumstances, where it could be argued that workplace

⁶³⁶ Adriano Fantini, interviewed by Gareth White, 16th September 2021.

⁶³⁷ Stephen Meyer, 'Work, Play, and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930–1960', p. 118.

tensions could be ascribed as much to racial discrimination as to a sense of machoistic competitiveness between men. For instance, the family history regarding Carmine Giannini provides one such insight into this. When asked whether his grandfather encountered difficult circumstances in the steelworks, Romanello responds in the following manner:

Apparently, my grandfather, along with his brother, underwent lots of mistreatment, you know, kind of bullying as such I think I remember my grandfather saying that (there was) one guy in particular for a number of years. And when I think back, I just can't picture my grandfather just doing his work, you know, and not just getting on with it. And I remember him telling me they were going to his lunch box and put bits of newspaper into sandwiches and stuff for that. But I think one day my grandfather retaliated and after 18 months and two years of this crap going on, he had a cup of coffee in his hand and he just went, 'boosh', right in his face with a full cup of coffee and scalded him at the same time. And from that day onwards, he said, he had nothing but respect.⁶³⁸

Antonio Romanello's representation of working-class male culture initially frames the hardships of the work environment by stating how his grandfather and great-uncle 'underwent lots of mistreatment' and 'bullying'. Against the representation of his grandfather as a hard worker who just 'got on with it' – itself a further example of his tolerance of the difficult working conditions – the Italians find themselves on the receiving end of workplace pranks, suggesting a state of competitiveness and macho behaviour between workers. The episode of the fight between workers expresses the macho behaviour in two ways. Firstly, by physically responding to the taunts of the antagonist (a marker of rough masculinity), Carmine Giannini is depicted as using physical strength to resolve the situation. And secondly, the defeat of his opponent thus re-aligns the relationship between the Welsh and Italian miners to one of respect. Thus, the physical act of punching and scalding his bully is shown as ascribing a different status within the workgroup hierarchy and bringing about equality between the two men.

A second example that draws on discourses of physicality and competitiveness can be found in the testimony regarding Antonio Manna. Antonio Manna migrated from Naples to work in various tinplate and steel works in Wales as of 1952. In communications exchanged with his son, second-generation Welsh-Italian Antonio Manna, part of the conversation focuses on an altercation that happened with a fellow Italian colleague:

My father was a very popular and likeable person, and he worked in the mines too in the beginning. One day the Italians and Poles were working together, and a friend of my dad's

⁶³⁸ Antonio Romanello, interviewed by Gareth White, 27th October 2021.

called my father over and said an Italian man is here every month to collect ten shillings off everyone for protection and helping out the men with their problems. [...] He told my dad he had to pay or else. [...] My dad and him had a fight and my dad had the better of him. My dad and his friends didn't pay him nothing (sic). They became friends after that. He was very well respected for being an honest man and a family man too.⁶³⁹

The anecdote offered by Antonio Manna regarding his father evokes several tropes of camaraderie and competitiveness that appear as a feature in the narratives regarding working-class male heavy workers' cultures. The popularity of his father indicates status in the workplace group, as suggested by the positive male working-class qualities of his likeability and presentation of a hard worker and miner. The following part of the anecdote's focus on the encounter with the *padrone* figure acts as a moment in the family narrative where Antonio Manna Sr. competes against a figure who is presented as being higher in the workplace hierarchy. As well as being a *padrone*, there are also inferences the other man was a former boxing champion.⁶⁴⁰ In demonstrating physical prowess and physically beating his opponent, Antonio Manna Sr. is presented as achieving two accomplishments. First, the fight between workers (a symbol of machoism) cements a positive relationship with his opponent, where respect is earned by Antonio Manna Sr. And secondly, the system of exploitation operated by the *padrone* ends, a decision which likely gained further respect from Antonio Manna's other workmates.

A further episode that suggests both the occasional reproduction of physical competitiveness between men and the blurring of ethnic lines can be found in the testimony regarding Pietro Di Maio. In Angela Pockley's recollection, the comments on competing males emerge with reference to the social lives of her father and other young men in the area. Pietro Di Maio is noted as attending local dances, a common feature of Welsh social life in the 1950s that provided an outlet for youths to socialise.⁶⁴¹ These were organised by the *Associazione Cristiana dei Lavoratori Italiani* or by local organisations.⁶⁴² When recalling his experiences of these dances, Angela Pockley notes the following:

I think there was a bit of hassle with the local Welsh boys at one point because all these Italians didn't have 2 pennies to rub together when they first came over... For instance, my father always said he came over and he had three pounds in his pockets, the equivalent of three quid in his pocket and that was it. But they all looked incredibly smart. So, when they weren't at work, they were all really well-dressed and they might have had one suit, but it

⁶³⁹ Antonio Manna, email to Gareth White, 6th April 2022.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴¹ Martin Johnes, *Wales since 1939*, pp. 96–7.

⁶⁴² Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', p. 79.

was very smart, you know? And so, all these Italians sort of infiltrated places like Neath and Swansea to the expense of some of the local lads with the ladies, I think. And so, I think there were a lot of fights and that sort of thing.⁶⁴³

The anecdote begins with an evocation of the trope of the ‘poor but picturesque’ Italian migrant noted in Italian migration literature.⁶⁴⁴ Having established this, Pockley evokes a second narrative trope – the stereotypical image of the handsome Italian man who was ‘well dressed’. Despite only having one suit – itself a potential reflection of how a consumerist 1950s society might have viewed owning *only one* suit – Angela Pockley draws on this trope and links it to their success in finding women. Thus, the references evoke tropes of Italian masculinity linked to sexuality and physical beauty, all of which imply Pietro Di Maio’s conformity to these values. The competitiveness between social groups, on the other hand, emerges in the second half of the recollection. The verb ‘infiltrated’ demarcates a sense of the invasion of territory, as though suggesting a false belief that the women ‘belonged’ to the local lads. That this fact cascades into frequent fights is suggestive of two things. Firstly, it implies a loss of masculinity for local men and its transferring to Italians such as Pietro Di Maio. And secondly, it firmly situates these conflicts as emerging as a result of competitiveness between masculinities as opposed to nationalities.

These themes recur in the closing section of Angela Pockley’s recollection, where once again she underlines the representation of the workers as *men* rather than as *foreign nationals*:

As well as the Italians, there's a similar story for the Polish people because a lot of Polish people were brought over as well. I think sometimes there were fights between the Italians and the Polish but, on the whole, they got on very well. I think it was all similar circumstances and I think they're just sort of young, you know, red-blooded young men who wanted to make a life for themselves really. But on the whole, they did get on very well with the Polish people.⁶⁴⁵

On this occasion, Pockley involves a third national group in the fights that occurred during the weekend. Rather than tensions existing because of the nationalities, this is more closely linked to the behaviour of the men themselves. The use of the presentation of the workers as ‘red-blooded young men’ who aspired to ‘make a life for themselves’ firmly reinforces this notion by remarking on their virile nature. The fights are also

⁶⁴³ Angela Pockley, interviewed by Gareth White, 8th April 2022.

⁶⁴⁴ Joseph Cosco, *Imagining Italians. The Clash of Romance and Race in American Perceptions, 1880–1910*.

⁶⁴⁵ Angela Pockley, interviewed by Gareth White, 8th April 2022.

presented as isolated incidents in a wider picture of warm team spirit between Polish and Italian workers, as evidenced by the repeated comment of how ‘they did get on very well’. Thus, Pockley’s narrative presents another example of the blurring of ethnic lines, where social relations are actively constructed.

Another outlet that binds masculinity and social bonds concerns the extent of trade unionism. Unions often promoted a ‘code of behaviour in the form of “respectable manhood”’ based on the values of ‘self-control, self-improvement, and unflinching defense of one’s rights against unjust oppression.’⁶⁴⁶ They promoted solidarity amongst workers by uniting them spiritually against a common cause. In South Wales, as Huw Beynon notes, ‘a new kind of trade unionism’ developed in the early twentieth century was the ‘clearest expression of the men’s economic power’ and the ‘spiritual value placed on camaraderie’.⁶⁴⁷ Similarly, others such as Hywel Francis and Dai Smith have noted that the workers were not an ‘anonymous mass of people conveniently labelled “the coalfield”’ but instead were “distinct social beings who maintained their localities” and organised collectively.⁶⁴⁸ Trade unionism thus becomes an important site where individuals express a respectable form of masculinity in contrast to ‘rough masculinity’, but also where social bonds linking individuals come to the fore.

While not all Italian metalworkers in Wales were involved in syndicalism as already mentioned in this chapter, the importance of being politically engaged in the defence of workers’ rights does appear sporadically in some testimonies. One such example can be found in Fernando D’Alessandro’s narrative of working conditions in Swansea. His recollection of his father’s political activism taps into a sense of pride and solidarity between the workers present:

He told me how strong the tradition was and how strong the negotiating power of the union was. Because obviously if you consider, I suppose, a shortage of labour, and that’s why they called in - migrant labour - when you have a shortage, workers are in a strong position to negotiate. And he said to me, we never actually had to go on strike in the tinsplate works because all the shop steward had to do was threaten to go on strike and management would immediately come and negotiate, because they knew that those Welsh workers would be if the shop steward said out, they were out.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁶ Peter Tallion, “‘What We Want Is Good, Sober Men:’ Masculinity, Respectability, and Temperance in the Railhooed Brotherhoods’, *Journal of Social History*, 36.2 (2002), 319–338, p. 324.

⁶⁴⁷ Huw Beynon et al, ‘Sources of variation in trade union membership across the UK: the case of Wales’, *Industrial Relations Journal*, 43,3 (2012), 200–221, p. 207.

⁶⁴⁸ Dai Smith and Hywel Francis, *The Fed*, p. 41.

⁶⁴⁹ Fernando d’Alessandro, interviewed by Gareth White, 14th October 2021.

Far from depicting tensions between Italians and Welsh, Fernando D'Alessandro's anecdote of his father's trade unionism alludes to divisions between manual workers and management, whereby workgroup solidarity for the cause of better working conditions united the men working in the area. Fernando D'Alessandro paints his father as being part of a workplace culture strengthened by political activism: this is expressed with the pronouns that he uses to associate his father with the movement. Initially the pronoun 'they' is used to discuss migrant labour, connoting the non-belonging of the workers to Wales. This is immediately contrasted with the first-person plural pronoun 'we', and thus implies his sense of belonging to the cause. As such, Arcangelo D'Alessandro is portrayed as being integrated into the narrative of the politically active workers in the Swansea tinplate factory as a member of a workforce who was prepared to take industrial action if needed. By presenting his father in this manner, Fernando D'Alessandro foregrounds traits of respectable masculinity as defining features of his father's identity.

The case of Nicesio Fantini represents another noteworthy example of trade unionism as a significant trait of working-class male metalworkers' narratives. Nicesio Fantini was awarded the *Stella al Merito del Lavoro*, a medal 'granted to an Italian individual whose hard work contributes to producing a respectable image of Italian labour abroad'.⁶⁵⁰ His life history was recounted to Flavia Virgilio in 2008, where his political activism comes to the fore:

Nicesio Fantini: però la cosa è che dopo hanno cambiato l'Unione. Insomma, gli uomini e le donne non volevano andare a fare il minatore.

Flavia Virgilio: l'Unione sarebbe il sindacato?

Nicesio Fantini: The union. Il sindacato. Io andavo sempre ai meeting del sindacato difatti perché ci volevano perfino. E c'è stato un tempo che volevamo mandarci via ma poi (ci) ha detto se volete stare qua dovete farvi inglesi...

Flavia Virgilio: ma chi voleva questa cosa? Lo Stato?

Nicesio Fantini: No, gli altri operai dell'Unione si battevano insomma per la gente. Perché andavo, [...] ed ero fra la gran parte che andava, [...] e c'era da parlare, parlavo... abbiamo fatto perfino venire il capo della Federazione, uno dei più grandi del Galles è venuto [...]⁶⁵¹

[Nicesio Fantini:] Then the thing is that the "Union" changed. The men and women didn't want us to be miners.

Flavia Virgilio: By "Union", do you mean the Trade Union?

Nicesio Fantini: The Union. The Trade Union. I always went to the trade union meetings because we needed to. It was a time when they wanted to get rid of us, then they said that if you want to stay here you have to become English.

Flavia Virgilio: But who wanted this? The State?

⁶⁵⁰ Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*, p. 94.

⁶⁵¹ Flavia Virgilio, 'Interview with Nicesio Fantini', 25th November 2008, (translation my own).

Nicesio Fantini: No, the workers of the Union fought for it. I used to go to the meetings, I went all the time, and there was a lot to talk about. I would talk... we even made the head of the organisation, one of the biggest organisations in Wales, come to speak with us.]

Nicesio Fantini's attention to workers' rights is repeated throughout the interview. He stresses that Italian workers were guaranteed the same rights as Welsh workers, and his recollection frames the controversial issue of national belonging due to unrest from local citizens. Marco Giudici notes the existence of tensions following the hiring of foreign labour in the Welsh mining sector, and interviewees recalled isolated incidents throughout Wales.⁶⁵² In Nicesio Fantini's personal narrative, there is focus on his involvement and accomplishments as a spokesperson. The use of pronouns and their referents throughout also indicate Fantini's self-identification with the union – 'we' for how they organised a site visit from one of the members of upper management strongly connotes his presentation as an activist and as part of a collective body alongside other workers. The selection of this event to highlight his time in the trade union is relevant as it revolves around the workers' sense of identity – the demand to *farsi inglesi* links into discourses of racial superiority and the denial, in this instance, of belonging to the workers' home countries. His resistance and determination to speak up on the matter thus demonstrate the importance Nicesio Fantini attributed to defending the rights of migrant workers, thus linking his self-presentation to values of respectable masculinity.

If Nicesio Fantini's explanation of his involvement in the battle for workers' rights appears fairly modest, his son Adriano's recollection of his father's practices is more expansive. In our oral history interview, Adriano Fantini discusses his father's attitude towards striking:

Adriano Fantini: He never worked for the unions. He did fight for workers' rights, but not as a union rep. [...]

Gareth White: Were there any strikes in his time?

Adriano Fantini: I think so. (There) must have been. [...] I would have been too young to remember, but there would have been strikes at the time. Would he have been a willing participant? I think it depends on what the reason was. He wouldn't have given up a day's wage for the sake of it if it was (like) 'I want a shilling more a week'. He wouldn't have bothered with that because he was getting more than we would have had anyway. [...] If it was because it was dangerous conditions, then I can see him doing that.⁶⁵³

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Important considerations emerge in Adriano Fantini's musings. The explicit comment that Nicesio Fantini was not officially a part of the union underlines the iron ore miner's

⁶⁵² Marco Giudici, 'Migration, Memory and Identity', p. 144.

⁶⁵³ Adriano Fantini, interviewed by Gareth White, 16th September 2021.

dedication by actively campaigning of his own accord. This is achieved through the juxtaposition of how he 'did fight for workers' rights', but 'not as a union rep', reinforcing the strength of Nicesio Fantini's conviction towards syndicalism and in choosing the causes he considered worth fighting for. This serves in situating Nicesio Fantini as being ideologically driven for improving the overall workplace culture. By not striking for a meagre pay increase but instead commenting on being willing to lose wages for improving dangerous working conditions, Adriano Fantini presents his father as being caught up in a heroic battle to obtain safer conditions for his colleagues.

Italian workers are thus depicted as sharing cultural values and embodying elements of rough and respectable masculinities to adapt to a foreign workplace culture. Conversely, their leisure time provides an opportunity for them to express Italian working-class masculine cultural values with fellow Italian workers. The testimonies gathered in this thesis touch on the importance of socialisation amongst Italians following their arrival in Wales. Italians would often live together in shared accommodation, first in temporary hostels and then later in private housing in smaller groups. There is also anecdotal evidence that suggests that Italian metal workers interacted both with longstanding members of the Italian community (such as café owners) but also with Italians from different manual labour sectors who also arrived in the 1950s.⁶⁵⁴

One outlet where Italians engaged in shared cultural values regards their attendance of local dances. Randy McBee's analysis of leisure for working-class immigrants in America links the importance of dancing to the expression of masculinity. Accordingly, 'social clubs provided men the space and the audience to witness and even share in the ongoing performance of one another's manhood through the contests of strength and skill that largely defined male culture'.⁶⁵⁵ McBee draws on Victor Turner's concept of 'liminal' spaces to depict the dance hall as a setting where individuals were released from 'normal constraints' and where the boundaries between 'heterosociality and homosociality', 'masculinity and femininity', and even 'public and private' were blurred.⁶⁵⁶ Attendance of these dances is repeated in the testimonies of Italians who were

⁶⁵⁴ Fernando D'Alessandro, interviewed by Gareth White, 16th October 2021; Gina Cirillo, interviewed by Gareth White, 25th April 2022; Marcello Luzzi, interviewed by Gareth White, Ninetta Algieri, interviewed by Gareth White, 28th March 2022.

⁶⁵⁵ Randy McBee, *Dance Hall Days: Intimacy and Leisure Among Working Class Immigrants in the United States* (London: New York University Press, 2000), p. 158

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 158–9.

active in Wales over the 1950s across all three working sectors analysed in this thesis. An example of their importance can be found in the testimony of third-generation Welsh-Italian Anthony Romanello, who evokes these dances in his recollection of his grandfather Carmine Giannini's experience of free time in Wales in the 1950s:

No matter how late you came, and how long the Italians were here before, you were accepted in the Italian community. [...] So, when they would go to these Italian dances [...] they would flock from all over. [...] I remember my nana saying there'd be a dance, there was always a dance in Merthyr [...] and they would catch a bus from Llanelli and when you got there there'd be a bus from West Wales, Swansea, and it was a huge influence.⁶⁵⁷

The narrative of Italian male working-class male reproduction of cultural values is firmly acknowledged in Anthony Romanello's description of the Italian dances in Merthyr. In this instance, the dance hall is transfigured as a space that brings Italians together from throughout Wales. The inclusion of Italians arriving from other areas of South-West Wales which also housed heavy industry plants is significant as it suggests how Italians from a diverse range of occupations would be united in one place. The anecdote's use of words that suggest mass scale, such as 'flock' and 'huge influence', presents an image of the immense popularity and their importance in defining the social lives of Italians. The effect is the elaboration of a narrative that strongly highlights the positive social bonds formed between Italians and the formation of a community with each other.

The significance of attending dances for the expression of Italian workers' masculinity in Wales can be explained by the links between homosociality and Italian male culture. Writing about the Italo-American context, Joan Weibel-Orlando notes the following:

[t]he pure enjoyment one finds in the company of selected other men has had a long and is a still viable expression of Italian male social life. Throughout Italy, hours-long, all-male gatherings at local coffee bars are daily occurrences and exemplify the viability of such positive and non-instrumental all-male association for their participants. Seeking out of all-male association is very much a part of the Italian-American male experience. From membership in ethno-specific associations such as the Sons of Italy to participation in bocce and soccer leagues, Italian American men willingly seek out pleasurable, leisure-time association with other *compaisani*.⁶⁵⁸

Whereas sociality is an oft-attributed characteristic of masculine values, Weibel-Orlando's examination suggests the specificity of Italo-American experience as being different to a singular American one. In place of specific activities such as drinking

⁶⁵⁷ Anthony Romanello, interviewed by Gareth White, 27th October 2021.

⁶⁵⁸ Joan Weibel-Orlando, 'A Room of (His) Own: Italian and Italian-American Male-bonding Spaces and Homosociality', *Journal of Men's Studies*, 16.2 (2009), 159–176, p. 168.

(highlighted in the Welsh context), Italian male identity outside of work finds expression in cultural activities related to their countries of origin.

For cultural activities, the attendance at Italian dances in Wales already acts as one indicator of this. The oral history interviews I conducted suggested several other frames of reference, such as celebrating Italian *feste* together, playing cards, or growing and preparing food. An example of this, and what it signified both for the representation of the workers' Italian masculinity and the importance of inter-Italian social bonds, can be found in the testimony regarding Francesco Algieri. Francesco Algieri arrived in the Llanelli area to work in a coal mine in the mid 1950s. He is then noted as moving from the coal mine sector to the metal industry before purchasing a fish and chip shop restaurant in Mumbles, Swansea. The family history of Francesco Algieri was recounted to me by his daughter, second-generation Welsh-Italian Ninetta Algieri from Swansea. Much of the conversation touches on the cultural activities her father did in his spare time since his arrival in Wales in 1956:

(The men would) met up in a coffee shop, or [...] they'd see each other in church on a Sunday, and then they'd arranged these dance things where they'd all meet, and they danced Italian music. [...] So even though it was in Wales or Llanelli or Swansea, it would all just be Italian music, Calabrian music. [...] And it was all Italian *tarantelle* and all that, you know. [...] I think it was important because them keeping together made them feel [...] they were home really. They'd miss their mums and their dads and their family or brothers, but they felt because they were at the Italian groups, they just felt more at home.⁶⁵⁹

The theme of cultural-specific masculinities finding expression in Italian homosociality is represented in the various activities carried out by Francesco Algieri and his colleagues. The quality of being Italian men outside of work is enabled in spaces related to Italian culture, such as coffee shops or the Catholic church. The reference to the workers dancing the *tarantella* and enjoying 'Calabrian' music further localises this, with the performance of activities specific to Southern Italian regions demonstrating the importance for the men of values associated with their homes. The relevance of home is also indicated in the closing comments of the anecdote. By talking about the importance of these Italian cultural activities and linking it to how the men were missing home and their families, Ninetta Algieri implicitly brings together notions of performing Italian cultural values for men, and the condition of migration. Without their family members and usual points of

⁶⁵⁹ Ninetta Algieri, interviewed by Gareth White, 28th March 2022.

reference, the Italian men are depicted as being brought together in the workplace and at these events. Cultural values allow them to enact a sense of Italian (and even regional Italian) masculinity and bring about a sense of belonging by allowing them to 'feel more at home'.

The section has thus outlined different outlets that demonstrate the performance of working-class masculinity for Italian metal workers and miners in Wales. By drawing on the theme of homosociality between workplace groups, the wider work community, and other Italians outside of work, it is possible to ascertain the relevance of social bonds for expressing this. At work, the blurring of ethnic boundaries and the primary model of socialisation amongst a mixed-ethnicity workgroup leads to the suspension of nationalistic frames of reference, with workers instead taking part in a shared workplace culture. Incidents where tensions arose, as illustrated in the testimonies of Antonio Manna, Antonio Romanello or Angela Pockley, can be ascribed as much to the performance of rough masculine values as it can to supposed ethnic conflict. Attention is also paid to trade unionism as another marker of respectable masculinity. The testimonies of Nicesio and Adriano Fantini and Arcangelo D'Alessandro demonstrate the importance of political activism in the workplace and, while not necessarily shaping their lives and theirs or their relatives' lives as part of a grandiose ideological struggle against the forces of capitalism, do acknowledge the importance of battling for a better future and safer working conditions. These conform to an articulation of respectable masculinity based on political participation and civil responsibility. Finally, the importance of cultural activities amongst Italians outside of work suggests an alternative, Welsh-Italian miner and metalworker masculinity. This is built on Italian cultural activities reproduced abroad, such as Italian dances or *feste*, that allow the workers to feel emplaced within a community and provide opportunities for the enhancing of social bonds between them.

5. Conclusions

In light of a relative lack of a historical narrative regarding the working experiences of Italian heavy industry workers in the 1950s, this chapter drew on insights from

metalworkers and miners to sketch the narrative contours built from the testimonies of diverse generations of Italians and Welsh-Italians. These focused primarily on the narrative strategies used to describe representations of working-class masculinity when talking about both the nature of their working practices, and the importance of social bonds in articulating 'male' values.

The chapter revealed how the testimonies of and about Italian manual labourers in the 1950s draw heavily on representations of Welsh-Italian working-class masculinity. My analysis unveils how these share several traits with dominant working-class masculinity, such as recourse to discourses of corporality revolving around hands, bodily strength, and good health to express workers' productivity and suitability to the difficult workplace. This also extends to attitudes towards the potentially hazardous working environments they found themselves in. The challenging and, at times, dangerous nature of work is downplayed stoically, with these conditions being generally accepted as a part of the job. Instead of focusing on the physical nature of work itself, the testimonies indicate a similar strategy whereby workers bookend recollections of the workplace in between their experiences of precarious working conditions and limited opportunities in Italy, and the better socio-economic and cultural ones available in Wales. This acts as a frame and serves as a justification narrative in which manual work in Wales is portrayed as acceptable for the better prospects it brings, even in spite of perilous situations experienced at work. This is also seen as a specific condition of Welsh-Italian working-class masculinity, where workers feel 'grateful' for the chance to work. The case studies also suggest how there was not the same level of participation of the workers in acts of bravado or recklessness, with this interpreted as another articulation of Welsh-Italian working-class masculinity.

The inclusion of testimonies about workplace environments from different generations (Di Maio and Romanello) suggest a narrative tension, where the stoicism of their relatives and their supposed silent acceptance of the perils are challenged. The open dialogue between generations about experiences of heat and danger challenge can be read as a counter-narrative, one that acknowledges the hardships and difficult conditions encountered. These testimonies further augment the representation of the individuals as stoic workers by foregrounding the factors they struggled against, rather than focusing on the material conditions they experienced outside of work.

With specific regard to representations of social bonds in the workplace, diverse facets are at play. Rather than identity formation being firmly within ethnic lines, there is evidence to suggest the importance of participation in workplace hierarchies and work groups. This is not to say that tensions did not exist, as evidenced by two case studies that looked at acts of workplace macho behaviour. Masculinity also becomes an important frame of reference when exploring representations of interactions with workers outside of the immediate social group. The individuals' free time becomes an anchor, and the case studies used in the chapter are presented either as partaking in typical working-class male values (such as competition and sexual jealousy) but also of performing shared cultural values (sharing food, attending dances). If workplace identities were constructed around job role and individual strength, the inclusion of free time displays how Italian workers portrayed aspects of *italianità* and masculinity.

Images associated to working-class male culture also emerged in recollections about trade unionism. Whereas the testimonies seem to confirm the findings of Johnes and Penny that Italian workers, like their Welsh counterparts, were not all heroically united as a cohesive front in the ideological battle for workers' rights, the examples of D'Alessandro and Fantini offer insights into the political involvement of individuals in the quest for the betterment of working conditions for their colleagues. It also provides some evidence of the influence of the heroic involvement of their relatives in political causes. These reveal the importance of activism for individuals involved and the causes they deemed worth protesting for. Attention to trade unionism also indirectly acts as a means through which to study perceptions of workplace dangers, providing an alternative insight into the stoicism and silence offered in other testimonies. Overall, these are incorporated into a wider arguing for expressions of Welsh-Italian working-class masculinity for manual labourers who arrived in the 1950s. They oscillate between respectable and rough masculinity, suggest conformity to workplace environments, and find individual expression for Italian cultural values especially in homosociality with other Italian workers during their free time.

CONCLUSIONS: Towards a multifaceted narrative of Italian migration to Wales

At the time of writing (August 2023), the history of the working practices of Italians in Wales during the twentieth century stands at a crossroads. The experiences of early twentieth-century workers are on the verge of passing beyond the confines of living memory, as too are the cafes that were once so dominant. In February 2020, Welsh-Italian journalist Nick Servini identified 11 Italian cafes run by the same families from before the Second World War who were still trading.⁶⁶⁰ Although they are still open today, this has not been without setbacks. Amidst a perfect storm of the current cost of living crisis, rising rents, the decline of the British high street, the lack of successors, the impact of COVID-19, and Brexit, even the last cafes risk disappearing.⁶⁶¹ Elsewhere, the experience of prisoner-of-war camps in Wales is also in danger of vanishing from sight. The camps themselves were often reduced to ruins immediately after the war, and the ones that remain are dependent on fundraising and crowdfunding for their maintenance.⁶⁶² The stories of workers risk passing beyond the realms of communicative memory and, without more efforts to preserve the legacy of Italian migration to Wales, these too could become a distant echo of Wales' past.

As such, it could be argued that this thesis becomes the latest piece of a wider puzzle that has been reconstructing the complex history of a multi-diasporic Italian community in the country. Other recent initiatives have built on the momentum started in the early 2010s that were acknowledged in Bruna Chezzi's thesis such as the Arandora Star Campaign.⁶⁶³ The experience of Italians in Wales forms a part of the WJEC History curriculum of 'Changes in Patterns of Migration, c. 1500 to the present day'.⁶⁶⁴ Conferences and memorialisation campaigns for the Arandora Star continue to be held in

⁶⁶⁰ Nick Servini, 'Why café culture has rich Italian flavour in Wales', *BBC News*, 12th February 2020.

⁶⁶¹ 'Historic ice cream café to shut up shop over winter for the first time in 90 years due to soaring bills', *Nation Cymru*, 11th November 2022, <<https://nation.cymru/news/historic-ice-cream-cafe-to-shut-up-shop-over-winter-for-the-first-time-in-90-years-due-to-soaring-bills/>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; 'The Last of the Bracchis', BBC Radio Wales, 30th August 2021; 'Fee hike is "kick in the teeth" for café culture in Wales' longest high street', *Daily Post*, 6th July 2023.

⁶⁶² 'Island Farm prisoner of war camp volunteers battle to buy visitor centre', *BBC Wales*, 10th October 2021, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-58835958>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

⁶⁶³ Bruna Chezzi, 'Cultural Representations of Italians in Wales', (unpublished PhD thesis: Cardiff University, 2012), pp. 135–7.

⁶⁶⁴ 'Unit 3: Changes in Patterns of Migration', *WJEC History*, <https://resource.download.wjec.co.uk/vtc/2020-21/KO20-21_1-1/Batch%201/KQ3_wjec_patterns_of_migration.pdf>, [last accessed 13th August 2023].

London (November 2021) and Cardiff (March 2023), as do commemorative masses in Cardiff.⁶⁶⁵ There has also been a small boom in the cultural production regarding Italian experience in Wales, with a series of novels, plays, radio programmes and discussions, and documentaries all seeking to capture different aspects of Italian history in Wales.⁶⁶⁶ On social media sites, local history groups become forums where increasing numbers of people share family stories and look for information about lost family members. The latter can be read as the latest manifestation of a new ‘ethnic revival’ where ‘many people started to consider themselves’ as part of a ‘plurality of diasporas which reinforce themselves through their ties with their regions of origin.’⁶⁶⁷ In this way, the boundaries of what is understood as Italian migration to Wales are constantly being written and rewritten.

In order to achieve a more heterogeneous reading of Italian migration to Wales, this thesis strove to move away from the ‘illusory comfort of simplistic narratives’ and recognised the ‘complex, fragmented, and often contradictory nature of historical phenomena’.⁶⁶⁸ Taking inspiration from the ongoing debate in Italian migration studies to Britain by scholars such as Terri Colpi or Wendy Ugolini about whose voices are represented within the historical narratives of the communities, this thesis engaged to capture marginalised voices and to incorporate them within the wider picture of Italian migration to Wales. An important first step in the process was to deconstruct what is commonly understood by Italian migration to Wales and challenging the ‘romanticised and glamourised’ images within it.⁶⁶⁹ This started by reassessing the epic historical narrative of Giacomo Bracchi as the pioneering entrepreneur who brought coffee to Wales and revolutionised the social lives of Welsh workers in the late nineteenth century. A narrative synthesis of a range of cultural sources revealed the contours of how Welsh-

⁶⁶⁵ ‘Arandora Star Remembered’, *Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Londra* < https://iiclondra.esteri.it/it/gli_eventi/calendario/arandora-star-remembered/>, [last accessed 28th August 2023]; ‘Visita in Galles della delegazione italiana del progetto “La tragedia dell’Arandora Star. Una storia di emigrazione per una cultura di pace’’, *La Gente*, 26th March 2023, < <https://www.genteditalia.org/2023/03/26/visita-in-galles-della-delegazione-italiana-del-progetto-la-tragedia-dellarandora-star-una-storia-di-emigrazione-per-una-cultura-di-pace/>>, [last accessed 28th August 2023].

⁶⁶⁶ As well as the works cited in the Introduction, we can add Rob Gittins, *Hear the Echo* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2018).

⁶⁶⁷ Maddalena Tirabassi, ‘Italian Cultural Identity and Migration: Italian Communities Abroad and Italian Cultural Identity through Time’, *The Essence of Italian Culture and the Challenge of a Global Age*, eds. Paulo Janni and George McLean (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2003).

⁶⁶⁸ Francesco Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*, p. vii.

⁶⁶⁹ Wendy Ugolini, ‘Spaghetti Lengths in a Bowl’, p. 214.

Italian experience is conceptualised, focusing predominantly on the experiences of Italian male café traders mainly from Bardi who traversed mountains, set up family businesses, and were struck down by the impact of the Second World War under internment. From this base, the thesis engaged in a process of counter-storytelling, understood as:

[a] method of storytelling that “aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority.” It is also used to expose and critique normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes. In essence, counter-stories (a) bring attention to the perspectives of marginalized and silenced voices; (b) stand in opposition to dominant stories of privilege; and (c) resist and challenge opposition, racism, and classism, thus working toward the goal of social justice.⁶⁷⁰

The original contribution that the thesis embarked upon was the direct incorporation of the family and personal narratives of Italian workers from working sectors that did not conform to the dominant narrative of the male-dominated refreshment industry. It paid attention to voices whose experiences have typically been rendered invisible, as was the case for female café traders, or else underacknowledged. This proved all the more important in a time where epic family narratives recount the unproblematic integration and cultural contribution to the country, and where institutions are interpreted as rewriting history to fit agendas of tolerance and inclusion.

The findings that emerge across the three analytical chapters reveal similar strategies employed by Italians in diverse working sectors. Continuing the work of scholarship that has identified the significant role of the media and institutions in crafting narratives about migrants, there was a focus on the oscillating representation of Italians throughout the twentieth century. This linked into wider discussions about challenging an unproblematic integration narrative by acknowledging hardships experienced throughout this period. Narratives about Italian migrants, published occasionally in English-language newspapers in Wales, were used by the followers of the Temperance Movement to publish anti-Italian trader discourse, with their articles focusing on their supposed anti-religiosity and lack of morals. The media also played a role during the Second World War by publishing rhetoric about Italians who they perceived as subversive elements of society. These strategies are not in themselves a novelty: the Welsh media is acknowledged as being a prominent site where discourses about Italians were elaborated on and crafted. However, the attention in particular to

⁶⁷⁰ Tisha Lewis Ellison and Marva Solomon, ‘Counter-Storytelling vs Deficit Thinking around African American Children and Families, Digital Literacies, Race, and the Digital Divide’, *Research in the Teaching of English*, 53.3 (2019), 223–244, p. 224.

the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century unearths new perspectives. Traditional understandings and family histories pay more attention to the epic journey and foundation of the family businesses; visits to court visits to pay fines due to Sunday Trading appear less sporadically in the oral interviews I conducted. Nevertheless, shining a light on the rhetorical imagery of Italians in this period provided a context to study attitudes towards workers in this period, linking individual stories of paying fines into a wider panorama that brought together discourses of nationality, religion, and belonging.

A common reaction reported across the three chapters regards how Italians drew on resilience in the light of anti-Italian rhetoric and the disruption of their experiences. Drawing on Ana-María Fraile-Marcos' understanding, the frame of resilience can be depicted as:

[l]inked to the capacity of beings– human or nonhuman, individual or collective–to withstand adversity, to endure by being flexible, to adapt to conditions of crisis. This transformation may involve not only mere survival, but also flourishing in the midst of difficulties.⁶⁷¹

Typically ascribed to the 'resilient memory and heritage' of the Arandora Star narrative in Britain, the theme of resilience runs through the experience of Italians in the twentieth century.⁶⁷² Workers from diverse sectors soldier on in the face of adversity and, as far as the outside world was concerned, defiantly continued. Moments of hardship, as evidenced in the testimonies regarding miners and metalworkers, were downplayed, with these being bookended in their recollections between the economic hardships of living and working in Italy, and the enhanced social conditions on offer in Wales. These underlined the psychological motivation of the workers and were used to justify the difficult working conditions they experienced. They engaged with their dehumanisation, such as the Italian prisoners of war and their internal quest against being 'prisoners' or 'numbers' and sought to find strategies to negate these effects. Together, these strands suggest an emphasis on survival and speak of the continuous adaptation of Italians to a rapidly changing twentieth-century Welsh society.

Part of this survival in the face of adversity revolves around the constant battles of workers to acquire agency. For the women who traded in the cafés, this manifests most

⁶⁷¹ *Glocal Narratives of Resilience*, ed. Ana María Fraile-Marcos (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).

⁶⁷² Terri Colpi, 'Legacy and Heritage of the Arandora Star Tragedy in Britain and Italy: A Transnational Perspective', p. 47.

clearly during the Second World War in what the thesis posited were ‘loss and growth’ narratives where individuals express their displacement, resistance, and collective unity to overcome hardships. In spite of events such as their physical relocation or being separated from male members of the family, Italian women in family narratives are shown to have banded together and constructed networks with other Italian women, allowing them to gain collective agency. A similar strategy is noted for Italian prisoners of war. In resisting the alienation that occurred by captivity and the loss of a sense of individual identity, as well as their association with the war, POW narratives depict how they use transferrable skills learned from before their enrolment to reconnect with ‘who they used to be.’ Rather than the psychological burden of being prisoners or former soldiers, they challenge their alienation and determine the course of their captivity. The role of these narratives in this process is clear. Given that ‘particular kinds of identities can be seen as stemming from ways of talking about the self in action’ and that ‘agency is a major basis for claiming power’, the thesis demonstrates how the workers’ redefined their working practices and their identities in order to flourish in hardship.⁶⁷³

Gender constituted another key pillar of investigation throughout this work. Acknowledging that the gendered experience of Italians remained an under-represented area of study in current scholarship, the thesis evidences the valuable insights to be gained from paying greater attention to the performance of multiple masculine and feminine values. In response, the chapters engaged with a gendered reading in several ways. Drawing on the frames of rough and respectable masculinities, anecdotes from Italians in different factories and mines revealed how Italians performed masculine values to show their emplacement within workplace cultures. These consisted primarily of being physically strong and healthy workers who tolerated difficult working conditions, would demonstrate their prowess and productivity at work, and would compete and associate themselves with their peers in their workplace groups. Similar frames of reference appear in the testimonies of entrepreneurial women in the café trade. A focus on the experiences of Italian female café traders, whose experiences have traditionally been neglected, helped challenge the social *invisibilisation* of their work. Case studies such as the family history of the Lusardi or Pelosi families depict strong and shrewd women who were responsible for managing cafes and developing family

⁶⁷³ Elizabeth Lanza, ‘Empowering a migrant identity: agency in narratives of a work experience in Norway’, *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 6.2 (2012), 285–307, p. 286.

businesses. Altogether, the analyses suggest how Italian men and women conformed to or challenged gendered norms. They also hinted at the unique nature of a Welsh-Italian masculinity specific to the manual labour workplace, built from an amalgamation of values that were commonly shared between men of different nationalities (such as the fundamental importance of work or appraisal of physicality), but also at times set aside from them (i.e., the sense of gratitude or the linking of attitudes to work with comparative poverty in Italy). These findings open a space within the study of Italian migration to Wales from a new perspective.

Another recurring feature concerns social bonds formed in Wales. The importance of social bonds is already noted as a fundamental aspect of how the café traders' community in Wales developed during the twentieth century.⁶⁷⁴ In this thesis, the strength of social bonds between Welsh and Italians led to a blurring of ethnic lines. There is a focus on emplacement in society, where shared cultural values are seen as fundamental towards their successful integration and family narratives write their descendants into the social history of Wales. These themes also emerged in the analysis of transcultural narratives of prisoners of war, where 'playful experimentation' with cultural elements lead to the reconfiguration of societal positions.⁶⁷⁵ The case studies together stand as a further confirmation of the importance of social connections in 'the context of local integration.'⁶⁷⁶

Social bonds 'with family and co-ethnic, co-national, co-religious or other forms of group' also assume importance in the thesis' study of Italian migrant homosociality.⁶⁷⁷ The chapters identified various examples of these, from the female support networks founded by café traders during the Second World War to the participation of miners and metalworkers as political activists fighting for better work conditions. Bonds between workers allowed spaces for Italians to express *italianità* in Wales. We can think, for example, of the way that Italians at Henllan Bridge POW Camp such as Mario Ferlito collaborated on the collective project of the Italian chapel and the way that this played a key role in providing prisoners with a place to practice their Italian religious identities. By a similar token, attending local dances and *feste* with Italian co-workers in the 1950s

⁶⁷⁴ Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and their Cultural Representations*.

⁶⁷⁵ Arianna Dagnino, *Transcultural writers and novels in the age of global mobility*, p. 193.

⁶⁷⁶ Alastair Ager and Alison Strong, 'Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21.2 (2008), 166–191, p. 178.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

acted as another outlet where *italianità* could be performed, as too did their initial living arrangements where Italian men would live together and, in their spare time, perform Italian cultural values together. Thus, if at work they are depicted as taking an active part in a shared workplace environment often built around different cultural codes, then the importance of relationships with other Italians reminds of how Italians performed multiple cultural values and flitted between 'work identity' and 'Italian identity' in Wales. The nature of this dualism, therefore, confirms the findings of Ann-Marie Fortier, who draws on the quote of Lorenzo Losi (a leading figure in the London-Italian community) to debate the participation of Italians living in London in voting in Italian elections, whereby 'this emigration distinguishes itself by the way it integrated itself even if maintaining its proper *italianità* and in fact imposing it to the host country.'⁶⁷⁸

Finally, in all three working sectors, there is recognition of the fundamental role that work played in conditioning the experiences of Italians in Wales. It provided a means for socio-economic mobility and brought about their integration into society, but also had a more profound impact. It allowed Italian prisoners of war to challenge the dehumanising experience of captivity, as shown by how they experienced fulfilment in carrying out jobs similar to those conducted before enrolment. It helped them escape economic poverty and, through sacrifice, secure a more positive future for their children, as illustrated by the psychological motivations of Italian miners and metal workers. And ultimately, it constituted a key battleground where the oscillating representations of Italians between subversive elements of society to a part of the social fabric of Wales directly impacted the working practices of Italians in the refreshment industry. These findings confirm the general acknowledgement of work as being a central aspect of individuals' lives, despite not being thematised as such. My attention to work draws these considerations to the fore and identifies new narratives regarding their experiences in Wales.

Drawing the strands together, my analysis of oral history interviews of Italians from different working sectors notes a similar trajectory regarding the importance of work for Italian migrants in Wales that manifest in unique ways. A historical narrative synthesis of the key themes explored demonstrates this framework. Italians move (by choice or, for POWs, by force) to Wales and begin to work. The quantitatively significant

⁶⁷⁸ Ann-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings*, p. 79.

arrival of workers prompts reflections from the host society about the new workers, but these are usually overcome through the Italians' hard work. The Italians develop social capital in Wales and come into contact with different cultures, modifying their individual identities but also those of the people they encounter through their working practices. Away from work, they practice Italian cultural values; at work, they seek to participate in the workplace cultures they found themselves in. They experience integration to different degrees, but this is often at risk of being disrupted by external forces. The Second World War looms in the background, conditioning the experiences of the worker in different ways. They develop strong social bonds with colleagues and overcome tensions, allowing them to become a part of the social fabric of the country. Work thus brings fulfilment, challenges alienation, impacts their identities, and provides the conditions for change.

As much as the insights garnered from this thesis have endeavoured towards providing a multi-faceted approach to the study of Italian migration to Wales, they are not without limits. The primary limit concerns the role of the researcher in making choices 'based on the significance of the included event in the analysis of the evidence of the whole.'⁶⁷⁹ In conducting historical research, the individual chooses whose perspectives to focus on and, by extension, those not to. As Cathy Coulter-Smith notes regarding life history research:

[r]esearchers cannot represent every single occasion that happened in the participants' lives but must choose which events to concentrate on and which to highlight; otherwise, the "map" of representations would be as extensive as the "territory" of the life it represents.⁶⁸⁰

Given the limits of a PhD thesis, the inclusion of every single experience would have been impossible. A thematic analysis of the 51 oral history interviews I conducted inevitably meant that certain life episodes were chosen to form the basis of the analysis. In using a narrative approach, the thesis has steered clear of seeking to generalise experiences, holding up case studies as examples of alternative trajectories to demonstrate the need to move towards a more complex history of the phenomenon and suggest themes that could resonate with the experience of other Italians who migrated to and worked in Wales. But it also depended on a conscious choice to focus on the perspectives of

⁶⁷⁹ Cathy Coulter and Mary Lee Smith, 'The Construction of Zone: Literary Elements in Narrative Research', *Educational Research*, 38.8 (2009), 577–590, p. 580.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 580.

marginalised voices. For example, by focusing in detail on the experiences of Italian women, I chose not to engage extensively with the family narratives about entrepreneurial men who were interned during the Second World War and whose testimonies recount other aspects, such as their direct experiences during the Temperance Movement or of internment away from Wales.

Another potential limit could be the uneven attention paid to gender throughout the thesis. The work drew attention to the different trajectories of Italian women in the refreshment industry, although the working practices of Italian women outside of this sector remain neglected. This was in part due to the difficulty in locating interviewees in this regard. Anecdotal evidence suggested that women were involved in the metal industry as well, for example, although this was impossible to confirm in the period of this project.⁶⁸¹ A greater attention to gendered readings have the potential to unearth alternative perspectives such as how women experienced work differently from men, or how women negotiated gendered roles in the Welsh communities. A potentially fruitful direction of the latter could consist in the study of the perspectives of ‘war brides’ – Italian women and children of Welsh servicemen who met during the Second World War. Gabrielle Fortune’s analysis of the New Zealand context suggests that their experiences echoed those of prisoners of war, noting how women struggled against the ‘simultaneous loss of individual identities and the imposition of impossible ideals and damaging stereotypes.’⁶⁸² In Wales, Giudici notes how ‘841 Italian women intending to marry British men were admitted to Britain between 1946 and 1950’, but also admits that it is impossible to know the extent of Italian war bride migration to Wales.⁶⁸³ Locating war-brides and analysing their narratives could provide rich insights into how they navigated their association with war and their integration into Welsh society.

Geographical limits also potentially restricted the scope of analysis of the thesis. The first and third chapters give ample space to the experience of Italians in South Wales due to the fact they represented a quantitatively larger sample to study. In the first chapter, the Italians from coastal areas and Swansea were held up to look at the displacement of women and their triumphant return in 1941, but other voices from Wales (such as the

⁶⁸¹ Felice and Serafina Toscano, interviewed by Gareth White, 22nd April 2023.

⁶⁸² Gabrielle Fortune, ‘Bride Ship, Brothel Ship: Conflicting Images of War Brides Arriving in New Zealand in the 1940s’, *Restaging War in the Western World. Noncombattant experiences 1890–Today*, eds. Maartje Abbenhuis and Sara Buttsworth (New York: Palgrave, 2009), p. 81.

⁶⁸³ Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity’, p. 56.

South Wales valleys, or North Wales) reported stories such as of Welsh neighbours hiding Italians, or Welsh politicians actively campaigning for the release of interned men from Caerphilly.⁶⁸⁴ The second chapter looked exclusively at one prisoner of war camp in South-West Wales. This was justified by a choice to study the experiences of Italians in a camp designated only to Italian POWs, but it also left out the other twenty camps that housed Italians at this time. Widening the geographical scale in Wales, or even conducting comparative studies with other countries with similar trajectories of Italians in the country, could enrich the field further.

Another potentially rewarding avenue for researchers would be to investigate the position of Italian migrants in Wales in diverse hierarchies. Francesco Ricatti's work on the Italians in Australia, where he pays attention to the racial ambiguity of Italian workers and their negotiation of racial hierarchies, could suggest a way forward in this regard.⁶⁸⁵ The Welsh-Italian case lends itself favourably in this regard. Future researchers could pay attention to the position of Italians in a country which, as Martin Johnes investigates, has been considered as 'England's first colony'.⁶⁸⁶ This could take the form of a study looking at the interplay between the power dynamics between Italian migrants, Wales, and the United Kingdom. Similarly, the study of Italian prisoners of war or mines and metalworkers may benefit from a cross-comparative approach that situates the historical experiences of Italians with those of German prisoners of war or as part of a multi-ethnic workforce in manual labour industries in the 1950s, incorporating the experiences of different prisoner of war camps or factories within the scopes of their projects.

In all, it is hoped that this thesis serves as a starting point for the diversification of what is currently understood as the narrative of twentieth-century Italian migration to Wales. At a time when the Welsh-Italian community is evolving, there is also space for what it means to be Welsh-Italian to evolve too. In writing it, therefore, it hopes to continue the discussions about the diverse trajectories of Italians to the country and spark further conversations between members of the Italian diasporic communities about their historical experiences of working in Wales.

⁶⁸⁴ Remo, Giovanna and Gianluigi Fecci, interviewed by Gareth White, 25th February 2021.

⁶⁸⁵ Francesco Ricatti, *Italians in Australia*.

⁶⁸⁶ Martin Johnes, *Wales: England's Colony. The Conquest, Assimilation and Re-creation of Wales*, p. 1.

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Appendix

Foreword

For the purposes of this thesis, the nineteen oral history interviews that were analysed in the three analytical chapters have been provided in this appendix. These are provided in a partially transcribed form, with the parts directly related to working experiences being provided. The author of this thesis intends to provide access to the other interviews at a later stage.

1. Interviews about the Italian Refreshment Industry

1.1: Interview with John Lusardi, 3rd November 2021

Gareth White: John, thank you so much for joining me today to talk about your family. It's hugely appreciated. I remember in our notes that we exchanged that your grandmother really had a particularly interesting travel and experiences in the refreshments industry. I was wondering if we could start by touching on her experience initially.

