On 17 October 2009, over 70 people from a broad spectrum of Australian society gathered at the Dante Alighieri Society premises in Newmarket, Brisbane, to participate in a scholarly symposium. The purpose was to reflect on the long history of Italians in Queensland in a public manner, as part of the state’s sesquicentenary celebrations. The programme included 13 papers by scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, whose shared passion for exploring Italian migrant experiences has inspired their separate paths of enquiry into unique features of Queensland’s history. The expertise and research of the presenters encompassed methodologies of archival investigation, anthropological fieldwork and oral history interviews, allowing a number of perspectives to be articulated for public debate. The symposium was opened with a welcome by Dr Don Dignan on behalf of the Dante Alighieri Society and was endorsed by Dott.ssa Alberta Federico, representing the Consul of Italy for Queensland and the Northern Territory, in a formal address.

The “150 Years of Italians in Queensland” symposium resulted in a dynamic and emotional interplay, with audience participation through interjections, cheers, laughter, gasps of horror and disdain, and the sharing of stories and memories. In the audience were Italians, Australians of Italian background, and others who had lived in Italian-Australian communities or whose interests in Italians and Queensland’s past had brought them to Newmarket that day. We could not have hoped for a better outcome. Indeed, informed debate, as Stuart Macintyre reminds us with respect to the recent History Wars, is important for a number of reasons: “The public discussion of history… serves other purposes [than “dogmatic assertion” and “character assassination”]: remembrance, entertainment, instruction and argument”.

It was only fitting, then, that our shared and localised initiative be taken one step further to a collective publication. We saw this as representing a contribution from some of the latest research on the theme of Australia’s Italian migrant community history, of benefit to researchers and interested public alike. We are grateful for the support of Tony Pagliaro and the other members of the Spunti e Ricerche Editorial Board, financial assistance from Griffith University, the University of the Sunshine Coast and the University of Southern Queensland, and the generous support of the Dante Alighieri Society, Brisbane, in hosting the day.

Italians are historically symbolic of Queensland’s cultural ‘otherness’ and all the articles published here address difficulties they have faced. Intimately connected to global forces and transnational trends, the history of Italians and their communities is emblematic of wider national and racial tensions. Any focus on Queensland’s Italians cannot be separated, therefore, from the broader struggles and prejudices
that characterise Australia’s colonial, sectarian, class-segregated and racist past. Yet, for 150 years, theirs has also been a journey of multiple layers, evoked through various stories, and about which new questions can be asked.

The research conducted for the symposium merits wider circulation for a number of reasons, not least the polemics surrounding Italian settlers and their impact within Queensland’s communities from the beginning. More specifically, emphasising Italian minority experience in the state provides a means for reflection on Australia’s political, social and cultural landscapes, and on such experience in light of global migration history. As none of the symposium papers covered the pre-1914 period, however, this is worth recalling as part of our introduction, along with a brief synopsis of the subsequent history, which can outline the context for the articles presented in this volume.

**Early Italian settlement and controversies**

The precise number of Italian settlers in the independent Colony of Queensland at its inauguration on 10 December 1859 is unknown. Italian names are listed in various records of explorers, construction workers, miners, farmers, businessmen, musicians and artists (see Cecilia; Marletta). The documentation appears to point to 1845 as the year of the earliest Italian arrivals, when four Passionist priests, three Italian and one French-Swiss, set up a mission with the agreement of Archbishop John Bede Polding for work amongst the Noonuccal and Gorenpu people on Minjerriba (Stradbroke Island) (see Cecilia 278). According to the nineteenth-century journalist A. F. Waddell, there were also “Italian wood-cutters and […] their women” present around that time, as well as miners, colliers and carters working on the development of the mines and the railways (cited in Cecilia 283). Tito Cecilia, a Scalabrinian priest and historian, also comments on the “engineering feat” constructed by railway workers and tunnel experts in the Barron River valley near Cairns, including Piedmontese and Lombards recruited in 1855 (281).

After the colony’s foundation, a handful of Italian priests and professional laymen also arrived with Bishop James Quinn on his return to the colony from Rome in 1861. They formed part of his new Queensland Immigration Society, which took advantage of the first parliament’s immigration regulations of 1860 (Dignan 1993). Officially, there were 88 Italians in the colony by 1871 (Jupp and York 18). Once gold was discovered in 1872, a consistent stream of Italians arrived from the northern regions of Lombardy, Piedmont and Veneto, and from Tuscany. Organised migration schemes from Italy started in this decade. These early migrants “prepared the soil for the developments of future periods” (Dignan 1993 61). Italian men outnumbered Italian women by about three to one, resulting in many cross-ethnic marriages. Yet, as sporadic as the arrivals were, from the beginning Italians created a sense of community.

Settlers of this regionally diverse group recognised the importance of reaching out to new arrivals and defending their interests in the stratified Queensland society that regarded Italians, in the words of one London-based Agent-General for
Emigration, as being of “a continental character”¹ – unsuitable for the development of the new colonial society. This early ‘Italian’ communal concern was triggered by complaints of abuse by the Tuscan passengers on the Indus in 1877. Several Brisbane Italians formed the Società di Patronato e Mutuo Soccorso tra gli Italiani nel Queensland (Society for the Assistance of Italians in Queensland) in 1877 to provide support “… by giving advice, procuring occupation, making loans, or giving monetary assistance”.² So, Italians looked out for each other fairly early in Queensland’s history, demonstrating a penchant for cooperation across traditional class antagonisms and regional differences.

The lives and work of Italians in this early period are described in the works of Cecilia (278), Dignan (1993), Ferrando Galassi, Piero Giorgi, and Cesare Marletta (16–18). In 1891 the most famous population boost of about 335 Italians arrived in the Herbert River, Burdekin and Bundaberg districts, as cane cutters and agricultural labourers, through a migration scheme orchestrated on behalf of the Queensland colonial government by businessman Chiaffredo Venerano Fraire (see Dignan 1991). Galassi describes the difficulties these migrants faced, including a hostile natural environment (117–139), the lack of English language skills (190), the risk of unemployment and bankruptcy (170), and health problems (237–242). He also paints a vivid portrait of the multiethnic composition of North Queensland communities. Italian migrants were living and working in close proximity with Indigenous Australians, Pacific Islanders, and Chinese, Japanese and English people, a situation that fostered mixed marriages as well as fear, hostility and racism (196–199, 226–236). The Fraire scheme not only brought about a chain migration process but also sparked intense debate across the colony. At issue were the merits of having Italians replace South Sea Islanders on the cane fields, amid trade union concerns about contract and indentured labour (Douglass 1995 39–59). Considered too racially inferior for the unions in this era – as they would continue to be even after 1901 when they were entitled to membership – Italian workers, it was assumed, contravened wage standards (see Saunders 105–106). Douglass argues that plantation contract work in the 1890s functioned like an apprenticeship for the Italian migrants, after which they expected to buy or lease land for their own plantation businesses (1995 40). The townships of Ingham and Innisfail that grew out of the sugar industry did so largely thanks to this early labour recruitment of Italians, who came mainly from the Monferrato and Valtellina areas of north-western Italy, and Veneto (Price 52).

Relatively acceptable due to their ‘white alien’ status – compared with the Chinese and Pacific Islanders – Italians became more numerous and visible during the White Australia Policy era after Federation in 1901. Naturalisation records on the origins of Italian men who settled in Australia between 1890 and 1940 reveal the numerical dominance of Northern and Central Italians over Southern and Insular Italians (see Price 18–20), but increasing numbers arrived from Sicily, Calabria, Abruzzo and other parts of the South after 1901 (Price 52). While most Anglo-Australians could not discern Italians’ different regional origins, debate about the
greater desirability of Northern Italians than Southern Italians had emerged in Queensland in 1890 (see Randazzo and Cigler 30–32). Ironically, all Italians were officially extended British subject status without loss of Italian nationality under Great Britain’s 1870 Naturalisation Act, and the same privileges in the British-Italian 1883 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation (see Dewhirst 39–40), about which most knew nothing.