John Lusardi: Well, she basically left Casaleto, a small village in Italy in Emilia Romagna region, due to poverty, quite a lack of food and money and resources in our area at the time and made her way to Wales, basically where the mining industry hadn't long really started and there was work there and possibilities for a better future. And that was her main reason for coming to this country from Italy.

Gareth White: Okay. When was it that she first arrived in Wales?

John Lusardi: Right, the exact date I can't be sure of... I looked for some documents that I had, but it was a very sort of early 1900s. I would imagine probably around 19. 14/15, but I'm not quite sure... I could find out, but it would take a bit of searching. [...] Early 1900s.

Gareth White: Okay. So, she arrived with your grandfather obviously, and they were already married before that?

John Lusardi: Yes, they were married in Italy and already had young children and brought the children with them to Wales.

Gareth White: Okay. I wonder before we briefly discuss the way they started the business, whether we could talk very briefly about Casaleto, you know, [...] I know you mentioned the poverty and the lack of resources. What was life like for them in general and what would your grandmother have gone through, in your opinion, had she stayed in Casaleto?

John Lusardi: From what I can remember of what she would tell me when I was younger was that food was very scarce, because the community of Casaleto was quite a way outside the main town of Bedonia. Travel was difficult as well, especially during the winter months, given the Topography of the area. I think through speaking to people who had already made the journey to this country by letter, not by phone calls, I think then she could see an opening, of a way of getting out of poverty they were into, like I said, make a better life for herself.

Gareth White: Okay. And I'd imagine that it would have been a very traditional Italian family with rural work? Maybe she would have been, you know, just raising children in the farm?

John Lusardi: It was basically a small holding. There are a few fields, a few animals. They're communal, people there used to help each other out, but it got to a point where you just couldn't make ends meet and something you had to change their way of life really...

Gareth White: And obviously from Casaletto they arrived in Wales where they made a very courageous decision to open a cafe. Yeah. What happened there? Talk me through the setting up of this café.

John Lusardi: Right, my grandmother had been had some friends who came to Wales before them. The guy's name was Moruzzi, and my grandmother made some arrangement with him so that if they came here, she could start a business with him. I think my grandmother was the push towards the business side of things, not my grandfather. She was the one that sort of drove it along. She went into business with Moruzzi, and they opened up a cafe in Nant-y-moel in the Ogmore valley, about 10 miles north of Bridgend. And started that was the business they started there.

Gareth White: And why is it, do you think, that your grandmother was so attracted to the idea of opening a cafe with Moruzzi?

John Lusardi: I've never actually asked her that. I think they were following on from the success that people who previously come here before her, they could see the different families had success in doing this sort of thing in Wales. And they just followed the example of others really.

Gareth White: Okay. In other words, following the successful model. Your grandmother must've been really inspired by the booming businesses and therefore decided to set up a first cafe then?

John Lusardi: Yes.

Gareth White: Okay. And what was it like in those early days of trading? Did they grow very quickly? What was it like in these early days?

John Lusardi: All I can remember when they first arrived in the Welsh Valley, my grandma told me it reminded them a lot of where they came from in Italy although the mountains were a bit smaller here. But generally the scenery and the close-knit community, people in the Welsh Valleys are very similar to what she'd come from in Italy albeit they were speaking a different language. My grandmother could not speak English when she arrived here, which I think was very brave to go and just immerse yourself in another culture and not being able to speak the language.

But after they arrived here, they seemed fit in very easily and make a lot of close friends, especially with one lady who had a farm just up the valley from where the cafe was, my grandmother became very friendly with her. And she helped my grandmother to learn to speak English at that time. Also, around the time my grandmother came to this country and just previous to it, some of her friends from that area in Italy did the same thing, but they went to the Rhondda Valley. Okay. And one lady in particular, an Italian lady who moved to the Rhondda Valley from Bardi, my grandmother said she was her best friend from Italy.

Gareth White: So obviously having that support network, it must've made a real difference for her moving forward.

John Lusardi: Yes. I think it was. Although they came basically on their own, they knew other people would come as well. And they knew these people. [...] I think there was probably about three other families my grandmother was close to who came to this country around the same time, and they opened up cafe businesses in different parts of the Valleys.

Gareth White: Interesting. In terms of the cafe then I'd imagine it was trading on the typical products of the time. So probably offering like the frothy coffees and this kind of produce?

John Lusardi: Yeah, it was snack food, pies, pasties, pork pies, which was steamed on the coffee machine, which is illegal these days...

Gareth White: I was going to say it's a food and hygiene nightmare.

John Lusardi: Yeah. And that went on for a number of years. And it was just general cafe stuff, coffee, which although there was coffee available in valleys, this was quite rare at the time, especially cappuccino and a sort of espresso type coffee. and teas. And one of the biggest things they sold was at that time, obviously cigarettes and tobacco to people who worked in the mines and collieries in the valley.

Gareth White: Now I'm thinking here. So, moving chronologically through this, you know, those early days when she arrived in 1900s, 1910s, there would have been ... Obviously a lot of power of what was going on in Wales at the time, particularly with the anti-Sunday trading. I don't know if it's something that your grandmother ever talked about, and your grandfather ever talked about with you?

John Lusardi: Not really, from what I can remember, but probably.... I was born in 1952. So previous to that, what I could make out, our shop, our cafe, the one in Nant-y-Moel was open seven days a week, more or less, 24 hours a day.

Gareth White: [...], I wonder whether she had to pay any fines because she treated on Sundays or anything like this, perhaps?

John Lusardi: Right, she did tell me, and my father has spoken to me about it in the past at the beginning... there was a lot of corruption. [...] And basically, a lot of things they were allowed to do in the café, or not allowed to do was down to certain police officers at the time, would be taking – better word for it would be backhanders.

Gareth White: Yeah. Okay.

John Lusardi: With also a threat of prosecution or being closed down because they were on license, I think at the time, and that went on for a number of years. And there was an incident with one police officer who was carrying out this corruption, he was basically caught out and it ended, and they didn't have a lot more trouble after that.

Gareth White: Goodness, it's surprising that there was such pressure by the local police on the family business.

John Lusardi: Yeah. There were other stories. She told me about things at that time. The police looked at them sort of very suspiciously all the time, obviously from another country. But yeah, it was hard for them. With the authorities in the early days, but later as they developed a business and everything, and people became a lot more friendly. The Valley people were in general, very friendly. It was only the authority element that made life difficult.

Gareth White: So obviously, you know, the Valley people, they were very supportive they frequented the industry without problems and, helped them to be very settled in that case?

John Lusardi: Yeah. The collieries at the time were working on three shifts on a 24-hour system. It was beneficial for our shop to be open. The one that was in Nant-y-Moel, because that's where the three collieries around the shop, to serve the needs of the miners going to work, coming home from work, and also just, a while after they've established themselves there, they would use our cafe as a clubhouse when they started a local football team called the [Cory brothers??] Football team and they used to hold all the meetings in the café.

Gareth White: Wow. It's very interesting that this local sporting association went to a cafe to have these meetings. Why do you think that was? Why do you think that ?

John Lusardi: They always had a hot stove. I think, knowing my grandmother , probably free drinks... It was somewhere cosy to go. They'd be there anyway, there wasn't a lot other to do than the local pubs or drinking alcohol. So, they'd meet in the cafe. There were other clubs in the café as well. The chess club, and some very small element of the clients started a photography club. I don't know much about that. On the football team side that was quite prominent then.

Gareth White: Interesting. So, it really seems that the cafe that they set up that was a base that then took on a greater meaning for the local community as time went by.

John Lusardi: Yeah. I don't think my grandmother envisaged that when they came there. I think that grew basically in the Valley. It was tough times in their days and the people of the valley looked at that as a social hub then. Yeah. It turned into a social hub as well as a café and somebody's business. Especially during the 1926 strike, when people didn't have money or didn't have a lot of food. I know my grandmother helped out a lot of people in the valley by letting them have food and loaning some money. She didn't always get paid back, but still, and it gained my grandmother in the valley a lot of respect with a lot of local people. She was really well liked. My grandfather as well.

Gareth White: Yeah, because I remember as well that, you know, you mentioned that it was very much a family business and that at the same time she was raising two sons, ... three sons. Okay. Would they be living in the place of work? So would it be like your upstairs would be the house and downstairs would be the...

John Lusardi: Yes. At the beginning, for a number of years, (they'd) absolutely live behind the cafe and above the cafe And, I can't remember the exact date, but my grandmother had another child later and there was quite a gap between the first 3 and the last one who also lived there but was a baby at that time. And like I said, I told you that my grandmother had only been here a very short while. I don't think it was two years and her husband died of tuberculosis...

Gareth White: Goodness.

John Lusardi: So, she was left on her own with the children running a business. Although, like I said, at the beginning, I don't know how long the wrong partnership lasted, but she bought out the chap Moruzzi who she was in partnership with and then just went ahead with business on her own.

Gareth White: What was it like then? Would the children be involved in the family business as well whilst your grandmother was running it?

John Lusardi: All right. Yeah. In the early years, I think my grandmother's oldest son, his name was Tommaso and my father Luigi, they were the two oldest boys. I think from 10 or 12 years old they were expected to help them work in the shop, but they also went to school as well. They travelled to Bridgend to go to school. And her third son, John, I think he was a bit younger, so he couldn't really work in the shop. It wasn't 'till he got into their teens, but my father went back to Italy, to the Italian army and his brother, Tom, I think went back to Italy as well.

[...]

Gareth White: Okay. So, in other words, you know, your grandmother was really instrumental in setting up the foundation of this, you know, making all the managerial decisions, really establishing the trade, and then her children, particularly your father and your uncle were then instrumental in pushing it outwards and expanding it?

John Lusardi: Yeah.

Gareth White: Okay. Excellent. Just having a look at the chronology now. So, we've gotten to the 1926 strike your grandmother is helping families, giving them food, supporting them in these difficult moments. And then obviously getting to the 1930s and, you know, we see a potential boom for business I'd imagine, but very changing geopolitical circumstances.

John Lusardi: Yeah. So, at that time, pre second world war, it went very well for my grandmother. By that time, she had three businesses in one street, a grocery shop and toy shops. By that time, my father was working in the cafe business full time, then, more or less running it. [...] And then running into the war, the Second World War, where the massive disruption to the family then because the police had to arrest Italians because we were classed as aliens to the war effort or whatever it was.

Yeah. So, my father and Tom... My father was arrested in Nant-y-Moel in the café there. The police officer, who went to arrest him was big friends with my father at that time. And, he didn't want to do it, but he had to do it. He had to arrest him. So, my father is arrested and sent to a central camp somewhere in England, and then he was shipped from there, to the Isle of Man, prisoner war camp, concentration camp or whatever it's called. And his brother Tom was arrested in London. Once they arrested him, they'd found out that he was a fascist supporter, and he was sent to go in Canada on the Arandora Star ship, which sadly sank, and all these people were killed on that trip. Just a little family thing. When my grandfather, found out her oldest son was a fascist, they fell out big time, and they didn't speak again for a number of years. And then [...] the next thing she knew he had died on that boat. She'd never actually recovered from that, because of the fallout.

Gareth White: . I'm so sorry to hear that. I mean, it's... I suppose that unfortunately, you know, with what happened with the growth of fascism, it must have definitely divided families who would have been pro and again, against, you know. [...] But in all these years, you know, I mean, I know your father was sent to the Isle of Man... What happened to your grandmother in all this? Was she allowed to continue to trade, was she under surveillance in any way?

John Lusardi: Right. To go back to the answer to a previous question about when she arrived here, these friends that she knew and who had come here at about the same time as who she really close to, they banded together this time and helped each other out because most of these Italian women, their husbands and sons were sent away to the Isle of Man or somewhere else. So, all of them were alone at the time. So, they banded together and helped each other out. My grandmother would often travel to the Rhondda family to help out a friend over there. I can't remember her first name, but her surname was Balestrazzi. And that family ran a business in Treorchy for years probably up until the year 1990, something like that ? but, Balestrazzi, my grandmother (and her) best friend helped each other out.

And she had some other friends down towards Neath in South Wales. And my father, was friendly with one of the boys there, but the both of them, obviously my father and this boy from neath had been sent to the Isle of Man. But my grandmother would go down there to Neath, And I can't remember their surname and they would come up and help my grandmother as well, so it was a bit of an all get together and help each other.

Gareth White: I find it interesting this network... I know we talked earlier about a support network, and it's always interesting because the Italian community in Wales, whilst not being as visible as those in say New York or, Rio de Janeiro, it does seem like they were very well connected even in the 1940s.

John Lusardi: Yes, I think we were *more* connected then. Although the spread was bigger later through marriage and other ways. I think I said the network and the closeness was there, it was closer at that time. I will say as well.... during that time my father, and obviously Tom was... and my grandma's on her own. She did have a lot of help from Welsh Valley people.

Gareth White: Interesting. So, in that place, even though the news that Italy were the enemy, you're saying that the Welsh people of the valley, with who she lived alongside were actually really supportive and very sympathetic to her cause?

John Lusardi: There was very little aggression shown towards my grandmother. I have actually asked her and my father because I thought they could sort of tip the balance towards aggression and "you shouldn't be here" and whatever. But no, they didn't. The people of the valley were quite shocked when it happened, because they were classed by this time as just Welsh Valley people, the same as everybody else.

Gareth White: Were there any particular shows of solidarity that spring to mind when you think of the reaction of the Welsh people in 1940?

John Lusardi: Well the... I think it was a Sergeant come to arrest my father, and he was absolutely distraught. He just didn't want to do it. And when they were led away there were people there, like Valley people, they were protesting and shouting, not against my father, against those who arrested him. It had quite a bad effect on people in the Valley when it did happen. They just couldn't understand why.

Gareth White: Okay. And then I imagine that, from there, your father was there... What happened in the Isle of Man? Was he then released very soon? Did he have to wait a few years before he could come back?

John Lusardi: Nope. He went through the full time there that they were incarcerated there. That's again,... even in that sort of downside of going to the Isle of Man, it would open up new doors from there where he met other Italians. Because while he was in the isle of man, and he'd been a secretary previously, he helped lot of people there. Actually, a lot of the Italians on the Isle of Man who couldn't read and write English properly. So, he helped them. and one of those people that he used to help us, was Charles Forte, [...] later to become very wealthy.

Gareth White: Yeah. [...] That is interesting that, you know, they had this constant mixing, of building a community albeit in difficult circumstances. Okay. I've got time for one last question, John. [...] But I was going to finish with how was your grandmother's trading during the war years. I mean, I know you said there was a lot of solidarity, with a support

network. Was she able to trade normally? Or did she encounter any obstacles in this period?

John Lusardi: Uh, that's a difficult one, that takes some memories. Yeah, I don't think there were any major obstacles. Probably shortages of certain items. But as far as her direct trading and I don't think it was, you know, major problems or official sort of problems. Shortages of different items would have been the biggest thing. Yeah. I don't have ... tobacco, food stuffs, but it seemed to run okay. They got through it as well. But yeah, that was during her war years. I can't think of any conversations with my father or my grandmother, of any problems during the war years.

Gareth White: Okay. But obviously the support network would help each other out, would it be more like you're helping each other out in the cafes? Would they kind of go on shifts? How would this work, this alliance?

John Lusardi: Yeah, I think it was a lot to do with some of the people had young children at the time. And it would be helping out looking after the children. One of the, the ladies from the Rhondda, Balestrazzi, she had a number of children and the youngest girl[...] more or less, brought her in these years and reared her.

1.2: Email exchange with Anita Arcari

1. My grandmother (born Grilli) was expected to help out with the family chores, as a young girl. This involved the usual housework, cooking and helping with other chores. Clothes were washed in communal areas, or in the river, scrubbed against flat stones. She would also have been expected to help with harvest, including maize and olives, and extracting oil from the latter. The olive stones were sometimes used as fuel for the fire, and the maize husks to stuff mattresses and pillows. She would also have helped with the goats and mules. After marriage to my grandfather Arcari in the church of Sant'Anna in Vallegrande, her tasks in Italy remained similar on the Arcari farm, but she accompanied her husband to the UK seasonally, mainly in the Kent area, and soon they became permanent residents in rented accommodation. They worked a barrel organ, and grandfather also operated as a one-man band, as well as ice cream. At first, she helped with making the ice cream, which he took to Whitstable Beach in a handcart, under his hawker's licence, to sell to the crowds. The enterprise was very successful and at that time, when her children were born and they were becoming more affluent, they employed a young servant girl.
2. Some of the money was saved, and used to fund their dream of opening their own business. Initially, they came to Swansea, where my grandfather's sister and her husband, who later died aboard the Arandora Star, were located. They began with a small café in the Morriston suburb, but after a short time, moved to bigger and more lucrative premises in Swansea, opposite The Pictorium, later the Palace, theatre. The business was a traditional Italian café, where they also sold ice cream. Although the business officially belonged to my grandfather, my grandmother was the brains behind the business, and the one who managed the finances. She worked alongside her husband in the café, which opened at 5 am, and closed late in the evening. As her daughters grew older, they were also expected to help out, and took trays of ice cream to the theatre opposite, to sell before and during the performances. Once again, they employed a servant to help out with the housework and in the café. They lived above the café at first, but later moved to a house around a mile away.
3. This continued up to the war years. However, they were both getting older by then, approaching their 60s. By the time Italy joined the war, and the mobs began to attack Italian businesses, they no longer had the café. However, I am unsure whether they sold up before this time, though. They kept their house, but also bought a small bungalow in a country area of Gower, which was safer from the bombing, where they spent much of the wartime, until my grandmother died in 1943.

1.3: Interview with Nick Antoniazzi,

Gareth White: I was wondering whether you could paint me a picture as to your family history. So, talk me through when the first Antoniazzis arrived and how they spread through Wales.

Nick Antoniazzi: Right. Okay. The first Antoniazzis would have been my great-grandfather. What I've been told off my dad, they arrived here in 1898, crossing over from Italy, walking into France, getting across into England on the boats. I think they worked in London for a while, and then they moved themselves down to South Wales. I've been told that they were in the mines. (They were) my grandfather and my great-grandfather and his brothers - might be one or two brothers that came over with him. And then from there, my grandfather came over when he was, I think 16, and he met my grandmother at 12 in Bardi, in a place called Costa ??? not far from Bardi. And then from there, my grandfather, he came over and he worked outside the mines, selling hot chestnuts. I don't really know much what happened to my great-grandfather. but my great-grandfather... I think he (did) quite well for themselves.

When he was in South Wales, he started buying or got himself into some properties. he actually went back to Italy a few years after, and he had plenty of money and... Where my family are from, the poverty was horrendous there, it was really bad in those days. So, when he came back, he was quite wealthy to the Italian standards. Anyway, he actually brought some Italian families over from Italy back to Wales and housed them in some properties that he bought.

[...]

So my grandfather came to Bangor in 1928. I think he came to Bangor, and he went back to Italy and he brought my grandmother. He got engaged with my grandmother at 14. And I think they got married then. And she came over from Italy with my grandfather, and then they bought the property that I'm in now in Bangor in, I think it was 1934. So, we've had that since then.

[..] From there, my grandfather and my grandmother, they opened up the cafe, but then the Second World War came and then my grandfather was interned in the war, taken down to Beach Road, to where the prisoner of war camp was. [...] And then the ships came in, picked him up and took him to Isle of Man. And he was there for the duration of the war. My father said when he came back, he was literally a broken, man, you know? and he died in 1960. [...]

[...] So, you know, going back to South Wales and my great grandfather. I know that there were seven brothers. Again, with high poverty in Italy, especially up in the Apennines and that area where, you know, people would virtually be foraging off the lands to survive. What I was told, my great, great grandmother and grandfather had to let some of the kids go because they couldn't afford them. So it was, I think, what went down to the pick of the straws, that the shorter straws were the ones to go. So, the three brothers left home, and they worked their way to England. I know they worked in France for a while

on farms, and when they got down to England, they actually got a free crossing over with a captain of a ship and they became deckhands on the ship for a few weeks. And then they came into England and then they went to London to work [...] And then from there, you know, quite early, it was 1903, 1904 when they went into South Wales. So yeah, from there, and I know they went back to Italy and then they came back and then I know my grandfather and my uncle Louie, they all came back to Aberystwyth, to South Wales and they moved themselves.

Because at one time we had the, the brothers and the uncles, we had 11 cafes in Wales. I know there was the one in Bangor, the one in Aberystwyth, there used to be one in Oswestry. there was one in, Pontypool, I know there w(ere) two or three in the Valleys area. Where the rest were, I don't know, but they're the ones that as a child (I knew)... I can remember the one in Oswestry, and Pontypool, because there used to be a big shop there, and then Aberystwyth and Bangor, you know, but they are the ones I can remember going to when I was young.

[...]

Gareth White: I think it's really interesting, you know, listening to how your family came over, especially the idea of drawing straws. So, it really could have been any one of these sons who could have had a different destiny. Related to that story. So obviously three of them were chosen to [...] go, you said. Was there a reason why? Was it a case that maybe they were recruited? Was someone looking for people or was it just like...?

Nick Antoniazzi: No, they couldn't afford to have... there was seven, but they couldn't afford to keep them all. My great, great grandmother and grandfather, they couldn't afford to keep them, so they just had to leave. And it was a case of finding a way in life. Now that's what they'd done.

Gareth White: Okay. So, I'd imagine then that they probably heard news about better opportunities in France and then...

Nick Antoniazzi : Well Italy [...] looked at England and everybody thought, what my father was saying, what my grandfather always said, was that England was the chosen place because everybody had money. Because of the Royal family, I think everybody, thought that everybody lived like that you know. Because you know, in those days there wasn't no social media, there was no TV. They just read what they had seen in magazines or papers or in books and everything was, I think, highlighted in England as everything was big and everything had money, nice cars, big cars, big houses, the Royal family. It had a huge influence I think on the whole of Europe, I should imagine. [...] And I think that's what made a lot of Italians come over to England and to Wales.

And then I think like my great-grandfather, he did make money because what my dad was saying, up in Bardi when he turned up in a big car, and in those days having in a big car was something, out of the ordinary. He was actually giving money to people in the streets, pound notes to people. And he actually told people, you must go to England. If you want to make a life, England's the place.

I think we were one of the first families over into Wales. Because we go back to, 1898 when they left home, 1902, 1903 coming into Wales... And then grandfather's coming over in 1928, my grandmother coming over in 1930. [...] And that's when they, in 1934, came to Bangor. Well, sorry. In 1928, he came to Bangor, it was 1934 when they opened up the café, cause I know that the café used to be a dentist.

[...]

Yeah. And then, like you said, you've got the Valla fish and chips shop at the bottom of town. They're from nearly the same area where we're from. Now their great great-grandfather or grandfather, I think they, he literally came over the same time as my grandfather, he did. So, you know, they came into Bangor virtually the same time. And then you got the other family [...] They used to have a café in Caernarfon that my dad thinks that, well actually was my great-grandfather gave it to them.

Gareth White: Wow, was that Bertorelli?

Nick Antoniazzi: The Maserati family. Now they were from not far from our area an' all. So, you know, (the grandfather) came over literally the same time, as my grandfather did, you know. [...] But it was my grandfather who had seen the Penguin café and that he decided that's what he wanted and that... Nobody would give them a loan. There used to be a bank next door. I think it was the District County Bank where the Nationwide Building Society is now. I think it was District County Bank, and my grandfather went pleading for a loan so he could buy it.

And I think in those days, the property was only about a thousand pound, [...] So anyway, eventually they were given the loan, he moved in, and he lived there. They opened the café and lived upstairs. And, you know, I think the Italians, when they came over, it was something they tried to get the image of what it was in Italy with the cafés, you know, the society. They were already serving milky coffee in Italy. This is, they thought they'd bring that kind of thing to Wales. And it did, you know, the Bracchis, the cafés and everything were everywhere, the Italian cafés, and it became a community hub. Then at the end of the day, I think, that a lot of these cafés actually brought a lot of people together in the Valleys.

You know, it was something new. A café to meet, [...] well in those days, you could smoke in a café, have a fag, have a coffee, have a chat with people from the mining communities. And this is where they used to meet up. [...] I think that the cafés became a hub for a lot of women. A lot of kids, a lot of families, you know.

So, I remember being in Aberystwyth when I was, what, five, six, seven years of age? And I can remember going into the café in Aberystwyth, and it was so, so busy. You know, my uncle, my dad, my great uncle Louis. you had his daughter, Mary-Lou there, you had his daughter Catarina. They're all working. My aunty Arda, she was there. We were all working. And so, you know, it was a big family thing. And then when my uncle retired, he went back to Bardi to live. He bought a big house there or built a property.

[...]

It's funny you might, my grandfather, when he was interned in the war, he was actually told two days before that he was (arrested), 'cause he was friendly with a police officer on the Bangor High Street. And the police officer actually said to my grandfather, he said "listen, you know what's happened, you know we've gone to war, [...] you're going to be arrested." So, he said, "I'm giving you two days to get yourself sorted now, to get your stuff ready and say goodbye to your kids." He said that the army are going to come to get you.

And he (my grandfather) says, "no, I don't want the army. Can you come get me?" So, he did. The police officer came to get him because he was his friend and took him down to, down to the (POW camp on the beach). Yeah, I know. That's a true story. I know that. And that's one thing my grandma, my dad has always told me that's, what actually happened, you know?

And, you know, I mean, it was a shame, you know, because my grandmother was left with three boys, you know? 'Cause she was taken down to the prisoner of war camp and all, but she said "well, who's gonna look after my children?", she said "you can't just kind of leave them alone." So, when the police went up there, they just said to the officers, "no she's good she's not going to cause any problems, come on..." So, they just let her go. And anyway, she came back to work, and she actually opened up the cafe herself and ran it by herself.

Gareth White: How was that for her? Like, you know, I mean, I imagine your grandfather was the one who was running it mostly. did she find it was, I don't know, that there were any challenges for her in the cafe?

Nick Antoniazzi: My dad was staying as a younger boy, you know, he was what seven, eight? Well, less than that, five, six. And my brother, his brothers, one of his brothers was older. That was Andrew. And Reno, the, the youngest brother. Yeah, I think he was too young, but they helped out. They helped their mother, you know, it was close, wasn't it?

[...]

All the cafes before the Second World War, they were all called Antoniazzi's cafes. But when the war arrived, they changed the names. I've got an original picture somewhere where I've got Antoniazzi's above the door. But then the name got changed just before the second world war, when the Italians went over to the Germans. And I think that's when the names are changed.

Whether there were reprisals, I don't know... But my dad and my grandmother, my uncles, they said they never had any trouble from locals when the Second World War was on. My dad said that everybody was very friendly. I will note the Bangor people, you know, they are a friendly community. [...] I really feel that once you get to know people, they're good...

Gareth White: [...] And then from everything you're telling me it, it really does show this testimony of friendship. [...] So, even like the story you're saying about your grandmother. So, when she was in prison in the prisoner of war camp here in Beach Road and being released by local police officer. I mean....

Nick Antoniazzi: Yeah, my grandmother, I'll tell you one thing. She was a very strong woman, and she was strong until the day she passed away. [...]

1.4: Interview with Andre D'Ambra, 29th September 2021

Gareth White: Lovely, Andrea, thank you so much once again, for taking the time to discuss your family history[.] Tell me about your family.

Andre De Ambra: Okay. So, as I said earlier, my grandfather Genaro Pelosi came to Swansea, I believe with three brothers, in the 1890s, maybe 1900s [...] and they each opened a cafe in different parts... I believe originally in the Swansea East Area. I don't know if you know Swansea at all. I believe it was Plasmawr , Brynhyfryd, somewhere like that. But my grandfather then had a cafe in the middle of town in a street called Nelson Street. And there's still a cafe there now, it's number nine Nelson Street.

He married my grandmother who's called Annunziata Tortalani, and they came from the Picinisco area of Italy near Cassino. A lot of the Italians in Swansea at that time had come from that region. I think my grandfather actually came from Picinisco, but my grandmother came from a place called Villa Latina, which is close. [...] So, they had the cafe there and they had, I can't remember off the top of my head about six or seven children.

There were two sets of twins. There was my mother was, Maria Teresa Pelosi. So, there was Dominic who was the eldest, then there was Luigi. Then there was George, Fred, Fred was Alfredo, George was, I think it's actually, it was Giacinto . And then there was my mother, Maria Teresa Pelosi and then there were the five of the twins, two girls, Adelina and Amelia. So that they had the cafe there.

My grandfather apparently actually joined the British army in the First World War. He was in the Pioneer (Corps). And I understand there's a lot of people from south Wales who went to the Pioneers because they'd dug the trenches, because they had the mining skills. [...]

So, the next significant events I know about, when the Second World War started or just before the Second World War. So, the story I've heard is that the family were actually in Italy. They were staying in Picinisco, went over to Latina, because my grandfather was suffering from tuberculosis, and he'd been advised to go there for the better climate. Yeah. And, when the war started, they decided to come back. But my grandfather stayed there with Fred, Alfredo.

So the train journey they had back, actually, my mother told me it was, they (went) through Poland[...] And there were, she said she remembers German troops being on the train. Anyway, they eventually got back to the UK. My grandfather died in Italy at that time. And then Fred somehow made it back to the UK. No one knows how he did it, and he never really told anyone else how he got back. So, during the war then, obviously it was all the stuff with the Italians who became illegal immigrants. And there was, the

roundup of anyone who was born in the UK. And I believe that one of, great uncles was on the Arandora Star. (??) knows more, because she's being involved projects with the Arandora Star, but the story I heard that was one of my mother's uncles. He disappeared off the boat and they all thought he'd died.

And then he turned up after the war in France. He'd opened a cafe in Paris. [...] So, during the war my uncle Luigi and my uncle George were actually in the British army, but my grandmother was classified as an enemy alien, and she was sent to live in Hay with my mother.

Now my mother's funeral, which was about five years ago now I was talking to my cousin, and she thought that they were in an internment camp in Hay. And my mother never mentioned that to me. And I've never been able to find it. And he mentioned have a camp there. But they were living in Hay. And the family story is that my uncle Dom wrote to Winston Churchill and asked if my grandmother could come back to Swansea, cause he was still running the café in Swansea cause he'd been born here. So, he was still running the cafe in Swansea

The story goes that Winston Churchill then wrote back and said that she could come back. But she had to be at a certain distance away from Swansea because it was a war zone. So they bought a house in Bynea and again, the family story is [...] But my mother was about 12 or 13 at the time, she was put on a bus from Hay with 250 pounds in cash to buy the house in Bynea. So, they were quite a well-off family.

And, the other story I heard, and my mother used to tell me that, before the war, the family owned property in Italy. But apparently, due to the war, some of the gold got lost. But anyway, so they bought the house in Bynea, which is where the prisoner of war thing comes in... because my mother was living in Bynea with my aunt, my grandmother. And the story I heard was, [...] my mother, one of her jobs every day was to go to a local farm and get fresh milk. Working on the farm was an Italian prisoner war, called Bruno Toniolo. And they met, and she must've been about 16 at the time when they met. Anyway, so they fell in love and they were subsequently married, but they weren't married until... I think they must've waited until my mother was 21 for her to get married. And again, I've seen some recent photos of the wedding and [...] they were married in Swansea

And then my mother went to live in Italy with her first husband, but they went to live in Venice where my sister was born. So, my elder sister Rita, who now lives in South Africa, was born there. And then Bruno died of tuberculosis. So my mother was living as a widow there with her mother-in-law and then she met my father.

My father, Francesco d'Ambra comes from a place called Ischia, which is in Naples... And he was working on the markets there and they met and they then got married. For some reason, which I've never got to gotten over, they came back to Swansea. From what I can gather, they had a fairly comfortable life in Venice My mother was running a hotel there, which I think was owned by her mother-in-law. And my father, he was working in the markets, but for some reason they decided to come back to Swansea. My father, his first

job was on the railways. He worked on the railways, and I recently discovered he actually was a prisoner of war, and he did a lot of work in Yugoslavia. [...]

[...]

André D'Ambra: And also, then after that he worked as a miner, so he worked in mines for coal. He worked in two mines. He had accidents underground. And I think with the first, he had compensation from them. So, the first accident. Apparently [...] A stone fell on his head, and he had compensation for that. And with that, I think they bought the first house or put the deposit on their first house.

Gareth White: Wow. Okay.

André D'Ambra: And then my father had a really bad accident, where his leg was impaled, or his foot was impaled with a cart. And with the compensation for that, they opened a cafe. So, the cafe they opened was called the West End Grill in Swansea and they were there for a few years. And then eventually my father is well, his business failed there, but then he opened another business, and he became a self-taught chef. [...]

I've done some little research on my grandfather, and I know there are reports of him in the Welsh press. Now, one report is of him... He was actually charged with assaulting someone. It looks like from the report he was trying to throw (someone) out of the cafe. But he was a young lad, about 13, so he got charged with assault. And the other one, he was charged with operating a gaming machine without a license. And the report I read was there was an argument in court as to whether or not the machine they had in the court was a gaming machine. [...] And because he was arguing a point of law, it was sent to the higher court. I can't remember the name of the court, but I couldn't find any further reports on that. So, his cafe became the Empire Cafe. I'm not sure. And that was run by Dom, who was my uncle, my mother's eldest brother. Yeah. and that became the Empire Cafe. And I don't know if you know Swansea at all. Probably not.

Gareth White: I'm mainly North Wales.

André D'Ambra: So, Swansea got bombed quite badly, but the Empire Cafe survived. And they were at the back entrance of a theatre called the Empire Theatre, and apparently the Empire Theatre was quite well known. And the artists there used to go in and out through the back door entrance. And so, I think that's how they got, that's how they became, that's how they became the Empire. My understanding is, and you may be able to correct me on this, but a lot of the cafes after the war, they changed their name. So, it wouldn't have been Pelosi's café, they would have chosen a generic name so they didn't stand out. So, they chose the Empire Cafe. And I think that's where that came from. [...]

Gareth White: It's really interesting... I've got a few some follow up questions. And one of the questions I really wanted to ask you've kind of tapped into here. I'm thinking about, you know, the treatment of your family in the early years. So, your grandparents came over, setting up their shop in, I suppose, a very, very interesting Welsh scenario. I'm thinking Sunday trading was obviously a big thing, the movement trying to regulate the selling of alcohol and things like that. And then obviously the stories you're mentioning of that were reported in the Welsh press. So, the question is, what was the treatment of

your grandparents in these early days as they were setting up the cafe? Did they encounter several problems and how did they overcome them?

André D'Ambra: So, my mother never really told me that they had any particular problems. They always felt, though, from the way she spoke about it, they always felt a bit isolated. [...] When my uncle Dom moved into a place in, [...] quite a posh area in Swansea, it was outrage at the time because there was Italians moving in there. So, there was that. My mother used to say that her brothers carry knives with them when they were around ten because they felt that they were under threat. But when I spoke, they never told me that. [...]

And I know my sister Rita recently told me that when she first moved here, because it's an interesting thing about language... So, although my mother could speak Italian and English, she never really passed it on. So, when she was living in Italy, she would be speaking Italian. She spoke very clear, perfect Italian. In fact, she was used as voiceovers in Italian. She did voiceovers in Italian films. And she learned her Italian, from what I can gather from there. What happened was when Mussolini came in, apparently he set up these like schools in different places where concentrations of Italians would to teach Italian children, Italian immigrant children. So, I think that's where she learnt it. But when my sister was born, she never taught her English. So, my sister only spoke Italian. So, when she came here, she couldn't speak any English. She could only speak Italian. She was eight.

And what she told me was that my grandmother, who I get the impression [...] she was quite a sort of matriarchal type of woman. And she told my mother that that everyone had to speak English and she had to. And so, my sister, the way they did it was quite cruel, they just didn't speak Italian to her anymore. They just spoke English. So that's the way she learnt English. So, we never learnt Italian when we were children and the Italian I've learnt, I think I picked up a lot of Italian because when my father first came here, he could only speak Italian and I was born when he came here. So, my impression is that my mother came over when she was pregnant. And then my father followed her. And it was probably because he had to sort his paperwork out before he could get here so he couldn't speak any English. And so I think they spoke to each other in Italian, and I must have picked that up. [...]

Gareth White: Yeah, I suppose, you know, having such historic links with Swansea in that instance must have really been beneficial for the family. Yeah, and I kind of like to zoom in on this a little bit more because, you know, quite rightly, you mentioned that many Italians settled in the Swansea area in the Morriston area. And you know, historically what I found in my research is that the Swansea Italians, they encountered a very different experience going through the twentieth century compared to other areas of Wales. I think in World War Two, for example, there were stronger reports of like shop rioting, smashing windows, people being intimidated and things like this. I mean, I know you mentioned your grandmother was classified as an enemy alien and she couldn't move. She couldn't live in Swansea. Did anything else happen in the war during this time? Yeah. Well.

André D'Ambra: One thing my mother related to me was that they, she was quite... I suppose proud is the word... the fact that their cafe wasn't attacked. But one of the

brothers' cafes was. [...] Her uncle's cafe was attacked, and two of her brothers went up to the cafe, and I think she said it was in Brynhyfryd. They were under siege in the cafe, and they went to help them. They went up to help them, and they managed to get them out. And I don't know the full story, but she tells me that the police were just watching while it happened. They didn't intervene and the cafe was looted. But again, there wasn't much talk about it. And I've read a book about the. You've probably heard it. That's Colin Hughes book. Have you read that?

Gareth White: Yeah, the lime lemon...

André D'Ambra: He made an interesting point, that after the war, I think the Italians tried to hide a bit. They tried to have a less of a higher profile. And I think some of that was that, and this business about the language. And then my grandmother, I think the fact that she didn't want to speak Italian, I think that was part of that as well, it was to keep a lower profile so that things like that didn't happen again. So, I think that that was a factor of it, I think. And my mother never spoke to me about (it). [...] I'd read about it, and I asked her about it, but she never spoke to me about it. And it was only then she told me that she thought an uncle, or she mentioned an uncle was on the boat. And you know, it was just never brought up, really.

[...] And I can never work out why they came back. And when I asked my mother, 'Why did you come back?' Because they had quite a comfortable life in Italy, and she could never really explain it to me. So, I don't know why. My father never really explained why they ended up coming back here, because they were unusual immigrants. Because they weren't.... My father had no plans to come here like the other immigrants who came looking for work. My father came because my mother was from here. He would never have come to Swansea otherwise, and he would probably have never worked on a mine. He ended up working down a mine because that was the job he took.

The other interesting about my father is that he worked for a company called Thyssens. And what they did was they opened mine shafts. So, when I spoke to old miners, if I meet an old miner, I always mentioned my father was a miner and he worked for Thyssens. So, there's always an amount of respect for those because it was such hard work. It was dangerous work because they opened the mine shaft, so they weren't employed by the NCB. They were employed by Thyssens who were brought in to open these mine shafts. And I think he did it in ?? , a mine that goes out under the sea. So, he goes out into the sea. and I think that's where they were opening the mine shafts. And they got paid extra for it. But it was dangerous work. [...]

Gareth White: Yeah. I mean, zooming in on the idea of your father's prisoner of war experience. Do you know which camp he was in at the time?

André D'Ambra: My father or Bruno?

Gareth White: Sorry, Bruno.

André D'Ambra: Bruno? No. Don't know. We've been trying to find out because my sister's interested in knowing it, but I don't know where he was. All we know that he was on a farm, that it might have been. He wasn't in a camp. Because I think they sort of trusted

Italians more and they just put them they just found them out everywhere. They just put them on farms all over the place. They weren't under guard or anything.

Gareth White: Definitely.

André D'Ambra: Yeah. So, it might be that's the case. But the story I heard is that he was working on a farm near Bynea. But it must have been close . Because my mother walked from her house to the farm to get the milk, so, but we're not sure where. [...]

Gareth White: No, of course. It does make sense. And I can really see the links between the industries, you know, as we are moving through this period. Another thing I wanted to ask, as you were speaking, you mentioned how your grandmother was this matriarchal figure within the family. Was she also active in the family business?

André D'Ambra: The interesting thing I found out was that, again, talking to my cousins because my cousins are older than me and they remember her, is that when she came back, they were talking about how they admired her really, because when she came back from Italy, when my grandfather died for a period of time, she was running the business, but also trying to look after all the children. And she had this problem with not being allowed into Swansea. Yeah. So, there was a period of time when she was doing that. From what I can understand, she was running the business, always had some control of the money from what I can gather. Obviously she must have taken cash with her when she went to Hay to live. And she must have taken more than £250 because you could buy a house for £250. But she must have taken everything in cash with her because I'm thinking she was probably thinking that she didn't know what was going to happen to her from there. So. And she had control over all the money. So yeah, I think though, that I do remember that it was Dom who then took over the cafe. I don't remember ever going to the cafe when Dom was there, but my uncle Dom then got ill himself because he got diabetes. [...] . So, he obviously stopped running the cafe then. Yeah. So, I think she was very hands on with the business, from what I can gather, particularly after my grandfather died.

[...]

André D'Ambra: She would have been as well, thinking about it, when he was away at war. She must have been running the cafe because he went to war in the First World War and the cafe stayed open. And so, she must have been running the cafe then. And she would have had... My mother was born in 1928, so she was like the middle child. So, she would have had, she may have had a couple of children before that. And I know certainly one of them died. I'm not sure whether he was here when he died.[...]. So, he would have been so my grandmother would have been doing all this while my grandfather was away at war. So, I'm guessing that she must have been running the cafe then.

Gareth White: Yeah, definitely. [...]. So, I've got a really strong view of your grandmother, you know, being a very, very, very strong woman, in spite of all the circumstances and we've touched upon the treatment of your family. You know, we referred to in the 1960s what happened with yourself and your sister. But we've also talked about the gaming machine that I imagine happened in the early 1900s.

André D'Ambra: [...] What I did was just I just Googled his name. So, you may be able to do the same. So just Google Gennaro Pelosi, Swansea, and these articles came up though. Is it the Cambrian or something like that? The newspaper reports anyway, and I found one as I say, with the gaming machine and one where he was charged with an assault. The other thing you mentioned, the Sunday trading, which is again, a story that my Auntie Ada told me. Now, she was married to Dom. They were DeMarcos and DeMarcos came from Picinisco as well. So that was another interesting thing where you came from, those families stuck together. So, there were we were from Picinisco, and all those families stuck together.

And then there were the others who were from Bardi. And they all stuck together. [...] she was born in Scotland and then they went back to Picinisco and then when they came back here, they came to Swansea. I'm not sure why. And. [...]. And she said that every Sunday on a Sunday, all the cafes opened, which was in defiance of the Sunday trading laws in Wales. And on the Monday, they'd all go down to the Magistrates Court and they'd just line up outside and go and pay their fines. And it was just regarded as an extra tax they had to pay. Now, they weren't they weren't selling alcohol, but they were just trading when they shouldn't be trading. So, it was accepted. I think the way she's talking is regard as some sort of almost social service they were providing because there was nowhere else to go on a Sunday unless you went to church or chapel.

[...]

1.4: Interview with Paulette Pelosi, 29th April 2021

Gareth White: Okay. Lovely. So, the 29th of April with Paulette Pelosi. Thank you so much for joining me today.

Paulette Pelosi: You're welcome.

Gareth White: Thank you so much and it's a real honor to speak to somebody who has worked so extensively in the history of the Welsh Italians, including your work with the Arandora Star Memorial fund. Making sure this issue gains a lot of visibility. I've been reading about your family history in the Arandora Star Memorial booklets, where you outline how your grandfather Giuseppe originally came from Picinisco in, 1907, settled in Swansea in 1908 and then from there had a very, very close link with Swansea and the area for 112 years. [...] I'd love to hear it from your words. So, like, what was the starting point? Like how was life like for the Pelosi family in Picinisco before riding in Wales and then like when they arrived in Wales?

Paulette Pelosi: Well, when you think about them being so young, they got married in February 1907 in Picinisco. And that probably... I've been in the church. That's where every one of them, you know, got married and baptized and final bit... She was 20 in 1907, and he was 25. So, they were very young and they immediately, on marrying, came to Wales. I won't say they decided, you know, it sounds like a sudden thing, but clearly, I found records later of their shared house in Ystrad in the Rhondda, when they came here in 1908.

So that couple, they were from Picinisco. So obviously a lot of it was word of mouth. I don't know the actual plan, except of course the poverty, the most beautiful spectacularly, beautiful area of Picinisco and particularly this little hilltop area of Vallegrande and. .. I have been there and it's 48 acres of vines and figs and all sorts of stuff, but not enough, I suppose, to survive well there.

And so, they came here, with their first born, my aunt Angiolina. She was born on the 1st of January 1908. And then after that, they came to Swansea to start opening their refreshment and confectionery cafe businesses. And obviously life in Italy in the early 1900s. I know you mentioned there was a lot of poverty.

Gareth White: Was there anything ever mentioned that you remember perhaps about the family structure? Would you say it was a very patriarchal family structure? Was it,

Paulette Pelosi: I get the impression that the women were extremely strong, starting with my great-grandparents, my grandmother Maria Carmela's parents. The great-grandmother was Croceficia. I mean, there's a name to carry the cross to bear. She married to my great-grandfather Leonardo DiMarco, and I've got lots of photographs of them. [...]

Yeah. And their daughter, my grandmother, obviously inherited that strength. So, you know, the men were small in stature, and you know the women were small, but only last

night I learned that my grandmother acted as midwife to my cousin during his birth because the midwife in Swansea was late arriving.

[...]

The great-grandparents partly walked over here in 1882. I can't categorically say she was pregnant at the time, but soon on arriving in Deptford in London, in an area that within 10 years had been reduced to rubble [...] she gave birth to her first-born twin boys, Francesco and Raphael. And she was partly a musician when she... when they walked over here, partly walked over here. [...] they were definitely musicians and had travelled Europe and she carried one of these little mechanical birds that people in a bird cage and people will be giving out tokens.

GW: It's quite an odyssey, you know, if we consider how far that would have been thousands kilometers. Sorry. Yeah, it is certainly quite an endeavor. So just to kind of timeline here, so 1882, say your great-grandparents arrived in the UK.

Paulette Pelosi: Yes. [...]

Gareth White: They went back home, and then obviously your grandparents must have kind of been inspired by this journey and decided to return.

Paulette Pelosi: Yes. And I think my grandfather, I can't find the documentation, but I think he had come here... If not Wales, certainly, the UK, when I think he would have been about 13, 14. That might have been under the, like *Padroni* scheme that somebody was here, maybe he worked for them. But it's [...] just conjecture, I can't find the actual documents, but clearly when they came in 1907 and he was 25, he had the skills... I mean, he had the skills to know what to do to travel.

Gareth White: Okay. So, actually the Pelosi family history, I know we started with (those) who arrived in 1907, but it actually predates this by a good quarter of a century with frequent visits that kind of drove them eventually to settling in the South Walian area.

Paulette Pelosi: And when they came in 1907 and they started their family and their businesses, I don't know how old the youngest would have been when they were able to travel, but they travelled back and forth from Swansea to Italy to Picinisco. And in fact, there's a, there's a family story of my grandmother cooking a lot of chickens and putting them in a wicker basket and taking them on the train before the boat, and also little glimpses of my grandmother's generosity, even though those were to feed herself and her husband and the children, she would generously offer to other people if they wanted to... [...]

Paulette Pelosi: [...] When you think about absorption into another society, and adapting and amalgamating with the pre-existing community. The Welsh and the Italians have always got along. There's a lot of similarities. But of course, when we fast forward to the war, you know, they, ... After the war, all the Italian cafes with Italian names on the signs were advised or told to change them to very English signs. You have people in my family

who may have had a little bit of Italian, they could speak a little bit from hearing it within the family, but bit by bit by bit that got diluted during, I think the after world war and the aftermath where they didn't want to stand out.

And even with tragedies, like the sinking of the Arandora Star. It took years for them to even speak about it. The Italians, they just kept it to themselves, dealt with it like that. And there were some loving Welsh neighbours who didn't know till years later exactly what had happened with that with the men being rounded up and interned that, you know, the even they didn't share it in detail with even their good Welsh friends.

So sometimes they, you know, this happens all over the world. It's happening today. How much, when you come into another country, another society, how much do you gain? How much do you lose? What can you retain? And then like with me, how does it spring out? Maybe generations later where there's no shadow of doubt.

I express that I'm a Welsh Italian, any chance to theme with the colours, red, white, and green, right. Welsh Italian. And that's very important to me. [...]

Gareth White: Absolutely. That is a really accurate kind of trajectory now of, you know, indeed the history of the Welsh-Italian community, you know, this very. Bright visible starts with a proud balance. We can say. And then obviously with the war, this kind of dwindles down with the following generations, with the exception, perhaps of those who are part of the Amici Val Ceno, they might've been more visible in the performance of their identity, but not as strong.

We're going to touch on that with fast-forwarding in a moment, but I'd like to come back to 1908. So, the cafe has just been established in Swansea. It's the first family business together. And what was this like, you know, how did your grandfather and your grandmother divide the roles of these brand-new family business?

Paulette Pelosi: Well I certainly know, and I think I told you... Circa 1919, 1920, they had a magnificent shop in the Mumbles, in Swansea. And lots of Italian families have sign writers within the family. They're very artistic. [...]

Gareth White: Yeah, definitely. I mean, it's quite fascinating thinking about the cultural contributions in this sense. We often think about it as just bringing coffee or bringing, you know, like ice creams, but indeed, you know, the architectural designs, you know, it's an enriched Welsh culture in a sense. Yeah, who would be more active in this? Would you say that your grandfather would have been...?