In the lead-up to 1914, labour was a racial and political issue in Queensland and Italians were a focus of debate over the suitability of the state’s north for white workers (Dewhirst 40–41). They were exposed to frequent vilification in the popular press, like the Bulletin. Australia’s first bilingual national newspaper, L’Italo-Australiano (1905–1909), came to their defence, attacking the popular racism of the day and promoting them as “hardy, intelligent, and industrious farmers”, ready to defend the nation (see Dewhirst). Several years later, many Italian men became caught up in the polemics over repatriation to fight in World War I, as Karen Agutter’s article in this volume discusses. And Italians were at the centre of controversy yet again in the 1920s when they purchased plantations and farms from unsuccessful post-war soldier settlers, such as in Stanthorpe and Innisfail (Dignan 1992 66–67).

Questions of loyalty and betrayal
Although the inter-war period is generally considered the “low emigration” era by historians of Italian migration (Vecoli 114), Italians reached demographic significance in Queensland during this time, as Table 1 illustrates. Notably, by 1933 Queensland’s Italians represented one third of Australia’s Italian-born population and their numbers were to remain the second highest of all states until 1954. An important factor in the increased numbers coming to Australia was the enforcement of immigration quotas by the United States in the 1920s. Also driving the increase were the demand for agricultural labour and chain migration, which surreptitiously worked against the Australian government’s intention to construct an ethnically homogeneous society (MacDonald and MacDonald 268–269). But the economic success of Italian settlers aroused racist resentment and the period leading up to World War II remains the most controversial in the state’s history.

A Royal Commission into alien labour in North Queensland – which produced the 1925 Ferry Report – even denounced Southern Italians as “... more inclined to form groups and less likely to be assimilated in the population of the state” (cited in Cresciani 1988 65). The emphasis on conforming to monocultural standards reflected the assumption that it was easy to stamp out all traces of one’s origins. By 1930 the formation of the British Preference League (see Martinuzzi O’Brien in this volume) accompanied vehement protests against the Italians’ dominance on the cane fields. In this volatile phase, characterised by economic and nationalistic strains, it is not surprising that any criminal behaviour by Italians was employed for propaganda purposes. Southern Italians were held to have a criminal propensity and such perceptions were exacerbated by the Black Hand Gang attacks of the 1930s,
Table 1: Queensland’s Italian-born population, 1871–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Italian-born in Queensland</th>
<th>Italian-born in Australia</th>
<th>Queensland’s share of Australia’s Italian born (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>960*</td>
<td>9.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>1,359</td>
<td>18.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>3,890</td>
<td>11.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>5,678</td>
<td>14.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>6,719</td>
<td>13.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1,838</td>
<td>8,135</td>
<td>22.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>8,355</td>
<td>26,756</td>
<td>31.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>8,541</td>
<td>33,632</td>
<td>25.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>16,795</td>
<td>119,897</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>228,296</td>
<td>8.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>20,272</td>
<td>267,325</td>
<td>7.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>19,280</td>
<td>289,476</td>
<td>6.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>18,875</td>
<td>280,154</td>
<td>6.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>17,958</td>
<td>275,883</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>17,410</td>
<td>261,892</td>
<td>6.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>17,844</td>
<td>254,780</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>16,297</td>
<td>238,246</td>
<td>6.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>15,197</td>
<td>218,750</td>
<td>6.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>13,999</td>
<td>199,120</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Victoria and Queensland recorded only.
even though the petty criminals of this gang only targeted a handful of Ingham’s and Innisfail’s Italian citizens (Douglass 1992 55–56). This issue is investigated in the article by Jonathan Richards in this volume.

Although Queensland had the highest number of Italians of any Australian state by 1933, immigration started to slow from this time onwards, due in part to the xenophobia that enveloped existing communities. For instance, in the context of tropical Queensland’s sugar-cane fields, Vanda Moraes-Gorecki has discussed the association of ‘black sugar’ with racist perceptions of Italians and other Southern European workers in this period. The suspicion of Italians also had political origins. Some Italian Australians were fascist sympathisers, while others could be counted amongst the anti-fascists or remained politically non-aligned (Cresciani 1980). However, in order to sustain social, business or community life, most Italians in Queensland accepted fascism, as discussed by David Brown in this volume (see also Brown 30–31). From the mid-1930s Italians therefore fell under the surveillance of both Italian consular representatives and Australian officials. In addition, by the late 1930s the Returned Services League had launched an anti-Italian crusade (Dignan 1992 70), resulting in a labour shortage.

The National Security Act of 1939 had a devastating impact on Australia’s Italian population. By the time Mussolini declared war in 1940, Italians had been categorised as ‘enemy aliens’. Those interned – mostly men, but some women and children – represented around 15 per cent of the Italian-born population in Australia, and about 46 per cent of them were interned in Queensland (Martinuzzi O’Brien 1992 92). The feeling was clear: they were “scapegoats” for a geopolitical crisis, as one internee, Osvaldo Bonutto, put it (61). Ilma Martinuzzi O’Brien has written extensively on Italian internment, including the story of Ingham’s Giuseppe Cantamessa, who has become symbolic of the irrational hostility directed at Italians during this era (2005 33). She argues elsewhere that “economic envy” was the motivating force (1992 94). In her article in this volume Martinuzzi O’Brien elaborates on the disproportionate representation of Italians from Ingham and Innisfail among the internees. Any appeal against these injustices by Italians or others fell largely on deaf ears. In a poignant response to his interrogators, one internee crystallised the reality of many: “My work is my politics, and my family is my religion” (cited in Douglass 1995 346, fn.118). While Italians were freed from the camps in most Allied countries upon Italy’s surrender in 1943, not all internees were permitted to return home immediately in North Queensland, some being held until 1944.

The Queensland Italian wartime experience has never been forgotten, but it has been said that few, if any, bore a grudge after the ordeal, despite the scars on individuals, their families and their communities. Indeed, some of the second generation grew up never knowing what their parents had endured. In what might be seen as a bold public comment on this episode as Martinuzzi O’Brien also notes in this volume – Innisfail’s Italians had a monument erected, in memory of those who had pioneered the sugar industry, to mark Queensland’s 1959 centenary (Baldassar 61–62).
Rebuilding lives and relationships

Despite hiccups in the process of drawing up post-war agreements between the Australian and Italian governments, Queensland’s Italian community almost doubled in size between 1945 and 1954, with nearly 70 per cent residing in North Queensland. The migration of whole families (as opposed to single men) characterised this second global migration wave, while chain migrations and ‘proxy brides’ helped redress the gender imbalance. Over the 1950s, Italians also re-started the sugar industry, which had stagnated during the War, and from which a renewed community spirit emerged. Yet many post-war migrants struggled to establish themselves and their families. Personal memories reveal a number of pressures, particularly for women, due to sexism, racism and exploitation (Ricatti 2010). Francesco Ricatti’s article in this volume offers insights into the memories of several Italian migrants and the contradictions inherent in living in a society in transition.

Italy’s 1960s economic boom and Queensland’s introduction of mechanical harvesting brought a substantial decrease in the numbers of Italians migrating to and settling in Queensland. But the Italian communities continued to grow thanks to the birth of the second and third generations. Italians and their descendants still represent a significant component of Queensland’s people with ‘Italian’ being the fourth most common ethnic heritage in Australia in 2001, and 22,030 Queeslanders identifying Italian as the language spoken at home in the 2006 census (second only to Mandarin in the non-English groups). And, as Italian family names and words have become familiar in mainstream Australian society, there has been a considerable shift in the status of Italians. In light of the growing commodification of ethnic Australia (see Baldassar 27), the Italian-Australian communities have responded to the changing face of social capital, multiculturalism and globalisation in numerous ways. Cinema, festivals, and educational and welfare programs, as well as official events and social organisations, provide a means for accessing ‘Italianness’. Furthermore, Italian is one of the widely-taught languages in Australia and in Queensland it is taught in 90 primary and 17 secondary schools, and at four universities. This popularity seems to suggest how much and how quickly perceptions about Italians have changed over their history in Australia. However, multicultural policies have not always resulted in acceptance of diversity, as Stefano Girola’s article in this volume on Italian experiences in the Catholic Church reveals.