Paulette Pelosi: I accidentally found a photograph of him as an intern man in the internment camp in Australia on the internet years ago. I then traced up through the very helpful archives in Canberra his war record, which was good to read. It was a very touching description of what his family were doing back in Swansea, and they described him as having worked in, I think the plastics business, I think it was an error, a typo. I think that was the plaster business. Talking about creating things. As I say, the strong rumour is, is that he came here to this country when he was a boy of about 13. And, so I

don't know what he was doing then. Maybe he was, maybe it was London. Maybe he was doing pastel shapes and ornamentation for theaters in London. Then I don't know.

Gareth White: Yeah, I'm wondering if there's any link to the *figurina* of Tuscany here? If he was so skilled in making these, it could be, you know, potential idea, you know, carry on that with this plaster making in 1908 in the new cafe, or did he say?

Paulette Pelosi: I don't think so. I think it was just something that they did for fun. Maybe now and again. I get the impression that he, that he was very well.

[....]

Gareth White: [...] I'm wondering whether your family from Picinisco when they were over in Wales came into contact often with, well, I know you said they lived initially with people from Picinisco, but was this an association that would continue or whether there are associations with also like the Bardigiani, for example?

Paulette Pelosi: What do you mean? Do they keep in touch with people in Italy?

Gareth White: So, when they were in Wales, did they socialise with primarily Southern Italians or was it also with...

Paulette Pelosi: I think I get the impression, mainly within their own family. It was such a big family having cafes. And I'm speaking from somebody who grew up as a child in my parents' cafe in Swansea. Obviously now and again, people with links to Picinisco might come in as customers... But I can't think of a vast number. In fact, there was a fish and chip shop next door, the Macari's, and they were from school, the matriarch there was my grandmother's friend back in Picinisco, but my father didn't carry on a relationship with them, you know, a friendship or anything. So, within the confines of the family, with the occasional customers from Picinisco, but not a lot of interaction with those Northern Italians that we were talking about just a few moments.

[...]

I didn't help in the shop. I was too young. They worked extremely hard. Both of them, my mother was English Welsh, but they both worked extremely hard. And I can remember my father sitting up in the evenings and hunched over a couple of buckets of potatoes, peeling them by hand, so the, so the chips, the next day would be perfect.

There were no eyes in the potato and that everything was perfect. So, they didn't have a social life. They really, you know, got up very early in the morning, worked hard in the shop. And my mother maybe socialized with her own friends and her own family, but they didn't have, they didn't go to these Italian, *scampagnata* picnic or things that the people from the North seem to have always.

Gareth White: Okay. So, we've talked about like, socialization models that your family would have had. And you were touching there upon the joint labor, this collaboration between your mother and your father within the business. Would you say this was also the case of your grandparents? Would they both play. Equal roles or would your grandmother be in the house raising children?

Paulette Pelosi: Well, I just get the impression from everybody that every day there's somebody comments about her strengths. And by 1919, when they had their biggest shop in Mumbles, I always point out to people. So, the sign writing, it's C and G Pelosi. And so, C was for Carmela. Now, I don't know whether that's just a fluke, that her name, her C is first, but... I just get the impression and she had to do a lot of stuff. There was a couple of years at one point, I'm not very sure that, um, I've got to find out more when he went back to Italy, and she had to run the shops on her own. And obviously when they were rounded up in the war, collar the lot, there's stories of her being involved in the Three Night Blitz in Swansea February 1941, where she is running with my six-year-old cousin Tony in her arms to get to the air raid shelter to save his life and their lives.

And then months later, in the shop in Mumbles, she's delivering a baby, her nephew because the midwife is late. So, she was definitely, literally, a hands-on woman. And there's always these stories of her being tremendously interested in property buying and renting property. And on the day she died in 1961, she was about to go out and look at some property to buy. So I remember as a seven-year-old going after mass on Sundays with my father to visit her. And she was always making pasta and making a big soup. And I can remember from that early age, her strong hands making the pasta dough. So even her work in the house often sounds even for present day women a little bit trivial.

And I know that when women even today work in the house, it's hard work. So, then I think she always worked hard in the house and in the shops because I've been asking a lot more lately with relatives. When my grandfather was rounded up, how did the shops survive? Literally all of them chipped in and worked there.

Gareth White: Okay. Okay. I mean, that's absolutely fascinating and it's ...

Paulette Pelosi: Just the Italian side, the Italians in my family who married Welsh, I've been given the names of several couples where the woman was my aunt, by marriage, or Welshman, and then they would step in and look at help look after the shops.

Gareth White [...] When you discussed about this interest in property in these peacetime moments. So obviously not during the war. I was speaking with Anita Arcari by email, and she said that Italians were the brains. The Italian women were the brains of the business.

Paulette Pelosi: I feel as well. Yes.

Gareth White: Yeah,

Paulette Pelosi: Yes. A lot. think of little incidents. Like my... I spoke of my grandfather Giuseppe's ingenuity. So, when he was going back to Italy for a couple of years, for

whatever reason, then my grandmother was in charge, but he would set things up like arranging.... [...] They had a shop in the same street as the Albert Hall in Swansea, Craddock Street. And before he went to Italy, he arranged something that, they would, as a family, be supplying the ice cream for the Albert Hall theatre. So, you know, but it would have been, my grandmother would have been keeping an eye, a constant eye out to see that all of that was working successfully. Yeah, the grandfather would set up the arrangements.

Gareth White: Your grandmother would follow the execution of the orders. So, in a sense, she would be a manager. [...]

Gareth White Okay. So, in that case there was no distinction of the boys would go into the cafe. The girls would go to do something else, like the whole family, regardless of gender.

[...]

Gareth White: I suppose that brings us into this moment, obviously 1940, disaster strikes, all of a sudden Italians become the enemy aliens. Your grandfather was rounded up. As you listed so beautifully in the piece that was then commemorated in the Arandora Star and Memorial booklets. And you mentioned that, you know, in his absence quite a lot happened to your grandmother, of course, from 1940 to 1941. Would you like to explain, what happened in this year?

Paulette Pelosi: Obviously the knock on the door and taking my grandfather away, and that was from the shop in Southend, the beloved shop. I mean, if I ever visit Mumbles it, you know, the area is beautiful, and he took such trouble. Now he was instrumental in choosing that shop because there's a wonderful story there. 1919. The children were very young. He rented a cottage for himself, Carmela, my grandmother, and the children nearby, just up the road. And every day he would go down to Southend, Mumbles, to check out what we call now. I suppose, footfall, check would it be a profitable area to have a shop... It previously had, apparently, been a 28-room hotel. So, I don't know how much that would have cost at the time, so I think that was there. They absolutely loved that place. The whole family, because when we go on to talk about 1940, when they had to flee Swansea, all of them, but they would all share one big bed for fun.

I mean, they had out of 28 rooms, they had their own rooms, but they all got together in the shop in Mumbles. I mean, my, father's brother, Loretto, Laurie, and his wife Philomena, had a cafe in Goat Street Swansea and anyone who studies, what happened in the Three-night Blitz in 1941 in Swansea will know that Goat Street was completely flattened.

[...] So, the story in the family is that, when my aunt Philomena (my aunt Nina) they left the shop in Goat Street, because Loreto was one of the three sons of my grandfather in the British armed forces. And so, Philomena, Nina went to the shop in Southend and they all - to use a Welsh word - cwtched in together. When Filomena, Nina went back to the shop in the morning, there was no shop. There was only us.

My cousin, Tony tells me because Nina showed him. He was only a little small boy, but there was only a cast iron potato peeler. [...] Literally that was all that was left of their cafe in Goat Street, because there was nothing left of Goat Street. There was nothing much left of Swansea. That was so how badly affected everything was.

Gareth White: But of course, it'd be the Southend cafe where they had,

Paulette Pelosi: Right, that wasn't bombed. But I know that a lot of women were told.... That's what I've been told by other people... But told they had to leave, particularly if they were in a coastal area. And I've heard, you know, I've read books where it sounds ?, but if they were on the coast and they were Italian and their men had been taken away and interned, if they had a bicycle and a radio, you get the feeling that they were highly suspicious, potentially dangerous characters, the women. So, they were told to leave.

I know for a fact that my grandmother went to the lower Swansea Valley , Godregraig, and I'm trying currently as you know to work out the details of all of that, because when she went there, she went with her one brother, Domenico DeMarco and her daughters, Domenico's wife, this must've been 1940, because he was then rounded up from there, Godregraig, and taken to the Isle of Man.

Meanwhile, in Swansea, his brother Michele DeMarco was rounded up on the Arandora Star and drowned. Different stories for two brothers. So, I don't know how he went to Godregraig. And I now learn as I told you that the small children, like my cousin, Tony at the time, were, as he says, evacuated there. So, I've got to find, I mean, obviously there was evacuation of children, uh, but were there two different things going on there with the Italian families? Removed or advised or told to get out of Swansea.... And was there also, you know, genuine government schemes of evacuation? It's a bit blurred [...]

Gareth White: For sure. I mean, I know you mentioned in your exchanges, how, you know, what you had considered, to be this family history, was revolutionized when you spoke with your cousin Tony...

It's a fascinating avenue of research to pursue. And I know in our correspondence as well, that, you know, we talked about these different regional approaches. So, like in areas such as Swansea, I remember you said that you think the response was more aggressive. There was a lot more...

Paulette Pelosi: Yeah, I think, because Swansea was a big town. I mean, it was reported in the paper. They couldn't say Swansea was blitzed, a very big town in South Wales. You know, was under attack last night. Um, but Swansea was always a big town. [...]

It was a big place. Whereas, you know, these little villages in the Rhondda, it was a very different dynamic of the relationships with people and in Swansea people would buy the local paper of the South Wales Evening Post, and they would read. Mussolini brings Italy into the war against Britain, and they would, there was immediate the knee-jerk reactions of cafes being smashed, and the stock stolen.

When the men were rounded up, the Italian women were bullied so much that my great uncle Michele, when he was taken away, the who landed up on the Arandora Star, his wife in the Pelosi shop in Plasmawr, just outside of Swansea, was terrified. Her windows were smashed. People looted the stock and she fled to assist a daughter living in Birmingham. And that side of the family were then born and brought up in Birmingham and returned into Swansea years later. But you know, you hear some wonderful little stories from the Rhondda, where.... I can't give you again, accurate details... But I know the very close, literally next-door terraced house, typical , Welsh would help hide or attempt to hide the Italian friend next door. So, he wouldn't be taken away. Different dynamics, [...]

Gareth White: And I think what you were saying about these little, tiny, Valley village reactions, it does strike me as contrasting. I mean, you know, from my own research I've seen in the North, there were stories of, you know, the families being put into prisoner of war camps, but then I think people speaking with the local police officers and saying, yeah, look, this woman's not going to cause any trouble, let her go. And then, you know, she eventually goes back and starts to run a cafe for the Antoniazis in Bangor. So, you know, it does strike me as being different to the Swansea case. Yes. And would you say that's because of this fear that was caused by newspaper articles at the time?

Paulette Pelosi: I think so. Because I remember living in London and traveling on the tube at the time of the Falklands War. And you would sit opposite somebody on the, well, you said a lot of people with the newspapers raised, and the inflammatory headlines, 'Go get them boys,' you know, and really inducing, perpetuating an anger, an aggravation that was throughout everyday life then. And even the way they wrote the reports of the dreadful scenes when the torpedo hit the Arandora Star and describing the Italian men in particular as upset and feeble people. These men were trying to get off a ship that was falling to pieces, falling into the oil covered waters, the men already screaming in the waters, mamma, mamma. Dying already and no, not enough lifeboats. I think we would have all been upset, frightened, feeble, whatever, but they would, right. You know, the Italian men were getting upset and overreacting, things like that. Yeah. So, I do believe the press can inflame situations.

Gareth White: Certainly, certainly I want to, you know, kind of like look into these years, like obviously the 1940, there was this initial dislocation. So, your grandmother was told she had to move to Godregraig. Um, she was there for a few months. And then I remember you said she came back in 1941 to look after the cafe. And what was that like for her? What was her experience in these years?

Paulette Pelosi: Well, I don't know because... I know that they all came back to the biggest one in Southend in Mumbles, and they all, you know, gathered together, particularly when auntie Filomena had found that her own cafe in Goat Street was completely gone. And I know that they had a refreshment bar in Denever place in Swansea and that was bombed. I'm not sure about the shop in Craddock Street, so I'm not altogether sure. I think the main thing then, although I don't know how they survived financially. [...] Um, I think the main object was for them to survive while grandfather Giuseppe was just, you know, existing in the internment camp in Australia. And of course, a lot of the Italian women weren't even informed as to what had happened to the men.

The government may have mentioned that, you know, certain men were missing and then subsequently they would say they had drowned, but the government didn't, provide information. They didn't get in touch with my grandmother. And so, you know, so there was an awful lot of strain on the women. Mental health must have suffered, but they didn't show it. They put on the *bella figura*, the brave face and just got on. But I think it was just surviving and in an area of South Wales that had been, you know, 1941 under attack.

Gareth White: Definitely. So, from this very, very dark moments, when, you know, the grandfather had been taken away, the grandmother was running the cafe with the extended family. Obviously then times changed, the representation changed. And you know, I'd imagine the circumstances must have changed for them as time went on. Potentially even after the three nights Blitz, would you, would you agree with this?

Paulette Pelosi: Yes. I think the priority had to be surviving. I mean, just looking at the picture of them, all gathered together, you know, all different relationships, uh, cousins, nephews, siblings. They were happy! How hard my grandmother must have worked to keep them all happy. I think I would think the main focus, I don't remember any stories of during the war, they provided steamy mugs of coffee and tea to my own father. He didn't go into the forces. He'd been very ill as an 11 year old boy with rheumatic fever, which is quite a common thing of his generation, which often left somebody with a weakened heart. But you know, I know that he did lots of things like sometime in a munitions factory, um, an air raid warden where he made some hideous discoveries [...].

The shops. I know that the shop in Southend got up and running after the war. I know that clearly because my uncle Tomaso, uncle Tom came back from the army and then he went on to run that shop and it became very popular with cyclists in that area. Yeah, so, and I know they lovingly called it Tom's, but, I can't get a picture in my head of the period with those shops open and then serving people...

[...]

Paulette Pelosi: You know, when you think about the Arandora Star, you think about military history. Obviously, it's always the men who have their names on the Memorial plaque. I mean, Anita (Arcari), she helped save a Memorial in Swansea that was about to be a war time, the Memorial destroyed. And the women, if they did have problems, they shelved them, had to forget about them. You know, the question she would have been asked. Where's your husband. What happened? What happened to Giuseppe? And you know, the story would have been focusing on him. You know, the women where the shops did remain open stories, you know, in our booklet and that, in the Rhondda, the women have to get on with some of them not even able to be restock the, the shops because they weren't allowed to travel a certain distance to get stock for the shop.

[...]

1.6: Interview - Helen Way, Gareth White, 7th October 2021.

Gareth White: Okay, Helen, thank you so much for agreeing to meet myself. Today's the 7th of October 2021, and I'm interviewing Helen Way regarding her family history and the Baficos of Cardiff.

Helen Way: Hello.

Gareth White:[...], I know we've exchanged a lot of emails where you've outlined your, your connection to three different families in Wales. I was wondering if we can go for a very general question just to kind of summarize the arrival of the first members of your Italian family in Wales.

Helen Way: That would have been my great, great grandfather, Giovanni Bafico, who became known as John Bafico. And he was married in Cardiff, in 1873. So, we're guessing he came over perhaps a few years before that. And there is some, some family story that he perhaps had visited the UK before, bringing over Italian marble artifacts, and gone back, but I'm not certain about that.

Gareth White: Okay. So, he arrived in presumably before 1873 in the South Wales area. There's a famous story about your great, great grandfather about how he jumped boats, I believe?

Helen Way: Allegedly, he was on his way from Italy to America . We don't know if it was with family or friends - but it was quite a rough journey coming around the Bay of Biscay. So, they must've been coming around from Italy around Spain, perhaps stopping off at Cardiff, which is a major port in those days, wasn't it really? And then going on to America. But he felt really unwell and got off the ship. And apparently only had something like four pennies in his pocket or something like that.

Gareth White: Okay. Okay. So then obviously he chose to stay in Cardiff rather than go all the way to the United States. Where was Giovanni Bafico from, which area of Italy?

Helen Way: Well, I've never found a birth certificate for him or for actually for his son-in-law who was the next generation. The story is that they were from the Genoa area. We think maybe Chiavari... There was some talk about Camiglia, which is on the coast, but my auntie Iris, who died in 1980-odd swore it was like three or four miles inland. And quite a sort of industrial area at that time and not a very nice place. And she travelled Italy a lot, you know, she liked places like Ravenna, Naples and all of that. So, she said that when she visited, where her ... would have been her grandfather came from, she didn't seem very impressed with it. And wasn't surprised that he left there. And he had apparently left because, and I'm just looking because I have a family story here, somebody else said that he didn't agree with the unified Italy. Didn't want to participate in any civil war, if there was one coming , and didn't agree with, and I'm just looking for the word and I think it's *regisimonte*, movement?

Gareth White: Ah the *Risorgimento*?

Helen Way: Yeah. And that's allegedly why he came, and I presume economic reasons as well...

Gareth White: Yeah. Can I check... I'm just fascinated by his anti-unification stance. Was there any kind of gleaning about this, did he say that unification was a mistake potentially?

Helen Way: I don't know. [...] . So, they (my family) started sharing stories with me and something that they said resonates with something my aunty Iris used to say, is that they were Northern Italians. They actually were culturally, I wouldn't say superior, but culturally better than the Southern Italians. And they saw themselves as different. [...]

Gareth White: Okay. Cause obviously the *Risorgimento* project and the Unification obviously, you know, it combined all of these places. So, the story is that, you know, your great great-great-grandfather didn't agree with it and decided to immigrate instead to Cardiff. Okay. And then what happened? He gets to Cardiff; he's got four pennies in his pocket. What did he do?

Helen Way: Right. So, I'm piecing this together from information in newspapers, you know, adverts, censuses, all that type of thing. So apparently, he began, sort of, I think he was around the docks area, and he would go and almost scavenge for potatoes off the ships or things that were spare and make baked potatoes or chips and sell them. And also get ice from the ships that were bringing in fish and use the ice for things, and began to make some money. So, I have records of him trying to sell a potato engine for preparing potatoes. And at that time, he was living somewhere in Cardiff off one of the main streets, Saint Mary's Street, which he eventually had a lot of businesses on in a court. And they were like slum courts, you know, so these tiny houses, lots of people living in them.

So, he must've started off like that. And just building, buying, selling, building, adapting to whatever people needed by the sound of it. When he married his wife, she was actually from Devon, And I presume, came to Cardiff as well, which was at that point, booming industrially. And they are both down as living in the same premises at the time of the marriage.

And he is down as a boarding housekeeper. And that was in Bute Street, which is when the main streets coming up from the docks to central Cardiff. And that's 1873. So, he must have to be either managing it. I don't know if he was owning it, but to be managing it again is some progression. And I would imagine he had a few things on the side, because he always seemed to have other businesses on the side.

From there, they started to have businesses in Cardiff, which were confectioners, sort of rooms, hotels, you know, B+B's, cafes. And at the same time also importing goods and selling them in auction houses. And these were Italian goods. they then went to Bristol for a year or so, again that would have been a very busy port I'm not quite sure what the reason was for going, [...] they stayed there a couple of years and then came back to Cardiff and settled in Cardiff.

[....]

So, they started to build up these businesses. [...] They were quite canny in what they did in that he would rent or buy businesses and then either buy premises, either side or by the premises that backed onto it so that he could go between the premises and get footfall on either side. And also, at one point had when, when they started to build the Arcades in Cardiff, - there's a lot of shopping arcades, and these would have been brand new Victorian arcades - he would have a premises at one end and a premises at the other. So likely to catch people going on, either street, either side, or if you entered it the one end and you went past and thought twice about going in, you might think again when you pass it, the other end.

So, they also, at one point would have had a, an ice cream cart that went around the streets because I've got an advert for him selling round about 1890 something like that. I think he's selling it for five pounds and saying that it's a good earner, something like to earn two pounds a day with it. So, I don't know what that's equivalent to, but clearly, you know, they would have been quite good business.

So, they started to build up a number of businesses. Some of which they moved on from, some of which were run concurrently. Yes, they then had, a hotel cum café cum restaurant, ice cream place in Custom House Street, again at the end, or sort of also the beginning of the docks, quite rough, you know, in some ways these even in these days, it was when I was younger, it was known as sort of a red lights area. But a lot of businesses would have been developing in that area as the docks were developing. And he eventually bought about three premises next to each other and had about 28 beds there, and also a premises in the street behind it. [...]

[...] They moved from three different premises there or had one or more at any given time. And from there they would sell block ice. They were confectioners. They also had rooms again. My great grandmother was born in Caroline Street. And they also at one point, and I've not found exactly where, but on Westgate Street in Cardiff, which is the Street of the Principality Stadium, or one of the entrances is on the Westgate Street, they had an ice factory where they had a machine for making block ice and he advertised this, you know, that they make block ice, sell it by the quarter or whatever, and people could pay threepence and come along and just watch the ice being made. So that must've been Victorian entertainment for you.

So, they carried on like this, and I think they perhaps had a lot of ups and downs. They did very well sometimes, perhaps not so well others, because there are lots of adverts of him, selling, you know, horse and cart or selling the contents of where they've rented. For example, when they rented one place on St Mary's Street and they then sold it to go somewhere else, you know, selling three automatic pianos, or, you know, big bar, all of the wooden doors and screens. So, they must literally have gone in and set up a place almost like the fixtures and fittings of what you would need for, for an Italian business or restaurant.

At one point, and this came as a bit of a shock to me when I was looking through things, they were arrested for running a disorderly house, or a house of ill repute, which was in the Custom House Street. They of course denied everything. [...] But the police apparently had been watching the premises and certain well-known ladies of ill repute were going in and out of the premises. So, he was arrested along with one of his sons and with one of their employees who was on duty. Obviously, it went to court. This was all in the papers with headings like 'Cardiff's steamy side' and all of this. He protested his innocence that they obviously didn't believe him. And then he had a choice of three months in jail or to pay a fine, and he chose the fine.

There was never any sort of implication of anything like that again. And I wonder whether that perhaps they were having a rough time at that point or whether it was just good business... I don't know. It was a shock for everybody in the family, because they had been thought of to be very hardworking, , built up a business, nothing untoward. [...]

[..] They also in one of the business directories are recorded as having a confectioner's shop in Penarth, which would have been another thriving seaside town. I've never found anything else on that. Other than in the business directory. And interestingly it's under S Bafico, which would have been his wife. and that's before I think the 1900s, because the only other, they had a son called Stefano, but he died in infancy. So, it can't have been him.

They also, just before, probably about 1911, were in Porthcawl, which is another seaside place where they bought a place there called the Marine Hotel, right on the prom on the seafront. It's still there. It was another Italian premises called Pietro's, which was an Italian ice cream parlour, and it's now owned by Cadwalader, which is one of those big ice cream chains. They didn't stay there very long. We think they sort of semi-retired there while some of their businesses in Cardiff were kept going by the sons and would have been quite busy in the summer, but quite bleak in the winter. And of course, 1914, perhaps the war was coming, and they wanted to consolidate their businesses and things. So, they went from there then.

What else did they do? One of the places they were at along this, this is the one that I mentioned was later sold. They sold it to Brains after the old man died. It was sold to Brains brewery, and then Brains sold it as the brewery quarter later. So, they were there from 1912 to 1937. I've got the building plans for that as well. So, there would have been downstairs like kitchens, restaurants, et cetera. And then upstairs bedrooms. Somebody in the family told me that if it was fully occupied, the children or young adults would be shifted out to their rooms and they'd have to sleep in the bath, so the room could be let to make more money.

Helen Way: The structure or view of the street that they would have had. And they, in fact, the Baficos lived there. They always lived on one of their premises [...] Whereas their children they'd all had their own houses and, you know, whatever, and didn't live above the shop, they always lived above the shop and seemed to have quite a tight handle on things. And then one of my cousins did say that he was quite astute, you know, but they, they seem to think of him very affectionately. And even when he was old and he went blind, he could tell the difference between a five-pound note by touch, you know, and a

10-pound note and or coins. But that she was perhaps the brains of the operation and rule the waitresses with like a rod of iron. [...]

[...]

One of my more elderly cousins told me that she recalled her or her mother going there and that's in the early morning, it sort of 1920s, the kids from the slum areas would come outside the shop and they were wearing sort of ragged clothes often did not have proper shoes or nothing on their feet, and my great great-grandmother would actually give away food that was left over from the day before.

Yeah. So, they had a lot of premises. I found loads and some of them, they may have stayed in only briefly, others for a long time, as I say, some were concurrent. So, my grandmother told me, and she was married to the great grandson of the original. Now she would say that they would walk from their house, and they lived in Cathedral Road in Porthcanna, and they could walk and come down through town through St. Mary's Street, Caroline Street, down to the docks, almost surveying the premises and going from one to the other. And I guess there's the method in that, you know, if he was overseeing things or collecting money, he had to sort of a route[...] and even, I guess Porthcawl, Penarth and Barry on a train were reachable. And, he did have like a horse and cart buggy the thing, and I believe one of the earliest people in Cardiff type of car as well, but he, that then later sold.

Gareth White: Wow. It's a fascinating story. And you know, it's really interesting listening to how your great-great-grandfather built up this empire when, when we think of the Italian café industry or refreshment industry... It's always this claim that it was Giacomo Bracchi who came over and set up the first café. How does your great-great-grandfather fit into this?

Helen Way: I think it's quite strange, really. I come down the female line, so I don't have an Italian surname. All of the Baficos in the UK that I know of descend from him. I think he perhaps assimilated into the UK society pretty quickly cause he had to... I did hear stories that, you know, he, when the boats came in, you know, he would have special orders and he'd have his special olive oil, which he kept locked away and they would eat Italian food. But actually, what they produced in their businesses seem to be very much what the local population wanted.

I've never found, as I said, any birth certificate for him, I've got his marriage certificate, but I've never also either found a naturalization of any type for him either. However, when his daughter, Marie Louise who was my great-grandmother married John Ghilard, who also is Italian - but very strange names in Italian.[00:26:00] - and he was naturalized and were they went to the... there were police records, you know, they looked into the case at the time. Cause this is just around the time of the Aliens Act. Yes. She's described as a UK citizen and being from a British family. Even though she was half Italian. So I guess they perhaps assimilated, did what they needed to do.

There's family stories of them having connections with some of the people who came perhaps a bit later, not the family you mentioned, but they may well have known them. I

just don't know about it. but some of the ones who came over a bit later, like the Carpaninis, Cavaciutis, they would play cards together regularly. They went to each other's businesses. They also knew Solly Andrews who, while not Italian... He built the Cardiff market. He had, you know, big businessperson and civic leaders in Cardiff as well. They mixed with them and then people like James Howells and David Morgans and other up and coming businesses at the time. They knew the Brains family who had the breweries, they knew the Crydlans who were like one of the big undertakers in the area. [...]

You know, although we always thought of ourselves as being from Italy and part Italian, it was in some ways so far back, even though there are three generations that perhaps less. [...] We know a lot of other Italians, so we went to school with them, but we've never really went to the sort of group meetings of the Italian community and things like that, because we'd been here that long, we sort of missed that bit if, you know what I mean?

But clearly, they must've been engaged with other families because John Bafico's daughter married an Italian, you know, he'd come over in his childhood with his parents, coming back and forth, and then come over and trained as a Marine engineer in Newcastle, but come back to Cardiff. So, she obviously met him. [...]

So clearly, they engaged with Italian community because she met him. And then she then met an Italian also in Cardiff. And there were stories of my auntie Iris, who was my grandmother's sister, that she would go to somewhere called the silver lounge, which was owned by the Carpaninis. And so, they would all go to each other's businesses and lunch there or work there and things like.

Gareth White: Interesting. Interesting. It's really interesting as well, just the extent to which this business was built up from the 1870s, but as you said, he had a few pennies in his pocket to all of a sudden by, you know, certainly by the 1910s, but even earlier, from what you're saying, I think having ice cream carts, cafes, hotels and everything. It does kind to change how we imagine the Italian refreshment industry. This is a lot before the Bracchis came and...

[...]

Gareth White: You kind of touched on this idea that, you know, temperance houses, temperance town in Cardiff When we think of welsh history, particularly in the 1890s, 1900s, it was quite a strong thing. You had these Temperance campaigners trying to shut down, trades and the Italian trades were targeted because they were foreign and because they were 'Houses of ill repute' as he would with reference to the women. I wonder if there were any of the stories of the Baficos coming into contact with any of the Sunday Trading Campaigners?

Helen Way: Not that I know of to be honest, no, I haven't heard anything like that. And certainly, in the adverts at that time, they just advertised themselves as being, you know, the best accommodation in town, you know, using genuine, best butter and all of this type of thing. Best rooms, best food. It doesn't say anything about when or the hours or the

days they would open. When I saw that they had a few temperance houses and temperance hotels. I just thought, well, they always seem to have an eye for an opportunity and maybe they could see that and thought, right, we need to go down this road. Whether it had something to do as well [...] I suspect it was more of a business opportunity or being able to operate you know, some of his businesses presumably were temperance houses and others weren't.

Gareth White: Yeah, that would make sense. I mean, certainly the number of temperance houses by the 1890s, 1900s, they do increase dramatically. Whereas before, obviously Italians were just, you know, starting off as just selling ice cream or the street, for example. [...] I wonder as well whether there were any other kind of instances where there were kind of these [...] like flashpoints with the local community in any way? Okay, because I'm getting the feeling that on the whole business was really good. They were really well integrated, really well liked... But did he have any of these?

Helen Way: Not that I know of, but again, more and more stuff comes out. I mean, there's stuff I've found recently on the Internet. You just find out more and more all the time. Not that I know of, I would say moreso, and not around the time of the First World War, that all seemed alright, but towards the Second World War, I know that my great grandparents had at that time purchased a house on Cathedral Road, It's a nice area, big house. And I do recall my grandmother telling me that house used to be called Italia. And then as the war was brewing, they changed the name to Ravenna to make it sound less Italian. But I don't know if they maintain the name over the door of the house through the war or not.

But when I go past that house, now you can actually still see the indentation where there, there was like a name of the house. Yeah. So clearly, they were sensitive to that. I don't know, 'cause the old man died apparently in 1937 38 and left the Saint Mary's Street business, plus Caroline Street, plus a block of shops – [...]

Gareth White: Okay. And I suppose that brings a very interesting question... because obviously the family involvements in all these kind of refreshment industries, it ended effectively in the 1930s, you would have also seen this kind of interesting phase in the 1920s and the 1930s when things change in Italy quite drastically. Benito Mussolini comes into power and... literally, as well, the way that Italians were perceived, abroad changes all of a sudden, you know. I mean the Italian, you know, some institutions accepted fascism in Wales and the UK ... but there were also strong associations where Italians were active, I'm thinking of the South Wales and Monmouthshire Caterers' Association. There's also the Amici d'Italia in the 1930s. I don't know if anyone in the families ever participated in...

Helen Way: I'm just finding the burial notice here. This is about when he died in the burial who was present, there would also present Messrs P. Besagni, J Besagni, P Malvisi representing the South Wales Caterers Association. Somebody Valli, that sounds a bit Italian, and then they were other people, other Cardiff businesses. So, they would have been involved with the SWCA for sure.

Gareth White: I don't suppose there was a Fairweather in that list too? A Paul Fairweather or Merryweather?

Helen Way: Merryweather? Let's have a look...No. Crydlans, Brains. And then the others were all family. I mean, he may well have been there, but it's just a little writer-up

Gareth White: Yeah. There were a number of Italian people. I think in the 1930s in particular, there start to be these more prominent Welsh Italian associations...

Gareth White: So, I was going to ask you one last question, Helen. And as I was saying less about the Baficos and a bit more about Cardiff history in general. Now we've touched on this idea - I remember you said that one of the ancestors, I believe it was the great grandmother who, because she was from a British family. She was saved from the interment that happened in 1940, when obviously, it was ordered, the police should collar the lot and remove the Italians from Wales. I wonder if you can shed some light on what happened on the night of the 10th of June 1940 in Cardiff in that, you know... I mean... We often think of rioting, restrictions. Do you know any stories about this?

Helen Way: No, I don't. I sort of heard that there was some unrest or that, you know, there was some feelings towards Italians changed and hence why they may change the name of the house and all of that type of thing.

But interestingly, you know, my great-grandmother was seen as being British and she was half Italian. Her husband was Italian. And I've got his naturalization. So, he naturalized himself in 1914, I think, or just before then. And he put in his parents' names, that he was an Italian subject, and obviously the police looked into him, but he obviously was allowed to carry on as normal.

So, they were not affected it at all. And certainly, none of the other Bafico descendants were, any of his children that I know of. And I know what happened to them where they all lived. So, none of them were interned at all. And yet, they would only, some of them only one generation removed. So yeah, that, I've always found that a little bit strange, but I guess that's because they must have assimilated themselves into the community. [...]

1.7: Email exchange with Teo Belli

11th November 2021:

Hello Gareth,

I came across your Peoples Connection site asking for family stories related to Italian-Welsh families.

(<https://www.peoplescollection.wales/story/1789816>).

My great-grandfather immigrated to the South Wales valleys around 1900 to operate cafes. My nonno (Bartholomew 'Bert' Belli) was born in South Wales around 1918, spending some of his childhood in near Bardi, and operated cafes, fish and chip shops up through the 1980s. He was interred in Canada during WWII and lost family members (an uncle) in the sinking of the Arandora Star. My dad moved away from Swansea for university, then moving to the Oxford area where I was born, before moving to the United States.

My nonna (Carmen) (who was born in the Bardi area before moving to Wales) lives in London and may be willing to speak with you.

Best of luck with the project - if you get any information of the Belli's of Swansea or additional info on Italians interred at Ile Saint Helen in Canada, I would love to hear about it.

Teo Belli
Chicago, Illinois, USA

24th August 2023:

I've provided some additional details here:

I'm told my great grandfather and his siblings would travel to London in the winter months to work stoking boilers, as well as laying mosaic tile. Including supposedly at the old royal naval college. He ran/worked in a cafe in London at some point also.

Prior to WWII, my great-grandfather (Giovanni) founded a cafe/fish and chip shop in Swansea. You can find advertisements for the fish and chip shop on old Swansea City football club programs. My Nonno ran the fish and chip shop until retirement in the 1980s. From what I know, he was a bit of an entrepreneur with a launderette or two, ice cream vans, making crisps, and more over the years.

While he was interred in Canada during the war, he told me that he worked as a lumberjack, and remembered ice skating on the frozen river in the winter (including getting some frostbite on his ears, so he always reminded us as children to wrap up and wear a hat). He also told stories about playing in an informal "football cup" while in Canada with the other internees. When he passed in 2009, he was laid to rest back in Bardi in a family crypt, in the same cemetery as a memorial to those lost on the Arandora Star. You can find the records of his internment and return to Britain in the archives. I have a copy saved that I can attach. Despite his experience, he was a proud Welshman and proud Brit. His accent threw me as a child with its combination of Italian and Welsh.

My Nonna is from Lugagnano Val D'Arda and came to Wales in the years after WWII, where she met my Nonno. They went to have two children, including my dad. Both of whom left Wales to pursue education and have been successful in their careers. My dad, being of Italian stock, fell in love with motor racing and still works in the industry. His sister became a doctor in London.

[...] As a young child, prior to moving to the USA, I attended the Welsh Italians summer picnic (Scampagnata) running in races and such.

Let me know how else I can assist you and all the best.

Teo

2. Interviews about Prisoners of War

2.1: Interview with Antoni and Emlyn Schiavone, 4th February 2021

Gareth White: And we are going so recording. So, Emlyn, Antoni, Thank you so much once again, for agreeing to meet with me today, to talk about your father. Now, the first question that I would like to ask is a very general question. Tell me your father's story. So, tell me what happened to him before the war. What happened when he was recruited for the war? And how did he arrive in Wales? What do you know about this?

Antoni Schiavone: My father didn't talk a lot about his early life, but we know that he was doing national service when the war broke out. During that time, he was working as a batman to a captain looking after the horses. When the hostilities broke out, he had a brief period of time where he returned home to his home village. And then returns to the barracks in Naples. Without really knowing what was happening and in the middle of the night, they were woken up and told to board ship, and he and his colleagues were transferred to North Africa.

His time in North Africa wasn't very long, but during that time he drove a lorry basically. He was then captured, and he moved. They took the prisoners to South Africa, and then from South Africa he was transferred to Liverpool, and then from Liverpool, he was transferred to West Wales. That's the bare bones of what I know. Perhaps Emlyn can add information that I haven't mentioned there.

Emlyn Schiavone: Yeah, if I can just step back a little bit. He was actually brought up in a small village called Montaguto, which I think it was in Puglia - I think it changed the boundary, but I think it's now in Calabria. But it's very rural, lots of villages on tops of hills.

So, he was born into a farm, his parents were farmers on the outskirts of the village Montaguto, So, his early life was growing up on the farm helping, [...] a large number of kids. [...] I've always thought it was seven children. [...] Quite a large family and a very small, I mean, in those days, obviously people, these days live in big houses, well, a few people in big houses in those days, a lot of people in small houses, they were very small farmers [...]

Yeah. So those were his beginnings. In terms of rural farming, in a village nearby of about a thousand people, which is very vibrant... Our first flavour of his village life was when we went there. I was ten, my brother was eleven. And just to give you a flavour of what the life was in those days, all of his family were within the village or in the vicinity of the village. So, within the course of a couple of hours, we'd met all his brothers and sisters and cousins, et cetera. When I went with my brother back there about four or five years ago, now we only had two relatives in the village: one first cousin actually in the village, Leonardo. And then one first cousin out on the farm. How it's changed...

And it's very much a ghost village. There's no employment there. There're a few holiday homes there that people have kept, farming families have kept, but it's certainly changed. Like my father's side growing up [...] People's ambitions weren't massive, you know, they were happy to live in, but they didn't want to do more than that, I suppose....

Anyway. Well, in terms of war. You know, my brother's just described. He very rarely spoke about the war or his experience... I do remember him saying that in the boat from South Africa to Liverpool, he had the impression that half of the people on the boats passed away by the time they got into Liverpool. He said it was quite a rough journey, a rough passage. But other than that, it wasn't one of those things ... it wasn't talked about much, you know?

Antoni Schiavone: So... The immediate family were in Montaguto. But he did have, I think, a half-brother Ferdinando who had migrated to, Canada, I think, either the States or Canada. I think there's another cousin as well, who moved to the United States [...]

And in terms of the journey from South Africa to Liverpool [...], like my brother says, he rarely spoke about his experiences. but the three things he did talk to me about [...] was when he was captured, one of his friends from the village told him to put on a Red Cross Band on his arm to show that he was working with the Red Cross, with the Italian... not the Red Cross, the Italian hospital services. Which he did, which meant that he was able to really stay in the same location for a few weeks. But then one day an Italian captain arrived there, with the roll call and to his amazement, he found that were tens of others who had done exactly the same thing. Obviously, they were caught out then and were sent back.

In the journey from South Africa to Liverpool, he talked about the fact that they have to do physical exercise every day. They weren't given enough water. And as my brother says, many passed away. And the only other thing he mentioned was that he remembers at one point, an American ship [...] passed nearby, and they were taunting the prisoners with food, which they sort of held up, and then threw it into the sea. Apart from that, yes... very, very little information. [00:07:00] No information whatsoever about what happened in Liverpool.

[...]

Gareth White: So, having a look so far, we have, you know, from very humble origins, we can say in a rural community, in a large family. Would you say that it was a poor community as well? Was there a lot of poverty that he experienced?

Antoni Schiavone: I would say it was. I mean, basically my father's family, like most people in the village, were subsistence farmers. They didn't own large areas of land, they owned small pieces of land here and there. And certainly, I would say that my father's background was, very poor. I don't think he had many years of schooling. And I think that's probably true of his brothers and sisters as well, but we don't have a lot of information about that. But our cousin [...] when we both visited our cousin in the farm

four or five years ago, it was still, you know, a very poor homestead a mile outside the village. It had electricity and it had running water.

When we went back there in 1962, first time we went to Italy with my father, that my father filled the boot of the car up with [...] our second-hand clothes to give to his brother's children who lived on the farm. Giuseppe - Giuseppe's children.

Emlyn Schiavone: I think poverty is a difficult one. Isn't it? It's all relative. The impression I got was... Yeah, I think people [.....]. they worked hard. They worked hard to get food on the table. I mean, if you compare it to poverty in India [...], you know, poverty is relative in terms of...

Antoni Schiavone: Where they lived.

Emlyn Schiavone: I think they were on a par with probably the rest of the community. I mean, our grandfather was a local councillor in the village. The main impression I got was that he had a very happy, vibrant childhood, and that material possessions weren't really ... okay, I'm not saying they weren't inhibition?? At all, but they weren't a priority.

[...]

Gareth White: So, you mentioned at the very beginning that your father. was on national service initially when all of a sudden, after a brief period home, he then went to the barracks in Naples and was then sent out to North Africa. Would you say that this was the reason why he enrolled in the Italian army in the first place? Was this a sense of duty because he was conscripted or was it more of a choice - did he ever speak about this?

Antoni Schiavone: I mean, he didn't. He didn't speak a lot about it. The impression I got was that he was conscripted, but I can't be absolutely sure of that.

Emlyn Schiavone: I mean, national service was compulsory, so there was no option there. You had to do a national service. But then in terms of the war commencing, I'm not sure of the detail around that, whether he had to, or whether he could have decided to go back to farm. I'm not sure it was a typical subject, so you know, it wasn't talked about much really.

Gareth White: So yeah, I mean, like, I think whenever like interviews are conducted with members of the Italian community, it's a very well-known fact of this kind of, it's almost like a sealed off event. [...] So obviously, he then arrived in West Wales after having this horrific journey from South Africa to Liverpool and then arriving in West Wales... What was that like from his first moments in West Wales? What were his first impressions of, you know, these green hills and different landscape and different languages?

Antoni Schiavone: It's difficult to say what his first impressions were, but clearly, he didn't have the language, either English or Welsh. It was a totally different environment in terms of weather and in terms of landscape, because obviously it was far greener

comparing, you know, West Wales to Southern Italy. He did not actually talk much about that particular difference.

The one thing which was made clear to us is that he didn't enjoy being in the camp. And when the members of the camp were offered the opportunity to work on local farms, he was one of the many who jumped at the chance. And I think that's partly because being idle was very, very difficult.

Looking back, the one thing about, even in the sixties, the nature of subsistence economy meant that people have to work hard... It was, you know, there were very long days and they needed to work for food. And if there's some money to spare, then they could buy a few additional possessions. But the work ethic was very, very strong. So, he was keen to get to work and, and enjoyed it. And so, it is a way of trying to, you know, improve his standard of living.

Gareth White: Okay. So, would they receive a wage for their jobs that they actually did in Wales, or was it sort of voluntary basis?

Antoni Schiavone: I don't know. I mean, he didn't talk. I mean, I think they must've received something. But it was mainly about the inactivity of being in the camp as compared to actually, you know, doing something. They would have had some sort of distance ways, but I don't know how much and there were... There was a distinct... from what I understand, a distinct difference between those prisoners of war that saw themselves as fascists and saw people going to work on the local farms or other areas of employment as an act of betrayal. And that was a small minority of people, prisoners like that. And probably the majority of the prisoners of war who were conscripts. Many of them didn't really want to be soldiers at all, they had no choice. And obviously because of the political situation in Italy at the time you had, you know, you didn't have any, unified Italian people, you had the Republicans, you had a very strong, communist base, you had the Christian Democrats, you had the monarchists, and you had the fascists.

And I would think that that all those tentacles of Italian society at that time were represented at the camp, but there was a distinctive difference between the minority who refused to go to work in local farms and the majority who wanted to do something useful and wanted to gain some sort of living.

Emlyn Schiavone: Yeah. The only reference I'd make...it's difficult for me now, because my perception has been coloured... My brother gave me a book a couple of months ago called *Filo* - Gareth, it's worth reading if you haven't! But it gives you quite a clear insight into what life was like.

But I think for me, the biggest distinction for my father was... When he was in Italy, he was effectively a free man, but coming to Wales, he was a prisoner of war. So, and I think leaving the camp brought a bit more normality to him, because if you're in the camp, obviously you have reminders every second of every day that you're a prisoner of war. Whereas if you're out working on a farm, then there's a more sense of normality, of being

a part of that community. So, I think he relished leaving the camp, trying to be himself as opposed to just having the status of being a prisoner of war.

And in terms of payments, I think. Like obviously they'd get paid in kind, you know, they'd have foods I don't know whether they stayed on a farm... Well, I think probably had to get back to the camp every night, certainly in the beginning

Emlyn Schiavone: I guess they'd have their meals there, et cetera, I'm not sure. Obviously in Filo it does refer to them having a pittance of a wage with some kind of a token wage. [...] But again, he never spoke much about that in terms of his time in camp really.

Gareth White: Okay. I find very interesting the comments that you made Antoni there about the composition of the camp, where you said that there are monarchists, fascists, Republicans and communists all within the camp. Would you like to expand on this, maybe? So, looking at your father's relationships with these other Italians who were in the camp, how did he... how does he fit in into this jigsaw? What were their relationships like?

Antoni Schiavone: Well, he would have fitted in... The people that he would have identified with most immediately would have been people from the South. We have to remember that, you know, at that time, people from Northern Italy looked at southerners, as practically an alien group. So, he would have, I think, identified with people like him who came from Puglia, Campania, or Calabria, or Sicily, or whatever, as opposed to the people from the more industrialised areas. And of course, to a certain extent, those differences in geography, were reflected in the attitudes towards the war.

One of my father's brothers, Giuseppe, he was captured as a member of the resistance, and he was sent to Germany. So, within his own family, he would have known of differences of opinion. And certainly one of the other brothers, and certainly probably the sisters as well, they were quite strongly Catholic in their belief. So, there would have been differences within the family, but I think he did identify most closely with the people who had his similar background and language. Because the dialect differences between different parts of Italy were more pronounced and in the early post-war years, they're still pronounced now, but they were far more pronounced at that point in time.

Gareth White: Absolutely. Emlyn, would like to add on anything that you remember about this?

Emlyn Schiavone: I think, [...] my father, he was fairly easy-going, moderate I would say in his beliefs. So, he would have weighed things up. I think he would have tried get on with everybody, but inevitably he would have been drawn to those from Southern Italy, the similar background than his, more so than perhaps Northern Italians [...] but I think he was somebody who wanted to get on with everybody. So, I don't think he'd have been going out of his way to be difficult with anyone. I think his ambition was to try and, you know, get on with as many people as he could.

Yeah. And that applied as well to when he went out to work on farms. He wanted to be there, he enjoyed people's company, you know, he didn't resent the Welsh people. I think he wanted to get on with them and to be a part of their life, you know? He had a very sort of easy-going, he had a lovely personality, I suppose. You know, so he wasn't somebody who was aggressive, who was looking for an argument with somebody, you know, I think he'd be...

Gareth White: Okay. I suppose there's another question that comes to mind when you were speaking about the identitarian links... So, what was it that the community here was most attracted to? I know you both said that language and the geographical provenance were the main ideas. How did he feel about the political situation? I know you said he was a moderate... Was he particularly convinced by Mussolini? Was this something that ever came up in conversations?

Antoni Schiavone: It did come up very rarely. Aye. I'd provoke a discussion occasionally. But I got the impression that, that like a lot of Italians, they were swept away by events rather than by a strong belief. There wasn't a very strong fascist element in the South anyway. They were, you know, mainly monarchists, and if not monarchist, and then they were communists. So, I think my impression was that he didn't have strong political beliefs, and like Italy they were drawn dragged into the war, rather than jumping at the opportunity to take part.

Gareth White: Yeah. Okay. Emlyn, would you agree with this assessment?

Emlyn Schiavone: Yeah [...] When I said he was pretty moderate... I think he probably would have leaned more towards socialism than towards fascism, that's the impression I got anyway... I think obviously with Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy. These were sort of quite charismatic [...], they're powerful characters, and they obviously had the influence on the individuals in those countries. And I think there was some kind of... I dunno, whether the people [were in the South??] (were) looking for change, I guess, in some respects, so whether they thought Mussolini was going to be the solution to some of the issues down South?

I wouldn't have thought he had much sympathy towards Mussolini as such, but I can appreciate as a young person, you know, that's Mussolini probably did have some kind of an impact in the same way as, Hitler had an impact in Germany, unfortunately.

Gareth White: No, of course. I mean, I think, you know, listening to the two of you speaking, I really get this impression of somebody who, rather than these political links being the thing that drew him into a community, an Italian speaking community in Wales, as I said, it was more like, you know, wanting to be with everybody, wanting to kind make connections regardless of political belief, regardless of geographic origin and languages, and, be very open-minded I think.

Antoni Schiavone: We've got to remember as well that, you know, he would have seen the lifestyle here as markedly different to his own upbringing. [...], I mean, I'm not saying that rural Wales, West Wales was rich by any means, but he would have recognized, the

differences in the economies. And you know, it was something which would have attracted him to, want to make more of a living to improve his own lifestyle.

Gareth White: Okay. Emlyn, would you agree with that? Do you think that like this comparison was something that was very notable for him?

Emlyn Schiavone: Yeah, I think, you know, he came into a rural environment. He was accustomed to a rural environment. So, I think he would have enjoyed the rurality. He wasn't a ??? Person. [...] And I think he would have appreciated possibly looking around him that there was potential in terms of improving his prospects as opposed to, I suppose, what would have been relative poverty in Southern Italy. [...] I think even though in Wales at that time there was- again, it's all relative, you know, West Wales wasn't well off, people worked long hours and sort of worked really hard for a living, but it probably in comparison, I think the economy was probably stronger than Southern Italy, I guess.