The improved status of Italians in Queensland is not, of course, simply an outcome of multicultural policies. The decline in incidents of xenophobia and outright racism can be attributed to several factors. Italy’s economic development resulted not only in a decreasing number of emigrants but also increased prestige for Italians and their histories and cultures in Australia, and interest in reclaiming ‘Italo- Australians’. Meanwhile, Australia’s prosperity and the adoption of multiculturalism created momentum for changing perceptions. And, finally, new migration polemics in the 1970s and 1980s shifted the focus away from Southern Europeans and onto the arrival of ‘boat people’ from South East Asian countries. Reviewing Queensland’s
Italian history can do much to inform us about the – far from ideal – workings of Australian diversity and about broader social and cultural attitudes.

**New research**

Against this background, the contributions to this volume of *Spunti e Ricerche* offer critical insights into both lived experience – through their focus on a number of dramatic episodes in Queensland’s history – and meanings from the past. While we have presented the articles in an order that follows the chronology of historical developments, some patterns also emerge concerning the stages through which Australian and Italian nationalism progressed. First, Karen Agutter introduces an episode in Italian-Queensland history that has had little coverage to date. In her article, “The Italians in Queensland during World War I”, she draws on archival documents, some of which she herself has compiled, to speak to the polemics over the treatment of Queensland’s Italian men of military age during that war. Agutter’s article centres on frictions over the proposed repatriation of these men to Italy, between the Italian Consul General, acting on behalf of the Italian government, on one hand, and the Australian Commonwealth, concerned with Queensland’s need to sustain the sugar industry, on the other. She highlights paradoxes in the anti-conscriptionist debate and the position of the labour movement, and the treatment of Italians on the *SS Medic* in 1918. Her article offers an appreciation of the way nationalism was imposed on Italian migrants’ lives.

Another contribution that addresses perceptions about the place of Italians and their communities, and their national characterisation in Queensland, is Jonathan Richards’s article, “‘End the Canefields Terror!’: True Italian Crime in North Queensland, 1932–1940”. Richards focuses on the way in which fears about ‘alien criminality’ in relation to a series of murder cases in Ingham between 1934 and 1938 fuelled assumptions about the Italian character at local, state and national levels. He argues that the literature to date skirts around this series of events, failing to examine their broader significance. By sifting through police and criminal justice records, he is able to reassess interpretations of the ‘Black Hand Gang’ given in the contemporary newspaper reports and in secondary source material, while also exposing evidence of the police surveillance of North Queensland’s Italian communities. Both Agutter’s and Richards’s articles invite reflection on how little attitudes towards Italians had changed since the furore around 1891 when the Fraire contingent headed for work on the plantations.

Two articles treat events around World War II. David Brown, in “‘Gathered around the Sign of the *Littorio*’: The Italo-Abyssinia Conflict and Its Impact on Italian Fascism in Queensland, 1935–1939”, investigates the kind of support that fascism garnered within the Italian communities of Queensland. He discusses the evidence of ritual, donations and rhetoric that has largely escaped attention in the literature on Queensland’s Italians. Using archival documentation and the contemporary press reports, he probes the nature of the support given by non-fascist members within the
Italian communities, exploring the complex relationship between national patriotism and ideological commitment. While noting some ambiguities concerning the reactions to the Abyssinian War in Queensland, Brown provides insight into the interpretations most Queensland Italians made of Italian fascism, to argue that there was very little doubt as to where their loyalties lay.

This pre-war situation contrasts with that analysed by Ilma Martinuzzi O’Brien, when Italians were targeted for internment during the War. As the title of her article, “Italians in Ingham and Innisfail in World War II: Selective and Not Mass Internment?”, suggests, Martinuzzi O’Brien’s is a dual micro-community study. She discusses the deliberate pursuit of Italians beyond any rational measure in two demographically significant towns. Indeed, her archival sources on several individual cases reveal that the reasons used to round up and incarcerate Ingham’s and Innisfail’s Italians were always flimsy, from which it can be gleaned that the construction of both circumstances and policies served to calm national paranoia and empower those in a position of authority rather than protect the citizens from subversive elements. Both Brown and Martinuzzi O’Brien remind us of the ways fear can distort reality and transform reliable and innocent workers into enemies of the state.