Gareth White: Okay. I'm going to go for one more question linked to this idea of like-minded people. And they said that he often bonded with people from the South of Italy. Did he have strong friendships within the camp? Or do you think his main relationships in Wales were with people who were Welsh people or English people?

Emlyn Schiavone: Hard to say within the camp, but certainly post-war he did develop strong relationships with other Italians who stayed in West Wales. So, they had their own community, if you like. So those relationships were quite strong actually. As they were with Welsh people and non-Welsh people living in West Wales, but certainly there would have been a particular bond with fellow Italians who had decided to remain in West Wales...

Antoni Schiavone: The one difference which puts him in a minority group was obviously that he married a Welsh girl. I don't know what it was like before the fifties... I was born in 1951, but the majority of the Italian population who remained in West Wales were Catholics and the Catholic community in the Newcastle Emlyn area were major contributors to the development of a Catholic church in Newcastle Emlyn.

But my father wasn't a practicing Catholic by the mid-fifties. And I think - I may be wrong - but I think the reason for that was obviously, if you were a Catholic and you married outside your religion, you were expected to bring up your children as Catholics. If you didn't do that, they'd come round and say 'right, you're excommunicated.'

So, the Catholic church, or the coming together of Catholics on a religious basis was very important to the Italian community in West Wales. But my father wasn't a strong or practicing Catholic during his lifetime. [...] I can't tell you what it was like, you know, immediate post-war years up until my perception, but [...] from a very young age, I can remember going to chapel with my mother, but I cannot remember possibly once or twice ever going - apart from that- ever going to the, to a Catholic service.

Gareth White: Okay.

Emlyn Schiavone: Going back to the original question in terms of friendships within the camp. I mean, I don't really know. I think he would have got on with as many people as he could have got on with. But I don't know where he had strong friendships in the camp - it's hard to tell really! I guess he would have kind of friendships with Southern Italians. But obviously it was a bit of an unnatural situation. You're on the camp, on the farms. You know, it was a bit of a bizarre situation in a sense, but I mean, if you fast forward post war by five years, then his best man was from Lampeter - a guy called ...

Antoni Schiavone: John Thomas.

Emlyn Schiavone: Joseph Thomas. Joseph Thomas from Lampeter was his best man, and his groomsman was a Mr. Davies from Cardigan. So those are the two people he had with him by his side in his wedding, as opposed to Italian people. Yeah, so that's probably a reflection of him wanting to reach out to the Welsh community that he found himself in. And he did - I [...] he used to talk quite fondly about this farming family in Lampeter. 'Cause that was one of the places he went to work. And then obviously in terms of where our mother lives, the farm she was brought up on, you know, that became obviously a really important part of his life. And yeah.

Gareth White: Okay, which brings me quite nicely into this next part. So, you mentioned just now that he was in Lampeter on a farm, what kind of activities did he get involved with when he was working outside of the camp And where was he?

Antoni Schiavone: Most of the work he did was on farms. He worked on several farms I think either in the late post-war years, early post-war years, immediate post-war years, he worked in a hotel, , not in the actual hotel itself, but with a hotel that owned land as well in Newcastle Emlyn. [...]

And there was a farm as well in, Blaen Porth, the area between Cardigan and Newcastle Emlyn, where he often mentioned that the people were very, very keen on him to stay on the farm, they were hoping that he would become a full-time farm worker there.

Gareth White: Okay. Okay.

Antoni Schiavone: So, when he worked at the farm in Lampeter, during the time that he worked on the farm he wasn't the only farm worker there. But during that time, the son of Joseph Thomas was actually an airman who was shot down when he was in Italy and lost his life. But my father was a bit of a favourite on the farm, partly because... one of the reasons was that he got into a big argument with another Italian prisoner of war who was stealing some of the eggs from the chickens. And anyway, sometime after Joseph Thomas' son died, they passed on lots of the clothes, or some of the clothes to my father - he had a suit off the man, shirts and things. This is all, here's what he's told us, you know, and Emlyn might know more, but that's, that's what I can remember.

Emlyn Schiavone: I don't know whether in your question Gareth, you alluded to what sort of things did my father do when he wasn't working... by that, in terms of the camp situation, or in terms of after the war, post-war but I think in those days you worked such

long hours. I think it was [...] when you weren't working, you were just recovering. And. So, I'm not sure how many activities you got involved with. Although I do know somebody who was older than us, who's now 80 or 81, [...] who lived near the camp. He lived in a village called Trefachlyn about a mile or so from the camp. He remembers very clearly the Italians in the camp and that they were very good footballers. And they used to play against some of the local Welsh teams and were obviously a lot better in terms of their football ability...

2.2 Interview with Sonia Ferlito, 3rd June 2021.

Gareth White: Ok adesso ci siamo. Quindi [...] ti ringrazio ancora Sonia per la tua disponibilità nei confronti del mio progetto e per avermi seguito così tanto con le storie di tuo padre.

Sonia Ferlito: Piacere mio, mi fa piacere ricordare quel periodo che mio padre mi ha sempre raccontato di tutto di quegli anni passati senza libertà, tutto sommato

Gareth White: Certo. E infatti c'è la storia di tuo padre e con tutti gli altri con cui ho parlato, sono storie molto affascinanti, e poi il fatto [...] che da una cosa negativa, cioè un'esperienza di guerra, è nata questa comunità italiana è una cosa molto positiva molto bella.

Sonia Ferlito: Sì. Poi si sono organizzati. Praticamente non sono stati ????? hanno organizzato gli sport, il tennis, le competizioni di calcio, hanno organizzato il teatro. Hanno passato, tutto sommato, in questo periodo che poteva essere un periodo negativissimo, loro sono stati anche bene. Perché poi a parte che uscivano a lavorare ma hanno anche fraternizzato con molti gallesi e non erano malvisti dai gallesi. Tutto sommato è stata un'esperienza positiva diciamo...

Gareth White: Esatto, ma anche il fatto con la storia dei vostri raduni no? Che per venticinque anni facevate questi raduni famosi in quasi tutta Italia. Diciamo soprattutto al Nord dove vi vedevate spesso, facevate la messa e tutto. Prima di arrivare ai tempi più moderni, vorrei iniziare dall'inizio; quindi, mi ricordo che tuo padre è nato nel 1922 a Novara, no?

Sonia Ferlito: Sì, a Oleggio Castello, che era provincia di Novara. Il paese era un Oleggio castello sul lago Maggiore.

Gareth White: E poi da lì è stato catturato in Africa e poi è arrivato in Galles

Sonia Ferlito: il 14 luglio 43. Mio padre scrive 'Africa addio. Africa amara. Africa addio. Così pensava Mario allevare dell'Ancora della Nea Ellis del porto di Algeri.'

Gareth White: Okay, quindi è partito da Algeri... ma poi mi ricordo che c'è fatta un periodo forse in Sicilia dove ha avuto qualche problema...

Sonia Ferlito: Prima, sì.

Gareth White: E poi è arrivato in Africa nel marzo del 43, no?

Sonia Ferlito: Sì sì. Perché da Novara li hanno mandati... hanno passato lo stretto di Messina, sono entrati in Sicilia dove dormiva anche sotto queste tende in un posto non conosciuto. Poi si sono imbarcati, sono arrivati in Tunisia. Dalla Tunisia poi sono poi passati in Algeria alla fine.

Gareth White: Sempre come parte di questa missione di Mussolini di conquistare tutta la zona est dell'Africa per creare l'impero mare nostrum... E cosa ha detto tuo padre dell'Africa? Alla fine ... hai citato questa amara Africa amara...

Sonia Ferlito: Africa... sì, lui dice dietro di lui quando è partito, 'dietro di lui delusioni, fatiche, fame, sete e una terra inospitale. Nulla che potesse alimentare nostalgia o il famoso mal d'Africa.' Sai che c'è il mal d'Africa che tutti vogliono ritornare in Africa? Lui no. Nel frattempo, circolava la voce di una probabile destinazione in Gran Bretagna, ma non ne erano sicuri. 'Non c'era certezza perché le guardie non dicevano niente. Le guardie erano tutte britanniche, quindi era quasi logico, però erano incuriositi dal movimento del porto: rimorchiatori, gru, merci, soltanto i soldati britannici. Quindi non sapevano ancora dove andavano a finire. che poi sono andati, la nave una volta imbarcati, sono andati in Scozia.'

Gareth White: A Glasgow, no?

Sonia Ferlito: Esatto. E poi saranno stati smistati nei vari campi di concentramento e finito in Galles

Gareth White: E facendo la ricerca dopo aver parlato con altri italiani, mi hanno riferito alcuni , anche forse il padre della Scarante, che le condizioni erano difficili per loro durante questo viaggio. Che forse loro però erano partiti dal Sudafrica per arrivare in Gran Bretagna. Per quelli che hanno fatto il viaggio dalla Tunisia in Scozia, com'era il viaggio?

Sonia Ferlito: Adesso dice dunque...

Gareth White: Sono stati trattati bene o male?

Sonia Ferlito: Sì. Tra l'altro era un'esperienza nuova, perché erano tutti, anche mio padre ma anche gli altri erano ragazzi di paese. Di paesi lontani dal mare, mai visto quasi il mare in un paese in piccoli paesini. Quindi si vedeva... mio padre ricorda i delfini che seguivano le navi con i loro balletti dentro e fuori. 'Non li aveva mai visti, dice quasi irridendo il dramma dei prigionieri. E mentre alcune barche dei pescatori portoghesi e spagnoli si attardavano nelle vicinanze del convoglio con la speranza di ricevere qualche scatto da mangiare. perché i marinai britannici gli lanciavano il cibo a questi pescatori portoghesi e spagnoli.'

Sonia Ferlito: Però questo è stato l'inizio perché dopo 'appena partita la nave, i soldati britannici le sentinelle le han prese, gli hanno detto "Andate sottocoperta," li hanno accompagnati sotto. e hanno distribuito le amache per la notte, sono stati trattati benissimo.' Poi hanno assegnato i tavoli per mangiare, erano 22 per tavolo. Ma, e quando arrivò la cena, mio padre dice restarono delusi perché c'era una pentola di minestra da

dividere in 22 e non era molto. Praticamente, dice mio padre, 'cinque cucchiaini a testa e un filone di pane sempre da dividere in 22.' Una fettina trasparente per ognuno. oltre a tutto era un pane di riso, così dicevano, che era bianco, inconsistente, non era un pane di farina di grano. Quindi avevano più fame di prima una volta finito.

Gareth White: Cavolo... immagino... avranno patito molto la fame.

Sonia Ferlito: e poi li hanno chiusi dentro nel dormitorio nonché magari qualcuno andasse sul ponte o pensasse insomma... si sentivano un poco in gabbia ed era una sensazione spiacevole, quasi claustrofobica. Poi dovevano montare queste amache che nessuno sapeva come si dovevano montare e quindi diventava anche comico perché dovevano poi salire sull'amaca e non ribaltarsi perché poteva succedere che l'amaca si girasse e quindi e al momento un po' così comico.

Sonia Ferlito: E. Intanto c'era la gara per trovare un posto di aiutante per le cucine per le pulizie preparare la verdura, pelare le patate, e che insomma poteva essere un modo per passare un po' di giorni. E poi anche perché in cucina potevano ricevere gli avanzi di cibo.

Gareth White: Ok.

Sonia Ferlito: E poi ogni mattina più o meno mezza mattina, facevano l'adunata sul ponte per l'esercitazione nel caso venissero attaccati dai nemici. Quindi si dovevano mettere in fila per cinque. Ognuno aveva un salvagente - perché in caso di bombardamento - e quindi era come un preallarme adesso fossero stati bombardati avere un salvagente per buttarsi in acqua.

Gareth White: Quindi, sentendo queste storie mi sembra un viaggio abbastanza traumatico no? c'è...

Sonia Ferlito: Sì, infatti! Però, appunto, era successo anche che quando una sera erano già chiusi sotto il ponte c'era stata la tempesta e poi all'altezza della Francia la nave fu avvistata dagli apparecchi tedeschi e attaccata. Loro erano sotto il ponte, si sentiva questo fuoco infernale della contraerea e poi il lancio di bombe. Anche bombe di profondità che scuotevano la carena della nave. E quindi erano in corso degli attacchi di aerei e sottomarini. E quindi loro erano terrorizzati perché erano chiusi, erano chiusi in sotto nella stiva e non potevano uscire e si sentivano come in gabbia. Qualcuno addirittura si era messo a piangere e si lamentavano, perché poi lo scoppio delle bombe e il rumore delle raffiche, della contraerea, qualcuno pregava è stato un momento veramente terrificante. Per tutta la notte. è diminuito solo verso la mattina.

Gareth White: Il che rende molto più drammatico questo viaggio. è miracoloso il fatto che è riuscita alla fine arriva a Glasgow.

Sonia Ferlito: Eh sì, avevano dovuto cambiare rotta a un certo punto per sfuggire agli attacchi dei tedeschi, l'avevano saputo al mattino. E quando ha proseguito a una velocità superiore a quella dei giorni precedenti perché dovevano velocemente rientrare nelle acque inglesi.

Gareth White: Okay. E poi è arrivato mi ricordo hai detto a luglio del 43. Sempre a Glasgow... in un campo di smistamento hai detto?

Sonia Ferlito: Vediamo un po'. Se alla fine erano arrivati al Nord, a Glasgow mi sembra. Perché da una nave sono passati all'altra nave. Una nave si era affiancata a loro a fila indiana sono passati su un'altra nave e su un'altra ancora e dovevano farlo velocemente. E sull'ultima nave hanno tolto i vestiti per la disinfestazione. Gli hanno fatto una doccia collettiva e necessaria perché era dopo mesi. Insomma, dovevano essere lavati e disinfettanti. Hanno distribuito le divise militari che erano color cioccolato con la pezza tonda verde o gialla sulla schiena del giubbotto o sui pantaloni. Era la divisa ufficiale dei prigionieri di guerra. E dice mio padre, 'triste fine per chi doveva conquistare il mondo senza un'idea di come fosse né di chi e di come fosse composto. Quanta ignoranza e presunzione nei loro capi. Intanto a pagare erano solo loro.'

Gareth White: Infatti, quando pensiamo a questo episodio o al fatto che anche con questa divisa militare che marcava questa gente come prigionieri. Dovrebbe essere stata una cosa incomprensibile come hai detto tu...

Sonia Ferlito: Pensa poi, comunque, ragazzi di 20 anni, con le loro speranze, i loro sogni.

Gareth White: E poi da lì in Scozia è stato smistato e poi mi ricordo che abbiamo detto che ha passato un periodo di 8 mesi in Galles, no?

Sonia Ferlito: E, adesso non mi ricordo. sì dunque... fammi vedere i suoi appunti...

Gareth White: Nessun problema.

Sonia Ferlito: Ecco dunque. Perché poi con ... nel Galles sono arrivati con il treno, poi il trasferimento è avvenuto in treno... ha ripreso il treno verso sud alla fine del viaggio correva voce fosse in Galles del Sud.

Gareth White: E questo fu nel settembre del 43, abbiamo detto...

Sonia Ferlito: E quindi sono arrivati, facevano ingresso nel campo 70. Il 17 agosto del 43. quindi erano partiti il 14 luglio da Algeri, 17 agosto 43 entrarono nel campo 70 e Mussolini era stato deposto da un mese.

Gareth White: Ok poi quando è entrato Badoglio, tutto è cambiato da lì...

Sonia Ferlito: però dice... Mio padre dunque... c'era un bel gruppo. Nelle baracche i letti erano a castello doppi con due belle coperte e un ?????. La cena in refettorio a base di minestra di tagliatelle abbastanza buona e una fetta di bacon [...] poi quando sono andati a lavarsi nei bagni c'era l'acqua calda dai rubinetti che era una cosa... e i gabinetti ben puliti.

Gareth White: Ok. E. quando ho parlato con tutti voi della vita in campo e poi anche da queste storie (dove) c'è il cibo, acqua calda, i gabinetti puliti, si potrebbe anche definire questo campo, un campo molto moderno nel suo nella sua visione, del suo modo di

vestire, la vita di questi italiani. Ma cosa diceva tuo padre della vita in questo campo con gli altri italiani?

Sonia Ferlito: Ma all'inizio mio padre era molto depresso. Non riusciva proprio ad adattarsi a questa nuova compagnia, erano in tanti, ne conosceva... aveva pochi amici. Poi, correva la voce di una richiesta di alcuni prigionieri da insediare un distaccamento a una cinquantina di chilometri dalla sede di Henllan in un piccolo villaggio sul canale San Giorgio che era Eglwyswrw, giusto? Era un nome impossibile da leggere per mio padre, non era in inglese, era in questa lingua gallese, parlata da quasi tutta la gente del posto. E quindi mio padre praticamente dopo tre giorni arriva a Eglwyswrw e dice: 'Era un paesaggio incredibile, piccole colline a volte ripide molto dolci e un po' fiabesche, i quei villaggi attiravano la curiosità di mio padre. Erano una trentina e tutti intenti a osservare quello che vedevano. MOLTI PRATI da pascolo, di un verde incredibile, case a un piano con finestre piccole, i vetri col telaio a quadretti. e molte altre case sembravano imbiancate con la calce piccole ...sembravano uscite da un racconto di fiabe. I negozi avevano insegne vistose originali, nell'insieme dava un senso di pulizia di cura, una prospettiva rassicurante per loro.'

Gareth White: E qui la prima impressione del Galles era molto buona.... come una fiaba.

Sonia Ferlito: Sì, e anche qui quando arrivarono in questo nuovo campo, minestra abbondante addirittura un pezzo di carne di pecora da mangiare.

Gareth White: Anche le tagliatelle, hai detto?

Sonia Ferlito: Di minestra di tagliatelle abbondanti.

Gareth White: Nonostante poi in questo primo periodo in cui hai detto che era molto depresso. Poi è dato in questa in questo villaggio chiamiamolo...

Sonia Ferlito: Sì, e poi erano meno, invece prima nel grande campo erano circa 500, quindi non conosceva nessuno. Invece il gruppetto ristretto che si è trovato in questo campo, in questo paese di Eglwyswrw per lui era meglio.

Sonia Ferlito: E poi il giorno dopo hanno cominciato a portarli a lavorare nei campi, e quindi ha avuto il primo contatto con la gente del posto. C'era un piccolo autocarro adibito al trasporto di persone guidato da un vecchio autista gallese. Prendevano posto una decina di prigionieri con la carta di lavoro da presentare al datore, e l'autista lasciava alla fattoria il numero di prigionieri che servivano che avevano richiesto due persone tre persone. C'era quelli che dovevano raccogliere le patate, chi doveva irrigare, e sarebbe ritornato a prenderli alla fine della fine lavoro il pomeriggio.

Gareth White: E questo perché faceva parte della sua routine quotidiana anche se per molto tempo.

Sonia Ferlito: A mezzogiorno interrompeva il lavoro per... avvenivano... gli davano sempre una fetta di pane col bacon, e mio padre... e alla fine succedeva anche che alla fine del lavoro prima di ritornare in campo magari la moglie del farmer gli dava una tazza di tè.

Gareth White: Che impressione aveva tuo padre con queste pause, a bere il tè con la gente che prima era considerata quasi come il "nemico"?

Sonia Ferlito: E invece non... erano trattati ... veramente, forse perché li vedevano giovani da soli. C'era una specie di tenerezza per questi ragazzi che non erano assolutamente violenti, e comunque penso alla bontà d'animo dei gallesi, perché erano persone molto miti. E quindi penso si siano incontrati perché poi andando avanti con gli anni, visto che di anni ne hanno passati parecchi c'era proprio... una specie di amicizia era nata. Andavano in questi bar e venivano accolti nei momenti liberi, ed era nata proprio una forma di amicizia, anche perché hanno capito che loro i ragazzi non davano fastidio. E lavoravano. Avevano solamente l'ordine di non familiarizzare con le ragazze del posto [...] E di lavoro ce n'era tanto da fare perché comunque gli uomini gallesi erano tutti impegnati in guerra, quindi di campi c'erano da coltivare... c'era da drenare irrigare. C'erano tanti lavori da fare e non c'era più la manodopera perché comunque i soldati i ragazzi gallesi erano tutti al fronte.

Gareth White: E per quello è che l'arrivo di questo gruppo enorme di - come hai detto prima - 500 ma anche alla fine del periodo anche a 1250, forse, italiani c'è il loro arrivo è stato molto positivo per la zona.

Sonia Ferlito: Utilissimo.

Gareth White: [...] - ma per parlare di quest'idea di comunità... il fatto che sono riusciti a stabilire una specie di comunità a forza di fare amicizia con la gente del posto...mi stavo chiedendo anche a livello con altri italiani, perché appunto 500 italiani, immagino da tutte le regioni d'Italia ma anche di, forse, divisioni politiche diverse. Cosa diceva tuo padre a proposito di questo?

Sonia Ferlito: Non andava d'accordo con tutti, aveva fatto il suo gruppetto di amici che sono poi quelli che sono rimasti anche dopo la guerra, perché poi come dappertutto come quando si è sul lavoro come quando si è a scuola, cerchi quelli che la pensano un po' come te che seguono il tuo pensiero. E quindi chiaramente non è che si formavano delle fazioni, però sai c'era chi che era più simpatico- normalmente perché siamo umani - e quello che ti era meno simpatico.

Sonia Ferlito: Poi però alla fine collaboravano. Perché quando avevano deciso di fare il teatro allora c'era quello che si travestiva- 'Guarda io sono bravo, mi travesto'. C'era il truccatore addirittura - 'io sono bravo, faccio il truccatore, ti trucco te da donna.' 'io faccio i vestiti, io taglio,' quello che faceva il sarto - 'ma io me ne intendo di preparare i vestiti.' Mio papà che dipingeva disegni fondali e quello bravo che recitava, quello che sapeva cantare, quindi c'era tutto sommato una collaborazione, un modo per passare la giornata anche in modo leggero.

Sonia Ferlito: E poi tutti i vari tornei il campo di calcio, allora li e l'arbitro e 'io sono bravo a fare il terzino,' e 'io sono bravo a fare il portiere'... quindi si dividevano un po' questi compiti. E questo li permetteva di andare avanti.

Gareth White: Ed erano attività ma anche decisioni nate spontaneamente, non venivano organizzate ma nascevano quando sul momento, possiamo dire?

Sonia Ferlito: Sì, poi chiedevano il permesso se era possibile farlo. Quindi il permesso l'avevano. e poi ci sono anche quegli episodi particolari ...perché ...di fuga, perché c'era una bella tranquillità con le chiacchiere, con il loro sport, e tutto quanto. Però a interrompere questa tranquillità, era successo un fatto eccezionale. Erano fuggiti dal campo sette prigionieri. Tra cui uno era questo [...], Bardella. E non si sa bene di questo Bardella. Mio padre ha scritto una storia quasi perché è una cosa un po' misteriosa.

Sonia Ferlito: Non si sapeva allora della fuga ma senz'altro è stato verso la fine della giornata. Non era mai successo che sette prigionieri scappassero... solo qualche caso isolato, però subito risolto con la cattura di questo. Anche perché, la Gran Bretagna è un'isola, dove vuoi andare? Il problema era quello. E quindi dopo la fuga di questi sette si è sguinzagliato un gruppo di militari che hanno avvistato senza risultato ogni angolo del campo, nelle fattorie, e anche perché quando c'era una fuga, di solito c'era sempre una la motivazione... era una ragazza. E quindi a un certo punto furono, questi sette che erano scappati, furono ... giorno dopo giorno furono catturati e spediti in prigione. Meno uno. Il signor Bardella.

[...]

Sonia Ferlito: E intanto in quegli anni lì iniziavano, erano iniziati i lavori per fare una chiesa; almeno si voleva ristrutturare una baracca che era usata per chiesa. Ma volevano decorarla e quindi hanno contattato mio padre perché aiutasse a decorare la chiesa e di prendere il contatto con altri, perché dovevano coprire le capriate e dovevano rifare l'altare e quindi insomma migliorare l'interno. Non era facile. Piano piano, dietro richiesta del cappellano don Italo Padovan, si misero a disposizione tanti prigionieri con l'entusiasmo una trentina di prigionieri che lavoravano nelle fattorie. E quando... pur lavorando nelle fattorie, al rientro si mettevano a disposizione per aiutare a preparare la Chiesa. C'era chi ha fatto i candelabri, chi ha preparato l'altare in cemento, gli imbianchini, lattonieri, insomma...

Gareth White: E poi è arrivato tuo padre con forse il pezzo più famoso più celebrato di questa chiesa che era il quadro dell'ultima...

Sonia Ferlito: L'Ultima Cena, sì. Che è stranissimo che dopo tanti anni non ha perso colore, che erano colori presi dalle fabbriche di lana della zona, perché erano quelli che usavano quei colori che usavano per tingere la lana delle pecore, quelli. E poi va bene usava anche il tè le bustine di tè, però è rimasta, c'è veramente, del - secondo me - del miracoloso perché il colore non è mai cambiato.

[...]

Gareth White: E vorrei parlare sempre di questo quadro, di questa, di questo lavoro che ha fatto tuo padre sempre con l'Ultima Cena. Perché ho letto che alla fine i modelli per i personaggi erano tutti prigionieri del campo?

Sonia Ferlito: Sì perché non aveva altri esempi davanti. E quindi per le facce dice 'va bene ma.' Lui ha trovato questa ultima cena... La foto dell'ultima cena l'ha trovata su un libro della biblioteca del campo. E c'era la foto di un'Ultima Cena che gli sembrava che poteva adattarsi alla semi-cupola. Ha studiato la disposizione dei dodici apostoli e ha cominciato su dei fogli di carta da lettera che avevano preso delle fattorie, ha disegnato alcuni volti copiati anche dai suoi compagni. Con un pennellino da acquarello, di quelli piccolini. E bene invece per l'abito usava un pennello di quelli che si usavano per dipingere le porte, un po' più grosso però era tutto quello che aveva. E quindi, insomma, 'alla fine dal fondo della chiesa il colpo d'occhio era appagante dice- Mario incredulo si meravigliava ancora di essere riuscito a fare una cosa del genere. E si chiedeva come fosse possibile.' Praticamente ci aveva messo due mesi e mezzo per finirlo.

Gareth White: Wow. E quindi la scelta di, proprio dell'ultima cena come pezzo artistico della chiesa è dovuto proprio a questa scoperta sua in un libro, c'è una cosa che...

Sonia Ferlito: Sì, ha preso questo libro guardando dice 'ma sì questo potrebbe adattarsi a una semi cupola questo disegno grande potrebbe adattarsi benissimo.'

Gareth White: Ok, perché secondo te era importante fare questa chiesa, trasformare questa vecchia baracca in un posto completamente diverso?

Sonia Ferlito: E tutti comunque collaboravano perché c'era chi ha fatto l'imbianchino e il decoratore. 'Ma io sono capace di fare, di dipingere bene la parete,' 'io guarda prendo la lattina usava le lattine del corned beef', del cibo e l'ha trasformata in un candeliere che ancora c'è, e poi mancava la campana. Allora a tre chilometri lì vicino c'era un castello con torri così no, si vedeva dal campo e c'erano alcuni prigionieri che andavano a lavorare in bicicletta e dovevano accudire a un allevamento di cani alsaziani, e aiutare anche nel lavoro dei campi. Era un collegio di studenti ebrei che erano stati sfollati da Londra perché c'erano bombardamenti e per quelli lì era zona abbastanza sicura. E c'era questo siciliano che andava ogni giorno a curare questi cani e fare dei lavori, e conoscendo il castello sapeva che in una delle torri c'era la campana e poteva portarla via. Siccome la Chiesa aveva bisogno della campana non ci pensava due volte e è andato e tornato in campo con questa magnifica campana nascosta sotto il mantello.

Gareth White: Incredibile.

Sonia Ferlito: Beh, comunque la campana era a disposizione ormai della Chiesa.

[...]

Gareth White: Quindi perché era importante costruire questa chiesa nata da questa collaborazione di tutti i membri del campo?

Sonia Ferlito: Perché praticamente era pronta ad accogliere la devozione di quelli che volevano entrare raccogliersi con i loro pensieri e cercare di dare un senso alla loro vita. Un momento, forse, un posto dove potevano raccogliersi un attimo. Però non trascurava neanche i lavori del teatro che continuavano ad andare avanti, perché la compagnia teatrale si riuniva si riuniva ogni sera dopo cena. E si impostavano nuove commedie, si discutevano i programmi, si cercavano motivi per risollevare il morale.

Gareth White: Quanto spesso facevano questi queste recitazioni?

Sonia Ferlito: E non lo so però dice, erano molti che partecipavano e questo serviva per evitare che mio padre che si abbruttissero nella nebbia, nella noia nel non fare, perché alla fine se il tuo cervello non lavora ti spegni. Sì, è così, perché lo vediamo noi. Se non facciamo qualcosa che ci aiuta a ragionare e a riflettere... Ti spegni. Quindi il lavoro nelle farm non era sufficiente. Perché... e poi c'era anche il pericolo che si ghettizzassero. Tutti quelli che lavoravano in una farm erano tutti amici e non parlavano con gli altri; invece, se la potevano aprire cioè facendo organizzare una recita o un teatro, la cosa si allargava, il contatto si allargava. Non si hanno solamente il gruppetto che lavorava e erano amici solo quelli, no? Perché altrimenti succedeva che si formassero questi gruppi delle stesse origini tutti i siciliani tutti calabresi tutti napoletani invece di amalgamarsi.

Gareth White: E quindi all'interno del campo non c'erano poi queste divisioni fra quelli del Nord e quelli del Sud...

Sonia Ferlito: Erano persone o comunque c'erano molti analfabeti. Infatti, c'è stato poi un periodo che i gallesi hanno cercato di istruirli, dargli un minimo di educazione, perché tu pensa, siamo negli anni 40 quindi l'analfabetismo era abbondante, c'era tanto analfabetismo. La scolarizzazione per qualcuno è rimasta forse fino alla terza elementare; quindi, fino a 9 anni ma qualcuno cioè la maggior parte erano analfabeti.

Gareth White: Okay. E quindi i gallesi hanno deciso di insegnare a loro delle competenze.

Sonia Ferlito: Eh sì.

Gareth White: Però per il resto tuo padre non ha avuto impressioni negative verso i meridionali...

Sonia Ferlito: Sì e no. Perché con qualcuno proprio non legava perché aveva una mentalità completamente diversa del sud del nord.

Gareth White: Ok però non possiamo dire che aveva questa visione di non lo so, che preferiva stare con solo uno del nord...

Sonia Ferlito: No no. Lui poi forse era più di carattere, perché alla fine mio padre anche nei raduni è rimasto veramente amico di persone di Roma, di Napoli. Io mi ricordo che siamo andati a trovare degli amici che erano a Formia. Insomma. Poi dipende dal carattere se uno anche del Nord, non collima col tuo carattere non ci vai d'accordo.

Gareth White: Ok. E poi pensando ai rapporti inter-italiani se possiamo chiamarli così ... Mi ricordo che hai detto che tuo padre dopo un periodo dove ha lavorato nei campi del Galles, no, [...] che è stato visto è stato notato da un forse maresciallo dove ha visto le sue capacità artistiche e poi è stato tenuto da parte per fare lavoretti solo all'interno del campo.

Sonia Ferlito: Sì alla fine sì, nell'ufficio, prima gli avevano dato degli incarichi anche nelle cucine, aiutare a servire, a rassettare la cucina e poi nell'ufficio. Insomma, lui preferiva,

perché mio padre non aveva una grande energia come lavoratore, non era così forte. Quindi il fatto di rimanere in ufficio per lui è importante.

Gareth White: Cosa faceva in ufficio? Aiutava chi gestiva il campo?

Sonia Ferlito: E guarda, questo non me lo ricordo. Vorrei riguardare ... beh, poi insomma anche il lavoro della organizzazione del teatro, delle scritte...

Gareth White: Ok. E poi mi hai detto tu che ha lavorato anche nella biblioteca del campo.

Sonia Ferlito: Sì, esatto stavo guardando se trovavo... devo fermarmi un attimo. Eh, guarda, sono talmente tanti gli appunti che dovrei...

Gareth White: [...] Ma hai detto qualcosa di come veniva visto fuori dagli altri italiani per il fatto che lui lavorava sempre nel campo e non nei campi?

Sonia Ferlito: Non usciva. Comunque io penso che la cosa sia stata accettata bene perché con il gruppo di amici ha sempre avuto un buon rapporto, è sempre stato rispettato. [...]

Gareth White: i compagni fino alla fine erano sempre quelli famoso, Scarante, Benetti, quelli dei raduni?

Sonia Ferlito: Sì perché è stato un grande lavoro quello di ritrovare dopo la guerra, di ritrovare... negli anni Settanta casuale, il campo era 70 nell'anno 70, mio padre aveva pensato di ricercare tutti i suoi compagni. Quindi è stata proprio una corsa, una ricerca magari, mandava le lettere al comune dicendo io sto cercando questa persona, mi aiutate a trovarla. E poi mi ricordo che in macchina, io, mia mamma e il papà andavamo a questo indirizzo che ci davano a cercare questo amico. Quando piano piano li ha trovati parecchi poi ognuno dice "ma guarda, io conosco, questo ci penso io a rintracciarlo e il gruppo si è formato. E ai primi raduni c'ero anch'io con mia mamma. Ed era piacevole vedere tutti questi che si commuovevano, avevano tanti ricordi in comune. E si è andati avanti per parecchi anni perché poi dopo cosa è successo passava il tempo, cominciava uno era morto purtroppo quindi quell'anno non c'era, l'altro nell'anno successivo, ne mancava un altro. Alla fine, mio padre disse 'No sentite, non facciamolo più perché diventa una sofferenza' perché ogni anno ne manca qualcuno e quindi hanno smesso di farlo.

Gareth White: E sempre intorno agli anni 90.

[...]

e quindi si vede che queste comunità che sono nate all'interno del campo si sono date da fare con questi progetti di costruire chiese, costruire squadre di calcio e tornei. Anche la Chiesa per non abbruttirsi ma anche per dare un valore forse alle loro comunità.

Sonia Ferlito: Sì anche certo, per lasciare un segno.

Gareth White: Una traccia... io sono qui e questo è il mio lavoro. E mi fa venire in mente un altro progetto di cui so che abbiamo parlato, il giornale del campo. E mi ricordo che mi

hai anche fatto vedere delle foto dei giornali che producevano. Cos'erano questi giornali? Di cosa parlavano?

Sonia Ferlito: Ma c'erano anche delle ricerche questi giornali. Te lo faccio vedere un attimo...

Gareth White: Grazie.

Sonia Ferlito: Questo è il 18 agosto forse... però, vedi, il Corriere del Sabato, posta tra i campi, sezione Messaggi. C'erano in varie sezioni ricerche anche. E poi il lutto, il campo 43, lutto al 144. E poi il notiziario come qua, cronaca teatrale del campo 100 quindi anche il campo 100 faceva dei teatri. Infatti, c'è una foto dove si vede che stava suonando la fisarmonica. Al campo 74 calcio, al grazioso campo della 722 si è svolto l'interessante incontro tra la 722 e 74, riportando così la vittoria, arbitraggio del tenente Suder, è stato veramente ottimo. Proprio la cronaca. Poi la musica, intrattenimento musicale alla 582, di campi ce n'erano una moltitudine. Programma musicale al 91. Alla 606 notizie... e poi notizie al campo 70, e questo il loro. Il teatro in questo ultimo anno, la nostra filodrammatica ha saputo preparare e rappresentare parecchi lavori. Firmato 'Uno del campo,' non si sa chi l'ha scritto. Musica perché la nostra orchestrina diretta dall'??? è composta da tutti i vari nomi dei prigionieri. Sport, nello sport, il nostro campo può ben definirsi tra i primi con le sue partite di pallone, pallavolo, bocce, eccetera. Poi le serate musicali. E poi in ????? parlava del teatro. Scenografi Ferlito e Giocondo. E poi tutto l'elenco di quello che rappresentava, sarà Il Fantasma di Grand Hotel, La Rosa di Gerico, eccetera, La Nemica, insomma erano delle cronache. Questo è una cosa importante, un reperto importante, non dice dove viene fatto ma comunque c'era la pagina dei passatempo, parole crociate, notizie dall'Italia anche...

Gareth White: E quindi per il fatto che c'erano anche altri campi menzionati in questo giornale possiamo anche dire che alla fine mi sembra un giornale britannico a tutti gli effetti scritti forse dai prigionieri di guerra?

Sonia Ferlito: Ma vedi il *Corriere del Sabato* e quindi anno quarto, numero 10 dove raccontava anche la fine delle ostilità, come la dichiarazione del presidente Truman, l'Unione Sovietica. Quindi anche la parte politica di parte. Quello che succedeva nel mondo.

Gareth White: Secondo te era anche un giornale che usciva regolarmente?

Sonia Ferlito: Penso di sì perché dice già il numero dieci, anno quarto anno quarto siamo nel 45

Gareth White: quindi dal 41.

Sonia Ferlito: Dal 41. Numero 10, quindi qui siamo ad agosto e il numero 10. Quindi non è neanche forse che sia stato bimensile? Non lo so

Gareth White: Ma comunque la decima edizione di questo giornale

Sonia Ferlito: è un reperto questo veramente...

Gareth White: È un miracolo che ce l'hai ancora.

Sonia Ferlito: Sì e questo è l'originale proprio...

Gareth White: Tuo padre ha conservato molti documenti, molte memorie del suo tempo in Galles.

Sonia Ferlito: Sì, e anche disegni di schizzi delle scenografie.

Gareth White: Ah sì, mi ricordo che mi hai fatto vedere quel quadro forse per uno dei... una delle recitazioni teatrali, anche cose un po' tipo fumetti.

Sonia Ferlito: Sì, fumetti certo, guarda. Sì, questo penso che questo è troppo. È simpaticissimo. Vedrai perché allora. Questo qui era una rivista musicale, non so se riesci a vedere... Rivista di Calogero che era una rivista musicale in due atti 20 quadri. Hanno collaborato per la musica e componenti l'orchestra Aurora, trucco Ferlito, scene Ferlito e Giocondo, costumi Curelli, Troiano e Tallone, suggeritore Bonazzi eccetera. È bello, eh?

Gareth White: Bellissimo. [...] Ok allora avrai l'ultima domanda perché penso di aver ricostruito tutti i passi.

Gareth White: l'ultima domanda che vorrei farti è la visione di tuo padre nei confronti del fascismo di Mussolini. Di questo abbiamo parlato brevemente [...] delle delusioni dei ragazzi che dovevano conquistare il mondo.

Sonia Ferlito: Certo

Gareth White: Ma di Mussolini come diceva?

Sonia Ferlito: E sai che c'era. Chissà se lo trovo. C'era una presa in giro di Mussolini. Chissà se lo trovo. Perché per loro era quello che gli aveva distrutto la vita, comunque, perché 'sti sogni di gloria aveva mandato questi ragazzi non preparati allo sbaraglio. Questo eventualmente te lo trovo. Questo che parla della French Café. L'ho visto un momento fa, ora l'ho perso. Praticamente era con le iniziali di Mussolini, ah ecco! Praticamente in quei giorni tra i prigionieri c'era uno strano anagramma che si ignorava chi l'avesse divulgato, né da quale fonte arrivasse. Era praticamente l'anagramma dalle lettere Mussolini, lettera per lettera avevano messo delle parole Allora Mussolini M morirai ucciso senza sepoltura odiato lasciando l'Italia nazione infelice. Capito? L'hai seguita?

Gareth White: Morirai Ucciso...

Sonia Ferlito: Senza Sepoltura Odiato Lasciando l'Italia Nazione Infelice.

Gareth White: Quindi era una visione molto molto...

Sonia Ferlito: Era la fine settembre 43, quindi era ancora in vita. Voleva essere una tragica profezia, dice mio padre.

2.3: Interview with Flavio and Bianca-Laura Benetti

Gareth White: Per iniziare vorrei fare un quadro molto generale. So che prima abbiamo parlato del suo movimento dalla Tunisia a Glasgow in Scozia. Ma quali erano i passi che ha fatto dall'Italia in Africa per poi trovarsi in mezzo alle colline del Galles?

Flavio Benetti: E allora, lui era militare di leva, sai cosa vuol dire militare di leva, a Bari, in ???, perché lui era meccanico diciamo. Quindi aggiustava motori, faceva una cosa del genere. Da lì, quando è scoppiata la guerra, è stato mandato in Libia. Praticamente subito, appena arrivato c'è stata la ritirata di Libia, di Tripoli. E sono andati a finire all'aeroporto di Cartagine, l'aeroporto militare di Cartagine che si chiama Ouina, El Aouina, qualcosa del genere. Lì sono stati stazionari, sono stati lì un po' di tempo, tanto è vero che mio padre ha conosciuto mia madre. Nel frattempo...

[...]

Flavio Benetti: Perché mio nonno che era stato dalla Sicilia alla base tunisina, tutte le volte che vedeva questi ragazzi militari e sapeva che andavano a finire in prigionia di guerra...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Perché loro sapevano già che...

Flavio Benetti: Parlavano italiano. E ora mio nonno: 'vieni, vieni, che ti faccio gli spaghetti.' Quindi moltissimi ragazzi sono entrati in casa nostra e hanno conosciuto la famiglia che si chiamava famiglia Cusumano, Cusumano.

Gareth White: Ok.

Flavio Benetti: Mio padre e mia madre si sono innamorati. Quando lui sapeva che doveva partire perché gli inglesi lo stavano imbarcando per andare in Inghilterra.

Bianca Laura Benetti: In Gran Bretagna.

Flavio Benetti: In Gran Bretagna, ha chiesto a mio nonno se poteva continuare a scriversi [...] con mia madre, con nostra madre. e quindi si sono scritti per tutto il tempo della guerra. Finita la guerra, non sono stati rimpatriati tutti subito. Infatti, mio padre è rimpatriato nel 46 non nel 45. Ha dovuto aspettare che mia mamma lo raggiungesse perché sai, la Tunisia era sopra la Francia...

Bianca Laura Benetti: La Tunisia era colonia francese.

Flavio Benetti: Una colonia francese. Quindi con l'Italia, che era stata...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Nemica.

Flavio Benetti: Fascista, era un nemico. E quindi hanno dovuto fare molte richieste e molte domande per potere venire in Italia. E si sono sposati il 15 settembre nel quaranta...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Sette...

Flavio Benetti: 47. è questo il percorso generale.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Cioè, in mezzo a questa storia di prigionia che ci siamo anche noi nel senso che questa ritirata di Tripoli, questo fatto che gli inglesi li avessero fermati in questo aeroporto, ha permesso a mio papà di conoscere la nostra mamma, quindi...

Flavio Benetti: Scusa un attimo se ti interrompo... Mio nonno era custode di una villa che era nel porto, le rovine del porto unico di Cartagine [...] Dopo, quando sono stati imbarcati, mi raccontava mio padre, che sono stati praticamente denudati e spruzzati di antiparassitari e di quant'altro.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Sono stati spogliati e disinfettati completamente.

Flavio Benetti: Avevano paura delle cimici.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Dei pidocchi...

Flavio Benetti: Dei pidocchi, soprattutto i pidocchi. Dopo di che in mare nella nave inglese sono andati a Glasgow.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Quindi dalla Tunisia sono andati direttamente a Glasgow.

Gareth White: E durante questo viaggio dalla Tunisia a Glasgow, oltre al fatto che sono stati poi denudati e disinfettanti, se vogliamo, quali erano le condizioni? Perché ho letto che per alcuni c'erano condizioni quasi disumane, non so se...

Flavio Benetti: No no, assolutamente no. Non ha mai parlato di queste condizioni disumane. Anzi, ti dirò che quando è finita la guerra, loro erano trattati molto bene nel senso che non avevano mai patito la fame. Perché gli americani davano alla Gran Bretagna tutto quanto serviva per mantenere i prigionieri. Addirittura, parlava delle posate, dei biscotti, i famosi biscotti che dopo sono diventate le colonnine della Chiesa.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Sai quel candelabro che io ti ho mandato la fotografia? Il candelabro che io ti ho mandato la fotografia è fatto con il materiale delle scatole dei biscotti, che loro ricevevano dall'America. E sì, ecco, non hanno mai patito la fame, non hanno mai ... non si sono mai lamentati, capito? Loro... devo dire che, tutto sommato, loro erano prigionieri di un campo di lavoro ma non era un campo come...

Flavio Benetti: Lo vedi? Ne ha fatte una decina di queste. Tantissime. Guarda il dietro come sono fatti.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Del legno.

Gareth White: Incredibile

Bianca Laura Benetti: Adesso nella chiesetta ce ne dovrebbero essere...

Flavio Benetti: Se ce ne sono ancora...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Se ce ne sono ancora...

Flavio Benetti: Ed era dipinto in tinta ora, porporina la chiamiamo noi. Sai quella...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Dorato era. Ritorniamo, forse siamo andati un po' fuori.

Gareth White: No, [...]

Flavio Benetti: E quindi le condizioni, tutto sommato, erano buone. E durante il viaggio verso la Scozia sono stati trattati direi bene.

Bianca Laura Benetti: E non abbiamo mai sentito, hai capito?

Flavio Benetti: Ma nessuno di quelli... Quando facevamo dei raduni nessuno ha mai parlato male.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Quando ci trovavamo tutti insieme, anche agli altri prigionieri, che magari noi i familiari ascoltavamo l'esperienza di uno o dell'altro che noi non abbiamo mai sentito parlare male. Anzi come tu forse saprai, ci sono stati anche dei prigionieri che stavano presso le case degli agricoltori e vivevano lì, non facevano ritorno al campo alla sera.

Flavio Benetti: Scusa, un'altra cosa importante. Quei cento che si sono trovati quel famoso anno, erano tutto lo staff del campo. Perché quelli, molti altri, perché era una migliaia, erano 1.500 mi sembra... Gli altri erano assegnati alle fattorie e quindi saltuariamente, pochissime volte erano in campo. Mentre mio padre, Ferlito, Scarante e gli altri era lo staff del campo che teneva, faceva, preparava...

Bianca Laura Benetti: La cucina, cucinava...

Flavio Benetti: E solo a volte venivano chiamati per andare in certe campagne lì attorno a Henllan per aiutare la...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Non so, per la raccolta delle patate ad esempio. Mi ricordo che mio padre raccontava della raccolta delle patate. Mentre invece magari persone che già prima che la famiglia era agricoltore, ad esempio, che avevano quindi esperienza in agricoltura vivevano anche nelle fattorie. Proprio con la gente del posto. Tant'è che poi tu lo saprai già ci sono stati anche tanti prigionieri, raccontava nostro padre, che avevano saputo che durante la guerra avevano perso le famiglie, avevano le case distrutte, molti sono rimasti da subito fino a lì. Altri sono tornati a casa e poi sono ritornati in Galles. Questo è il ricordo che abbiamo insomma dei rapporti...

Gareth White: Sì, infatti c'è qualcuno delle storie degli italiani che ho trovato in Galles rispecchia queste tendenze.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Bravo, esatto.

Gareth White: Quelli che poi sono tornati e si sono trovati in un'Italia completamente cambiata, e poi sono tornati tutti in Galles.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Non avevano più affetti e non avevano più nessuno e sono tornati.

Flavio Benetti: Oppure la situazione economica era molto molto molto bassa e hanno detto no, forse là ho un futuro...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Ho una possibilità, un futuro. Molti perché si erano innamorati delle figlie, hai capito? Oppure perché probabilmente, in questo mio pensiero, si erano anche affezionate a queste persone che li avevano lì in casa con loro. E quindi hanno trovato una piccola famiglia. Potrebbe essere anche questo ecco.

Gareth White: Okay tornerò a questo fra un po'. Ma vorrei poi passare dalla Scozia al Galles. Quindi sappiamo che intorno al 1941 possiamo dire 42...

Bianca Laura Benetti: 41, 42 quando c'è stata la ritirata di Tripoli, non... abbiamo dei miei ricordi un po' sfuocati...

Flavio Benetti: Ho fatto delle ricerche ieri sera. La disfatta dell'esercito italiano e tedesco-italiano è stata nel '42. E presumibilmente, mio padre è partito per l'Inghilterra nel '43. Come ti dicevo presumibilmente in primavera perché quando sono stati nello stadio di Glasgow.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Di Glasgow.

Flavio Benetti: Di Glasgow, lo stadio di Glasgow, non hanno visto la notte. Hanno sempre visto del chiarore. Per quello che dico che primavera o inizio estate. Tra quello lì e andare a Henllan, quello non lo so, ma saranno stati...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Non abbiamo notizie...

Flavio Benetti: Coi camion, normalmente. Glasgow è stato il posto dove sono sbarcati. Sono stati una notte sola dentro lo stadio e molto probabilmente il giorno dopo sono stati messi su dei camion. Ma guarda che i campi di prigionia erano più di 200 250 mi sembra tutto e tutta in Gran Bretagna.

Gareth White: Sì ho visto qualcosa oggi che forse c'erano quasi 1000 campi in totale

Flavio Benetti: No, ti dico di italiani...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Parliamo adesso parliamo di ...

Flavio Benetti: Per esempio noi, in un raduno, ne abbiamo trovato, abbiamo conosciuto dei prigionieri che erano stati alle Isole Orcadi sopra la Scozia e ti racconterò la loro storia...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Ti scriverà la loro storia...

Flavio Benetti: È un po' più triste di quella del campo 70.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Però, Flavio raccontagli che... però loro non hanno ... fino a che c'è stata la guerra non hanno mai patito la fame.

Flavio Benetti: Anzi.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Ti volevamo aggiungere quest'altra cosa.

Flavio Benetti: Finita la guerra, Non sono più ... alle sovvenzioni

Bianca Laura Benetti: ***dell'America, dai ??? fatti dall'America.

Flavio Benetti: Che lì hanno sofferto un po'.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Ha sofferto un po' la fame, capito, perché non è stato immediato, finita la guerra loro non sono stati rimpatriati immediatamente.

Flavio Benetti: Ci ha voluto un po' di tempo per organizzare il rientro, insomma. Ascolta una cosa. Lo sapevi che durante la guerra l'unica cosa che non era tesserato in Inghilterra era il pane?

Gareth White: Mmm... non lo sapevo questo.

Flavio Benetti: Ecco questo è un aneddoto che ti racconterò che è molto divertente, te lo scriverò.

Gareth White: Grazie, faccio una nota di questo.

Flavio Benetti: Tre pagnotte di pane.

Gareth White: [...] Poi sappiamo che a un certo punto poi vostro padre è arrivato a Henllan, dove ha trovato, abbiamo detto forse mille prigionieri in questo posto in mezzo al nulla. [...] com'era la vita nel campo fra gli altri italiani?

Flavio Benetti: Guarda che si sono trovati benissimo! Aveva fatto il campo da tennis, ha fatto il campo da bocce. Hanno messo a posto anche la chiesetta. Non è che sono stati lì a piangersi addosso. Hanno capito che non c'era niente da fare, avevano il [collo?] di essere stati prigionieri; quindi, tutte le persone che sono chiuse in un campo penso che si trovino...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Però una condizione triste, certo, per loro hanno cercato anche di

tenersi. Non so, io ho un portasigarette fatto da mio papà con le lattine. Facevano ... un anello fatto da mio papà sempre con materiale di fortuna. Non so se lo sai, ma loro avevano anche organizzato una compagnia teatrale, nel senso che facevano le commedie e chiaramente gli uomini si travestivano da donne perché mancava il soggetto femminile.

Bianca Laura Benetti: E poi va bene, tutto il lavoro che ha fatto Mario Ferlito per dipingere la Chiesa con colori di fortuna. Ecco c'erano ad esempio, non so se lo sai, ma ad esempio i piemontesi [...] ha(nno) una grande tradizione di bocce, il gioco delle bocce. E quindi avevano organizzato il campo di bocce, facevano dei tornei il campo da tennis.

Flavio Benetti: Poi c'era una squadra di calcio.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Avevano la squadra di calcio

Flavio Benetti: Ti dico che nei raduni si rideva.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Sì quando ci si ritrovava perché c'erano dei bei ricordi, hai capito? non...

Flavio Benetti: Nessuno si è mai lamentato del genere. Chiaramente erano...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Erano prigionieri...

Flavio Benetti: Costretti a stare lì, non avevano le loro famiglie vicine. Però rispetto a quelle persone che sono andati in India o quelle che sono andate in Sudafrica. Sono stati trattati molto bene.

Gareth White: Ok e...

Bianca Laura Benetti: [...] di loro aveva delle storie da raccontare. Quindi per loro probabilmente sono sempre state belle cose, quelle di ritrovarsi. perché erano tutti ragazzi molto giovani come avrai avuto modo di scoprire, e hanno vissuto una parte della loro gioventù...

Flavio Benetti: Gran parte della loro gioventù, perché praticamente tra militare, prigionia e rientro ritardato, siamo sui 6 - 7 anni.

Bianca Laura Benetti: C'è stata molta gente che ha passato via da casa 6 - 7 anni.

Gareth White: Ok, e fra questi tornei sportivi, anche il teatro, cosa faceva vostro padre? partecipava in queste iniziative?

Flavio Benetti: No. Era una persona molto riservata e molto timida.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Molto timido, molto riservato.

Flavio Benetti: Giocava a bocce però.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Giocava a bocce.

Flavio Benetti: Ti racconterò un altro anello...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Una storia...

Flavio Benetti: Delle bocce. Ricordatelo.

Gareth White: Ok. E secondo voi perché era talmente importante dare queste possibilità, cioè creare questi tornei, fare questi spettacoli teatrali, perché era talmente importante?

Bianca Laura Benetti: Beh, per impegnare il tempo, presumo.

Flavio Benetti: Non pensare troppo a quello che... Dal posto dove erano...

Bianca Laura Benetti: A volte, non so, Flavio mi raccontava che nostro padre era meccanico, ma non di macchina. Però una volta ha aiutato un agricoltore che gli si era rotto il trattore, la cinghia del trattore...

Flavio Benetti: Ecco un altro anello.

Bianca Laura Benetti: E lui l'ha aiutato a metterlo a posto. Facevano i cestini di vimini

Flavio Benetti: Mah, è troppo in avanti. Dopo lo racconto più...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Dopo lui ti racconterà che lui ne sa di più..
[....]

Gareth White: Di impegnare il tempo sicuramente c'è un motivo o forse anche per costruire una specie di vita quotidiana?

Bianca Laura Benetti: Certo, per riempire la quotidianità.

Gareth White: Ok. Sicuramente. (Sonia) Ferlito poi mi ha parlato anche di altre iniziative, forse una scuola di lingue dove studiavano l'inglese. Un giornale del campo, forse...

Flavio Benetti: Pochissimi... pochissimi sono venuti fuori sapendo l'inglese, era una specie di rifiuto. ...Come si può dire...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Una specie di protesta, forse. Forse hanno avuto più possibilità di imparare qualcosa quelli che hanno vissuto a stretto contatto con le famiglie.

Flavio Benetti: Sai cosa... Quello che, per esempio, quello che ha fatto da interprete quando è venuto Mr Jones a Ferrara, Scarante, ha imparato l'inglese perché lui aveva una fabbrica di candele. Le candele... le vendeva non solo al Vaticano ma le vendeva dappertutto e quindi girava e quindi ha imparato l'inglese per quello. Un altro che è di Bologna che si chiama Merli, anche lui [...]

Bianca Laura Benetti: Faceva l'agente di commercio quindi...

Flavio Benetti: Faceva il commercio, quindi girava tutta l'Europa.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Gareth, si può dire che per certi prigionieri quel po' di inglese che avevano imparato, e mi sento di dire che potrebbe essergli stato utile poi per la loro vita lavorativa successiva.

Flavio Benetti: Che hanno voluto imparare.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Che hanno voluto imparare, hai capito? Magari che hanno voluto imparare perché erano predisposti, è tornato utile sapere l'inglese perché anche se erano altri tempi, comunque, si sa che l'inglese è sempre stato una lingua un po' internazionale. Quindi c'è stato chi ha avuto dei vantaggi...

Flavio Benetti: Purtroppo, nostro padre no.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Nostro padre no.

Gareth White: Quindi l'inglese no. I tornei, un po' di bocce ogni tanto. ho sentito anche di un giornale del campo...

Bianca Laura Benetti: No. non lo sapevo...

Flavio Benetti: Non sappiamo di un giornale.

Gareth White: Ok, quindi il giornale possiamo dire di no. Ma la Chiesa? La Chiesa è un punto comune che... di cui parlo sia con gli italiani in Italia ma anche gli italiani in Galles. E a partire dalla costruzione, perché mi hanno raccontato il modo in cui tutti hanno collaborato [...] Vostro padre ha lavorato anche lui sulla costruzione?

Flavio Benetti: Aveva una grandissima manualità.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Aveva molta manualità, sapeva...

Flavio Benetti: Era molto bravo. Praticamente lavorava in ferro perché la sua scuola...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Aveva un indirizzo sul materiale del ferro più che del legno.

Flavio Benetti: Era un lavoro. La squadra 'avviamento al lavoro' si chiama che allora corrisponde più o meno alla nostra diploma di adesso. Ed è voluto, era molto, aveva le mani d'oro...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Riusciva a [fare??], aveva dalle buone mani per fare tante cose. Quindi, come ti dicevo, [...] a casa ho una cornice fatta in legno di colori diversi che mio papà non so se da solo o con l'aiuto di altri prigionieri, amici prigionieri, ha fatto dove teneva la fotografia di mia mamma. Perché adesso questa è una cosa personale però te la dico volentieri chiaramente quando lui era prigioniero, era già fidanzato con mia mamma e c'è stato un grandissimo scambio di fotografie e di lettere per cui noi abbiamo anche tanto materiale del campo, di quando era lì nel campo anche per questo motivo. E quindi

lui aveva fatto questo portafotografie che io conservo ancora dove c'era questa bella foto di mia mamma che era in bianco e nero dipinta poi dal fotografo, perché lei gli aveva scritto dietro gli aveva scritto al fotografo i colori, e c'era una dedica di mia mamma -c'è ancora, un po' sbiadita, una dedica di mia mamma su questa foto che probabilmente mio papà ha fatto incorniciare. Però questa cornice l'ha fatta nel campo. Non so se con l'aiuto di qualcuno perché appunto era in legno e non era la sua specialità, il legno ma...

Flavio Benetti: Quando uscivano per lavorare, ad esempio raccoglievano del materiale che poi trasformavano dentro il campo.... e rubavano...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Non è che lo rubassero, però se vedevano del materiale da poter lavorare, poi non so con quali attrezzi però magari qualcosa forse gli veniva anche messo a disposizione dalle famiglie.

Flavio Benetti: No no, anche dai meccanici del campo...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Anche dai meccanici del campo dalle guardie.

Flavio Benetti: Nel campo c'erano gli autisti che portavano in giro col camion. C'era un'officina quindi senz'altro lasciavano fare qualcosa, hai capito?

Gareth White: Ok quindi tutto sommato che hanno lavorato tutti insieme raccogliendo tutti questi materiali. Vostro padre con la sua manualità che lavorava con il ferro, è stato molto attivo a produrre le cose anche per la Chiesa immagino... avrà costruito...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Sì, certo. Perché ad esempio e adesso non so cosa sia successo quando loro sono venuti lì con i candelabri perché c'erano ancora questi candelabri...

Flavio Benetti: Erano diversi. Hai visto nel mio racconto? La prima chiesa che hanno trovato era tutta diversa. Guardaci bene, nella foto era diversa l'altare. Non era come quello - a parte il dipinto di Ferlito. Per esempio, l'altare costruito allora con del cemento. E dopo l'hanno dipinto come se fosse marmo.

Gareth White: Ah, ho capito...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Poi l'hanno fatto l'hanno fatto sembrare marmo, ma non era marmo.

Flavio Benetti: Le colonnine che ci sono con la ricimatura così, che sembra marmo, è tutta lata. Quindi si sono industriati per trovare i colori...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Si son impegnati anche per trovare i colori...

Flavio Benetti: Trovare il dell'ultima cena che c'è nell'abside.

Gareth White: E c'era una leggenda a proposito di questo disegno non del Ferlito, che hanno usato i prigionieri come modelli?

Flavio Benetti: Erano loro.

Gareth White: Erano i prigionieri? Ah, okay, mi sembrava... Ok quindi queste con

Flavio Benetti: La barba non ce l'avevano però se la sono inventati, l'hanno aggiunta, ma i profili sono di loro.

Gareth White: Ok benissimo. E poi a livello di praticare la religione era una cosa che faceva nostro padre?

Flavio Benetti: Certo! C'era il padre Italo Padovan

Bianca Laura Benetti: Avevano un prete...

Flavio Benetti: Avevano un prete e avevano un dottore italiano.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Nel campo c'erano prigionieri, un prete e un dottore, un medico italiano.

Flavio Benetti: ...Di Grosseto, tra l'altro, un toscano che però era un ostetrico.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Era uno di quelli che faceva nascere bambini tra l'altro...

Flavio Benetti: Se non erano incinte, non sapeva... comunque era un medico...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Era sempre un medico, era specializzato in un'altra cosa, però era sempre un medico.

Flavio Benetti: Di fatto, ti faccio una parentesi. Per il primo raduno, lui era già malato. E aveva preso la camera di fronte alla stazione dove si sono trovati tutti i prigionieri e prima di scendere con sua moglie diceva 'Guarda i miei ragazzi, adesso vado là in mezzo con loro.'

Bianca Laura Benetti: Perché lui era più anziano rispetto ai prigionieri, lui era più anziano...

Flavio Benetti: E durante l'anno è morto. e quindi non ha fatto, non ha fatto altri raduni, è stato sicuramente quello...

Gareth White: Ma anche lui poi è stato catturato o era già in Galles prima?

Bianca Laura Benetti: Questo non ce lo ricordiamo, ce lo siamo chiesto. Sai ce non lo ricordiamo...

Flavio Benetti: Perché probabilmente era un...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Secondo me era un medico che era andato comunque a fare la guerra, hai capito?

Flavio Benetti: Come il prete, il cappellano Don Italo Padovan, che era assieme alla truppa.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Seguiva i soldati che erano persone con ...

Flavio Benetti: Lo sai, ogni compagnia aveva un prete e un dottore.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Hai capito? I soldati...

Flavio Benetti: E ave(vano?) il sergente, il tenente capitano, avevano sempre due persone di riferimento.

Bianca Laura Benetti: E Gareth, in relazione alla religione, diciamo, alla nostra religione cattolica. Ti volevo dire che quando loro si ritrovavano in questi raduni, trovavano sempre modo di fare dire una messa tutti insieme.

Flavio Benetti: E per i primi ...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Prima del pranzo, hai capito, prima del pranzo. Loro avevano l'abitudine di dire questa messa e i primi anni c'era proprio il prete che era con loro nel campo

Gareth White: Che era il Padovan...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Che era il parroco del campo. Poi dopo ci siamo... abbiamo chiesto ai parroci che erano lì, avevano delle chiese vicino a dove era il ristorante, capito? ok e veniva detta questa Messa e mio papà diceva la messa al campo perché veniva detta all'aperto. Quando ci sono stati disponibili i candelabri venivano messi, venivano usati per la messa. E poi purtroppo negli anni venivano sempre ricordati i nomi dei prigionieri che erano mancati, che non c'erano più, che erano morti.

Flavio Benetti: Di cui avevamo notizie, perché' poi...

Bianca Laura Benetti: di cui avevamo notizie...

[...]

Gareth White: Quindi la religione era una cosa molto importante...

Bianca Laura Benetti: E così questo che ti volevamo dire...

Gareth White: Capisco molto chiaramente. Ma stavo pensando fra le figure che avete menzionato, c'è il prete Padovan, il Dottore. Ma poi gli altri italiani che lavorano come personale del campo, come venivano visti questi italiani che lavoravano...

Flavio Benetti: Te lo volevo scrivere!

Gareth White: Cavolo!

Flavio Benetti: Qualcuno te ne anticipo brevemente. Il capitano, il capitano del campo, inglese, ha detto a Crescini che era il capo dei prigionieri italiani, e gli ha detto se metto dentro un hangar cinque prigionieri italiani con cinque soldati inglesi, e li chiudo lì per un paio d'ore, quando riaprono... gli italiani nudi, in mutande, ecco, e gli inglesi vestiti tutto. Quando riapro, gli italiani si sono vestiti e gli inglesi... Questo è un anello dicevano che... Per dirti, era... una certa fratellanza c'era.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Soprattutto però, Gareth, fu una cosa che io ricordo che ti voglio dire. Perché come tu sai l'Italia è molto grande e ogni regione è molto diversa dalle altre. Diciamo che alla fine quando noi ci si trovava con questi raduni, eravamo quasi la maggior parte erano prigionieri del nord Italia. Per dire, non c'erano e non c'erano siciliani perché nostro padre ci raccontava che loro erano molto isolati, cioè c'era una un...

Flavio Benetti: Facevano un gruppo a sé...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Facevano un gruppo a sé. c'era la capanna, stavano insieme nella stessa baracca, hai capito? c'era la baracca dei sardi, la baracca dei siciliani...

Flavio Benetti: Dei calabresi...

Bianca Laura Benetti: O quella dei calabresi...

Flavio Benetti: Però, un calabrese c'era...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Un calabrese...

Flavio Benetti: Perché era andato, era sposato a Spoleto in Umbria...

Bianca Laura Benetti: E poi ad esempio [...] gli ultimi anni erano riusciti anche a trovare che però non è riuscito a venire un signore di Cefalù; quindi, probabilmente non era una chiusura totale. Però ti posso assicurare che la maggior parte dei prigionieri che partecipavano, che hanno voluto rivivere questa cosa di cui ti stiamo parlando. E a parte Scarante che era di Roma, e ce n'erano forse più di uno di Roma però c'erano delle regioni delle parti d'Italia che mancavano completamente perché loro avevano fatto, come avevano fatto del gruppo a sé non partecipavano, hai capito?

Flavio Benetti: Uno che era di Trapani, invece l'amico era amico con gli altri, perché era una persona istruita, era, lavorava in Comune che è una persona...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Aperta...

Flavio Benetti: Aperta a esperienze, non chiusa nella sua nicchia locale. Mente aperta. tra l'altro sono andato a trovarlo a casa sua a Trapani.

Gareth White: Cavolo! È sempre interessante. Perché appunto c'è questa cosa, che l'organizzazione in base alle regioni è una cosa che mi hanno portato anche gli italiani in Galles che sono del sud e quindi avevano una vita un po' diversa. Ma qualcuno mi ha anche parlato della divisione in base alla credenza politica no, fra i fascisti... i

Flavio Benetti: Delle discussioni non mancavano, hai capito? Anche nei raduni, delle discussioni non mancavano, perché gli italiani sono molto...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Bene perché poi la storia un po' dell'Italia la conosci quindi c'era chi...

Flavio Benetti: Qualcuno era di destra, era di sinistra.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Chi era per Mussolini. Comunque...

[...]

Gareth White: Però possiamo anche dire che la vita all'interno del campo era anche organizzata in base a queste divisioni no, c'è i monarchici, repubblicani, fascisti, non fascisti e tutto?

Bianca Laura Benetti: Non ne abbiamo notizia, io ti direi di no. Non abbiamo mai sentito. Abbiamo sentito tante storie divertenti, abbiamo sentito come loro si organizzavano nel tempo e queste cose qua, ma niente di come mai abbiamo sentito che siano stati come ti dicevamo né maltrattati ne...

Flavio Benetti: Anche non ci sono state delle grosse liti.

Bianca Laura Benetti: [???

Flavio Benetti: Erano in moto, anche se anche quelli che stavano in disparte non hanno detto... liti non ce n'erano.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Io penso che sarebbe stato anche visto che erano tutti comunque in una condizione di prigioniera alla finem poi ognuno poteva avere...

Gareth White: Ok perfetto. E un'altra cosa c'è sempre al riguardo forse delle discriminazioni e divisioni. Il fatto che vostro padre ha lavorato nel campo e non ha lavorato fuori del Campi con

Flavio Benetti: No, ci andava!

Bianca Laura Benetti: Ci andava anche a lavorare...

Flavio Benetti: Quando era il tempo di raccogliere le patate, andavano fuori anche loro, non tutto il campo che ...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Non tutto il campo perché magari qualcuno rimaneva nel campo per fare da mangiare...

Flavio Benetti: Mettere a posto, pulire...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Pulire le baracche, avevano dei compiti...

Flavio Benetti: Era a turno, non è che una parte usciva e una parte no...

Bianca Laura Benetti: C'era un turnover, hai capito?

Flavio Benetti: Comunque, faceva parte dello staff del campo, capisci.

Gareth White: Quindi non era...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Cioè, loro dormivano, cioè lo staff, lo capisci la parola, loro diciamo vivevano prevalentemente nel campo.

Flavio Benetti: Praticamente non dormivano mai fuori campo.

Bianca Laura Benetti: mai. Ecco, loro rientravano sempre...

Flavio Benetti: Andavano fuori la mattina, facevano quello che dovevano fare, tipo raccogliere patate o altre cose, e poi rientravano la sera...

Bianca Laura Benetti: E poi c'erano questi camion che li riportavano del campo...

Flavio Benetti: Le altre che erano assegnate alle fattorie quelle, stavano fuori...

Bianca Laura Benetti: C'erano dei lavoratori che erano assegnati, capito, che vivevano proprio con la famiglia.

Flavio Benetti: Ecco, e di quelli ne abbiamo recuperati ben pochi, perché non, praticamente non conoscevano l'ambiente del campo, diciamo che erano quasi estranei alla vita del campo.

Gareth White: Ok quindi, sì, infatti vedo forse il fatto che gli italiani che sono poi andati in Galles forse erano quelli che forse stavano più fuori.

Bianca Laura Benetti: E quello che ti dicevo. io ricordo che mio padre diceva che ci sono stati proprio dei prigionieri che sono rimasti là perché hanno trovato l'amore, in somma, hai capito? quindi...

Gareth White: Ok. Quindi a livello di lavori cioè non è che possiamo dire che c'erano proprio posti di lavoro fissi, c'è più che altro...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Loro andavano dove c'era bisogno ma...

Flavio Benetti: Anche nel campo si dava il cambio, si scambiavano i lavori, capito? A parte quelli che facevano da mangiare che erano "cuochi", diciamo in senso ???. gli altri, per ??? sono bravi tutti.

Bianca Laura Benetti: per tenere pulito...

Flavio Benetti: Per pulire i sentieri, per tagliare l'erba, per dirti... quelli lì li facevano tutti però..

Gareth White: Non è che possiamo dire che c'erano persone che poi venivano reclutate per svolgere un tale compito per tutti.

Flavio Benetti: No. Tranne i cuochi che facevano da mangiare, direi di no...

Gareth White: Ok benissimo. E vostro padre, invece? Quindi ha raccolto patate, ha aiutato quegli agricoltori, ha fatto qualche mestiere. Che cosa altro ha fatto durante la sua permanenza in Galles?

Flavio Benetti: Questo... praticamente questo. per esempio, È un anello che ti volevo raccontare ma vabbè, te l'anticipo... È andato a finire in una fattoria in cui c'era solamente il vecchio, probabilmente i figli erano in guerra e aveva un trattore che non funzionava più. e allora lui intendendosi di motori gli ha chiesto se poteva vedere cos'era il problema. ha smontato la testa del motore. E ha visto che la guarnizione non teneva più, era rovinato e non c'era più guarnizione. Ha detto, 'il problema è questo. Ce ne ha un altro nuovo? E quell'uomo gli ha detto no. Ne ho un altro, ma non è uguale. Allora mio padre, cosa ha fatto... ha tagliato quello che non andava bene e ha ???.... tagliando a fetta così e così è vedendolo una sopra l'altra.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Ha recuperato ...

Flavio Benetti: Quando ha richiuso il cilindro dentro, il motore ha funzionato. Allora questo l'anziano ha detto. 'sì, tu grande meccanico.' L'ha accolto per mangiare insieme a lui, ha mangiato a tavolo con lui.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Ha voluto ripagare tenendolo a tavola con loro. Ecco. adesso questa è una delle storie che noi ci ricordiamo, hai capito? Perché come ti dicevamo lui ricordava queste cose proprio molto positive. Questi episodi sono rimasti probabilmente anche a lui perché sono accadute cose molto più positive di altri, ma poi penso che la sua vita fosse quella di andare a lavorare. io mi ricordo che diceva che raccoglieva le patate e poi altre cose non ... hai capito...

Flavio Benetti: Cera un fosso che c'era troppo vegetazione, il fosso, scavano il fosso.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Pulivano i fossi quando pioveva.

Flavio Benetti: Mio papa aiutava...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Per il decoro...

Flavio Benetti: Per l'agricoltura, perché la Convenzione di Ginevra diceva che potevano essere usati per l'agricoltura.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Loro erano prigionieri di guerra, ma dovevano lavorare. solo per l'agricoltura per l'agricoltura insomma per aiutare. Probabilmente perché la

manodopera, i lavoratori del Galles erano tutti in guerra, quindi mancavano le persone con della forza con della forza fisica per fare dei lavori e loro erano prigionieri e loro avevano quelle caratteristiche lì chiaramente. essendo tutti ragazzi giovani, capito? Poi ripeto, si potrebbe dire che non avevano neanche convenienza a farli patire la fame, perché se loro erano in forma riuscivano a lavorare meglio, Chiaramente.

[...]

Gareth White: Signori purtroppo dovrei concludere con ultima domanda poi se mai ci sentiamo nei prossimi giorni. Ok ma vorrei finire con una domanda positiva generale, che poi vorrei pensare anche alla situazione quando poi è tornato in Italia e le sue riflessioni su Mussolini. Ma per finire in bellezza, diciamo, com'è cambiato vostro padre dopo le sue esperienze in Galles? E questo è una domanda molto ampia.

Flavio Benetti: Perché... lui era, aveva cinque fratelli e una sorella. No, aspetta, erano in sette in tutto. Allora tutti i quanti sono andati in guerra tranne il più piccolo, che a quanto suo (di militare) non è riuscito, cioè fortunatamente per lui non è andato in guerra. Sono tornati tutti a casa. La nostra era una famiglia patriarcale, sai cosa vuol dire?

Gareth White: Sì, tradizionale.

Flavio Benetti: Mio nonno ??? una persona di ???. Era un maestro di scuola elementare che allora e direi che vale di più...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Di una laurea.

Flavio Benetti: Allora. È nato nel 1800 e qualcosa... Verso la fine del 1800. Mia zia l'unica femmina era crocerossina quindi in qualche modo.

Bianca Laura Benetti: Ha partecipato alla guerra.

Flavio Benetti: Ha partecipato alla guerra perché bombardavano...

Bianca Laura Benetti: Lei era della Croce Rossa Italiana.

Flavio Benetti: La Croce Rossa Italiana, quindi hanno rischiato. Fortunatamente sono stati tutti salvi. [...] Prima della guerra, scusa, mio padre lavorava, ha lavorato in una fabbrica vicino a Ferrara. Facevano i cingolati dei trattori, anche ??? chiaramente. ma poi ha avuto un posto da istruttore, appunto dei lavori in ferro a Trieste in una scuola di avviamento al lavoro. Lui per il ferro, suo fratello per il legno.

Flavio Benetti: Quando è tornato a casa il posto l'ha perso. Era una persona intelligente ma troppo onesta. Con un altro fratello ha messo da piccola industria che faceva delle forbici dei sarti [...]
[...]

Gareth White: Se non ci fosse stata una guerra come sarebbe stata diversa la vita?

Flavio Benetti: Senza la guerra sarebbe stato professore probabilmente di applicazione tecnica alle medie. [...]

Bianca Laura Benetti: Lui è partito per la guerra e aveva questa possibilità di essere un insegnante. Per queste scuole che ti insegnavano a lavorare il parroco [...]. Poi aveva avuto questo patto di professore a Trieste. E però con la guerra a questo progetto è finito quando è tornato dalla guerra non ha più proseguito, è stato coinvolto da questa produzione di forbici...

[...]

Bianca Laura Benetti: Sicuramente il fatto di essere stato chiamato in guerra gli ha spezzato forse una possibilità di carriera lavorativa che aveva in corso che aveva appena iniziato. [...] diciamo la sua permanenza in Galles non c'entra molto per la sua carriera perché comunque durante la guerra è stato fatto prigioniero. Avrebbe probabilmente combattuto in guerra e sai dopo sentito tante storie se ci sono dei ragazzi anche a Ferrara che non hanno più rivisto il padre perché non sono più tornati perché erano andati in Russia e dalla Russia tanti non sono tornati sono stati dati proprio per dispersi. Ok quindi per dire...

Flavio Benetti: Del brutto della guerra via via

Bianca Laura Benetti: Ci sentiamo dire questo. Era meglio nel brutto della guerra di anni che ti hanno accolto la tua gioventù dal tuo vivere ad alto potenziale carriera. Diciamo che consideriamo l'esperienza di nostro padre dei prigionieri e dei prigionieri in genere che sono venuti in Inghilterra. La consideriamo comunque buona cosa perché potevano morire potevano a morire in battaglia potevano morire in Russia o potevano capitare prigionieri di coscienza cioè si sono sentite tante cose.

3. Interviews about miners and metalworkers

3.1 Interview with Fernando D'Alessandro, 14th October 2021.

Gareth White: OK, Fernando, today's the 14th of October 2021 and I'm joined by Fernando D'Alessandro to talk about his family's history. Fernando, thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me this afternoon. OK.

Fernando D'Alessandro: My pleasure.

Gareth White: Thank you very much. I was wondering if we can go for a very, very brief overview of your family's movements from Cassino to Swansea. I know you've kind of sent me a blurb, but can I ask you to go into some details again in your own words?

Fernando D'Alessandro: Yeah. Well, my father emigrated to Swansea in 1952. And as I said in the blurb that the war was devastating for the family and the house was completely flattened. They had nowhere to live initially. Then they built a rudimentary wooden shack, really. And slowly, slowly started rebuilding. When my father emigrated in 52, they still hadn't finished rebuilding their house. So, it was a long time. I mean, there was limited finances as such. He sent money back actually to help build.

Fernando D'Alessandro: But he told me this story, I mean, he... after the war, there was little work, I mean, the kind of work you got. I mean, he worked in the quarry breaking stones, He worked as a lumberjack on the mountain because the mountain was burned by the bombing. So, they cut down all the burned trees and replanted. And just day labouring work on his own family farm. There wasn't much of a future, so he applied to emigrate to the United States and to Britain. And he got called by the British.

Fernando D'Alessandro: I can go through the procedure of how that happened, if you want, his memories, Because he told me that there was a system, the British government was actually looking for labour, there was a shortage of labour in that period in, you know, areas like South Wales in the steel industry, there was shortages in the tinplate industry. And he actually went for a... They sent actually English, or British doctors to give them a checkup, a medical checkup. And he went to the local provincial capital of Frosinone in the province of Frosinone, and he told me, I remember him saying that very vividly how they checked his height. You know, chest measurements and all the rest of it. And then he said, but the most important part of the checkup was when they looked at my hands, he said, because his hands were like thick, solid callous skin. He was doing labouring work and farming work, so his hands were very tough. And he said, the doctor said, this guy will do for us. And clearly a good candidate for the heavy work he was going to go and do. That was the visit. That was... he did that in Frosinone.

Fernando D'Alessandro: And then he told me about the time when he was ready to leave and with his suitcase and left for Milan, because they would gather them all together. And he said when he got to Milan, there were people from Calabria, Puglia, Sicily, you know, generally from the south, from all over the south, Abruzzesi. They were all together, and

he said they all they had a little thing on their jacket with the name and destination, The company. He actually said to me felt like cattle being transported from destination, factory in Britain.

Fernando D'Alessandro: And then he said when they landed Dover, the some official from the company was waiting for his batch of workers and took them straight to Swansea and the next day, he was at the blast furnace in a tinsplate works. And the tinsplate works I've actually got here, the works book from 1950... this is 53. It's basically got the rules and regulations, what you're expected to do. It's got my dad's name and where he lived, you know, Port Tennant in Swansea, and they took him, he said, to a hostel in Morriston.

Fernando D'Alessandro: There was a Morriston hostel for the workers who had arrived. And there was a lot of Italians in that hostel. I've got a picture somewhere, I think it might be in Italy though, of him outside this hospital in the winter, I think it was the winter 52, 53, it was quite cold. I think I think it was two rooms, you know, asbestos roof, wooden hostel. That that's where he settled and worked.

Fernando D'Alessandro: And as I said, there was a lot of Italians. Just to give you an example. They used to receive letters from Italy. The only way... there was no Internet then, then no mobiles. You know, this is very... Italy was very far away in those days. Now it's like you don't feel as far away at all. But it was very difficult. It took weeks to communicate back home. They received letters, and there was some of those workers were illiterate, and my dad used to tell me a funny story. One of them would say to him: 'Would you go and check if there's a letter for me because I left my glasses in the room or something like that?' It was because they were illiterate, very poor southern peasants who had emigrated. My dad could read, he could write, you know, he'd been to primary school.

Fernando D'Alessandro: He also did an English course which was provided, I think, for all of them. And my dad, he actually learned English very well. He could read an English newspaper very easily. He could write good English. And I remember my Italian, well, second generation like me being surprised when they saw my dad had written a note in English. You know like, 'what, your dad writes English?' I said, Yeah, why doesn't yours? I thought it was normal. Some didn't. Some had greater difficulty. The problem being, if you can't read and write in Italian, how can you read and write in English, you know what I mean?

Gareth White: Sure.

Fernando D'Alessandro: But he did this English course, but he told me the funny stories. He told me that he got annoyed with it. Because he said he wanted to learn English, and a lot of these young men, all they wanted to learn was how to say, 'Do you want to come out with me to the cinema tonight?' They were just trying to use the basic words to date Welsh girls. And my dad was like... Well, he was about to get married, you know? And he was very serious in those matters, and he was like, 'that's all they wanted to know, and they were wasting my time. I wanted to learn, you know, get on and learn in this kind of stuff.' These are just some of the funny stories that he would tell but he did learn his English quite well.

Fernando D'Alessandro: Morriston Hostel wasn't too far away. because it's where he worked, it was actually called the Swansea Vale Works, and the company was called the National Smelting Co. Ltd. They worked with zinc and tin. In fact, they were called the tinsplate works. When I was a little boy. I never realized because the Italians that work there, they used to call them lads 'la tinplata'. And I thought what's the tinplata - tinsplate pronounced by Italians. But he worked there and then like a lot of them, within a certain amount of time, saved a bit of money, and they would find themselves private accommodation. I've actually, I dug it out... I've got the original in Italy, but this is a photocopy I did, which is his first bank statement from his book and it's like February 1953, he deposited £10 in the bank. That was quite a lot of money in those days. And it's interesting you see, deposits in March and in August, he withdraws thirty-six pounds because August would be when he would go to Italy to visit the family, obviously. I've got all that recorded. You can trace it in in the paperwork.

Fernando D'Alessandro: He came on a four-year contract. in those days. Apparently, that was the way it worked. You had to sign a contract for four years, so you were tied to that particular company. And he had an aliens book, I don't have his here, his is in Italy, but I have my mother's, which is this kind of thing, where you have, you, know name and everything and where she came from. And they had to go to the police, local police. This a Swansea Borough Police, June 1956, and it's stamped. And, you know, they give, they grant her leave. One of them is stamped at Folkestone when she landed, actually, the next 20 stamped Swansea and it's the aliens department. we called them aliens in those days. and every year they had to have it stamped. This was the way it worked, OK?

Gareth White: And every year? It wasn't more frequently?

Fernando D'Alessandro: It was once a year they had to go to the local police, wherever they were living, they had to go to the local police station and get it to get it stamped. At the end of the four years, they would have been free then to leave and look for other employment, they became more like, you know, British workers with the right to move about, there was no European Union then. They moved to Port Tennant to Swansea, which is down by then near the waterfront there, and rented a house like ... Initially he rented it on his own with other Italians, they'd share a house, They'd be three or four of them say in the same house paying rent for that room and. That was him working.

Fernando D'Alessandro: Now the memories I have of him telling me about Wales, one of the things they always told me was, because they moved to England, was how friendly the people were.

Gareth White: Yes, OK,

Fernando D'Alessandro: How much they liked the Welsh. and compared to, well, the Midlands in Coventry, they made a comparison. [...] There was a difference I could tell. I didn't visit Swansea [...] after we left, but when I went back once with my mother, I took her to find it. [...] And we found the place and we went to the church where they baptized me, and I left her in a club for a few minutes, some pub. And when I came back, a whole group of Welsh people were talking to asking, 'Where are you from?' And I was like, Wow, it really is the way they described it. In the streets we were looking for where they lived

and I couldn't find it properly, but then three old Welsh ladies from Swansea, they all gathered around and they all started calling other people, 'come over here' and they're helping to find. And they were really. And then they and then they, all these ladies, they all said, 'Oh, I remember when the "Eyeties" came', they had memories of all these young Italian men arriving in the I suppose late 40s, early 50s, and it seemed they had nice memories, by the way they spoke of it.

Fernando D'Alessandro: And of course, then I got to find the local shop that was run by the Italians, and then we went to the Cascarini Cafe; there's a family, the Cascarinis, that ran several cafes because they were the Italians who emigrated, set up a cafe, made money, set up the kids with cafes, and they all carried on. My dad was not part of that, he was part of the industrial emigration, and he remembers that.

Fernando D'Alessandro: He remembers, he's told me about the Welsh that he met. He told me how he actually had a workmate who couldn't speak English, but he was Welsh. He was from the Valleys somewhere, an old guy. And my dad, he used to tell me, you know, I was Italian. I couldn't speak English when I arrived in England. There was a Welsh guy who was he was obviously from some isolated place where they spoke Welsh.

Fernando D'Alessandro: Other memories that he gave me of the factory was how strong the trade union was. And he was very proud of that. He joined the Union, he stayed in the union for the rest of his life. And he told me how strong the tradition was and how strong the negotiating power of the union was, because obviously if you consider, I suppose, shortage of labor, and that's why they called in migrant labor. When you have a shortage, workers are in a strong position to negotiate. And he said to me, we never actually had to go on strike in the tinplate Works because all the shop steward had to do was threatened to go on strike and management would immediately come and negotiate, because they knew that those Welsh workers would be, if the shop steward said out they were out.

Fernando D'Alessandro: And these are the memories of work, if I could describe what my mother told me about that, because she didn't come to England to Wales until my dad had done his four years contract. So, he came to Italy, to England, sorry to Wales in 52. the next year that year, which I described actually when he took that money out, that was to go and get married, and he went back to Italy, they got married. She continued to live in Italy for the next three years and they would meet once a year in the summer when he had his holidays. The rest of the year would be letters every two or three weeks, I suppose. But when she arrived, she told me that he went to pick her up, in Dover I think it was. When they went back to Swansea, to the house where they had a room because they were sharing it with other Italians. And she went to visit him at the works, and she said to me, it felt like walking into hell. It was like the hot flames, the molten metal and the dust, the heat. And that was her first impression of the workplace.

Fernando D'Alessandro: And it was tough work. I mean, these were, you know, steel workers. and there was quite a lot of Italians, but obviously a lot of Welsh, a large number of Welsh. My dad had very fond memories of, I have to say that, of Wales in particular.

Fernando D'Alessandro: What else? There was a whole number of Italians from the same town. Yeah, like my godfather was in Wales and I was baptized in Swansea by him, he was from the same town. I knew there was a number of others which I remember the

names of at least the visitors, all from the same village that there was this. There was this tendency of groups of immigrants to come from the same place. I suppose they gave them a kind of their own little community. And, you know, sharing things about Italian food. I've got a picture of Christmas 1953, I think it is. And there's a whole group of them, all these people that I know, they're all sitting in a room at Christmas because they didn't go home for Christmas, obviously.

Fernando D'Alessandro: And then and all of them, practically all of them were on their own without their wives. There was one guy who had his wife there. There was this tendency they would come out as men on their own, either with a fiancée back home or even a wife, or they would get married a little bit later and then gradually bring them over. My godmother came over and mother came over, and initially they would be at home. Life was quite tough, I would say, because to arrive in a country where you don't speak a word of the language. And culturally, it's a huge shock. I mean, you come from the south of Italy, where you work on a farm, you're in the countryside, the sun, climate... my mother who landed at Dover, she said. It was foggy and the first thing she said to my dad was 'When are we going home?' You know, but then she said to me, but what was there to go to? We didn't have anything to go back to.

Fernando D'Alessandro: So, you know, they made their life in Britain, starting in Swansea and... I'm trying to think if there are any other memories... I know my dad... I've got a picture of him on the beach, I think he's at the Mumbles, and the Italians. That would be something they did in their spare time. Generally speaking, their life was a very simple, frugal life, because the reason they come was to get on, so they'd pay their rent and, you know, save as much money as possible because they don't emigrate just for the sake of it.

Fernando D'Alessandro: And I have actually a middle name, which is Eddie, and the reason is one of my dad's workmates was called Eddie, a Welsh guy. And he said, he's, you know, he's born here, I've got to give him an English name as well. And he learned, he learned a few Welsh words, my dad, off the Welsh. I won't repeat some of them because they're rather rude, kind, the kind of thing the Welsh would say about the English and that kind of stuff, you know, and he'd have a laugh about that. But I mean, I think I think he could say 'Cymru am byth' which I think means Wales forever or something like that. He learned a few words. I mean, obviously English was the main language.

Fernando D'Alessandro: My mother, as I said, she lived in this room... when my dad was at work, she'd be on her own in this room, and when I listened to her (talk about) it, I got the impression that it was obviously a big sacrifice, but they could get together with some of the other Italian women, obviously. I know that they would get together, they would go out for walks together and things like that. They had a very, very strong Italian identity.

Fernando D'Alessandro: You ask about the identity. I think the identity gets stronger when you emigrate, you identify more... Because I mean, if you're in Italy, you're Italian, like England and your English, you're English, you just want one of the many people in your own country. Obviously, you have your identity. but there's also the other side of emigrating, which is, although there was it was, you had fond memories. There was also racism. Well, you know, in the sense of kind of the prejudice against foreigners among certain people, not everybody's like that, but enough to make you feel... pretty uncomfortable a little bit. There was also the story, you know, the Italians in the Second

World War and all the stories, you know, they were defeated. I think it weighs heavily on somebody that suffered the way they had. To have all the jokes about things like all the Italians were cowards because they surrendered.

Fernando D'Alessandro: You know, my dad, was in the army. And he was sent home on leave. After a few weeks actually got quite ill, OK? And he had to go back. But by the time he had to go back, they had, Italy had surrendered. So, he didn't go back, like hundreds and thousands of them they didn't, the army collapsed, and he said to me, there's no way I was going to go fight for those – excuse me - those bastards - he was referring to the fascist regime. And therefore, you know, welcoming the end of the war and they would welcome the Americans when they arrived. You know, this was the end of the war. And then to be to be treated like that in another country is a bit heavy going for them. I think I remember my dad, he felt that. And he spent the whole of his time in Britain hoping to go back.

Fernando D'Alessandro: And of course, he didn't... he did eventually because he got quite ill last couple of years, but never got to go back as he had dreamed. You know, make a bit of money, go back, establish a.... That's the classic idea... there's two types. There's some leave and decide. That's it. But there's a lot who do dream of going back. And they never manage it because it takes a lot longer to accumulate money. Secondly, they have a second generation. They have the kids who were born in another country and start to belong to that country. And it's difficult for them to think of going back to a country which they know, but it's a little bit foreign to them. So, you have this tragedy of this old generation which dreams of the day when I can go back. And it never happens.

[...]

Gareth White: [...] I would if I could actually follow through with a few things that I made a note of as we were speaking. And I find it really interesting, first of all, where we're speaking about the legacy of the war. I mean, you know, you mentioned your father was, you know, very, very reluctant to join back up with the war once an armistice had been agreed. And then obviously, he came to Wales, and you mentioned he had to deal with this legacy. Did he say anything in particular about these experiences in Wales, were there any particular instances of these kind of discriminations or tensions let's say and.

Fernando D'Alessandro: Well, you see, partly, because he was in Wales from 1952 to 1957, then he moved to England. And so, some of these things would have happened also in England but also in Wales he remembers. I remember it was funny, you know, you know, when Britain applied to join the Common Market and de Gaulle would keep blocking Britain from joining. You see, because when my father arrived, there was still a strong sense of the British Empire. And people still felt we have an Empire, but I mean, the empire was by 1960, I think all the colonies had been given up or what was left of them already, there's very little left. but there was still this sense of we are a powerful British nation and all the rest of it. And you Italians, you know, there was a bit of that and making fun of the Italians.

Fernando D'Alessandro: So, my father was like, he was very proud of his Italian heritage in the sense. Like, you know, Dante, he would quote Dante. He would talk about Garibaldi, Mazzini, all of that and the Italian language. But he also made a big effort to learn English.

And I was always struck by the fact that he used to say to me, 'You are Anglo-Italian.' He didn't say you are Italian, you're Anglo Italian, you're a mix of the two.' Which I was I'm thinking about. I find that interesting because you can go, you can go in different directions. I remember some children of Italians who would reject their Italian heritage as strongly in, and I sense that what they were trying to do was to be to be accepted as completely British, didn't want to be different. That's characteristic you have sometimes of the second generation even refusing to speak Italian. Then you have others. I'm different, I adopted a strong pride in my Italian background, and I learned to speak Italian. I always spoke. I spoke the dialect of my parents at home, always spoke in that dialect with them. I still can with my mother.

[...]

Gareth White: Thank you. Thank you so much for sharing those thoughts. I wonder as well if we could pass some comments on socialisation. Now I know that you mentioned that obviously they went to the hostel initially in Swansea area and there were lots of Italians. And then later on the first house that he bought.

Fernando D'Alessandro: He didn't buy. He rented the room in the house actually,

Gareth White: Ah quite right, he rented the room in the house again with many Italians. I wonder if we can comment on this idea of an Italian community within these within the tinplate factory. Was this something that was reconstructed at all, if we can say?

Fernando D'Alessandro: What do you mean by reconstructed?

Gareth White: In the sense of like, would you say that within the works where your dad was based, was there like the construction of an Italian community that was in Wales if it makes sense?

Fernando D'Alessandro: Yeah, well, obviously, you have Italians coming from different parts of Italy. So, although my father had, there's a whole group of them, I can there's one two three four five people I can think of here from the same, from Cassino Italians, so they would speak the same dialect when they were together. But then if you have Sicilians or Calabrians or Puglians, they would speak their own dialect. And if a Sicilian speaks his dialect to my father's people, they wouldn't understand each of them very well. and in those days, you would arrive with dialect. It was very rare that you would arrive with Italian or well-spoken Italian. But obviously, once you're in Britain, does it matter that you're Sicilian or Calabrian? You're Italian and you start to get to know each other and become friends. And obviously, in spite of the dialect, they all spoke some Italian to some degree, and they would get to know each other. There'd be something common there, obviously a common shared experience.

Fernando D'Alessandro: But I mean. I wasn't... I don't have a living memory, I mean, I just have what my parents told me, what I remember is that it comes outside of your remit in the sense that it's when I was growing up in the Midlands and Coventry, I would imagine something similar back in in Swansea. What happened is the Italians, there was actually an Italian community. There was a club. They created an Italian club which used to hold events such as, you know, a Big Dance on a Saturday every now and then. And it was like a Little Italy. A little bit of Italy actually, and it was quite funny to observe

because most of what... the phenomenon, which is.... .you see, immigrants tend to preserve traditions from the home country[...]

Gareth White: I mean, certainly 1950s Britain, there were these Italian associations that wanted to provide an outlet for Italian workers and then obviously steel plates, workers, the tinsplate workers were a part of this, I'd imagine also your dad would have experienced something when he arrived in Swansea, you know, in those four years when he was working there? I'd imagine that, you know, you mentioned how they got together for Christmas, and they celebrated together. So, I'd imagine that the main socialization points would indeed have been, as you say, the people from the town from the Cassino area, but also with Welsh colleagues.

Fernando D'Alessandro: Oh yes. Yes. I've got a photograph of them [...] I think it's a photograph of one of his best mates, and he was a Welsh guy in the picture is of his mates when he got married with his wife now. And I said, 'Who's that?' He said he's one of his best mates at work. So, he did have good Welsh mates in the workplace, in the workplace. They did have that. The socializing, I think, would probably have taken place mostly in each other's houses. Because I would imagine they weren't the types, they're going to spend money in the pub or whatever, because as I said, they were there to save money, but they would meet often in each other's houses. I know my dad definitely used to go and see lots and they were always Italian friends He'd go and visit, spend the night, the evening with, you know. Eating, chatting, drinking together. No, that was that tended to be the case.

Gareth White: OK. And I wonder as well whether we could talk a little bit about the temporary contract nature. So obviously he came over on a four-year contract with the intention of earning money to one day go back to Italy triumphantly. Was it always in his mind to go back? Or was there a moment when he kind of said, you know, Hey, I know I came to this for a temporary contract, but I'm going to stay in the UK.

Fernando D'Alessandro: You say temporary, I mean, I don't know. I don't know the technicalities of it. I know it was a four-year contract because he had he had to respect the four years. Yes, but after that he wasn't obliged to leave. He could continue working. What it meant was once he'd done his 4 years, he no longer had to have his aliens booklet stamped. He basically became free to circulate and go anywhere he wanted and get a job anywhere, anywhere he wanted to, but he could have stayed. In fact, he stayed another year. He stayed until '57. Yes.

Fernando D'Alessandro: On the question of going back, he didn't think four years and I can go back, that never entered his head, it could take a lot longer. But he always had the dream one day, one day we go back. [...]

Gareth White: I suppose that leads me to the final question that I wanted to ask you indeed looking at this integration. And I want wonder to what do you think was the secret behind your dad's successful integration first into the Welsh landscape and then later to England?

Fernando D'Alessandro: Umm... secret to integration. Well, I would say he was never fully integrated in the sense that, you know, he was always Italian. always very proud to

be Italian, actually. But. He did make a big effort, as I said, to learn English, and he learnt it well, he learnt it.[...]

3.2 Interview with Angela Pockley , 8th April 2022

Gareth White: Right. So today is the 8th of April 2022 and I'm joined by Angela Pockley, maiden name Di Maio. Good morning to you, Angela. Thank you so much for joining me today to talk about your father's history who came over obviously in the 1950s. To get started, I was wondering if you can paint me a picture of your father's trajectory to Wales, from leaving Italy, you know the conditions that were in Italy before he left. And then his arrival in the country.

Angela Pockley: OK. And well, my father was born in 1929. At the age of 21, after the war the situation in Italy was pretty dire as far as jobs were concerned and employment. He always worked, but he worked doing things like logging trees and would have to travel 3 hours each way to work there and back with his father and various members of the family and things. So basically, he was just a young man growing up in Italy and the times just after the war.

He used to often talk about his childhood and about the experiences in the war. For example, you will have heard of the Battle of Monte Cassino. He and his cousins and friends and brother, they used to actually go to Monte... go to Cassino and actually watch the fighting as kids because that wasn't very far from where they lived. They'd actually go there and watch the fighting and they'd count the airplanes and all this sort of stuff. And his brother actually got buried by a building that was bombed. And he did survive, but it took him a long, long time to sort of become right again and everything. So, my parents both used to speak about the war a lot... not all the time, but they were always quite happy to, and I used to love to listen to their stories.