The next two articles focus on the post-war period of mass migration, when attitudes towards non-English speaking migrants were starting to change. However, both authors highlight the way assumptions about Italians’ ethnic difference and the on-going emphasis on assimilating to the ‘Australian way’ perpetuated contradictions and frustrations. Francesco Ricatti’s article, “Speranza e Sacrificio: Memories, Oral Histories and Myths about Migration”, counters public statements in Italy about mass migrations with the memories of 15 Queensland Italians, to challenge assumptions about Italian migrant experiences. Indeed, the rhetoric and myth of ‘national emigration’ and of multiculturalism, respectively, stress notions of migrants’ hopes and sacrifices, successes and ‘contributions’, in ways that unwittingly inform ongoing discriminatory attitudes in both Italy and Australia. Ricatti examines the hope experienced by the Italians he interviewed and their memories of issues to do with the English language, attitudes to and conditions of work, and racism. The narratives that Ricatti recreates challenge the record, public and private, that places migrant experience in convenient and nostalgic perspectives.

Contradictions also emerge from Stefano Girola’s research, in his article “The Italian Catholic Federation in Queensland: Serving the Changing Needs of Italian Migrants”. Girola maps the formation of the Federazione Cattolica Italiana (FCI) as a Catholic lay movement, established to meet Italian migrants’ needs in the 1960s. These needs were of a spiritual, linguistic and social nature because of the alienation experienced by Italians, not only in the wider community but also in their local parish congregations. Girola traces the motivations to establish the FCI in Queensland in the original vision and efforts of Fr Aldo Lorigiola and in the work done by the Scalabrinians, parishioners and individual Anglo-Australian parish priests. Yet, as his
informants’ oral accounts show, despite multiculturalism, Italian parishioners have had to confront hostility and ostracism consistently.

Finally, Catherine Dewhirst, in her article, “Historical Turns in the Historiography of Italians in Queensland”, engages with historical approaches to Queensland’s Italian migration past. She discusses the notion of writing inclusive plural histories in Australia and the debate over ethnic histories that has emerged from a cultural history perspective. The way the history of Italians in Queensland has been interpreted has largely been limited to a focus on three concerns: a report (the 1925 Ferry Report), an industry (the North Queensland sugar industry), and the pressure for assimilation. Dewhirst shows how Western historiographical trends underlie the intellectual, political and cultural currents that have influenced the writing of Italians into Queensland’s history. In her examination of the shifting arguments about the place of Italian migrants, she reflects on the persistence of nationalism and the challenges posed since multiculturalism. Like other authors in this volume, Ricatti, Girola and Dewhirst tackle the inconsistencies in the multicultural ideal.

**Future research directions**

Important recommendations can be drawn from a focus on a state’s minority group history, regarding integration within Australian history in particular, but also transnational influences. The lack of inclusiveness in mainstream histories remains particularly frustrating in our nationalistic age. Gianfranco Cresciani (2002 705–707), for instance, criticises the way Australian histories have tended to cater to mainstream society, neglecting the specialised research available from many lesser known histories which could provide more pluralistic accounts of Australia’s past. This issue has been raised more recently in line with historiographical developments relating to cultural history, which Dewhirst discusses in relation to the histories of Queensland’s Italians in this volume. Where, then, might a future emphasis be placed in the study of Italians in Queensland?