Gareth White: Yeah.

Angela Pockley: He had a brother who was two... He had one brother that was two years younger, one that was a lot younger, and two sisters. And, what he used to say is that one day he and his brother, when he was aged 21, his brother would have been 19, went into the town. And they found that when they got there, they were all these tables set out in the in the Piazza. And it was effectively what these days we'd call a recruitment drive. And on each table, it had the name of different countries. And it was all about people from other countries going to Italy to try and recruit Italian men to go back to their country and work in various industries. So, in Britain, for example, there was a massive, massive sort of labour shortage because after the war a lot of people had been killed and people were busy trying to reconstruct the country and everything. So, there was a shortage in the mines, a shortage in steel, particularly in Wales, steel and tinplate industries.

And my father's way of putting it was there were all these tables, different country name on each one. And we realized that they were trying to offer people jobs. So, he said my brother and I just wandered round. He said 'I looked at France and thought, no, I don't wanna go to France. I looked at Argentina, thought "no, too far", looked at various other countries, not now. Don't fancy that.' Then he came across one called Wales. And he actually thought, 'I don't know where the heck this Wales place is, but I'll give it a go.' That was the start.

His brother in the meantime signed on with a recruiter from Canada. And within no time at all, my father found himself with hundreds of Italian men going over to Wales to Felindre tinplate works in Morriston, near Swansea. His brother found himself off to Canada. So, his brother lives in Canada. My father lived in Wales. They didn't meet each other again for over 40 years from that time. But they just made their lives in different countries. So that's how my father got to Wales, basically.

Gareth White: OK. As well as in Italy before he arrived in Wales, did he go in through any kind of workplace training or language courses?

Angela Pockley: No, no, nothing like that. He just had to turn up at a certain place. I don't know the details, but I presume he had to register and get his papers. The contract was for a year to work in the tinplate works. I don't think he even knew what tinplate works were. And he certainly didn't know where Wales was. It could have been the other end of the Earth as far as he was concerned.

Angela Pockley: So, and I think the next thing was they all had to... there were hundreds... I think actually in total there were over a thousand men that came from Italy to work in the tinplate works. And yeah, the one part of the registration process when he got to Wales was that he had to sign up for and have a what was called an alien registration card.

Gareth White: Yes.

Angela Pockley: Now, I think I've sent you the photographs of my mother's. But I don't know where. [...] I've never seen my father's, but he would have had one as well. And the words on the front is actually 'alien registration'... It's unbelievable in this day and age. So really no, there was nothing like training or language or nothing like that. Just turn up at this place at this time with your papers, off you go. So, he found himself, he came over, it was train and ferry. And then train, ended up in Swansea and got marched off to ... It was a hostel that was organised by the tinplate works near Morriston.

Gareth White: OK.

Angela Pockley: So, he was with Italians from all over Italy.

Gareth White: OK. And had he travelled with many Italians from Frosinone, from Sora? Or was this like?

Angela Pockley: I think it was a big mixture. [...] I don't think he knew anybody that was actually going. Now I know that he later met people that were from Sora, but as far as I know, he didn't go with anybody. He just turned up.

Gareth White: OK.

Angela Pockley: But he did meet people from Sora, you know, later on, that had come at different times for different reasons, but basically it was a mixture of Italians from all over

the place. I don't think they all went to the same place. Actually, they might.... I don't know about that. I don't know whether they all ended up going to the same place.

One of the things he says is that the very first night he got there, there was some sort of landlady. I think he stayed in lodgings for a few nights until they got the hostel sorted out. Couldn't speak a word of English. So, he was with some landlady who said, 'Oh you boys are Italian I'll make you some spaghetti.' and she opened up a tin of Heinz spaghetti. And I think it was a bit of a shock to the system. But he always laughs about that. And yeah, so that's basically his story.

[...]

Angela Pockley: Yeah, that was basically it, really. So, for a while, he stayed at the hostel, and he met a lot of Italian men, which a lot of a lot of them went back after a year, but quite a lot stayed in Wales and made lives in Wales. And some he was very friendly with to the day died basically. And after, I don't know how long he was at the hostel for, but I don't think it was very long. And then he went into lodgings.

Gareth White: Private, yes?

Angela Pockley: Into private lodgings. I think he was with a couple more Italian guys. But basically, he worked very hard. I don't actually know how long he was at Felindre for, whether he was a whole year there, but then I know that he then changed to Eagles Bush steelworks in Neath.

Angela Pockley: And basically, that's where he worked. [...] Until I was 16 months old, he worked in the steel, in the Eagles Bush in Neath, and we lived directly opposite. And so, he used to do loads and loads of double shifts. He was basically never at home, and he used to send money back to Italy and save some himself. But I think it was a really hard sort of, [...] difficult manual work. Not that he ever said that, but he was always called for overtime because he was ambidextrous, which meant that he could use the machine and the rollers on both sides. So, he was quite a big asset to them. I don't know the exact machine or anything, but something to do with the rollers. So, he just worked his socks off, basically. [...]

Angela Pockley: So, he was in Eagles Bush for maybe a couple of years. In the meantime, he'd met my mother in Briton Ferry which is just outside Neath. And you've got her story. They actually met in Wales and got married. But my mother lived and worked for a family called the Cavallis, who were absolutely fantastic with her. They were like parents to her, and they were really, really, good with the whole family. She was part of their family, she turned up at age eighteen to work for them, and right till the day she died, she was friendly with the Cavalli people. And to this day, I'm sort of friendly to their descendants. So, it's the things carried on, really.

But Mr Cavalli was, always looked out for my mum. He gave her away at her wedding. Et cetera. And one day he came over to my parents' house, and said to my father, you have to take tomorrow off. Whatever you do. You've gotta take the day off, I'm taking you

somewhere. So, I don't know how he managed it, but he got the day off work and Mr Cavalli took him to Ogmore Vale, which is near Bridgend. And he said to him, I'm going to lend you the money to buy this cafe because it was for sale and you'll never, ever have to go to the steelworks again, to the Eagles Bush again. And that opened up a new era of his life.

And this Mr Cavalli lent him the money, and my parents then moved from Neath to Ogmore Vale. We stayed there until I was four years old, so I was brought up from my 16 months to four years old I was brought up in that cafe. My mother had all the experience of being in a cafe because she'd worked with the Cavallis in their cafe for a long you know, for many years, my father had never done anything like that. But they just basically got on with it, made a success, and then then when I was four, they sold that cafe and bought another cafe in Neath. Which is where they stayed until they retired in about 1987, I think? Something like that...

Gareth White: Wow.

Angela Pockley: Yeah. So that's their story, really. They always had a lot of Italian friends. But they were very much integrated into the Welsh community as well. They weren't sort of only Italian, you know, they were a mixture, really. They had a mixture of friends, Italian and Welsh. I think a lot, I think a lot of that is the geography of Wales. There's no sort of... flat area basically where Italians would all live like in other countries. For example, my uncle in Canada who went to Canada, 'til the day he died, he could speak English, but badly, because the area that he lived in was known as Little Italy. [...] In Wales, there's nothing like that apart from one street in a place called Llanharan, which was known as Spaghetti Row because there did seem to be a lot of Italians in that row. But other than that, there weren't sort of Italian communities in one place, although the Italians did tend to sort of stick, stick together and be and be very friendly with each other. But not at the expense of integrating into the local communities.

Gareth White: Yeah, I suppose it's more pockets or communities as opposed to a central.

Angela Pockley: Yeah. And there weren't communities at the expense of it, of being part of their own, Welsh community. It was sort of as well as. [...] Growing up, I had the best of both worlds. And I had all the Italian culture stuff as well as all the Welsh stuff, so. Yeah, which I think that's quite unique too. I don't know about other parts of the UK, but certainly to Wales it's quite unique really that all the Italians didn't live in one place, you know.

Gareth White: Absolutely, absolutely. I wonder if we can go back as we were speaking, I had a few quick questions and at this stage. just starting for the hostel. What kind of building was the hostel? Are we thinking more like an actual I don't know Building in a space, or was it more like, you know, military accommodation?

Angela Pockley: [...] I think it was pretty basic. But having said that, I think all the Italian guys were pretty much all at work most of the time. Anyway. I think it was just some, I think it was just pretty basic, but I don't know, I don't know. I know it was in Morriston, but I. but I don't know whether it was purpose-built or whether it was a load of porter cabins or... I really don't know about that.

Gareth White: Don't worry, don't worry about it. I'd imagine that in that time, in the hostel area he was, as you said, he was with other Italians in this space.

Angela Pockley: Yes.

Gareth White: What... would they kind of, you know, like socialize? Would they kind of organize Italian activities in the time off whilst they're in the space that, you know of, or in the private lodgings he went to afterwards?

Angela Pockley: I don't think it was ever sort of a formal socializing... an organized thing, but they spent a lot of time together and with each other's families. They'd go over to each other's houses. When my parents bought their first house, which was opposite Eagles Bush, they had three Italian lodgers. So, they did socialize, and they did a lot of cooking together. And because all Italians like cooking, they spent a lot of time together. But I wouldn't say it was formal. [...] And, you know, I think most of them, I mean, we didn't have phones or anything like that. And I don't think there'd have been much of a way of organizing anything.

And I think there was.... I think there was a bit of hassle with the local Welsh boys at one point because all these Italians who didn't have two pennies to rub together when they first came over... For instance, my father always said he came over and he had three pounds in his pockets, the equivalent of three quid in his pocket and that was it. But they all looked incredibly smart. So, when they weren't at work, they were all really well dressed and they might have had one suit, but it was very smart, you know? And so, all these Italians sort of infiltrated places like Neath and Swansea to the expense of some of the local lads with the ladies, And so, I think [...] there were a lot of fights and that sort of thing.

As well as the Italians, there's a similar story for the Polish people because they're... a lot of Polish people were brought over as well. I think sometimes there were fights between the Italians and the Polish, but on the whole they got on very well.

Gareth White: Do you know why there were fights between the Polish and the Italians? Were they similar circumstances or?

Angela Pockley: I think it was all similar circumstances. I think they're just sort of young red-blooded young men who wanted to make a life for themselves really. But on the whole, they did get on very well with the Polish people.

Gareth White: And would they work side by side whilst they're in the in the steelworks, whilst they were in tinplates area?

Angela Pockley: I don't know about that. I think not, but I don't know. That's just an impression... There might have been a different department or something. But one thing that is sort of significant really, is that when my mother came over, she was on her own and she lived with this family. So, she picked up English very, very quickly. And her... she always had her Italian accent - well, A Welsh-Italian accent. And one or two words were never quite right, but basically her English was absolutely fantastic. My father's English

never ever reached that standard. He spoke English very well. But [...] it was never at the same sort of level as my mother's. And I put that down to the fact that he spent all his time, a lot of his time initially with lots of Italian men. Whereas my mother was just thrown into it. She was straight in, working in the café straight away. And most Welsh people didn't speak Italian.

You know, she actually ended up, I don't know if I mentioned this, but she actually ended up working for the police. And when she was waiting for the cafe, she also used to go to court to translate. And because there were a lot of, you know, there would have been cases involving in Italians. She was a court translator.

Gareth White: Interesting. And would she take on cases more of this second generation of, you know, newly arrived miners and metalworkers, or a bit of everything?

Angela Pockley: I think whatever came up that was Italian and needed translating, but I think there'd have been a lot of that generational type thing. And yeah.

Gareth White: Interesting. I wonder if we can. ... on the topic of work. I wonder if we can speak a bit about the working conditions that your father went through in Eagles Bush and in Velindre. I know you said that he was a hard worker, but what was the nature of that work like? Did he feel it was safe work? Did he feel protected? Was it, you know what? What do you remember about this?

Angela Pockley: I know that it was very, very heavy danger... What these days would call probably dangerous work. but he never complained. He never... to him it was an opportunity and he wanted to work as much as he could. He never really spoke about the actual work other than the fact that he could use this machine with both hands, so that they sort of wanted in there all the time. Yeah, he never really... I mean I've learned a bit since about what the working conditions were like, but not from him. You know, he never ever mentioned it. He just said that it was hard work.

Gareth White: Yeah, superheavy, it was more the work was there, it was hard, but it provided that opportunity so he could put up with the difficulties.

Angela Pockley: Yes, I think he didn't. I should think he just accepted... I think probably. And I imagine I speak for most of the people in his situation. I think they're just accepted it was hard work and had to be done. You know, otherwise you go home and start logging trees again, you know, or whatever you can find.

Gareth White: Yeah. So, it's kind of cast as an alternative there.

Angela Pockley: Yes. he certainly never envisaged that he'd be running and owning a cafe or two cafes. That was never in his plan.

Gareth White: So, was it in his plan to stay in this Wales that, you know, he saw on a piece of paper on a table to table in Sora?

Angela Pockley: And no, his original plan was to stay for a year. Then I don't know at what point he met my mother. Whether his contract was extended or whether he went,

whether he just intended staying for a little while longer and going back, but then he met my mum and all that went out of the window, and he never really said that he intended going back. But I think he probably thought he would go back at some point. But all that changed.

Gareth White: As it is as it does.

Angela Pockley: As it does.

Gareth White: Absolutely. So obviously your mother, we've talked about how she belonged, and we spoke before we started this call, to a very different world compared to your dad's world of Frosinone and Sora. I wonder if we can talk a little bit about these mixing of worlds of the Italians from the "older generation" and the Italians who came over in the 1950s.

Angela Pockley: Yeah. Well, my mother's stories firsthand were that really. Because the family that she stayed with were of the people that came over after the First World War. But a lot of their friends were people that had come over sort of from the First World War... I think that I think they did. I don't know whether there might have been an element of the people that were here already sort of helping and getting involved with the new people that were coming over. I don't really know how that happened. But they certainly must have been mixing with them because a lot of our family friends were people from Bardi and people from the First World War influx. Exactly how it happened, other than my mother actually working for people, I don't really know. I'm not really sure. So, whether...

If my father hadn't met my mum and he'd stayed in Wales. I don't know how many Italian people from the first influx he would have known. They were also very sociable people, and I don't just mean my parents. I mean Italians of that generation anyway. So, if you say, for example, he was walking around some town that he'd never been to before. And he saw an Italian name on a cafe, and he went in for a cup of coffee. You could bet within two minutes they'd be talking about Italy and where they came from, and they'd be speaking in Italian and all this sort of thing. So yeah, I think it's something that just happened naturally, really.

Gareth White: OK. So, in that case, could we say that there were no real obstacles towards this mixing of old and new communities, and quite the opposite, that they actually worked together?

Angela Pockley: I think so. I mean I couldn't know definitely, but I think that... yeah, I think they did sort of work together.

Gareth White: OK, OK. So, there's no kind....

Angela Pockley: So, you mean, sort of the original Italians that were here already and the new lot that had come in? I never aware of any animosity or any Issues or anything like that.

Gareth White: OK, so the fact that we're all Italian, even if from different areas, even from different outlooks....

Angela Pockley: Yes. I can just go by my parents' friends. And they were from all over Italy. Bardi, Sicily, Italy, you know and all over the place. Northern Italy, southern Italy. Naples. And they all had their stories, you know.

Gareth White: Amazing. And did they, all I'm wondering, like, because they are from different areas, did they all kind of... You know, try to come together as one unique Italian identity? What I mean by that is if he was socializing only with people from Frosinone, maybe he would have been a bit more Roman, let's say? I don't know if there's any kind of regional....

Angela Pockley: Yeah, I never saw any of that. I just saw them all as my dad and his Italian friends.

Gareth White: Yeah. OK.

Angela Pockley: And there were sort of a few jokes that between, like the Northerners and the Southerners. There were a few sort of jokes, I suppose, but I suppose that's the same in Britain, isn't it really? You know, English, Welsh and. Scots.

Gareth White: That's true. So, in terms of like you know, I know you mentioned the positive relationships also with the Welsh people, would that also have extended to his time working in the tin plate and a steel before the cafe?

Angela Pockley: Yeah, I don't know for my father because I think he spent so much time at work, and he lived with Italians. I'm not sure whether his socializing with Welsh people would have been more from the days that they started with the cafe. My mother's story is totally different. She was just thrown into it, and she had to get on with it. But I'm ... you know, it's not something I ever asked him and but that's my impression is that he didn't really have that much time to do much else. And I know they used to go to dances and a lot and stuff, but it was mainly with this Italian friends. I think probably the integration bit possibly came later for him. But I'm thinking on my feet now. I'm not really sure.

Gareth White: Don't worry.

Angela Pockley: Because I don't know that whether when he was in work, whether he was working only with Italian people on his group or whatever, or whether it was a mixture of Italian and Welsh, or as you mentioned earlier, would it have been a mixture of Italian, Welsh, Polish and anybody else? My impression was mainly his circle was mainly the Italians. But I don't know.

Gareth White: That's fine. It's interesting as well that you mentioned these dances. It's something that that has come up a lot when. Whenever I've done these interviews that....

Angela Pockley: The Empire in Neath.

Gareth White: OK, tell me about that.

Angela Pockley: Yeah, the Empire in Neath, which later became a bingo hall, was a dance hall. And that's actually where my parents met. Well, no, that's not strictly true. They had met once before in the cafe my mother was working at, but that's where they sort of got together at the Empire. And a lot of the Italians will say, oh, remember my days at the Empire and everything but. But that was that would have been Welsh people as well. And I guess that's where a lot of the fights happened, I imagine.

Gareth White: OK, so this was just a standard dance hall owned by locals....

Angela Pockley: Yeah, there was nothing that there was nothing Italian about it. It was....

Gareth White: OK. Interesting. Were there any other things that your dad got involved with? For example, I've come across references to *Il Gruppo degli Alpini*, there was I think there was the ACLI, the *Associazione Cristiani dei Lavoratori Italiani*, I don't know if he was active in any of these...

Angela Pockley: Yeah. And there's the Val Ceno as well, which were basically people from Bardi.

Gareth White: Yeah.

Angela Pockley: I think as time went by, they did used to be organized dances and things through these organizations, which were I suppose you could call them Italian dances... I don't think it was to start with, as far as I know that maybe it was, I don't know. But my parents did used to sort of quite occasionally go to like Italian dances, which might have been through one of these associations, but they never really got involved in anything like that. They weren't really that interested. But I know a lot of people were.

Gareth White: OK, OK. Interesting. So, what about coming into contact with Welsh culture for him? What was that like? You know, when he arrived, you mentioned the Heinz Spaghetti culture disaster, but were there any other things that you know struck him as he arrived in Wales?

Angela Pockley: The weather... I don't think so. I think, what we have to remember is that these were young people who had a world in front of them, probably wanting to leave their other worlds behind. And it's only later in life when you start thinking about my life in Italy, my life in Wales. To them, this was a big new adventure, good or bad. They never really.... then other than the weather and the food, they never really mentioned anything about the culture. I know they both always said that they found the Welsh people very, very friendly and accepting of them... , I mean. And I know, there were the fights with the young lads and all the rest of it. But on the whole they found the Welsh community very friendly.

Gareth White: Interesting. Where there any kind of not....

Angela Pockley: And actually, when you think about it, when they came over, it was only

a few years after the Second World War. So, whether they did have any... antagonistic experiences, I don't know, but I'm not aware. They never ever mentioned it. So, and they did used to talk a lot about all sorts of things. But I imagine there probably was a little bit of resentment from some people. It was a difficult time you know, for everyone, really. But I think there was so busy working they probably didn't even notice.

Gareth White: Interesting. I wondered as well... maybe could we also say that because the Welsh had Italians before in the past, you know, with the Bracchis, with the cafes, maybe that could have had a very different experience for them compared to had they been in a larger congregations say...

Angela Pockley: I think that's probably right. Maybe there is something in that, you know, Welsh people were already used to mixing with Italian people. So more of them was fine. But maybe there was an element of that. I know that with the Arandora Star bit and when we went ... going back to earlier when I said that there were situations where men were arrested by their... had to arrest their own father because they were in the British Army and intern them. And I know those were quite difficult times. I have heard stories there where families have been really sort of well-integrated into the people of the Welsh people, with their streets and very involved and very, you know, sort of friendly with them, suddenly turned on them on the Italian when Churchill raised his famous announcement 'collar the lot'. And I think there was a turn of friendship there. And I've heard of some stories where the wives and kids were left behind in these cafes because these men were literally just dragged out of the front door and some of them never seen again. A lot of them were seen again, but some of them weren't. You know, I have heard stories where they had their windows smashed and all this sort of stuff by people that they'd been very friendly to a sort of like, I suppose, like a mini civil war type thing. But. I don't know how everybody got over that. But and I don't know whether that was the norm, but I have heard stories like that.

Gareth White: Yeah, definitely. It's something that, you know... [...] You know, I've that people talk about, you know, this this black spot, this black year, let's say 1940/41. And then I suppose things changing and improving. And obviously, after the war, things almost take a reset you could say.

Angela Pockley: Yeah, yeah. And maybe that's what happened. But I was brought up sort of in this Italian community as well as the Welsh community, and I never saw any sort of animosity at all. I think we once had some crazy guy came into our cafe and started calling my parents all sorts and basically my mother was a feisty lady and she was jumped over the counter and basically punched him, I think, or something similar. But that was the only the only time. [...]

Gareth White: I wonder if we can flip this then. So, we're talking about the Welsh being friendly. Do you think there was certain characteristics that created a synergy between Welsh and Italians?

Angela Pockley: I think certainly going back to when I was young, the Welsh family values were very strong. But I suppose that's the same globally, nationally, whatever. But family values were very strong, and people generally were generous and friendly and

kind. Mostly. Certainly, there's nothing my parents like better than inviting their friends, whether they were Welsh, Italian. Wherever they came from over for, for food and a lot of time was spent around the table, talking, chatting and that's where I've got all my information from really. [...]

[...] My parents, certainly, they never starved. They always have a happy time in Italy. Obviously, the war years were different, but they certainly didn't have any money. You know, they were poor. They were peasants type people. My mother was from, like, a peasant community... But there was nothing unhappy about it, you know. And she was also from a large family, and they were all feisty... She was a very feisty person, and all her family were exactly the same. And it must have been hell on earth when they started to argue. But they were all sort of like, open people, really. [...]

Gareth White: Definitely. Definitely. Angela. I'm gonna ask you one final question related. I think I've got all the points I had in my head. I want to think about integration. It's something you've touched upon quite a bit. What do you think was the secret of your parents' integration into Welsh community whilst also at the same time being a part of an Italian community?

Angela Pockley: I think there was nothing that was done consciously. And it just happened. you know, I don't think there was any reason or they didn't have any strategy to mix with Welsh people, they just didn't. I'm sure they just didn't even think about it, and it just happened really.

Gareth White: So, could we say that these are organic things that happened without consideration of nationality... You know, they, they just, they saw people rather than Welsh, rather than Italians.

Angela Pockley: Very much so.

Gareth White: OK.

Angela Pockley: But they always kept their Italian identity. They were proud of it. But they didn't sort of impose it on other people. They didn't expect Welsh people to act like them or they didn't try and say that Italian people were better than them or... and they didn't try and impress anybody. They just lived their lives, really. [..]

Gareth White: Interesting. So, it's almost as if for people who don't know they can cling, maybe to a romanticized version of Italy, whereas those who kind of have had taken part in this memorialization of, you know, of everything that's happened. But it's more realistic.

Angela Pockley: Yes. Exactly. And, going off at a tangent, but my uncle in Canada who lived in this Little Italy. My parents went over to see them after 40 years of not seeing them. And they came back amazed, saying things like, 'It's like going back in time.' It's like Italy as because they think of Italy as the way they remembered it. And the Italy that they left, you know, all those years ago, Italy's moved on. It's not like that anymore. For example, children were going to church in Canada with ?? on their heads and things. Well, they haven't done that in Italy for 50 years, you know, and it's they sort of I think because

the community was so closed and only Italians... and I imagine it will be the same in New York and any other big cities where there's big areas of Italians. I think it's changing now, but certainly up until not that long ago. But the older people they only remember the Italy that they left, and they didn't think that Italy was. Really not like that anymore at all.

Gareth White: Whereas the Welsh Italians I'd imagine because they were more dispersed, they might have been more....

Angela Pockley: Yeah. You know, my mother actually came back from Canada saying they're crazy over there because they think Italy's like when I left it whereas she was fully aware that Italy wasn't like that anymore.

Gareth White: Yeah. Yeah, definitely like a fossilization of what, Italy. Yeah.

[...]

3.3 Interview with Adriano Fantini, 16th September 2021

Gareth White: Adriano, thank you so much once again, for taking the time to meet on the 16th of September 2021 to discuss your father Nicesio. [...] So, I'm going to start with a very general question if I may. Tell me about your father's arrival in Wales and his recruitment from Italy.

Adriano Fantini: The recruitment in Italy came about because his uncle was part of the stonemasons that came over to build the Rhayader dams.

Gareth White: Okay.

Adriano Fantini: When they were building the Rhayader Dams, they needed specialist stonemasons to build the dam. So, they came over from his village, then when they wanted to recruit for the mines, they already had links. So, they went across and recruited.

Gareth White: Okay. So obviously having the prior knowledge from his uncle meant that recruitment was actually easier for him?

Adriano Fantini: Yes.

Gareth White: Okay. And when did your uncle arrive to do the works?

Adriano Fantini: I couldn't tell you that. I don't know the answer...

Gareth White: Don't worry. That's fine. But I 'm assuming some time before the 19... maybe early 1950s?

Adriano Fantini: Yeah. It would have been sort of like late, sort of late forties.

Gareth White: Okay. So, your father was then obviously in a village in Italy. Which village?

Adriano Fantini: Torreano di Cividale.

GW: Okay. Torreano di Cividale. And that's in...

Adriano Fantini: Friuli.

GW: That's right, of course, I had checked the notes. Okay. So, he was living in Friuli at the time. What was his background like in Italy?

Adriano Fantini: Right. So, it was a farming background essentially. But his father died when he was 15. So, as the oldest son, he was responsible for doing all the work, if you'd

like. I mean, so he had, fortunately Mussolini introduced schooling for youngsters, so he had education up until 14, but then he obviously had to work the land, but it was a very hard and poor life, essentially. So six children, with his mother and obviously other members of the family, all living in the same property, all working the land, no income. However, they did eat well. So, everything was fresh. But obviously they went through the period of the war, where they were ransacked by the Germans, the Americans, the partners, and the Russians. So, they were occupied by everybody essentially. So, they had nothing apart from the land, and most of the food was stolen.

Gareth White: Okay. And your father would have been too young obviously to participate...

Adriano Fantini: in the war? Yes. But he grew up through it.

Gareth White: Okay. Yeah. That must have been a really difficult experience you know, to kind of...

Adriano Fantini: Yeah. So, they would do all the hard work and then people would come along and take their rabbits and whatever. So, I mean, that was their livelihood. It would be what... That was what their income was: rear a rabbit and then sell it. But obviously there was no income, so essentially very poor,

Gareth White: Okay. And then I'd imagine that set up then what would happen in the 1950s when they're looking for experienced men to come work in the mines ...

Adriano Fantini: And they were just looking for anybody, to be honest, they didn't need experience. They just wanted anybody. There was a shortage of labor in the UK, and my father's family had no money. So, it was a no brainer.

Gareth White: Okay. And tell me about the recruitment. I mean, obviously you've sent to me the contract that he had, what would he say about his recruitments?

Adriano Fantini: I couldn't answer that question because he never, ever discussed that. He just said they came over from the mines. They obviously had the links with Wales, or with South Wales because of the Rhayader Dam with his uncle. Yeah, I think it was just the offer of money. It's as simple as, that.

Gareth White: Okay. And did he work in the mines before? Did he have any prior experience before?

Adriano Fantini: None at all.

Gareth White: Okay, so he was just literally working the land on the farm, and he was hired from there... Okay. So, then I'd imagine that you know, obviously he went through the recruitment, you know, I'd imagine went to Milan, maybe to do some training...?

Adriano Fantini: No, they just brought him straight over. So, they did the recruitment. he and six others all came together.

Gareth White: Okay. So, he came with six people...

Adriano Fantini: I think it was six. No, there's six of them altogether. I think. So, he came with another five...

Gareth White: And were they all people from the same village ?

Adriano Fantini: They were all people that he knew, the same sort of age, and same sort of backgrounds. I don't think he knew them, not all of them before they came, prior to coming, but I think they met up during the recruitment and on the way over.

Gareth White: Got it. Okay. Yeah. I was asking about the training centre, because I know that some people particularly in Southern Italy, they spent a period of time in Naples, did some kind of training course, learned some English and then arrived.

Adriano Fantini: No, no, there was nothing. It was, you know, there's your contract, sign it and come over. Nothing, no training whatsoever.

Gareth White: Okay. Okay. And then regarding these six people, I'm just thinking for like future questions, where these like relationships, then that he then kept when he arrived in Wales or did they go their separate ways?

Adriano Fantini: No, he kept the relationship for life. [...] So, obviously they came over with those and some did go back to Italy in the sort of seventies, eighties. Even when he went back to Italy. I remember when he was a small child, we'd have to go and visit these people. So, he always kept in contact with everybody.

Gareth White: Okay. And I notice you said some there. So, I'd imagine some also settled in ...

Adriano Fantini: Yes. So, some stayed here, but there's also, you know, it wasn't just those, it was other people that he met over here as well, he kept in contact with everybody, essentially.

Gareth White: Yeah. I found an article from the Amici Val Ceno that he was involved with a Domenico Alzetta?... I'll come to that a bit later on. I'm just going to kind of stick from a chronological point of view.

He met the six very special people and then they came over to the United Kingdom. I imagine they went straight to Wales? So, there was no previous stops or...,

Adriano Fantini: well obviously they, they came by what would have been steam train at the time, so there would have been stops... but no, there were no overnights. Let's get off and have a look around sort of Ostend or anything like that. It was straight over.

Gareth White: Okay. And what was that like for your father? I mean, I'm just thinking, growing up in Friuli, in Italy. I mean, it must have been a very shocking moment when he opened up the train doors and... Wales!

Adriano Fantini: I've got to be honest, he said he loved it. It was an experience. He was a young man, you know, traveling, an opportunity that he'd never had before. So he enjoyed that.

The language was a big barrier. So, when he arrived, you know, 'cause they all went into a hostel together initially. So, what they used to do for their own food., and when they went shopping, asking for food, they found difficult. It wasn't a supermarket where you can walk in and just pick it off the shelf. You had to go into a butcher's and ask for a piece of beef , but they didn't know what beef was, you know, so it was all animal noises, you know, moo! So, it was things like that. That was the biggest barrier that he found.

Gareth White: Okay. And then obviously I'd imagine that those were barriers that he overcame, fairly quickly I would imagine...

Adriano Fantini: I wouldn't say quickly, but once he had settled, he took night school for English lessons so he could learn to read and write in English.

Gareth White: Okay. And was this done like whilst he was also working?

Adriano Fantini: It was while he was working in the mines, yes.

Gareth White: Okay. Was it organized by the company or was it just ...?

Adriano Fantini: I don't know who organized that. I would imagine so because they, they did sort of integrate very well if you like, they did treat the foreign workers as well as the sort of native workers.

Gareth White: Okay. I'm definitely gonna come onto that theme in a moment of the integration. But I'm just going to go again, keeping it on a general level before zooming in on the specifics, about the working patterns and the working conditions that he found when actually arriving at Wales. What was that like?

Adriano Fantini: The working conditions. He had a shock at first but being used to sort of walking up a mountain to gather wood, to stay warm, essentially. It wasn't the hard work. I think it was the darkness and the dirt. Because he was in an iron ore mine, not as bad as being in a coal mine, but he'd come out orange and all your clothes would be orange... I don't think it was so much the hard work. It was more the sort of underground. There's nothing to see apart from, you know, blackness and the iron ore ??

Gareth White: Okay.

Adriano Fantini: That was, I can't say he didn't enjoy it, because he did.

Gareth White: Really?

Adriano Fantini: Yeah. So, it's not something that he said, you know, I hated every minute of it. It was a lifeline for him and his family. So, I think he just got on with it.

Gareth White: Yeah. Making do, knowing about the wage coming in, the benefits of it... Okay. And what was his shift like? Did you have to work many days a week? Was it shifts?

Adriano Fantini: Yeah, it was a shift pattern. I think that was for everybody, but I couldn't tell you the hours that they were, but it was sort of mornings or evenings, I remember that as a small child.

Gareth White: Okay. So definitely mornings or evenings. . And then he'd actually be underground for long hours. ...

Adriano Fantini: They would be underground for eight hours, they would even eat their food there.

Gareth White: Goodness, in the darkness... I'd imagine there'd be lit up spaces...

Adriano Fantini: There'd be lit-up spaces, yes, but it would be sort of cold, wet, and dusty.

Gareth White: Was he actually underground all the time with other Italians or were there also Welshmen??

Adriano Fantini: No, there were Welsh people as well, yes there were. It was mixed. It wasn't just purely a shift of Italians. It was that they integrated everybody. So, it was a lot of people that were ...

Gareth White: Because I remember some stories of other mines where I think they'd send the Italians in the better areas of the ground, and that caused friction with Welsh people. I don't imagine anything similar happened that your dad recounted?

Adriano Fantini: If that happened, he never mentioned it to me. I'm not aware of that.

Gareth White: Okay. So, what was it like working alongside these Welsh people?

Adriano Fantini: He got along well [...] Obviously initially at first, he would stick to the Italians like everybody would, because obviously they spoke the same language. But, ultimately, he got on well with all of them.

So some of his friends are you know ex-miners that are Welsh, so he kept in contact with everybody. It wasn't just, you know, 'you're Italian, you're my friend. You're a Welshman, so I'm not speaking to you.' He integrated well with everybody.

Gareth White: And I'd imagine as well that the same was reciprocated, no? That the Welsh...

Adriano Fantini: It was, yes, that's right. But my father also , as a supplement to mining, used to haircut.

Gareth White: I was going to come along to that later on, yes.

Adriano Fantini: So, a lot of the miners would use him to have their haircuts as well.

Gareth White: Wow. So, he had like a double role...

Adriano Fantini: Yes. So, he would, that's how he sort of started sort of barbering. He'd do it for the Italians and then suddenly they were, well, can you come and cut my hair? So, he would actually have the Welsh people as well, sort of having the haircuts or the other, all fellow miners, if you like, as soon as they knew, would have their haircuts by him.

So, he kept in contact with all of them. But also as, as time progressed, when he was down the mines, he became part of the first aid team with the St John's Ambulance. And the majority of those were sort of Welsh miners, so he integrated it as part of a team as well then to do the first aid underground.

Gareth White: That is impressive. I mean, the amount of roles that he had... I was going to come onto this as well because I noted that he was selected as well to be a recruiter. It wasn't just staying in Wales, it was like, he was actually sent back.

Adriano Fantini: Yes, because he went back, he brought his brother over, so my uncle came over as well on the sort of second recruitment...

Gareth White: How did that happen? Like how did he go from being someone underground to actually recruiting?

Adriano Fantini: Yes, I think it's because he was willing to... so a lot of Italians, and I know a lot that have come over as, in the generation that he came over, didn't learn to speak English properly. Okay, so even until the day they died, you know, they'd speak English to me.

And I felt they were better off speaking Italian because I don't understand what you're saying. But there's a lot of Italians from his generation that came over and didn't learn to communicate. I think that was the biggest bonus that my father had, that he actually was willing to learn English, not just to speak, but to actually read and write. So, which is why

I think he would have become one of the ... a lot of his friends couldn't read English, they can speak it and go in, but they couldn't read and write. So as a recruit recruitment, he was probably the perfect candidate.

Gareth White: Okay. So then obviously he was sent back to your home, and he brought his brother and...

Adriano Fantini: I don't know how many others, but yes, he went back there.

Gareth White: Wow, literally to his hometown?

Adriano Fantini: Yes. I don't know if... I would have thought that the region, rather than just the village.

Gareth White: Yeah, that makes sense. You don't go all the way and just, go to your village and , there you are...

Adriano Fantini I mean the village is a thousand people, so you're not going to recruit that many sort of young men, but I would've thought in the area itself, you know, he would have had the recruitment sort of drive.

Gareth White: Okay. So obviously he was a recruiter. He was a hairdresser., he worked in first aid team alongside the Welsh. Is this something that was common practice that, you know, they would have these kinds of additional roles whilst working in the Iron ore mines?

Adriano Fantini: I think they would do anything for money... Obviously he came over, most of his wage went back to support the family, that was the whole point of him [coming over]. So, any additional money was a bonus, so any further jobs that they offered enabled them to sort of live a better life. So, any additional income would have been a massive bonus for them.

GW: Okay. Do you know how... so obviously the extra income that was sent back, I'd imagine that was like on a frequent monthly basis, maybe even ...

Adriano Fantini: It was a regular, regular payment on a monthly basis. Yes.

Gareth White: And then everything else was additional...

Adriano Fantini: Income ... Additional income that he could use then to sort of improve his life over here. So he went into lodgings. After the initial period of being in the hostel, he went into lodgings, which he had to pay for obviously, and then any money left would go to Italy, but he could improve the lodgings that he stayed in with the extra income.

Gareth White: Let's talk about the living quarters for a moment as well. So obviously starting, like he went on to lodgings, initially he was in a hostel.... What was that like?

Adriano Fantini: Couldn't tell you. He never, ever spoken about them.

Gareth White: Okay. But I imagine he was probably situated with other Italians.

Adriano Fantini: Yeah, it was other Italians. I think principally, it was all Italians, or all foreign workers. I don't think it was just Italians. I think they were Poles as well. I believe.

Gareth White: And then obviously he went with into these lodgings, by himself or was he with other people?

Adriano Fantini: Nah, he was with other people.

Gareth White: Okay. [...] And how was that like then? I'm just imagining this group of young Italian guys finding themselves in south Wales in a house or trying to improve conditions.

Adriano Fantini: Yeah, I don't think it was like it is nowadays. I don't think you'd go out and buy furniture. I think they just survived in it if, for want of a better word, but the housing conditions would have been better than what they were used to in Italy. It's as simple as that. It was... where he was, it was overcrowded, maybe in a big farmhouse with lots of land, but it would have been overcrowded with the amount of family there and everybody having their roles. The houses weren't built for comfort, or at least over when he came here, he could sort of get furniture and sit down, and have an electric cooker rather than the wooden burning one. So, you wouldn't have to light it, just turn a switch...

Gareth White: Yeah. So, I think in that case, the improvements, it would have been...

Adriano Fantini: A huge improvement yes.

Gareth White: Okay. I'm just thinking, was there any kind of reconstruction of Italy... I don't know if they had any festivals or food, or...

Adriano Fantini: Well I don't think initially there was... All the Italians they used to go to the dances, to the local dance halls. That was their sort of the weekly entertainment. But in terms of creating Italian *feste* and what have you, not in the early days, that didn't come much late until much later in his life.

Gareth White: Okay. I'll definitely come on to that area, in a moment. But these dances that... so they were a weekly dance. And I imagined workers could go from the mines and just attend these...

Adriano Fantini: It was, what we would call a discotheque nowadays, the dance halls, so anybody could turn up, so they would go and just mingle together. And then just grab a girl to dance with.

Gareth White: And I'd imagine, was that where he also met your mother or was that?

Adriano Fantini: Yes. That's where he met my mother. My mother is Welsh.

[....]

Gareth White: Okay. Obviously then he recruited, and he went straight into the ironworks. I'm thinking as well about the contract that you sent that, you know, obviously that would have been a temporary contract.

Adriano Fantini: I don't know if he ever had another one, to be honest. That's what he's got. I don't think he ever kept any other contract.

Gareth White: I wonder whether he came initially, maybe he talked about like, you know, "I'm only going to stay two or three years and then ..."

Adriano Fantini: His plan was never to stay. In fact, even after he met my mother, his plan was never to stay. When he had children, his plan was never to stay, and then he just stayed.

Gareth White: Okay. So, in that case, would you say that he kind of kept, you know, like Italy in his heart?

Adriano Fantini: He forever remained Italian; He didn't give up the nationality [...]

Gareth White: Okay. Would you say he also kind of kept a bit of like a Welsh identity as well?

Adriano Fantini: Oh yeah, he did. Yeah, he was happy that he had been working in Wales, or I should say the UK. I mean, he wouldn't have stayed so long if he wasn't. But if anybody asked him his identity, he would say "I'm Italian." He wouldn't say "I was Welsh. "

[...]

Gareth White: Okay. I'm wondering as well as we're speaking about politics, was he also involved in kind of trade unions in his time?

Adriano Fantini: He belonged to the National Union of Mineworkers, because I think that was part of the initial contract he had. I think the unions were a strong organization in the day. He was never an activist for them though. He never actively sort of worked for the unions, but he did fight for workers' rights. So, but not as a union rep.

Gareth White: Okay. Were there any strikes in his time?

Adriano Fantini: I think it plenty. It must've been.

Gareth White: Yeah. I was just thinking whether he participated, whether he shared any stories of, I think like, of him going to the picket lines.

Adriano Fantini: I think I would have been too young to remember, but then there would have been undoubtedly would have been strikes. Would he have been a willing participant? I think it depends on what the reason was. So he wouldn't have given up a day's worth for the sake of it, if it was "oh, I want a shilling more a week." He wouldn't have bothered with that because what he was getting was more than he would have had anyway. So, I don't think it was ever a case of "I'll strike for more money." If it was because it was dangerous conditions, yeah, then I can see him doing.

Gareth White: Okay. Interesting. I'm always thinking as well, you know, being foreign workers. And I know we said earlier that they were all welcomed, were all embraced into the community, and I'm always wondering whether there were these kinds of tensions that might've been caused by events.

Adriano Fantini: I don't know of any sort of racial sort of abuse in his time either. I think that's because the Welsh are very sort of friendly anyway, so it's not... I don't think it was no real major racial abuse, like you hear of. But then did he hear a bit of it in those days? That's the only part, but, I don't know, because he never did discuss that.

Gareth White: Yeah. Because one thing I found with my research is that, you know, I think by the 1950s, there did seem to be more of a positive representation of Italians in Wales. After the second world war, I think there was also, empathy for Italians. But yeah, I'm glad that there was no knowledge, that there were no stories of like discrimination?

Adriano Fantini: If there was, he never ever discussed it. So, I don't think there's any incidents that he's ever said in his life that was discriminatory. He was never, "you're not coming, you're not coming in because you're Italian" or anything like that. I don't think there was any discrimination. Not even in the workplace, "you can't do the awful job because you're a foreign worker"... I think everybody was treated pretty much the same.

Gareth White: You don't think there was any kind of jealousy that, maybe unemployed, local people were like, "why are they coming over?"

Adriano Fantini: Well, they actually came over because there wasn't enough labor in Wales. It was as simple as that. So, I don't think there was much unemployment. People would have chosen not to work rather than somebody stealing their job. [...] It's the reason they recruited in Italy. They couldn't get the labor in Wales. The coal mines were booming, so they needed labor. It was as simple as that. So, I don't think there's any tension in terms of 'foreigners taking our jobs.'

[...]

Gareth White: So, let's flip that on its head. Let's think positive experiences. Were any particular stories, that your father recalls that, have really stuck with you about your father's time working in the mines?

[...]

Adriano Fantini: Oh, yeah. I mean, the social sort of part of being a member of the first response team was always... the highlight of his year was going to the sort of St. John's ambulance do, where all expenses were paid. [...] And obviously he met my mother, so, you know, that'd be the most important thing that he would say...

Gareth White: So, could we say that [...] the contact with the people were what made that experience? Yeah,

Adriano Fantini: I mean, he didn't come over for the landscape or all the culture with which he did adopt. He actually came over to work and then obviously fell in love with society in general, if you like, with the people, you know, the friendliness and the way they were.

Gareth White: Yes, and then obviously he decided to stay.

Adriano Fantini: Yes. He met my mum and then decided to stay. Yes.

Gareth White: Okay. I wonder if we can come back to some of these other Italians, they had connections with. So obviously you said that there would be six people that he had as friends for life. I'd imagine they all worked in the same industry as your father, they stayed in and around the area for a number of years.

Adriano Fantini: So, they all started in the mines. Other people went onto (other jobs) later in life, Not that they stayed there forever. So they all, for the initial, I would say 10 years, they worked together. I can't see it being any less than I would have thought they'd gone on to other jobs in the 60s and 70s. It wasn't just those though, he did meet other Italians [...] obviously from different regions and they bonded as well. [...]

Gareth White: Yeah. Of these Italians, would you say that there was socialization amongst Italians of a certain area, say all the Friuliani would stick together, or would they kind of be mixing, you know, some people from Calabria.

Adriano Fantini: I would say in the early days, certainly the Friuliani would still stay together, more so because they knew each other. I can't speak for the others, but my father was certainly sort of integrated with all other Italians. He didn't care where you were from.

Gareth White: Okay. So, for him, the regional identity wasn't important, it was just...

Adriano Fantini: It was important, because in Friuli they speak Friulian. It's an actual language, it's a recognised language and not a dialect. It was important that the region you were coming from, but it wasn't well, all of a sudden, "I'm not speaking to you." It was a case of "I'm Friulan, these are my real sort of closest-knit friends, they're Friulani." And it always, because with other Italians, you can't speak Friulian. They'd have no idea what you'd be saying. But they could speak in their Napoli accent and my father would understand because it's just a version of Italian. So that identity stayed with him, you know, it's always Friulan.

Gareth White: Okay. I find it interesting the linguistic and the different geographical affiliations. So, I'd imagine Friulian- Italian – English, the different facets of a person.

Adriano Fantini: Yeah. But I think that's, because my father said he had the opportunity until the age of 14, he actually went to school and he actually said he was grateful for that because otherwise he'd have had no education. And that's where he learned Italian, the proper Italian. Because everyone, we spoke Friulian. So he learned Italian. So, he was very much into sort of languages for want of a better word. He was closely interested in, hence the reason for learning English in night school, it was the opportunity to learn.

Gareth White: Okay. I find that really interesting. What about Welsh, did he...

Adriano Fantini: He could speak Welsh as well as me, which was pretty poor.

Gareth White: It's a difficult language !

Adriano Fantini: [...] He knew the sort of everyday phrases that most Welsh people, and they say, Welsh people, that the majority of Welsh people didn't speak Welsh. [...] So, he could speak as much Welsh as them. [...]

Gareth White: I find it very different in the north.

Adriano Fantini: North and west Wales sort of, yes. They kept the... a bit like Friulian. They still, even today they encourage people to speak it. It was a very minority language, same as Welsh. He understood that he could understand that concept of Welsh being this sort of language of Wales, but unfortunately, he never learned it.

Gareth White: Do you think the fact that, and again, this is just a conjecture here, but the fact that coming from this context of being Friulian, from a strong regional identity within a larger national framework, do you think he kind of saw more parallels than just the language with Wales being a part of the UK?

Adriano Fantini: Yes, I think so. I think, I think he could see that sort of similarity of the regions, for want of a better word. I think Wales was still classed as, they may have had their football team, but it was still classed as a region of the UK before the devolution. So, he could understand that Wales had its own identity as part of the UK, the same way that Friuli wanted its own identity in Italy. So, the parallels are very similar.

[...]

Adriano Fantini: I think the Sicilians would have found exactly the same sort of scenario. You know, I'm from Sicily. If you ask a Welsh person where they're from, I'm from Wales and Sicilians do the same.

[...]

I think that because Italy was divided into regions, if they came over to Wales, they could associate that Wales being a region, similar to where they came from.

Gareth White: That was a really interesting thought. So, thank you. I'm going to come towards just like the few last questions. Keeping all this regional identity and you know, your father (?) really pay much attention to Friulian. Coming to the Amici Val Ceno. I know that he had some interactions later on with this ...What was that like? How did he get started with these people from Bardi?

Adriano Fantini: He's always been part of not losing this Italian identity. So, Amici Val Ceno was sort of an Italian club set up by people from Bardi in Italy. But he was a member of the ACLI. He was also a member of [...] the Alpini Club. So anything to do with sort of that side of his identity he would be involved in. If it was regional sort of events, dances, dinners. I mean, [...] I've got a picture of when he went for an Italian meal. I mean, I don't even know when it was taken. [...] early sort of 60s. He always, kept this Italian identity. So, if there was an organization that offered him an opportunity to keep that, he would join or get involved. So, it was always, that's always been important.

Not to say that he wouldn't exclude Welsh people or other people going to these events, because he would actively encourage other sort of nationalities to go. You don't have to be Italian to be a member of an Italian club. Maybe that's because he married a foreigner.

Gareth White: So, he kind of understood the importance of (??)

Adriano Fantini: Yes, that's right. Yeah. So he met with the Amici Val Ceno, became involved with those as well, as well as the Alpini association, and the ACLI. I mean, the ACLI was probably his biggest role, because that allowed him to get political with the people that matter and advise. So, he would often go to the embassy in London to meet with the sort of ministers and complain that 'why don't we have the same rights as people living in Italy, because a lot of the rights of people living in Italy, they didn't have over here.' Because they were living abroad and he always used to argue that if it wasn't for the people that moved abroad, Italy wouldn't be where it was.

Gareth White: Very true. Very, very true point. And...

Adriano Fantini: And it was all arguing politically that foreigners or Italian should be treated exactly the same as people living in Italy. To the sense of, he would always fill in people that did military service or actually worked in it. He would fill out their forms so

they could get their pensions, which were rightly theirs, but the Italian government didn't naturally want to give that sort of money.

Gareth White: Wow. That is really impressive. I mean, when did he start with this role with ACLI ? Was that in the 1950s?

Adriano Fantini: That was later on, that was probably the sort of late seventies.

Gareth White: Okay. That's fine. It's really interesting. He got really political, with all these associations, and playing such an active...