A glaring gap can be found in the field of Italian-Aboriginal or European-Aboriginal history, which Girola elsewhere argues would benefit from translations of foreign language sources to encompass multicultural interpretations (92, 99). Important studies of the relationships between Asians and Indigenous people, especially in North Queensland, have challenged traditional historical narratives of the Australian nation (see Ganter; Reynolds; Stephenson). From a similar theoretical perspective, the study of Italians’ complex relationships with Indigenous people would certainly problematise our historical understanding of Italian migrants’ racial ambiguity, and of their inclusion in or exclusion from the realm of whiteness. Furthermore, as Joseph Pugliese and, more recently, Ricatti (2011 43–44) have argued, we cannot continue to write histories of Italian migration to Australia while ignoring the presence and rights of Indigenous people and the historical complicity of Italians in the dispossession and exploitation of Aboriginal land. Another area in need of attention is the colonial period generally. Although the history of pioneering notables
in the pre-World War I era has highlighted an early cosmopolitanism in Queensland’s colonial society, the research to date is not exhaustive and also poses questions about cross-class and cross-cultural collaborations. For a start, what could research into minority groups working in the sugar-cane industry – not only Italians but Indians, Greeks, Maltese, and South Sea Islanders – reveal about the plural ethnic culture of Queensland’s social and economic networks? Moreover, memories of racism between Italians that have emerged in current oral histories prompt questions about the extent of northern Italian racism in Queensland, on which serious research has yet to be done.

There have been some micro-community studies, like those on Stanthorpe’s and Tully’s Italians (Arcidiacono and Arcidiacono; Bonaccorso; Tully District Italian Pioneers Committee), which capture lessons of rural community-building and allow the life stories of participants to be documented. However, investigation into other types of ‘communities’ and from transnational approaches could also highlight the complexity of relationships. The lives of women and children remain poorly represented in the literature from various disciplinary perspectives, in spite of some recent studies (see Pretelli 786–787). Furthermore, while much is known about the linguistic repertoires and practices of Sydney’s first-, second- and third-generation Italians, thanks to the work of Camilla Bettoni and Antonia Rubino (see, for example, 1996), there is considerable scope for investigation into those of Queensland’s Italian communities, whose settlement patterns have been very different. And pushing the boundaries through oral history work can engender deeper levels of trust, to inform a greater depth of understanding of lived migrant experience and relations (see Ricatti 2010).

Possibilities for future research can also be gleaned from this volume’s articles. For instance, what degree of assistance and support did Italian migrants and their families receive from other Australians and the media in times of national crisis? What impact did the internment of Italians or Australians of Italian origin have during World War II on the state’s or the national economic situation? Is there any evidence of transnational influences across the Italian diaspora (as opposed to between Italian communities and Italy), which would suggest the need to discuss the significance of such influences? How might the experiences of Queensland’s Italians contribute to analysis of the current polemics over asylum seekers? With cross-cultural experiences and broader colonial, national and diaspora networks and interactions in mind, we hope that the research published in this edition of Spunti e Ricerche adds fresh insight and stimulates further work aimed at redressing the legacy of the Australian emphasis on an imaginary monocultural past.
Works Cited


Catherine Dewhirst, Claire Kennedy, Francesco Ricatti  

“From Italy to Ingham: Italians in North Queensland.” St Lucia, Qld: Queensland University Press, 1995.


Notes

1 MS, Queensland State Archives: COL/79A (1876), no. 2853. Letter from Agent-General for Emigration Arthur Macalister to the Colonial Secretary Theodore Hamilton in Brisbane, 15 September 1876.
2 Pugh’s Almanac, 1878, p. 163.
3 L’Italo-Australiano, 5 August 1905 and 6 June 1907.
4 See, for instance, Don Dignan’s comment in the “Foreword” of the 1994 edition of Bonutto’s autobiography, that the “hurt” that Bonutto experienced “… prevented him from mentioning it to his children for twenty years…” (cited in Bonutto x). See also Ilma Martinuzzi O’Brien’s comment on Alf Martinuzzi in her postscript (2005 35).
6 Oral communication by Dott.ssa Alberta Federico, Director of the Education Office, Italian Consulate, Brisbane, 14 April 2009.
7 A study of the trilingualism of Brisbane’s first-generation Friulians by Silvia Polo and Claire Kennedy is in progress.
8 We warmly thank Nathaniel Mitchell for editorial assistance in the preparation of the articles in this volume for publication. For generous funding we also thank the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Griffith University, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of the Sunshine Coast, and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Southern Queensland.
9 Claire Kennedy and Francesco Ricatti are Cassamarca Lecturers, at Griffith University and the University of the Sunshine Coast, respectively.