Adriano Fantini: Yeah. I mean the ambassador in London used to hate having him go there because he wouldn't sit quietly in the corner and say, 'oh yes, you know, I'll accept that.' [...] If it was an answer that wasn't correct or he didn't agree with, he would push his point and say, you know so voting was made really difficult. If you're in Switzerland, you could travel to the border of Italy and they would pay your fare, but they wouldn't for the UK. Well, what's the difference between foreigners in Switzerland and foreigners in the UK? Surely you have to pay the fare the same. So, I think they ultimately agreed to the same sort of thing. It was very difficult to get the money, but it was the fact that they changed their policy to say, okay, well all Italians can do this. Doesn't matter where you're from.

Gareth White: That is a really, really important victory.

Adriano Fantini: Yeah. Oh, no, it was always about the small things about... Everybody should be entitled to the same, cause if it wasn't for the foreign workers sending money back, Italy would never have recovered from after the war. And he always saw that as an important part of the role of emigrating. It was not just making a better life for him and his family in Italy. it was also a benefit for the Italians in general.

Gareth White: Yeah, definitely, I mean, I think that the *rimesse* was so important even before the war in terms of the building Italy, to industrialize, I completely agree, you know, the post-war economic recovery[...] Adriano, my final question for you then in terms of, you know, a summative view of your father's experience in Wales. What was the secret to his successful integration?

Adriano Fantini: Willingness to learn, to understand other people's sort of perspectives if you like. I mean, they had very similar values in terms of family life in Wales, as they did in Italy. It was very sort of similar, but it was the openness to, you know, never stop learning.

Gareth White: Okay. So do you think in terms of that, and the shows of openness, this willingness to participate in the community...

Adriano Fantini: Yeah. It was. My father's social life was our sort of hate if you're like, as a young child, because we used to go... He would go and visit people. We would travel up

to north Wales to see what we would expect the holiday and we'd spend a day seeing a friend 'cause he could go there and spend hours and hours chatting. Or we'd go to Cardiff because we lived outside there. [...]

Adriano Fantini: One thing that is, my father and this was with the Welsh mine as well. They actually did a sort of Testimonial [...] which is an award from the Italian government [...] in the contribution for work and for the miners union spokesman, [..]

Gareth White: Wow. How did he obtain this?

Adriano Fantini: It was unknown to us. It was completely unknown. So, one of his friends actually contacted the sort of consulate and said, this guy deserves recognition. And they actually had testimonies not just from Italians, but also his fellow co-workers in the mine. So, the Miners' Union and people that were there, so they all had to put something forward. And then it was just out of the blue and then you're going to London to get it.... he didn't know nothing about it, neither did we as a family. [...] but then it was up to the embassy in London to get the official sort of medal. So, it's almost like an MBE.

Gareth White: That's fascinating. When did he actually obtain this award?

Adriano Fantini: And that was 1995...

[...]

Adriano Fantini: But that was sort of the level of.... Cause it that wasn't just Italians, although it was awarded from the Italian government. It wasn't just Italians that actually said this guy deserves it. It was actually his fellow co-workers in the mine as well, which were Welsh, which had no benefit of giving. They had no reason to say, "Yeah, you deserve it." [...] They felt strong enough to do so, which was actually quite moving. My father was really sort of overwhelmed by the fact that the Welsh actually aided in that award.

[...]

3.4: Email exchange with Antonio Manna

Gareth White: I remember you mentioned a few times about your dad and how he came over. Where did he come from, and what did he do?

Antonio Manna: Naples, Italy. Worked in various tin plate and steel works when he came over in 1952. Later on, he settled as a rough painter. He stayed in a hostel in Morriston with other Italians for a while too.

[...] He left Italy in 1952. Wales were looking for immigrants to work in the steel industry. Well generally the Welsh were good to my father... but he did suffer from racism, discrimination in the workplace, and in some workplaces... unfair pay.

Well, there was a small community of Italians who would meet up in the Italian cafes and call around my father's house too. And he had lots of Welsh friends. I don't know if there was a Union, sorry.

Gareth White: I have a few follow-up questions that I'd love to ask based on what you've said here. When you say there was 'discrimination and tension', could you go into a bit more detail? Also, was this amongst other Italians, with Welsh people, or with other nationalities (e.g., Polish?). Also, you mention the fact that they met in Italian cafes with other Italians. Why was it important to meet in these places, and what would they do?

Antonio Manna: Well, I was born in 1955, so I was very young. But I remember people calling us names because of being half Italian... Can't recall my father saying anything about the Poles! They would all go to Italian cafes. I suppose it was to meet up with Italian friends. But my father had lots of British friends too... When I was growing up, we had lots of Welsh friends calling to our house to see my mam and dad too. and to look at my dad's vegetables and greenhouse to see grapes. We used to make wine with them. Also had chickens... my dad was renting a condemned cottage with a big garden... Before we moved in, a lot of my dad's Italian friends repaired the cottage free so that my family of 11 could move in.

Gareth White: What about the work conditions? I've read reports of there being accidents and not too safe...

Antonio Manna: Well, I think it was the same for everyone in them days...

Gareth White: Do you think the war had an impact on his treatment in Wales?

Antonio Manna: Yes, I remember my father arguing with a neighbour....a few other people too ...but generally the Welsh people were nice to us

Gareth White: Final questions: would you say there was, more than an Italian community, there was a Campanian / Neapolitan community in the area, and in what ways do you think it's similar to welsh community?

Antonio Manna: Well. Can't remember much about what part of Italythey came from ...but it must have been Naples and surrounding areas because they went to south Italy

for workers ! My dad's father died when he was nine .and he had three younger brothers...so he was the head of the family ...he worked up until he came to wales at 20...as a shepherd !.,

Yes, the Welsh and Italians are very similar!

One last story .my father was a very popular and likeable person ..and he worked in the mine's too in the beginning....and one day the Italians and poles were working together and one day ..a friend of my dad's called my father over and said a Italian man is here every month to collect 10 shillings off everyone for protection and helping out the men with their problems ...I won't mention his name the family are still around....anyway he.. told my dad he had to pay or else basically...this guy was a boxing champion in the Italian army !my dad and him had a fight and my dad had the better of him ...my dad and his friends didn't pay him nothing!., they became friends after that ..he was very well respected for being an honest man and a family man too !

[...]

3.5: Interview with Antonio Romanello, 27th October 2021

Gareth White: 27th of October 2021. And I'm here with Anthony Romanello to discuss his family's history regarding their involvement in the metal industry in Wales in the 1950s. OK, Anthony, I'm going to come over to you for the first question, and I want to know before your family arrived in Wales, you said just now they're living in Benevento in Campania. Can you start off by telling me a bit about their lives in Italy and why they left to come to Wales?

Antonio Romanello: Yeah. So basically, post-World War Two is the key factor where obviously after the World War and some of the drastic decisions that Mussolini had made had kind of brought Italy to its bare knees. The economy was in such a state that this ultimately was really struggling to, you know, how can I say it, to make [.....] work. You know, the majority would just live off the land. The families were big. There was no work, no work at all. Level of poverty to be honest. I mean, I'll say poverty, [...] they're without food on the table, and that's as far as it goes you know? Yes. I think post-World War Two countries such as Switzerland, Great Britain, America, the South Americas, their economies were starting to boom basically. Great Britain, the steel industry was booming. The factories got the garment, and other industries were booming, which for the Brits is a work that a lot of British people didn't want to do, really, you know?

Gareth White: Okay.

Antonio Romanello: So, I think that post World War Two whether these countries were booming, and Italy was still on its knees. And what happened was local centres, you would have adverts to go work abroad, jobs to go work abroad. But however, I mean, this goes back to pre-WWII as well, I mean. (Others) in the family who have moved, [...], they've moved to Argentina in the 1920s and that, Argentina, where else, Venezuela, and one lot moved to New York, which is now in Pittsburgh [...]

Gareth White: So, in other words, for the Romanellos, migration was like a really common experience.

Antonio Romanello: Right. Yeah, yeah.

Gareth White: OK, OK. And this is the 1920s. [...]
[...]

Gareth White: Yeah, I find it interesting. You know, you're saying about the poverty in Campania, and then obviously these local adverts started to appear. And these adverts for workers in the steel industries, would they be?

Antonio Romanello: Yeah. So, at the time, in the 1950s, my grandfather, there was works, the Steelworks in the UK, especially Wales. They just, needed manpower, you know. My grandfather [...] was already courting my grandmother and they got married. He departed then to Wales by train. And I think he worked the first year, the first 12 months here before he went back and fetched my grandmother.

Gareth White: Okay, so your grandfather was courting your grandmother? He sees this post in a local in a local centre, gets a job and goes to Wales, right? Do you know what year he first arrived in Wales roughly?

Antonio Romanello: 1954.

Gareth White: OK, in 1954. So, he spends a year here, goes back to Italy, and then returns with your grandmother.

Antonio Romanello: Goes back, gets married, then returns with her.

Gareth White: OK. And where did he start off working in the 1950s?

Antonio Romanello: It was the old steelworks in Llanelli. The site is still there because it's a listed building, but it closed down many years back now.

Gareth White: OK. Did he come over with anyone else when he first arrived?

Antonio Romanello: Yeah, he did. It would have been his brother, my uncle Tonino. But obviously, by the time they got here, there was already Italians here, so it was all about building communities, you know?

Gareth White: OK. In what sense, about the communities that were already here, can we go into this a little bit more.

Antonio Romanello: Yeah. So, I mean, there was already an influence of Italians in Wales and parts of Britain. I mean, the first general influence here in Wales would have been late in the 1860s onwards. Yeah, yeah. One famous one would be Joel Cascarino, the Cascarinis, who came here, and they see this massive coal mining industry booming. But there was nobody for them to go and hang out and have a coffee or have breakfast. And he was the first guy to start a cafe, the cafe business and, you know. [...]

Antonio Romanello: Yeah, obviously coming over from Italy, which was a big thing, such a big step to come in this country being Italian. It's like they wouldn't come by themselves, they would come with a family member. And once you're there, they would kind of connect to other Italians for that kind of connection of safety and friendship that, you know, safety, you know?

Gareth White: Definitely. That makes a lot of sense, you know. And obviously he came over with his brother. Yeah. and of course, he would have found things a lot easier? [...]

Antonio Romanello: You know, it was tough. I mean, I remember him saying, but you know, how it was, and it was tough. He'd come over here, he'd have to abide by the rule, you know? They were just cheap migration. [...] The earnings, I think, what was he on, I think at the time was seven pounds a week? House lodging was one pound fifty a week, because when he initially moved over here, he was lodged in a house with another Italian family who would have been here a number of years already.

Gareth White: Was this like a relationship that he kept up with this other family? Or did he...

Antonio Romanello: He had this family in question now. Their son would go on to marry my auntie, my mum's sister. [...]

Gareth White: Was this company also working in the metal industry or were they working in like a completely different area?

Antonio Romanello: Yeah. So, the guy in question, he worked in, he came a bit sooner he did, I think it was something around about, he was already here four years, Saverio his name was, and his wife Lucia. [...] So basically, a lot of them had come over here, some of them would just come here and work and live a normal life and send some money back and make a life an honest life for themselves. A lot of them come over here and want the piece of the action. They wanted to make it, and they want to make it on the big time, you know? So, by expanding, fish and chips, cafes, you know, and I think these guys managed to buy a house with a couple of bedrooms that, as he was working in the steel industry, his wife would look after the house and the lodgers and stuff that, you know, they kind of were doing that.

Gareth White: Did he come over with anyone else from Benevento other than your brother and his brother? Or was it just the two of, you know...

Antonio Romanello: Trying to think now, because there was surprisingly many that came over... But my grandfather in question I'm talking about now is my mum's father, my grandfather that I just explained about the Argentina scenario. They also come over here with my great aunt, but then moved to West Wales, to Haverfordwest in the farming industry. [...]

Gareth White: Yeah. So obviously it starts off with your nonno coming in the 1950s, having that initial year in the steelworks, but did he come back to the steelworks when he came back with your grandmother. Or What was that when he changed?

Antonio Romanello: Yeah, that's right. When he went to fetch my nonna around twelve months later, and when he came back, my nan was only 17. My grandfather's a couple years older than her. Only two years older than her. And my nonna being 17, she says she hated, that she cried for three months nonstop, you know. So, my nonna hated it. And it gave that sense of untrust into the society, well, you know that she was petrified.

Gareth White: Okay. I wonder if you know whilst we're thinking about this idea of like your untrust and the reception of Italians in Wales, whether there were ever any kind of, I don't know, negative treatment towards your grandparents, particularly whilst there in Wales in the steelworks,

Antonio Romanello: There was, Apparently, my grandfather, along with his brother, they underwent lots of mistreatment, kind of bullying as such. . I think I remember my grandfather saying that one guy in particular for a number of years. And when I think back, I just can picture my grandfather just working, doing his work, you know, and just getting on with it. And I remember him telling me they were going to his lunch box and

put bits of newspaper into sandwiches and stuff for that. But I think one day my grandfather retaliated and after 18 months or two years of this crap going on, he had a cup of coffee in his hand and he just went, 'boosh', right in his face with a full cup of coffee and scalded him at the same time. And from that day onwards, he said he had nothing but respect. They always had that view. And my gramp, you know, In that sense, they always viewed the local society to be not so kind.

Antonio Romanello: Like us from Italy, well my family anyway, but a lot of Italians that came here, they're friendly, they've got a good heart and, they try to bring them values of friendliness and kindness and honesty. But back then, you know, the culture was such a binge drinking culture, my grandfather says there was 120 pubs, in Llanelli. People earned their money, and at the end of the week, [...]. There was a pub across from across the roads from the steelworks. A guy would go there every day and then one hour lunch break he could down seven pints eight pints in his lunchbreak and then go back to work. He could never work out how these guys would live with their wages.

Gareth White: [...] But I imagine he as well had loads of positive relationships with people in Wales When he migrated. Did he make close friends with...?

Antonio Romanello: Yeah, absolutely, I'm not saying that. Yeah, I think a lot of it was prejudice against Italians because of the World War Two scenario, you know? [...]

Gareth White: OK would ever be anything like, you know, comments like no other.

Antonio Romanello: Oh yeah, so many, you know, stuck in reverse, all the Italian jokes about the running backwards during the war, X Y and Z. But at the same time he made a lot of nice friends here. Absolutely. I suppose it's a case of settling down, you know, settling down and then just moving on.

Gareth White: OK. What about the actual conditions in the steelworks for him, like what were the conditions like? was he working long hours, was he underground?

Antonio Romanello: I remember him telling me he hated it, the safety levels of it. He was, you know, [...] he said. Every foot you step in that place you had to watch you don't fall into something that could burn. You burn alive and he didn't like it. But you know, he got on with that. Yeah, he would start very early in the morning, and I think it was shift related work. Because I think when, after a number of years and he managed to save up money, he moved house closer to work so you wouldn't have to walk so far to work. And my grandmother's living there now, and she's 80.
[...]

Gareth White: OK. So obviously, the safety conditions of work were really worrying. You know, I'm thinking you say, you know, the risks of falling into things, being severely burned. [...] But I'm thinking, were there any kind of unions that were protecting them in these days? Mm hmm.

Antonio Romanello: Um. I remember them telling me it was very it was very much a socialist situation with them, you know. They had socialists. [...] you had so many that they were kind of well looked after, there was a bunch that were untouchable and that.

And basically, they'd get all their backs shipped the work and any work that didn't suit them, basically, they see these people, get the best treatments out of the steelworks, but not them, you know, so they didn't have a say in the matter.[...] As far as unions, you say, I don't remember, him mentioning anything like that.

Gareth White: Yes. OK. So, in other words, you know, the strong idea of, you know, doing the jobs that literally, as you said, no one else wanted to do, just the ones that were really dangerous. And outdated.

Antonio Romanello: Yeah.

Gareth White: OK. I wonder, were those any kind of like strikes or any kind of protests about the work conditions that he might have?

Antonio Romanello: I remember something that happened, which caused him to lose his job... Something happened where there was some sort of strike or something going on at the time, which caused that part of the steelworks closed down.

Gareth White: Okay

Antonio Romanello: And he was 42 then, 42 years of age. So, which would have gone [...] 1971 1972, when the steelworks closed down under , which then. [...]

Antonio Romanello: But my grandfather passed away, he was 60 because of cancer, which I think was caused by inhaling whatever the hell was going on and the steelworks. if you'd go see my grandfather at the age of 50, in his early 50s he'd look like somebody who's 78, [...] You know, my grandfather was definitely 20 years past his age. Thinking back that it was. It was sad to see it. Yeah, that's for sure.

[...]

Antonio Romanello: Yes. So, my uncle had, they called at the little café in Gorseinon those were that those be that we play cards that you know. You know, like the dances organized on the Valleys [...]. jump on a bus and go to the Italian dances and the band from Italy, you know?

Gareth White: Interesting, interesting. I wonder is whether you, as you're speaking about these Italian dances and other events, were there any links with, you know, like the Italians who came before? [...]

Antonio Romanello: Yeah, I think... I don't know, no matter how late you came, and how long the Italians were here before, you were accepted in the Italian community, you know. You're widely accepted. So, when they would go to these Italian dances, they would flock from all over. For instance, I remember my nonna saying there'd be a dance, there was always a dance in Merthyr, just outside Merthyr. and then they would catch a bus from Llanelli, and when you got there there'd be a bus there from West Wales, Swansea, and it was huge, a big influence.

Gareth White: It really seems like the meeting place of Italians from everywhere in the 1950s. [...]

3.6: Interview Gareth White, Serafina Toscano, Felice Toscano - 30th March 2022

Gareth White: So, tonight is the 30th of March 2022, and I am joined by Serafina Toscano and Felice Toscano, two Welsh citizens currently living in Italy. Buonasera to you both, good evening.

Felice Toscano + Serafina Toscano: Buonasera, Good evening, Gareth.

Gareth White: Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me tonight to discuss your family history. I'm going to start with a very general question. What happened? Can you talk to me briefly about your family's movements from Italy? You know, mentioning maybe briefly what the situation was like in Italy before migration, and then how they were recruited, how they arrived in Wales?

Serafina Toscano: Yeah. Do you want to start?

Felice Toscano: Okay. Well, my father initially moved to the United Kingdom. He was recruited by the Italian Ministry of Labor. He was sent to Milano and from there, he was sent directly to Glamorganshire, and he was posted in a place called Pontardawe, in the Neath / Swansea area. And he had a four-year contract, and he worked for a colliery. He was at the mines.

Felice Toscano: From there after... one of the problems that he used to always mention that he had in the barracks, [...] he lived with the Poles, the Polish.

Serafina Toscano: Yes, I remember him saying.

Felice Toscano: There were many conflicts between them because the post-war was still a bit hot, the iron was a bit hot. And he luckily moved out of the barracks a year and a half before his contract expired and he bought a house in Port Talbot where he then went on to rent rooms out with his fellow citizens.

Serafina Toscano: Italian citizens.

Felice Toscano : Italian citizens, yeah. That's how he got to be here. He was very pleased. He was very, very happy to have moved to the United Kingdom.

Serafina Toscano: Because he moved to the UK because he had nothing to leave. He said he had nothing to leave behind. He was a farmer. And after the war, you can imagine there

was nothing, nothing at all. And he didn't want to be a farmer because there wasn't, it was just food, that's all. Vegetables to eat and nothing else. There was no money. There was no future. And he was a hardworking man and very, very proud, a proud man. So, he said, 'I can't live like this'. And that was the reason he emigrated because he didn't want to live off sort of thing, off, his parents or whatever. He wanted a future. And he couldn't see that future in Italy in those days.

He actually tried to go to Argentina first, and his mother, my grandmother ripped up his application form. And he said, don't ever do that again. And then he applied for the UK. That's why he ended up in the UK and not in Argentina.

Gareth White: Interesting. And I'd imagine that when we're referring to Italy, was this also in the south where he was from?

Serafina Toscano: Yes, the Southern part is in the Naples area.

Gareth White: Okay, so in the Naples area he was originally from...

Serafina Toscano: In the Campania region.

Gareth White: Yes. Okay. May I ask, was it like from a rural village in the country?

Felice Toscano: No. Pomigliano D'Arco at the time wasn't a rural village. He was a farmer, but Pomigliano was a very important, technological...

Serafina Toscano: It became gradually, Flash.

Felice Toscano: No, no, it was. During, the Nazi fascist regime, it was a technology call centre of the Daimler company, which occupied many, many people. Obviously during the war from 1943, it was heavily, heavily bombarded and totally destroyed. When my father chose to leave Pomigliano d'Arco, it was still a mass of rubble.

Serafina Toscano: Yeah, yes it was... we remembered it. When we used to come over, we were 10, well, I was 10, Felice was younger... And for me, it was rural because all I could see were cows pulling carts. And that's me talking about the early sixties. Yeah, that's what I remember coming home on a cart pulled by a huge cow. And we were going into this little village where my father grew up. [...]

Gareth White: Okay. But, but obviously the fortunes at the time were such that emigration was the only answer.

Serafina Toscano: The only option. In fact, my father called his younger brother. Salvatore, and he went over at a later date. I don't know how many years later, but once again, this second brother of his couldn't find work obviously. And the elder brother, my father was the first that called him over. So, of three brothers, two went over to go to the UK.

Gareth White: And that would be very much the chain, like the domino effect. The chain migration that we mentioned...

Serafina Toscano: Yes, exactly.

Gareth White: And your father's name sorry?

Serafina Toscano: My father's name is, was Antonio.

Gareth White: Okay, fantastic. So, Antonio was recruited and Felice, you mentioned it was under the bulk recruitment scheme agreed by the Ministero del Lavoro. Did he have to go through any training before arriving in Wales?

Felice Toscano: None at all, Gareth.

Gareth White: So, no training, no language lessons, potentially

Felice Toscano: Nothing at all. No.

Serafina Toscano: Nothing. Unfortunately. For my mother, that was a great, handicap because she refused. My mum, she went over in 1951 Felish? I can't remember.

Felice Toscano: No mam went over in 1955.

Serafina Toscano: In 1955. They got married, Yes, they got married in 55. And my mother in effect, she refused to learn the language. She refused, as if to say I can't speak it. I'm not going to try. I'm not going to make myself ridiculous. So, there was this barrier. My mum never really accepted being over.

Felice Toscano: But I may add, like you said, Gareth. There were the pioneer generation, the Bracchis, the Sidolis, the Rabaiottis.

Serafina Toscano: Viazzanis.

Felice Toscano: ... who were all in the commercial industry. They had all their cafes and ...

Serafina Toscano: Coffee shops, fish and chip shops.

Felice Toscano: But they were also hired as interpreters.

Serafina Toscano: Yes exactly. Because my aunt told me, cause I called my aunt the other day, and she told me that the biggest difficulty she had when she went over... my aunt is my mother's sister. So, after my mum went over in 55, her youngest sister got married. Both husband and wife went over. And stayed with them obviously for a while. And my

aunt said that while she was pregnant, she couldn't, she was unable to speak to nurses in the hospital when she went up for checkups during her pregnancy. And Viazzani was the person who acted as a translator. Yeah. So, there was this language barrier, obviously,

Gareth White: But it's interesting as well that there were links with the previous generations that there weren't, you know, like these isolated communities of the old generation and the new generation, but it seemed like a lot of mixing...

Felice Toscano: But the relationship, unfortunately wasn't a very compact, very close knitted community among the Italians. My father said that.

Serafina Toscano: Which Italians, Felish? Which Italians?

Felice Toscano: The ones that arrived after.

Serafina Toscano: Exactly. Between the first, let's say the older group and the younger group. The relationship, the close-knit relationship was the ones that arrived after the war.

Felice Toscano: Yeah.

Serafina Toscano: Not those before the war,

Felice Toscano: Because obviously it was a more dispersed community, 'cause they were all involved in business.

Gareth White: That is interesting. So, you seem to say that, after the war, people who came over in this second mass migration wave were a lot tighter as a community?

Felice Toscano: That's the impression that we have had and the, the contact that we have had with these people.

Serafina Toscano: Yes. Because their English obviously was, how can I say, wasn't broken, wasn't pidgin English, [...] what would you call it... because I remember growing up and I'd speak... when at school I'd speak English [...] So I went to school, not knowing how to speak English, because at home we'd only speak Italian or Neapolitan. But with my parents, as we grew up, I remember mixing English with Italian, Neapolitan. I wouldn't call it Italian. I would call it an Old Neapolitan... Because when we came over in 1975 to Italy, I found that I was using words that were obsolete. They were out of fashion; they were not used any more. So, we grew up speaking as if we had fossilized. They had fossilized themselves. [...] They went over in the 1950s, in 1950, 51, my mum then in 1955. And that's how they remained really language-wise and mentality.

Gareth White: That is interesting. I'd love to come and say into more detail about these cultural clashes later on. I want to just kind of take a step back and following the timeline.

So, he arrives in Pontardawe in you said 1950, 1951. And he went to work in a coal mine, you said?

Felice Toscano: Exactly. A colliery.

Gareth White: Okay a colliery. And you mentioned as well that he was housed in barracks.

Serafina Toscano: Yes. They were all housed in barracks.

Gareth White: Okay. Were these kinds of former military barracks that had fallen into disrepair?

Serafina Toscano: Exactly. They were former military barracks in the Briton Ferry area. So, we are talking about the same area. Briton Ferry. That's what auntie Anne told me.

Felice Toscano: In Pontardawe.

Gareth White: Okay. And you mentioned as well that he was working and living with Polish people at the time?

Serafina Toscano: In the barracks.

Felice Toscano: But not mixed. They were in the same location, but in different barracks.

Gareth White: Okay. So, could we say maybe like there was a hut for the Polish and a hut for Italians?

Serafina Toscano: There were different porters, and they would divide it up by nationality because after the war, obviously not only the Italians went over, but, all the different nationalities there. He did say that there was a lot of, I don't like to say the word violence, but there were lots of outbreaks.

Felice Toscano: Yes. There was a lot of conflicts between them.

Gareth White: Okay. May I ask, did he mention any reasons for this? Was it just ...?

Serafina Toscano: I think it was because the Italians were with the Germans. I think that's the reason. That's the only reason I can think of.

Felice Toscano: The most discrimination that the Italians received in that period of time, Gareth, was not from the Welsh, but from the Polish.

Gareth White: Fascinating

Felice Toscano: And that really irritated the Italians. So, there was always these brawls between them.

Gareth White: Honestly, that is very unexpected. I suppose historically it makes sense, but. I'd be very curious to find out...

Serafina Toscano: We have to place ourselves back in time. It was after the war, three or four years, five years after the war. The Italians were allied with the Germans, which wasn't nice, let's say at the time. The memories [...] the wounds were fresh from the war and many of them had lost obviously families and friends during the war. You can imagine the Germans...

Gareth White: Okay. [...] In terms of the work itself, that, what were the conditions like in that sense, down in the mines?

Felice Toscano: Well, when my father compared the intensity of work, physical, he said that work in Wales was a pleasure.

Serafina Toscano: But that's daddy Flash.

Felice Toscano: He was a very hardworking person...

Serafina Toscano: My father worked too hard. For him the workload was never a workload. It wasn't a load.

Felice Toscano: Because he always compared it to Italy.

Serafina Toscano : It was a pleasure for him, but it was heavy going, because my aunt told me the other day that - in fact I wrote it down - talking about earlier, long, long hours, they work very long hours. [...] It was night shifts. Many of them worked nights, and my uncle, Michael, my dad, zio Giovanni, Uncle Johnny as well, they all worked long hours and night shifts. And it was dirty work. Obviously not being able to use the mind, they used their hands. They'd use their hands cause they were laborers obviously. But this allowed them time working night shifts and this allowed them time she told me...

My dad rented an allotment. And he loved farming because another thing that they missed was the food, the vegetables. Today, we have everything. You get access to almost any kind of vegetable, but back in the fifties, there were no aubergines. There were no peppers, zucchini. You wouldn't have these broccolis as we know them, you wouldn't have them. You wouldn't find them. So, this allotment they had, they planted all these vegetables that they missed, but this was in years to come, not straight after, it was when dad bought his house and they all settled in New Street where we lived.

And then he started farming. He had an allotment with pigs, wasn't it Felish? Pigs, rabbits, chickens, everything. So, my dad, after the night shift, he'd go to the allotment. And that's

where he loved it there, because he was in the countryside, and he still loved it. So really it was work, work, work.

Gareth White: And in a way as well, I suppose it's a reproduction of his little corner of Italy.

Serafina Toscano: Exactly, exactly.

Gareth White: Okay. I know we mentioned as well that the nature of the job was quite dirty. Was he working in, I don't want to use the word dangerous conditions, but you know, my research...?

Felice Toscano: There were no safety conditions.

Serafina Toscano: In fact, he had an incident, when he worked, was it the chemical works then later was it Felice?

Felice Toscano: Later he moved to a chemical works as a boiler man.

Serafina Toscano: As a boilerman. but he didn't wear masks. They weren't compulsory. There was some gas escaped or there was something happened. There was a gas leak. And I remember opening and knocking... a knock on the door and I opened the door and there was this gentleman standing outside, advising us, informing us that my dad was in hospital and my father had problems with his breathing ever since. And another, my father's brother died with cancer in the oesophagus. Yes. So, I think that there health problems.

[...]

Gareth White: Did he ever talk about any of these difficult conditions down in the mines?

Felice Toscano: Never.

Serafina Toscano: My father never spoke about the war. He didn't speak about anything of the past or very rarely...

Felice Toscano: Because he fought also in the war.

Gareth White: Interesting. Did he speak much about this as well?

Serafina Toscano: No... He only told me, I remember once he told me that, when the war ended or they said it was finished, he was in the north of Italy and he walked barefoot from the north down to the south and he came back home barefoot, not to wear out his boots. He carried them over his shoulders. As I said, my dad was a very hardworking man and our friends remember him as such.

Gareth White: I definitely get that impression listening to the two of you speaking about, you know the extreme work ethic.

Serafina Toscano: Yes, Extreme, exactly.

Gareth White: I wonder as well here, we've talked a lot about these difficult conditions. I wanted to kind of flip this to focus on some of the positives. And whilst we mentioned about the Polish interactions...

[...]

Felice Toscano: They didn't socialize with the Welsh. No.

Gareth White: Was there any reason for this?

Serafina Toscano: There was only one family in the whole street [...]

Felice Toscano: Serafina, may I add it was their choice. So it wasn't that the Welsh avoided us.

Serafina Toscano: No, no.

Felice Toscano: No way at all. No, no,

Serafina Toscano: No, but one family, I don't know why, but ...

Felice Toscano: There's always one family, because...

Serafina Toscano: Because even today we are still good friends with one.

Gareth White: Interesting. And I suppose putting ourselves in their shoes, you know, they'd have come over, new country, the language issues as well. Of course, they would look to socialize with different people. But obviously I'd imagine a lot of socialization with Italians?

Serafina Toscano: Yes, absolutely. I remember, every Saturday, or Sunday. Saturday evenings, we would drive over to one house or another and we'd meet up. Various families, Italian families. And I know we'll have supper together, play cards. The men would play cards. The women would chat. The kids would play. I remember it fondly, with very fond memories of that time. It was lovely. It was our day out because we never went anywhere.

Gareth White: Okay. And this was something that was done every week, was it?

Serafina Toscano: Yeah, every week, twice a month. You know, it was regular.

Gareth White: I wonder as well whether, you know, there was any involvement in any other Italian association? I've come across references to Italian dances that were held, locally in some areas, or *Il Gruppo degli Alpini* that's sometimes mentioned. Is that something your dad was active in as well?

Serafina Toscano: I don't remember any of this...

Felice Toscano: No, I don't recall. No,

Serafina Toscano: At least not in our area.

Gareth White: Okay. Yeah. It might be more kind of Llanelli way in comparison to Port Talbot, which

Serafina Toscano: Definitely.

Gareth White: Okay.

Felice Toscano: In Port Talbot, from what I remember, none at all.

Gareth White: Yeah. Okay. Okay. So, there's a lot of socialization with Italians, were they also Italians from the same area as your father?

Felice Toscano: Southern Italy.

Serafina Toscano: All Southern...

Felice Toscano: Not Northern Italian. As I said before, the majority of the Northern Italians had arrived in our area a generation before, and there was this sort of them looking down on us. Okay. They didn't consider us as equal to them. So, there was... and my father used to outline this problem a lot.

Gareth White: Interesting... So, in that case, that there were definitely tensions with the Northern Italians, but a lot of affinity with the southerners.

Serafina Toscano: Exactly. Yes. Because we were all from the Naples area, the others were not, they were from the Northern part.

Felice Toscano: They came from the Emilia-Romagna region , the Bardi region, Emilia-Romagna

Serafina Toscano: And that's another reason probably, that is the reason I should say...

[...]

Gareth White: I wonder if we could quantify it as well, approximately, the extent of the Southern Italian community in Port Talbot. Would that be large groups?

Felice Toscano: Now, as I said Gareth, only our extended family probably counted 40 to 50 people.

Gareth White: Okay. And they all came over?

Felice Toscano: And they all came over. And then considering other Neapolitans and southerners, mainly from Sicily. ..

Serafina Toscano: Yes. Campisi. He was a tailor. A gentleman.

Felice Toscano: I can tell you more or less we are talking about, in an area only Port Talbot, we are talking about something like 200 to 300 Italians.

Serafina Toscano: Yes, it was a lot, there was always an Italian in the class. In my class We were three.

Felice Toscano: There were four.

Serafina Toscano: We were Monopoli, Toscano and Cacamo. Cacamo came from Sicily, Silvana and myself in the Naples area, her father came over, but the father married an Italian, but not from the first generation, a prisoner of war. Her parents were prisoners of war. Yes. And when he came over, he married this lady and they had six children. Unfortunately, he died very young, but they had a fish and chip shop, because she was from that kind of a family.

Felice Toscano: From the Bardi area.

Serafina Toscano: Yeah. So that's why he opened his fish and chip shop. The other place where they worked was the ironworks in Wales. The ironworks. Zio Salvatore, Zio Giovanni, they were there until my uncle John he fell in, he wasn't quite well.[...]

Felice Toscano: May I add also here as it comes to mind. Why didn't the Italians feel the weight of this heavy work hard work that we say? Because they received something that they didn't know existed. They were in a welfare state. Zio Giovanni, when he fell ill, was shocked by the way he was treated by the Welsh, positively I mean....

Serafina Toscano: Because he was ill... he was ill.

Felice Toscano: One thing I must say, they were always grateful to the Welsh.

Serafina Toscano: Yes. Yes. Even if there was discrimination.

Felice Toscano: Well....

Serafina Toscano: No, I've experienced it. I don't know about you, but I have.

Felice Toscano: I didn't you see. That's the problem. Each one has a personal experience like that.

Gareth White: No, for sure. I, are we talking about, you know...

Serafina Toscano: School children.

Felice Toscano: At school.

[...]

Gareth White: I was wondering if we could go to take a step to return to your father's story and, linking as well Serafina you mentioned that, zio Salvatore worked in the iron works. Yes. Were they very similar conditions that he experienced compared to your father's trajectory?

Serafina Toscano: The same. Long hours and dirty work. When I asked my aunt and she said, I've written it down here. And she said, "why are you asking?" she's 90, she's over 90. And she said, "why are you asking me all these things?" I said, "I just want to know," because this and that. And she said, "it hurts me. It hurts me to remember." And I didn't expect that after so many years. That's what she told me. So it wasn't a choice. Because the minute they had the possibility, the first possibility they had of coming back to Italy, they took it. And that was in the 1970s. because there's a question here. I don't know if I'm jumping, you say here[...] how did they deal with.... They left. [...] What strategies did your ancestors use in order to navigate a rapidly changing society? In the seventies it was rapid. And what happened then was that in Italy, there had been, let's say the industrial revolution. Italy was booming. Everybody had money. Everybody had jobs. And in the UK the tendency was the opposite, because my mum said, but they're much better off there then they are here. So why are we here? So, my auntie Anne left, my uncle Salvatore left. They all found jobs in Italy and, gradually we left. So that's how they reacted. They left.

Gareth White: Which makes sense here with the *boom economico*. Of course there would be this transition, return migration. So, it's interesting how the circle closed in on itself.

Serafina Toscano: Exactly...

Felice Toscano: But if they were better informed of the situation, they may not have made that decision.

Serafina Toscano: Flashy, 50% of the Italians in Port Talbot...

Felice Toscano: But [...] when they returned to Italy, they regretted it.

Serafina Toscano: Yes. Some of them did, some of them went back to the UK.

Felice Toscano: I mean our own parents. Dad regretted coming back to Italy .

Serafina Toscano: Because he came back because of my mum. Not because he wanted to (but) to be close to the family.

Felice Toscano: Exactly. Because all the family had returned, we would have been the only family living in Wales at the time.

Serafina Toscano: You can imagine all the family living together, then all of a sudden everybody's coming back, and mum would be on her own. [...]

Gareth White: I was thinking this whole time about the dynamic of being from Campania... and Serafina you mentioned at the start, you know, this old Campanian identity that was very strongly felt. I wonder if we can talk about the interplay between Italian and Campanian identities for your family whilst they were in Wales.

Serafina Toscano: The interplay? Well, they tried... you talk about traditions, customs, things like that. ...

Gareth White: Yeah, exactly. Whether there was more kind of self-identification as Campanians... Italian?

Felice Toscano: There was ... what we called 'campanilismo'. The campanilismo was very strong among the Italians.

Serafina Toscano: They were very nationalist as well. They became strong nationalists amongst themselves, which when we came over to Italy, I didn't find it.

Felice Toscano: Well, I wouldn't say nationalist more like 'patriotics'.

Serafina Toscano: Okay. 'Patriotics'.

Felice Toscano: Well nationalist could be confusing. So (he) was a 'patriotic.' He fought the war, but he wasn't a fascist.

Serafina Toscano: No, absolutely not.

Gareth White: Okay.

Serafina Toscano: They kept their traditions [...] They celebrated the same special occasions, they cooked the same food [...] We tried to keep, to remember Italy as they

remembered it. And when we came over? Actually, a lot of things we didn't find, because they just didn't have what we did there, they didn't do anymore here in Italy. Little things, even with food or whatever things different and the mentality as well.

[...]

Gareth White: Okay. I'm just looking at the questions that I sent you. I think we've touched upon most of the themes here. One which I don't think we've touched on is the last one in 'B3' about trade unionism and political activism.

Serafina Toscano: I have no idea of that at all. It was nothing . .they never spoke about. I think they were unaware of it.

Felice Toscano: I would say that they were pleased with the conditions in which they were living.

Serafina Toscano: Exactly. That's why they were unaware Felice. Because he would complain.

Felice Toscano: They didn't ask for anything else. They just wanted to work and have a regular wage.

Serafina Toscano: I do remember dad saying that he wanted to do more overtime. And he wasn't given all the overtime that he wanted. Maybe my dad wanted all the overtime I don't know. But he'd say that he 'd ask for it and he wouldn't get it. When someone asks [...] Maybe it was dad wanting to work a lot... But I remember he'd say this about overtime, but apart from that, no. Trade union, nothing, honestly speaking, I think they were unaware of it, or they thought that they weren't....

Felice Toscano: Oh, I think they felt well protected. They were pleased with the welfare state and everything they had at that time. We're talking about the fifties and sixties now? No...

Serafina Toscano: Having seen that and experiencing all this, I think as Felice, I think that they were pleased to have what they have. I remember my aunt saying that when she got into Wales, when she arrived and they had their own house, or they went to see other people, they said they had carpets on the floor and she remembers, you know, she's got this image of these carpets on the floor and for her, it was something wonderful. [...]

Gareth White: Yeah. I can just imagine, you know, the different circumstances and discovering this, you know, very different surrounding in comparison with what you've grown up with.

Felice Toscano: Imagine that our parents in these rural areas lived in a single room house with a bathroom outdoors. When my mother arrived in Port Talbot, with a three-

bedroom house, you can imagine how she felt. So, they were really pleased on the condition.

Serafina Toscano: My dad had bought the house, but my aunt had told me last a couple of days ago, she said they could buy the house. They had permission to buy the house after the four years. Not before.

Felice Toscano: Not before.

Serafina Toscano: No. And the police (would) c(o)me to check on them regularly? Yeah. I've still got his alien act card somewhere. Yes. I've still got it. I have to look it up. It's got mammy's picture on it. It's lovely. And it's alien act. I read it once and I thought "alien, we are not from outer space," but obviously that doesn't mean it in that way. But alien act, I think it was 1920, Is that right? [...]

[....]

Felice Toscano: And as for the women. They all worked in factories.

Serafina Toscano: Yeah.

Felice Toscano: Cigar factory, the sewing factory, the tinsplate factory. My mother worked for the Abbey Works, the Steel works.

Serafina Toscano: She was a cleaner.

Felice Toscano : They all had jobs. No worries about working.

Gareth White: Can we maybe dig into this a little bit more, the idea of the Italian women working in these manual labor industries? What was that like for them? And how would they compare to life in Italy that they could have had?

Serafina Toscano: Well, the life in Italy that could have had would have been a housewife.

Felice Toscano: Or they were seasonal workers, farm workers, picking beans, picking fruit, that was their jobs there.

Serafina Toscano: Where we live, there was a carnation plantation. Yes. Now not so many, but in those days, yes. And a lot of fruit, fruit picking in this area, And tomatoes. A lot of tomatoes. So, it's seasonal obviously.

Felice Toscano: Yeah. But they also knew that, as I said again, the welfare state, contributions, healthcare, school for the children, which wasn't available for the Italians at the time.

Serafina Toscano: In fact...

Felice Toscano: So, where it went wrong for them was in the 70s.

Serafina Toscano: Yes.

Felice Toscano: But they didn't exactly understand. That's my opinion. What was going on in Italy at the time, especially in the South. 'Cause as you know well, Gareth, there's the great divide in Italy between north and south. The gap is getting ever and ever wider, it's not going to close, it's getting wider. So, yeah. They were really pleased when they went to work in the factory.

Gareth White: And what kind of jobs would they be doing in with factory?

Felice Toscano: Well, as I say, there was an auntie of ours and she worked for the cigar factory. Yeah, probably she rolled cigars. I don't know. Another aunty, I was in a sewing factory, [...] another – Zia (???) [...] worked for the tinplate company. Our mother and her sister worked for the steelworks as a cleaner.

Serafina Toscano: Cleaners...

Felice Toscano: Another auntie was a caretaker

Serafina Toscano: In a school.

[...]

Gareth White: Interesting. Were the women [...] able to get these jobs through their partners? So, if the partner was working in a certain industry, or was this like an independent process?

Serafina Toscano: My mum didn't, because my mum got her job through another Italian woman that was there that was already cleaning in the steelworks. She just said, "would you like to come, I'll speak for you." And they got in that way. Another aunt of mine worked in the hospitals. Another worked in the school canteen.

[...]

Gareth White: And were there many women who worked in these jobs of the south Walian community from Italy.... ?

Serafina Toscano: Oh yes. All of them.

Felice Toscano: Many of them, I don't remember an Italian woman that didn't work.

Gareth White: Wow. And obviously the experience was very positive. (...) than the alternative and I'd imagine as well, there was no challenges for them. They were, they just, they worked and that's it.

Serafina Toscano: None at all. No challenges!

Gareth White: Perfect. Okay guys, I'm going to ask one final question. [...] Whilst your family were originally living in south Wales, starting from their arrival in the fifties, would you say like, what kind of links were kept with Italy whilst they were living in Wales? I'm thinking, I dunno, like communications with people who were left behind, maybe sending money in the form of remittances, political participation, but any of this happened?

Serafina Toscano: Political participation... Every time that the Italians voted we would receive [...] an invitation to vote through the consulate in Cardiff, I think it was. They kept in touch, obviously via letter, written letters, obviously, a phone call was only when someone passed away and that was the only time that they would call or whatever, but usually it was always written. Sending money over, yes, to our grandparents. Our grandparents were still alive in Italy and mum and the sisters would now and again send them some money over to help them with the pension.

Felice Toscano: Dad did it regularly up until his marriage.

Serafina Toscano: Exactly. He sent money to his mother monthly until he got married, then his brother who was not married yet continued. Salvatore. He continued to send money into the family because they'd left two or three sisters, two sisters and another brother, three of them still in Italy.

Contact. They worked at least I'm speaking for my father. He worked a lot with the aim of building a house in Italy to come back. [...]

3.7: Interview with Adriano and Dominic Candelori, 19th July 2021

Dominic Candelori: Hello. Good afternoon, Gareth. [...] thanks for asking for an interview with my father. I prepared a short introduction before I hand you directly over to him.

As you're aware, he's just turned 88 years old. Born in 1933 and he first came over to Italy when he was 18, I believe in 1951. He had a short break back in Italy for a few months, I believe, and then returned full-time to work in 1953. A few years ago, the Welsh National Museum Industrial Museum in Swansea made a really good exhibition about Italians in Wales, especially about him and his life. So, before I hand you over to Dad, I thought I'd just show you a few of the boards that they presented for him, which is really good. And of course, you can find these at the museum as well. So let me just flip the camera around.

And this was the exhibition all about Italians in Wales. And there, you can see the really nice board that they presented as part of their exhibition. And as I move over, you can see a photograph of my father. And the gentleman by him is Antonio, known as Tonino or Tony Luzzi, who was Dad's brother-in-law, who came over together to work when they arrived in Wales. [...] They talk about Llanelli, they talk about both of my parents. How they met when they were together, Llanelli being Tinopolis, the city of tin. They talk about Terni, which is where my father is from. And there's Dad in his teens and a photograph of Terni in the background. And then of course the main focus of this exhibition was the Craftsmen at Work series. And as it says, there. Adriano's Craftsmen at Work series is a tribute to the industrial craftsmen of the past a subject, which he is passionate about capturing.

[...]

So, as well as sculpting many pieces of work, Dad also sculpted smaller craft pieces. And these were really the generic bread and butter when he went to exhibitions and craft shows and Eisteddfods, et cetera. And these were a series of small sculptures that he made. [...]. He's done a lot of work in stone. And this perhaps is one of the most well-known subjects, Rhodri Morgan. Rhodri Morgan had a number of photographs from which dad worked, but they also had a number of sittings together, which then dad was able to get a really, close likeness to this gentleman who was, of course, as you know, the First Minister for Wales.

[...]

Gareth White: Quindi sei venuto, sei arrivato nel 51 e eri molto giovane avevo 18 anni.

Adriano Candelori: Ho compiuto, ho compiuto i 19 anni a Llanelli in Galles.

Gareth White: Ma prima di venire in Galles, com'era la vita in Italia? Cosa ti ricordi dell'Italia?

Adriano Candelori: Io mi ricordo bene, solo però quello che ha interrotto tutto. È stata la guerra perché dopo la guerra le cose erano difficili per riavviarsi verso i lavori, verso la normalità. E allora per quello che mio cognato è venuto qui in Inghilterra nel Galles. Dopo un anno si è portato sua moglie, mia sorella. E un anno dopo quello ancora sono venuto qui io a stare con lei. E allora io non ho conosciuto mai una differenza perché venendo dall'Italia con una famiglia italiana, sono stato qui nel Galles con un'altra famiglia italiana- mia sorella. E allora io non ho sentito la differenza. Però nello stesso tempo, io sono stato il tipo di persona che... ho fatto tanti amici e loro sono stati quelli. Per loro era una novità.

Gareth White: Ok...

Adriano Candelori: Che per me era un bisogno di conoscere la lingua e parlare l'inglese. Da tanti anni il perché non lo so, però non ho conosciuto mai il gallese, la lingua gallese, non la conosco proprio niente.

Gareth White: E quindi sei arrivato che tua sorella era già in Galles e nel 1950 per dire e poi è arrivato tu nel 51, e poi nel 53 hai iniziato a lavorare sempre a Llanelli...

Adriano Candelori: Io sono venuto qui a stare con mia sorella, ma la prima volta che sono venuto io, non portavo i propri documenti. Ok allora sono arrivato a Dover, nel porto di Dover mi hanno mandato via. Perché non ci avevo i documenti propri. E allora, dopo di quello, ho richiesto ancora e c'ho i documenti propri, e sono venuto qui nel 52.

Gareth White: Okay. Ma per capirci, quindi eri già partito. Poi sei stato rimandato in Italia, poi hai fatto di nuovo il viaggio... ma eri stato reclutato per lavorare in Galles o hai viaggiato per scelta tua?

Adriano Candelori: La seconda volta era proprio sotto contratto. Era richiesto proprio.

Gareth White: Ok... parlami di questo reclutamento. Sono arrivati degli uomini inglesi a Terni? o come sei stato reclutato?

Adriano Candelori: Ho fatto richiesta perché mia sorella stava qui. E allora quando mi hanno mandato via, io ho fatto una richiesta propria

Gareth White: E quindi la richiesta ufficiale?

Adriano Candelori: Allora sono venuto qui, Ma sotto contratto per 3 anni, e dopo saresti stato libero di restare anni nel Galles senza essere...

Gareth White: Respinto, mandato a casa?

Adriano Candelori: ... rimandato a casa, allora sono stato qui sempre. Dopo dieci anni, mi hanno dato una lettera che mi hanno detto per quanto io non sono soggetto inglese, io posso restare qui per tutta la vita mia per sempre. È trattato come una persona gallese o inglese.

Gareth White: Molto interessante. E da lì ovviamente sei rimasto sempre in zona, sempre Galles del Sud?

Adriano Candelori: Sì.

Gareth White: Molto interessante. E hai detto che sua sorella viveva già a Llanelli con suo marito. Come mai loro sono arrivati in Galles?

Adriano Candelori: Right. Dopo la guerra mio cognato, il marito di mia sorella ha richiesto per venire qui perché reclutavano la gente per venire a lavorare nelle fabbriche di ferro, le acciaierie nel Galles. E allora lui ha fatto un'applicazione, ed è venuto. E gli è piaciuto ed è stato bene. Dopo un anno, si è portato qua la moglie mia sorella con due bambini e due figli, e stavano bene. E io a 19 anni, senza lavoro, senza un prospetto di niente, mi ha chiesto se volevo venire qui con essi. E io ho accettato, cercare qui ho capito che è per questo anche la prima volta non portava documenti. La seconda volta invece è tutto a posto, avevo i propri documenti.

Gareth White: Parlami del primo impatto che tu, cresciuto in Umbria, in un posto spettacolare...

Adriano Candelori: Bella bella bella... la prima volta, la prima volta che sono arrivato qui, che sono arrivato alla stazione, sono uscito della stazione e ho trovato 5 sterline per terra di carta. Però ho detto: Questo qui è il posto giusto. si trovano i soldi per terra!...

Gareth White: La ricchezza c'è ovunque.

Adriano Candelori: Così. Sono restato sempre più, mi sono sempre trovato bene perché io sono stato un tipo che facevo gli amici. E sempre contento di stare con gli amici e loro mi [sono] piaciuto e sono rimasti amici con me. E da allora ecco qui e qui per me per me questa qui è ed è stata allora come una seconda casa per me.

Gareth White: E il lavoro? Quando sei arrivato a Llanelli e hai iniziato a lavorare, cosa hai dovuto fare? Quali erano i tuoi ritmi quotidiani? cosa facevi in questa acciaieria?

Adriano Candelori: Il lavoro?

Gareth White: Cosa facevi?

Adriano Candelori: Dopo i tre anni che erano obbligatori, tu puoi restare nel Galles e trovare altri lavori. E allora io, in questi tre anni tramite la mia personalità e mia sorella mio cognato, ho avuto tanti amici, e dopo tre anni uno degli amici che c'avevo mi ha detto vogliamo fare un business together.

Gareth White: Aha.

Adriano Candelori: Lui è riuscito ad avere una licenza per tenere una birreria. E allora io ho accettato e abbiamo avuto questa birreria insieme per una decina d'anni, forse anche più. [...] E perché avevamo aveva amici che c'avevano teatri, un teatro a Llanelli, avevamo anche tante celebrità, e quando che venivano perché noi eravamo uno dei

cocktail bars, il che era l'unico forse, venivano sempre da noi a passare un po' di tempo. E infatti ho conosciuto parecchie persone di celebrities..

Gareth White: Mi chiedevo com'è stato il cambiamento da lavorare insieme per un lavoro manuale e poi aprire un bar, aprire una birreria... Hai notato differenze?

Adriano Candelori: Beh io, da tre anni ho fatto sotto contratto con le acciaierie ne avrò lavorato propriamente un anno... [...] perché... non è che non mi piaceva, non mi piaceva ad ogni modo, ma ho avuto sempre tante cose da fare che non ci andavo e lavorare, preferivo andare a lavorare in altri posti come nel bar oppure altre cose che si fanno ma non nelle acciaierie.

Gareth White: [...] Stavo pensando in tutto questo, in Galles... Hai conosciuto tanti italiani o pochi italiani?

Adriano Candelori: No la maggior parte non-italiani, italiani conoscevo quelli che erano amici con mia sorella e mio cognato, ma io non che preferivo, ma si sa. Come è stato non lo so... Comunque, sempre amici gallesi.
[...]

3.8: Interview with Adriano Candelori, 1st April 2022.

[...]

Gareth White: Parlando dei tuoi lavori, mi ricordo che quando ci siamo parlati ad agosto no, mi hai raccontato tutto il tuo percorso che hai fatto un anno con la Tinplate, che hai lavorato a Llanelli, e poi...

Adriano Candelori: Sì.

Gareth White: Hai lavorato come scultore, in un bar, insegnante.

Adriano Candelori: Tante cose, Sì. ma quando ho lavorato giù nel tinplate, nella acciaieria ci sono stato tre anni lì [...] Prima che io posso essere stato liberato del contratto.

Gareth White: Ok e quindi tu avevi questo contratto di tre quattro anni per il tinplate.

Adriano Candelori: Tre anni il minimo.

Gareth White: Ok.

Adriano Candelori: Ed io ho compiuto i tre anni.

Gareth White: E com'era questo lavoro per te? Perché mi ricordo che hai fatto un po' di tempo, ma poi hai cambiato lavoro, cioè facevi altre cose. Ma com'era nel tinplate?

Adriano Candelori: Dato che finiti i tre anni ho avuto tanti grandi amici e amiche, tutti quanti abbiamo aperto una birreria.

Gareth White: Mi ricordo.

Adriano Candelori: Ed è quello che io mi sono sposato, sono venuto via, e ho fatto il decoratore. Esatto, la decorazione delle case. Disegnavo e consigliavo... E farlo nello stesso tempo con comodo uguale. La gente mi dice 'Voglio fare questa stanza chi raccomandi?'

Gareth White: E cosa facevi nella tinplate?

Adriano Candelori: Quel periodo del tinplate era tanto pesante perché dove io facevo lì qui lo chiamano il doubler. io tiravo fuori le lamiere e poi li mettevo. Cioè il fireman prendeva il pezzo di ferro, very thick, e lo dava a quello che stava dalla parte dei cilindri, lui lo passava sotto e veniva più fina. Poi io lo prendevo e arrivavo a lui fino a che non veniva fine fine ed ogni volta che lo ritirava lo piegava doppia. e dopo quella doppia ripassata che faceva due lamiere. Dopo quella quando era ripassata, lo doppiava un'altra volta e faceva quattro lamiere. E adesso non mi ricordo quante volte abbiamo piegato in tutto, però, quando che era ritirato via, era accomunato su un mucchio di lamiere che lì lavoravano le donne con i guanti di pelle - molto pesanti perché la lamiera taglia... allora loro avevano questi guanti che le sfilavano via una con l'altra e lei le metteva su un

mucchio di lamiere finite. Dopo quelle che venivano esportate, andava a fare le lamiere, le lattine, tutto uguale. [...]

Gareth White: A me sembra un lavoro pericoloso che hai lavorato vicino a un fuoco.

Adriano Candelori: No, io non stavo vicino al fuoco, io stavo.... Il fireman che prendeva... Lui lavorava vicino al fuoco, il forno, dove tirava via i pezzi di ferro e poi li passava sotto ai rulli. E io stavo dall'altra parte a tirarli fuori e andavo lì sopra a darglieli un'altra volta. Lui li ripiegava e poi li ripassava. Così facevano quattro, sei o otto lamiere fino a fine.

Gareth White: Ma, quindi, c'erano per te le precauzioni? Tu avevi la protezione per non...

Adriano Candelori: Tagliarmi? No, no, no. Soltanto le pinsaglie che tu prendevi. [...] Le pinze erano così lunghe.

Gareth White: Ok, quindi non c'erano guanti speciali, occhiali?

Adriano Candelori: No, si possono mettere. Sì. Ma non c'era tutto il pericolo. Perché le pinze erano talmente lunghe che tu prendevi la fine della pinza che era lunga come il mio braccio, tu prendevi, dal principio. Così fanno. E tu le prendi come qui. Ora era distante dalle mani. Però è naturale che dovevi prendere i guanti, perché quando che usi tanto di quel ferro [...] puoi rovinare la mano.

Gareth White: Certo, certo. Ma tu hai visto incidenti al lavoro in questo periodo di persone che si sono si erano fatte male ?

Adriano Candelori: Non seriamente, ma ho visto la maggior parte delle donne che quando prendevano dei fogli di lamiera, che erano talmente come un coltello, e glielo rovinavano i guanti. E qualche volta c'era qualche disgrazia, ma non niente di troppo pericoloso.

Gareth White: Scusa, quando dici donne, erano donne italiane, donne gallesi?

Adriano Candelori: No no. Non c'erano donne italiane. Erano gallesi.

Gareth White: Tutte donne gallesi?

Adriano Candelori: Yes.

Gareth White: Ok, ok, perché immagino anche le mogli saranno arrivate con gli italiani in questo periodo?

Adriano Candelori: Non me lo ricordo.

Gareth White: Però hai fatto molti amici a Llanelli con gli italiani in quel periodo.

Adriano Candelori: Tanti italiani e gallesi. Io apposta ... parlo. l'inglese. praticamente bene perché io ho sempre avuto amici gallesi e stavo sempre con loro, più con loro che

con gli italiani. Gli italiani li conoscevo, ci fermavamo. Come stai? Un dialogo e poi ce ne andiamo. Invece con gli altri inglesi o gallesi. Io c'avevo proprio amici chiusi.

Gareth White: Ma con gli italiani non so, facevate delle cose, tipo non so, feste italiane ogni tanto??

Adriano Candelori: Ci stavano. tante feste italiane e tanto, tanti italiani che avevano amicizia stretta. Ma io sono sempre stato uno, una persona fuori da quel posto perché [...]

Gareth White: In questo periodo ovviamente hai fatto amicizie con gallesi e italiani. C'erano anche persone di altre nazionalità? Ho letto che c'erano molti polacchi...

Adriano Candelori: Polacchi sì. ce n'erano già, ce n'erano. Ma ognuno si tiene alla nazionalità sua. Lì i polacchi stavano i polacchi, gli italiani con gli italiani.

Gareth White: Ok e non c'erano tensioni fra italiani e polacchi?

Adriano Candelori: No, non frizione per niente. No, , siamo e siamo sempre andati avanti in perfetta armonia, in relazione Sì.

Gareth White: Ok, ok, ma in questo periodo che in questi tre anni, tu hai mantenuto qualche legame con l'Italia con la famiglia a casa a Terni?

Adriano Candelori: Sì, sempre. Ma io quando io sono venuto qui , c'avevo diciotto anni.

Gareth White: Sì, mi ricordo.

Adriano Candelori: E mia madre non mi mandava solo. Però qui c'avevo mia sorella è il marito. Per via del lavoro [...] e lui è venuto qua sotto un contratto e dopo un anno si è a portato qua la moglie, mia sorella e i figli e un anno dopo sono arrivato io che avevo 19 anni. Non c'erano prospettive di lavoro a Terni, non c'era possibilità. Io ho (sentito un po' di) frustrazione, ... frustrato. E allora my sister said, mia sorella mi ha detto perché non vieni qui con me c'è tanto lavoro qui, forse se non ti accettano dopo sei mesi rivai via, ma nello stesso tempo se ti accettano e sei qui, e infatti sono venuto. Però quando io sono arrivato a Dover. Te l'ho detto questo, prima mi hanno rimandato via.

Gareth White: Mi ricordo che non avevi i documenti corretti.

Adriano Candelori: Non erano, non erano timbrati, giusti. soltanto per quello. Allora mi hanno rimandato via, mi hanno messo sul treno. Io sono dovuto ritornare a Terni, ma dopo un mese più o meno ho rifatto la domanda. e sono tornato. È stato qui sempre e ancora sto qui.

Gareth White: Ma il tuo progetto era sempre quello di rimanere in Galles o di fare qualche anno e poi tornare?

Adriano Candelori: Yeah. io volevo soltanto stare tempo qui per imparare l'inglese.

Gareth White: Ok.

Adriano Candelori: Perché in Italia non [...] non sono stato educato in Italia tanto perché la guerra ancora non era completamente finita e ho fatto la scuola primaria e, dopo la guerra è venuta non siamo più tornati a scuola. Però quando io sono venuto qui in Inghilterra, allora sono andato a scuola.

[...]

Gareth White: Ok, [...] quando sei arrivato in Galles, tu andavi in questi caffè italiani nel tempo libero?

Adriano Candelori: Beh, sì, sì, ci andavo pure io. Anche per conoscerci e per parlare italiano.

Gareth White: Ok, quindi era un posto dove sentirsi italiani all'estero.

Adriano Candelori: Tanti italiani, ci stavano tanti italiani.

Gareth White: Ok. E come erano i rapporti con voi, i nuovi arrivati, i giovani italiani?

Adriano Candelori: E sempre bene.

Gareth White: Sì, sempre bene.

Adriano Candelori: Anche quelli per il bene. Io parlo per me. Sono sempre stato accolto da tutti.

Gareth White: Okay.

Adriano Candelori: se è la mia personalità o quello che è, non lo so, però io sono stato sempre, mi hanno sempre accolto... con tanto affetto

Gareth White: Ora capisco.

[...]

Gareth White: Capisco, capisco. Ma senti... parlando di questi italiani. Ho letto da qualche parte che c'erano anche associazioni italiane in questo periodo come il Gruppo degli alpini o l'ACLI.

Adriano Candelori: Sì, ci stavano. Però io sono stato sempre fuori da questi gruppi, perché non lo so. Però io c'avevo tanti amici nuovi e non sono mai stato solo, e non ho avuto mai interesse di andare a questi posti dove andavano tutti gli italiani ...perché c'erano balli i sabati per gli italiani, io non ci sono stato mai.

Gareth White: Quindi per le persone che volevano, loro andavano in questi balli e...

Adriano Candelori: Sì. C'andavano sì. Io non sono stato mai un tipo di quel tipo, perché c'avevo tanti amici, non solo che non avevo bisogno di andare in nessun altro posto.

Gareth White: Facevano altre cose queste associazioni per caso, oltre ai balli?

Adriano Candelori: Non me lo ricordo adesso.

Gareth White: Però organizzavano dei balli...

Adriano Candelori: E son sicuro che avrebbero avuto associazioni...

[...]

Gareth White: E parlando di associazioni mi chiedevo se tu facevi parte di un sindacato mentre lavoravi nella tinplates.

Adriano Candelori: No, non me lo ricordo. Non credo.

Gareth White: Quindi non c'erano scioperi o problemi in questo caso?

Adriano Candelori: No, no.

[...]

Gareth White: Capisco e.... parlando di questi amici, hai detto che erano amici stretti gallesi che ti stavano nel cuore. Quando li hai conosciuti hai potuto, come possiamo dire, hai potuto sperimentare la cultura gallese e insegnare a loro la cultura italiana?

Adriano Candelori: E ho fatto quello, che io ho insegnato l'italiano e la cultura italiana ... quello che facevo per parecchio tempo per tanti anni.

[...]

Gareth White: Cosa hai pensato di questa cultura diversa dalla tua?

Adriano Candelori: Io e io soltanto pensiero mio era quello di imparare l'inglese, la lingua. Non c'era bisogno di formarmi un'idea, o esperienze della cultura. La lingua inglese era più importante....

Gareth White: Quindi i pensieri sul cibo gallese?

Adriano Candelori: Io no, non ho sperimentato mai, perché quando io sono venuto qui, che abitavo con mia sorella e allora abitavo con lei. E tutti i pranzi, e tutto, la cucina era tutta italiana.

Gareth White: Quindi lei faceva piatti italiani per voi?

Adriano Candelori: Tutti italiani.

Gareth White: Quindi il fatto di avere già una persona del tuo paese. tua sorella, tuo cognato.

Adriano Candelori: Io non ho. Non me lo sono mai. Com'è la parola, adesso non me la ricordo. però. Italy. I never missed Italy. I never missed it.

Gareth White: Non ti mancava l'Italia.

Adriano Candelori: Ecco, non mi mancava. Perché io parlavo italiano, stavo con mia sorella, il mangiare, la cucina era tutta italiana. E allora il solo problema era quello che dovevo imparare l'inglese e l'ho imparato.

Gareth White: Ma quando dici italiano no? Mangiare italiano, parlare italiano... possiamo dire che più che è italiano era umbro?

Adriano Candelori: Più italiano??

Gareth White: Se eri umbro, se ti sentivi più

Adriano Candelori: Umbro o gallese? No, se ero sempre umbro, allora adesso mi sento più gallese. Perché sono 70 anni che sono stato qui.

Gareth White: Quindi adesso ti consideri più gallese, ma eri umbro?

Adriano Candelori: Io sono umbro ma sono più gallese che umbro.

Gareth White: Ma cosa vuol dire essere umbri? Cosa che c'è qualcosa che definisce umbro per te?

Adriano Candelori: Beh, l'Umbria è una bellissima zona tutta verde, è il cuore verde dell'Italia.

Gareth White: Sì, mi ricordo, non sono stato, ma ho visto le foto.

Adriano Candelori: Terni è bella pure. Terni è bella, è piccola. Terni non è grande, piccola, ma è una bella cittadina. È stata bombardata durante la guerra tanto tanto, c'abbiamo avuto 105 bombardamenti a Terni solo per via della fabbrica d'armi e delle acciaierie e due più fabbriche più importanti di tutta Italia, l'acciaieria e la fabbrica d'armi.

Gareth White: Quindi ok ma scusa ma quindi l'impatto della guerra ha devastato l'economia locale.

Adriano Candelori: Sì, tanto.

Gareth White: Per quello poi che avrà avuto un peso sulla tua decisione di emigrare no? o di non trovare lavori. E l'economia difficile....

Adriano Candelori: Non è stata una grande decisione perché non c'avevo un lavoro. [...]

Gareth White: quindi tu come hai visto, come vedevi la cultura gallese e il Galles quando sei arrivato? Oltre all'aspetto visivo?

Adriano Candelori: gli italiani e i gallesi sono veramente tanto, tanto vicini di cultura.

Gareth White: Ok, che senso? Come erano vicini?

Adriano Candelori: Anche come personalità. Come si espr[imono].

Gareth White: Ok, nel senso... non so. Questione di carattere Dici?

Adriano Candelori: (nods). È tanto simile. it's very similar to the Italians. Very similar. è tanto simile agli italiani che i gallesi sono tanto simili. Si esprimono nello stesso maniera, fanno gesti diversi, gesti grandi e parlano con le mani. [...]

Gareth White: Ok, qui tutto sommato la tua esperienza in Galles, quando sei arrivato nella tinplate. In quei tre anni, l'esperienza con i gallesi, con gli amici è stata una cosa positiva, mentre le condizioni al lavoro...

Adriano Candelori: Erano tanto difficili. sì, ma a quel tempo era un lavoro. Bisognava lavorare e io l'ho sempre osservato come un lavoro. Andavo al lavoro, andavo a casa, lavoro casa. E basta. Nel frattempo, c'erano dei divertimenti; c'erano balli, c'erano escursioni fuori, andavamo... dopo mi sono comprato l'automobile. Dopo quando c'hai un'automobile. [...]

3.9: Interview with Ninetta Algieri, 28th March 2022.

Gareth White: OK, so it's the 28th of March 2022 and I'm here this afternoon with Ninetta Algieri. [...] to discuss her family history in Wales. So I'm going to start with a first general question. Can you talk me through... (your father's) conditions in Italy before moving? And then what happened that led him to Wales?

Ninetta Algieri: Well, the condition in Italy were, 'cause they came from the South, they were really sort of peasant land. They were working the fields. It was hard work. So, his sister came over to this country with her husband and then he called him over. They found him a job on the farm first. And he came over and then he went back to Italy, and he met my mother and brought her back over then with him.

Gareth White: OK. When you say that his sister and husband came over originally, were they also working in South Wales kind of in the metal industries, or whether a farming community, what were they doing?

Ninetta Algieri: No... His brother-in-law started working in the mines. And, obviously then from there he progressed to the metal industry but... he then bought a restaurant in the Mumbles in Swansea, and they were running a fish and chip shop restaurant in in the Mumbles.

Gareth White: OK. So, in that case, they probably arrived a few years before 1956, I think you said, yeah?

Ninetta Algieri: That's it. Yeah.

Gareth White: OK. So obviously the sister and the brother-in-law were the first to come over. What kind of experience was it in Wales that they had?

Ninetta Algieri: I think when they first came, the change of weather, the climate was a bit... they were a little bit depressed, thinking the weather is so different to what it was in the South of Italy. But they pursued it, carried on with it, and my mother was the same when she first came here. She didn't like it at all, 'cause of the weather. It was January. It was snowing. It was raining.

Gareth White: Wow.

Ninetta Algieri: And she would have gladly gone back home, you know. But years to come then, when we were older, I did ask her "would you move back to Italy?" And she then said "no. I've made my life here now and she was happy to stay in Wales." [...] she did admit in the beginning she would have gone back easily, but because we were born here then and she'd made her life here in Wales, she was much happy to stay, she was glad.

Gareth White: OK, Where was home in Italy? I know you said in the South.

Ninetta Algieri: Cosenza, Cosenza.

Gareth White: Cosenza.

Ninetta Algieri: (In) Calabria. That's right.

Gareth White: And what were the conditions in Cosenza like? I know you said it was, you know, peasant land, it was poor. Was it difficult economically speaking for them?

Ninetta Algieri: It was, yeah. They've just had to work. My father had been in the war as well. And he came back from the war, and he had to look after his family 'cause, I think they were... He was one of 13, so he was looking after them 'cause they were a bit younger than him. And I think he just felt he needed to get, to get away, do better things with his life, you know, after having been in the war. [...] He just wanted to change, you know? And I think Wales because his sister had come to Wales, he thought it was a great opportunity for him.

[...]

Gareth White: OK. So obviously, there was a very difficult economic situation... He was one of 13. He'd survived the horrors of the war and then he gets the call over from his sister and brother-in-law to migrate. What was the journey like? Did he speak about the journey to Wales?

Ninetta Algieri: Yes. He didn't enjoy the journey at all. [...] It was a 3 or 4-day journey. He caught a train from the South of Italy to the north of Italy. Then from there through Switzerland and France. And then you have to catch the ferry across from Calais to Dover. He said he just felt it was never ending, you know. And then eventually you got into Wales, and he was picked up by his brother-in-law. And he was grateful, he couldn't wait to get off the train and just get on.... Yeah, it was a long journey.

Gareth White: OK. And had he had to do anything in Italy before traveling? I'm thinking any ... I don't know ... training courses or language?

Ninetta Algieri: No, nothing. They didn't have to do anything, and I don't think ... I think he had his passport, and he had some kind of what they call papers at that time. So, he just had some kind of like working papers [...] and he just had his passport and the papers, and he just came over with that. And one little suitcase, I think. And that was it.

Gareth White: I'm surprised there's no training as such. I know in Naples there was apparently like a large center. But yeah...

Ninetta Algieri: No because he was coming over and he was going to work on a farm, I think he just had to have some papers. And then as soon as he got here, they just took him to where how to work. And again, he was just working on the farm.

Gareth White: Ah, yeah, of course. So, he'd have to had farm. And then obviously he transitioned into the...

Ninetta Algieri: Into Duport Steelworks. Yes. I think he made friends on the farm then, and somebody in the farm, obviously a Welsh person, must have said to him. "Do you want to work in Duport steelworks? It's probably better money etc etc." And he accepted it and he went to work in Duport then.

Gareth White: OK, what can you tell me about the working conditions for him in Duport? What was that like?

Ninetta Algieri: Hmm, I do remember him when he used to come home and I was a child and he'd be working long hours, 12 hour shifts he used to do and sometimes a little bit longer. And he used to work down in the pits, I think down in the slag heap, as I think they were called, the furnaces and everything. And it was hard work. He would come home, and he'd be sort of covered in black soot, and he'd have to go have a shower everyday [...]

Gareth White: Was it working by himself down the pits or was he working with other people?

Ninetta Algieri: With other people. Yeah, he was in a group.

Gareth White: OK. Where they like other Italians, where they Welsh for the Polish?

Ninetta Algieri: No, there were Welsh and a couple of Italians. So, he was lucky. He could speak to these Italians, to translate, and they could speak Welsh or English better than him. And he would ask them "what are they telling me to do? What are they asking me to do?" So, he was lucky there were Italian people there who could speak English and translate for him, you know.

Gareth White: OK, what were the relationships like with these Italian colleagues, other than obviously as a translator, mediator POV, can we?

Ninetta Algieri: They became friends, you know. And we used to have like dance parties for Italians, used to hold a dancing group for Italians. And they all used to meet up then at this dance fest, it was like a little Italian festival. They used to make for them, you know, just for them in Llanelli or Swansea.

Gareth White: OK, so sorry this is just to just to confirm there, that is like an Italian festa that was held for the Italians who worked specifically in the metal industry?

Ninetta Algieri: No. For all Italians who lived in Llanelli. They would get together 'cause. they were friendly, they got together and became friends. And they're the ones who worked with him and would obviously say, "there's a dance tonight. Do you and your wife want to come along?" You know, so all the Italians would all meet up.

Gareth White: Interesting. And how often would this be? Would it be like?

Ninetta Algieri: It would be once or twice a year.

Gareth White: OK. And I'd imagine as well, yeah, speaking about with other Italians from Llanelli and we'd be speaking probably of people who'd come over before, not just with the metal industry, would there be the older Italians (there)?

Ninetta Algieri: There'd be others who would have come over before again, or worked on farms and then started working in the steelworks. And they obviously were here longer 'cause they could speak better English than my father, and some were a bit younger and could pick it up quicker. My father, [...] because he was so much older, he struggled a little bit, you know.

[...]

Gareth White: OK. So obviously you know there were these *feste* that were opportunities for bringing people together and he worked very closely with these local Welsh people and the Italians. And he said the relationships were good, all round?

Ninetta Algieri: Yes, yes. He got on really well with the Welsh people. [..]

Ninetta Algieri: I think his generosity was that they were nice to him in work. As well as because he'd always make his own wine and he'd always plant his own vegetables. Fruit you know, as if he was in Italy, he'd do the same here. And he'd always take them a bottle of wine to say thank you for this and they'd appreciate it you know. And then they were they were really nice to him then, you know, thinking well he's generous to us and they were generous to him you know.

Gareth White: Got it, okay. So, I think, the flip side of that... obviously the relationships were actually very positive. Were there any conditions that you would say would be challenging that he might have spoken about with you? I'm thinking perhaps, you know, maybe some tensions with certain people or particularly after the war with Mussolini or that kind of thing maybe?

Ninetta Algieri: Oh yeah, yeah, I think some... there were tensions with some because of the... And I used to find that in school sometimes as well, being Italian, some were a bit... how do I say, why are you here? Why aren't you in your own country? Go back home. And there were some ... not. Not many, but a few, you know. [...]

Yeah, he I don't think he take took any notice of it. He'd just carry on with his work. But I think he used to come on sometimes and say I think they were all being a bit... Some of them are being a bit... what are you doing here? You should go back home to Italy you know.

[...]

Gareth White: [...] Can you tell me more about this sisterly relationship (with his sister in Wales) Would that be something that would he'd keep whilst he was in the workplace or, you know while he was in Wales?

Ninetta Algieri: Oh, definitely. They were really close. She was the eldest and he was sort of the middle in between, but they were really close because he used to do a lot for the

family and like I said, he went to the war. Then he came back and any little bit of money that he had, he'd always give to the brothers and the sisters. He tried to look after them all, you know. So, I think the older sister felt he was her favorite sort of thing and that's why she asked him over.

Gareth White: OK.

Ninetta Algieri: Yeah, I think he felt she felt that he done so much for everybody else. It was time he came over and had sort of a better life, you know, for him.

Gareth White: I wonder if at the same time, you just mentioned about how like he gave money to the family. Did he continue with that when he came over to Wales, to send money back to Cosenza?

Ninetta Algieri: He did just send bits until he got married. You know, 'cause, obviously then he married, had children, started having a mortgage. You know what I mean? He probably felt he didn't have enough sufficient funds to send over to everybody then.

Gareth White: OK. So yes obviously, you know, he needed to prioritize expenses...

Ninetta Algieri: Exactly.

Gareth White: OK. I wonder as well, you know, we talked about, you know, how these expenses were, some obviously came as a result of him. But you know, moving through life, getting married, having his own family... and what was it about the steelworks then that, you know, met these requirements, like gave him the opportunity to have a better life than he might have had let's say...

Ninetta Algieri: But as I said, he worked really hard and obviously earned the money to be able to live a better life here. Obviously in Italy he'd been working the fields. He would have been just peasant life, you know, whereas here he had such a better life when he managed to get what others had, like a television, a phone... a home of his own. Whereas in Italy they were sharing one home, you know, to brothers and sisters. So no, he did have a much better life [...]

Gareth White: I'm thinking as well you know related to the hard work and linking into what happened in Wales in the 1950s that, you know, I think you said he came over and like he started working at 56, no in Duport...

Ninetta Algieri: No, he started on the farm in 56/57.

Gareth White: Yeah. OK.

Ninetta Algieri: And then he started in, I think it was on the farm for a couple of years, actually 'cause. Then he went over to marry my mother as soon as he came back here with my mum. And I think he came over in 60s and 1960.

Gareth White: Yeah. OK.

Ninetta Algieri: With my mum and then from, I think it was just after 1960 he started working in Duport Steelworks then.

Gareth White: Got it. OK. I wonder as well then if you know, he encountered anything in terms of... I don't like. Yeah, being part of a union or striking?

Ninetta Algieri: Yes, he did. In Duport Steelworks. Yes, he'd often, sometimes be home, and I'd say, why haven't you gone to work this morning? He'd worked from 6 o'clock in the morning till sometimes ten o'clock at night. On these particular few days, he hadn't gone in, and he said it's because I've gotta go in and we're standing outside the picket line, we're striking for more money or whatever, you know. So, he was in the Union to do that.

Gareth White: Would you say that he was very active within the Union in his time?

Ninetta Algieri: I think he'd do it because he was told, you know, by his friends. You've got to come and do this, otherwise he wouldn't understand what the union were talking about. All he'd know from his friends, his Italian friends. We've got to go. We've got to attend because they're trying to strike for this, [...] So he's just followed on, you know, and thinking well, I'll follow on. I don't want to be the black sheep and not do it, you know.

Gareth White: Right. OK.

Ninetta Algieri: Yeah.

Gareth White: Yeah, yeah, I'm just linking inside the working conditions in general and linking back to what you said about, you know, being in the furnaces, the hard work. Would you say, I don't know that there's a bit of exploitation potentially or, In terms of the working conditions being a bit, you know.

Ninetta Algieri: Yeah. I don't think what they did then they would do today. You know what I mean? They wouldn't do it today. Yeah, I think there'd be so much uproar and conditions were poor. I think he'd often come home and his shoes would be soaking wet. 'cause he'd been down in the in the pits. I don't think the work that they did then and how hard they worked they wouldn't... it wouldn't be allowed today. Yeah, health and safety wise anyway. Really. They never... they never wore. I think he may have worn a hard hat. Maybe. But not every time he went down there.

Gareth White: Wow.

Ninetta Algieri: So, health and safety conditions would definitely have stopped it today.

Gareth White: Yeah, this is, you know something I've heard, people say like (it was hell) being down inside the furnaces...

Ninetta Algieri: Yeah, yeah.

Gareth White: It's interesting to have that comparison as well. Uhm, thinking about positive things. I'm wondering what his experiences were like of coming into contact with Welsh culture. You know, you kind of touched upon the language, how, you know,

and more than anything that the climate, the climate was bad. He tried to bring some food. What was this experience of coming into contact with Welsh culture?

Ninetta Algieri: Like I said before... This is why they grew their own food. We had chickens, we had rabbits. You know what I mean? They were typical. Even though living in Wales, they were still sort of living the Italian life. Because they'd grow their own vegetables, their own foods, their own chickens. Like I said, animals and rabbits and things, you know. And then they have their rabbit 'cause they'd cook the rabbits. They'd cook their chickens. They wouldn't eat typical Welsh food. You know what I mean? 'Cause to them, they were still Italian, and they do want to eat their Italian food. And so, nothing really changed in their sort of they were. I know they were working the fields then and it was peasant life, they still sort of grew their own as if they lived out in Italy. Tried to live that life you know.

[...]

Gareth White: I would just wanna drill in a bit more into this idea of Italian because obviously he's from Cosenza, that's Calabria, very different compared to what it might be if you're coming from Milan, for instance. Yeah, would he say that he lived very Calabrian life?

Ninetta Algieri: Definitely, it was all Calabrian, doing your own wine, doing your own foods. My mother would make her own salamis. You know, it was like typical Italian, and it wouldn't just be her. The whole group of Italian friends and families would meet together, and they're all sort of do it together. They'd order the grapes, they'd order the food, the pork to make the salami. They all worked together, you know, as a family. It's never 'I'm doing this all on my own.' It's together. It's as if keeping the Italian family together, you know, ...

Gareth White: And with these friends also be from the Calabria area or were they...

Ninetta Algieri: No, various like Naples, you'd have some from Foggia. Some from, obviously Calabria. Yeah, but they were all over the place. We met numerous people from Foggia and numerous from Naples. Lots from Naples

Gareth White: Yeah.

Ninetta Algieri: Yeah. [...] It's my father would say, oh, that gentleman was from Naples. And I'd say, oh, is that far from where you are? Cause as a child you don't know where these places are. And he'd say, well, he's more sort of, here, you know, on the map and he'd show me on the map. And I say, oh, so he would eat the same things. Are you the same sort of culture and he's say, oh no, Neapolitans are different to the Calabrians, you know?

Gareth White: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. You're quite right. I mean, it's so different. I mean, as you said, with food. You know, you go 20 kilometers. It's different completely.

Ninetta Algieri: Exactly, and I'd say, well, how come, 'cause if I go from here to Swansea or here to Tenby the other way west, we're all sort of the same and we Welsh will eat

Welsh cakes, daffodils are our flower and leeks. And you know, we're not changed from Swansea to Llanelli. But yet you go from like you just said, from Calabria to Naples and they're different.

Gareth White: Yeah, definitely. It's nice that they all got together, you know, even despite being from different areas and did these kinds of Italian things, you know, kind of make a Little Italy, if you want.

Ninetta Algieri: Little Italy. That's right. Yeah, I think Llanelli was known as Little Italy because there were loads of us living in sort of the same area. And they would all meet up and they would all group up together or go to each other's houses.

Gareth White: That's really interesting actually. How was this Little Italy of Llanelli perceived? Like was this something that was kind of shared by everyone in Llanelli ?[...]

Ninetta Algieri: Yeah, that's where all the Italians live, and I think it was mainly Tunnel Road in Llanelli. If you mentioned Tunnel Road in Llanelli, you'd know there were loads of Italians living in Tunnel Road. And we'd see each other then again, cause we're Catholics. We'd go to church on this Sunday, and all the Italians would meet in the church. And then after the mass, we'd meet outside and they'd already talking for ages outside the mass because they'd catch up on things, you know, so every Sunday we'd go to Mass, and we'd all meet up together then.

Gareth White: Interesting. I'd imagine that's something that your dad held and your mum when they came over for the first times as well. You know going to the churches and building, yeah.

[...]

Gareth White: I'm wondering as well as you're saying these places, and we talk about the churches , we've talked about Italian food. did he talk much about the cafes? Like about going to the stereotypical Bracchis or you know?

Ninetta Algieri: Yes, that's right. We had the Salvatore's, I think they were called, in Llanelli. They used to have a little cafe. And there were a few others as well. Lots of them had cafes, ice cream parlours. My other aunt and my uncle in the Mumbles and my cousin, they had the fish and chip shop, so it's either the fish and chips they had or cafes with coffee and ice creams and lots of, you know, Italian what they call those *torte*, you know. The Italian ones, yeah.

Gareth White: Cool. So, like would this be something that they would go and meet up in very often to like in their spare time?

Ninetta Algieri: They'd meet up in a coffee shop yet, or meet up and like I said, the main times they'd meet up is when either they'd see other in church on a Sunday, and then they'd arranged these dance things where they'd all meet, you know, and they danced Italian music and all Italian, you know. So even though it was in Wales or Llanelli or Swansea, it would all just be Italian music, Calabrese music. And you know what I mean?

It was all Italian and you wouldn't be dancing like us as children, we would be going there. And it was all Italian tarantelle and all that, you know.

Gareth White: Wow, I just can't imagine him doing the tarantella in Llanelli.

Ninetta Algieri: In Llanelli, they were doing the tarantella.

Gareth White: So, when we say important for the people who came over in the 1950s and, you know, the Italians in general to do these things.

Ninetta Algieri: I think it was important because them keeping together and made them feel... it's like you said Little Italy... and made them feel they were home really. You know, they'd miss their... mums and their dads and their family or brothers or their brothers and sisters, but they felt that because they were at the Italian groups, they just felt more at home, you know.

Gareth White: OK. So yeah, so definitely feeling integrated we could say...

Ninetta Algieri: Yes. Yeah, not outsiders really living in a in Wales, and they just felt more you know, as if they were back home in Italy, you know?

Gareth White: OK, OK. And I know they use... I can imagine the answer to this question, but what was the secret to your dad's Successful integration into Wales?

[...]

Ninetta Algieri: I think his success is that he was just a hardworking and kind person and he got along with everybody whether it was in Italian person or a Welsh person he would he he'd make friends with everybody you know.

Gareth White: Yeah. So, he wouldn't kind of be 'I'm Italian, you're Welsh. We can't have a relationship. 'very beyond nationality.

Ninetta Algieri: No, he didn't . It didn't bother him what nationalities people were. He was just happy. He just wanted happiness and peace. You know, cause being at the war as well. It just made him realize that it's better to be at peace with everybody then then be at war with everybody you know. So, whether they were British, German, French. He was one of these people who just wanted happiness where he was, you know.

[...]

3.10: Interview with Diane Davies, 13th April 2022

Gareth White: Okay. So, Diane, I'm going to go for a very generic question initially, and I'd like to know if you can paint me a picture of the situation in Italy that prompted the Passalacqua family to emigrate from Italy to Wales in the fifties.

Diane Davies: Okay. Well, I'm not sure how it was for everybody there. My own family, both my mother and father, they came from farming families. So, their parents both left them land and farming. They were actually not too badly off.

After the war they lived in a village which was occupied by the Germans. It had been occupied in the war. It was not long after that my father came over, sort of about eight years after the war, I think... I personally I don't know how well the village people there had recovered from it. But as for my father, he didn't want to work. He didn't like farming, basically. So, he wasn't very happy. You know, I don't know how well they could have managed or survived. They did have a very nice sort of piece of land and lots of vineyards and whatever. They could have probably lived on it, but he wouldn't have made lots of money or they would have just probably survived living on that. So, for him, it was a little bit of an adventure as well and a bit to come over make money and take it back to the family. So, my mum stayed on the farm with the three children and looked after the farm with the help of her in-laws, whilst my father came over.

He just came over with this contract with the metal industry. As I said before, I can't remember the name of the company. And he just moved... I remember him telling me, you know, before he died, you know, he just worked very, very hard and made sort of quite a bit of money, saved it all. And then, you know, he sent his savings back to my mum. So, I think it would have been two or three years later, he finally convinced my mother, because she didn't want to come, to come over just for a year or so and try it out. So, she had money from the land her father left her. And when they came over, they bought a house in Briton Ferry. Not a big one you know, just a sort of a terraced house, [...]

During that time my mum had me and, and then my younger brother whilst we were living in that house before they knocked it down. My father carried on working in that industry and I think my mum used to help other Italians when they were coming over. She would sort of, she had a room, so they would help them out to find the accommodation later. So, they'd come over to us first and while they were working and while they found a suitable accommodation for themselves. So that was another way I suppose... They saved more money and eventually, after about maybe five years, so I can't remember the exact dates. But then my father, they had enough money to buy a business. So, he went into the, not the cafes but he went into the fish and chip business. So, he had a fish and chip shop so and did very well with that until he retired. Really. It was quite popular in Port Talbot, and he did quite well.

Gareth White: Perfect. So obviously. Back in.... He was obviously in southern Italy, I think I remember?

Diane Davies: Central. It's central. Well, you know what they say, you know, everybody else is South of wherever you are. But it's Abruzzo. So, it is actually, you know, Mezzogiorno, so it's north of Puglia.

Gareth White: Yeah, that's it. And I'd imagine in this period, did he ever mention how he was recruited in the first place?

Diane Davies: No. That... So, I did read some of these questions, you know, we just don't know really. He did have a job to come to, so I should imagine that he was recruited in Italy along with lots of other young men at the time, you know... because I vaguely remember him saying he came over with others to work there. So, he didn't just come over and hope for the best. I think he was he was coming to a particular contract.

Gareth White: Okay. And then he was in the Port Talbot area. Was he in the Swansea area for his job initially?

Diane Davies: Port Talbot, because it was Briton Ferry, which is in between.

Gareth White: I was trying to work out, so probably....

Diane Davies: Yeah. ... Because then eventually they bought a house in Baglan where we were, where they lived for about 50 years, you know.

[...]

Gareth White: And in that time when he was without your mum and those first two or three years, what was his life like? Did he ever talk about his experiences?

Diane Davies: Well, he didn't. I can't remember him saying anything specific, but my mum used to talk an awful lot and tell us a lot about those days. So, you know, I know from her, he just worked hard. All of them that came over worked quite hard because they were all, you know, trying to earn for their families back home or if they were single, you know, they were just setting up there, they wanted to start their life in Wales. So, there was a mixture. So, I know they worked quite hard. My mum worked very hard as well. As I said she had a big family, she already had three children then me and after three years my younger brother, you know, so and on top of that she used to, as I say, you know, I don't know how long that went on for, but it could have been that it was just a few. And she kept that. [...]

Gareth White: I know you said you worked hard. Did you ever talk about the working conditions that he encountered in ...?

Diane Davies: So, you know, I do remember that time when we had the conversation, and he painted the picture of him, you know, just... He was having to fold plates, maybe. It seemed like heavy work, you know. And he was saying he was quite strong. And that, you know, sometimes if anybody was ill, he'd be the first one that they'd go and ask to fill in. So, he would do extra work to his own shifts because they'd call on him to fill in other people's shifts because he was quite a hard worker. [...] And I just got the impression it

was quite... I don't know whether to say bleak, but they were hard conditions, I think, compared to today. They were hard conditions.

Gareth White: It is something that I've come across a lot doing these interviews that the conditions compared to now were potentially dangerous...

Diane Davies: No, I think they were.

Gareth White: But he never mentioned anything of, I don't know, any accidents that happened to other Italians or....

Diane Davies: No, He didn't, no. he didn't... Whether or not it happened, I don't know. But he didn't specifically mention that to me.

Gareth White: I'd imagine as well that compared to your recollections of the fish and chip business that he started in Port Talbot, that the recollections of the steelworks might have been very different, maybe I'd imagine he might have spoken more about fish and chips?

Diane Davies: Oh, well, when I was older and I was there, I was even helping out, you know, sometimes...So that I know more about that really...

Gareth White: Okay. But obviously in terms of steelworks, the recollection was a very hard worker, some bleak conditions. Did he mention who he worked with? Was it all Italians ? Was it Welsh people?

Diane Davies: I think there was a mixture. A mixture of people, yeah.

Gareth White: Okay. Cause there was as well often Polish in there.

Diane Davies: Yeah, he didn't mention that.

Gareth White: Okay. Okay. What about his social life then? What was his social life when he came over here?

Diane Davies: Well, I think that when he came on his own, I should imagine that he was just together with other Italians, because when my mum came over, I remember they had lots of Italian friends. But my mum did... she integrated quite well and quickly with the Welsh people around her. Our next-door neighbour, she was very close to, and I think she sort of looked out for my mum a bit. She may have been a bit older than my mum and you know, my mother said she helped to teach me English before I went to school. So, you know, she was a really nice lady, [...]

[...]

Diane Davies: Well, the majority of those from Swansea that he knew from the beginning he must have worked with at the beginning. So you may link that. I mean the people that you've done research on from Swansea, you may link them from having worked in maybe Port Talbot or Briton Ferry, in which case they would have all known each other.

Gareth White: It's interesting as well what I think of the 1950s Italians. One thing that comes up a lot are this kind of like recreational activities in this time, some of the Italian dances.

Diane Davies: Yes, that's right.

Gareth White: I don't know if that is also something he talked about really.

Diane Davies: Well, I know that they went there, they took me there, you know, to this. So, there was a club in Swansea, and I remember, for example, Befana, they'd have, you know, parties for children for the Christmas Befana... Regular dances that they would go to. and mostly Swansea, although they knew lots of families in Port Talbot as well, most of when I think of the close friends, they were the ones that they would see regularly were from Swansea. So, and it's not that they came from the same area of Abruzzo, they were from different parts of Italy.

Gareth White: Interesting... do you remember which parts of Italy they were from?

Diane Davies: gosh no. And I don't know how to find that out now.

Gareth White: Do you feel it was more kind of like from the South?

Diane Davies: No, no. A mix again, because I remember my mum saying some were from north. And I know that they knew some people from the south.

Gareth White: Yeah.

Diane Davies: From Port Talbot. But the ones from Swansea were mostly mid to north I would say... of the ones that we knew anyway that we knew. Yeah.

Gareth White: I wonder as we're speaking about Italians and Swansea and Port Talbot, whether your parents, when they came over in the fifties, came into contact with the Italians who had already settled in Wales prior to the fifties. I'm thinking about in the Bracchis... the Italian cafes

Diane Davies: Yeah. I think there was one family that they knew that were.... So, it would have been somewhere north of Cardiff, where I think that there's a settlement of Bracchi, you know, of Italians that, you know, they do this annual thing there.

Gareth White: Yeah. The Amici Val Ceno.

Diane Davies: I think so. I think they knew somebody, one of the families from there. Apparently, my mum said that she took me there once. I can't remember this. You know, it must have been before I was ten maybe. But I was taken there once and it was, you know, far, they had a car from. [...] . They knew quite a lot of families really. I think that when he when they started the business, they also knew other businesspeople, Italians that were that had started, for example, you know, Joe's Cafe in the Mumbles. He was a friend of my father. [...]

Diane Davies: He would have only met on a daily basis with the people he worked with, which were the other Italian men working. And so possibly those people may have known people in the families that had cafes and possibly introduced him then. So, he may have been introduced in that way. Yeah. They seem to know a lot of people, a lot of families.

Gareth White: Okay. I wonder in his time whilst he was over here, whether there were any kind of difficulties that he experienced. I'm thinking maybe tensions, jealousies of Italians, kind of thing.

Diane Davies: He never talked to us about anything like that. But I wouldn't be surprised if there was really because... You know, there were quite a lot of Italians and possibly other nationalities. And I'm sure that, you know, a lot of Welsh people thought maybe they were taking their jobs and things. So, I'm quite you know, but it wasn't something that he dwelled on really. But I'm sure there probably was a little bit of that.

[...]

Diane Davies: Yeah, I think it still happens now, doesn't it? I think it's just a normal reaction, isn't it, that, you know, unless they really were so short of people that there weren't any others around, but Port Talbot being a big town even then, I'm sure there were lots of people who would have probably thought, oh, you know, they taken our jobs. I think I think it's natural really, isn't it?

Gareth White: You mentioned as well that other members of your family came over after your parents. How did that happen? Did they kind of send over for them?

Diane Davies: Oh, no... my father came on his own. And then my mum brought she just literally brought the three children, my elder brothers and sister. They came over on the ferry or a boat, I think. I remember my sister, my other sister telling me that my mum came over on her own with the three children.

Gareth White: It wasn't that she invited members of her family?

Diane Davies: Oh, no. Nobody else came. No, nobody else wanted to come really. So, you know, as I said, my father was a bit of an adventurer as well. And he wanted to do something different and also make more money than what he could at the farm, you know, give sort of for the family, you know, not anything substantial but just, you know, to my... My father had two, three sisters and one sister emigrated to America, to Philadelphia. My mum had two sisters and three brothers. And one sister emigrated to Argentina.

Gareth White: Wow. So, immigration was actually very common?

Diane Davies: Oh, yes. Definitely. I just I don't know if you would be interested in that, but my mother's father, my grandfather, he may have even had a green card, but he spent a lot of time working in America, in New York on buildings. And I don't know if it was railways and buildings or just buildings, but he was back and forth all the time and, you know, sort of. But his family never went there. So, my mother never went to America with

him or on a holiday or anything, you know. And he just went and worked, saved money and came back and forth because he was making a lot of money then. So, this would have been maybe twenties and thirties or something like that maybe.

Gareth White: Yeah. I find it interesting that it's a passed-on experience from generation to generation.

Diane Davies: Yeah.

Gareth White: Okay. Yeah. I've got one more question for you Diane. Thinking about culture, their experience of coming into contact with Welsh culture. What was that like for them?

Diane Davies: It's a bit hard to answer because, you know, I'm trying to answer for something that they felt and experienced. And they never really dwelled on anything negative. I think that they were fully immersed in what was going on around them. They had Welsh friends as well. And if you're talking about earlier the early experiences, I don't know... [...] we all had very good memories of growing up in Baglan because it was very family orientated street you know, close. [...] They just they concentrated on, they had a big family, a business. And that was their life. And they had lots of close Italian friends that were like our family, really... Because I think that's how everybody sort of felt as a family. They got to know because we left such big families and communities behind. You know, they had all these friends and families, they became our family here. You know, for example, you know, some of the ones like my age, you know, we'd say that we were cousins, you know, we would feel like cousins, sort of thing because we were all probably missing out on the extended family, you know?

Gareth White: Interesting. So, it definitely like reproduction of Italian cultural values.

Diane Davies: Yeah, exactly. Yes.

Gareth White: I've got one final question based on that. I find it interesting that your dad came over. And then tried to convince your mother for two or three years. My question is, what convinced them to stay?

Diane Davies: Oh, right, yes. Well, okay. So, my mum wanted to go back, and my father wanted to stay just a little bit longer. And then finally after about 4 to 5 years of my mum being here, my father said, 'okay, I'm ready, we'll go back now,' because for some reason I don't know, he wanted... they probably did quite well, and they had enough to go back and have a reasonable life. But then my mother didn't ... she decided she didn't want to the change, you know, she started to like the life that she had there. So didn't want to go back to the farm. So, it actually reversed, you know, and decided, no, she liked her life in Wales, and she didn't want to disrupt the family, you know, and the education really and go back. And then finally my father agreed with her that it was best not to disrupt the family again and go back. [...]