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Past and Current Trends in Italian Scottish Migration Writings: Time and Memory in Joe Pieri and Anne Pia

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to shed light on Joe Pieri (1918–2012) and Anne Pia (1950–) as key figures of Italian Scottish migration literature. Although they have been neglected by academic criticism, their commitment to representing their transnational identities, as well as the ‘process of becoming’ of their community members, now deserves full recognition. Time and memory are central themes in their writings. *Isle of the Displaced: An Italian-Scot’s Memoirs of Internment in the Second World War* (1997) and *Language of My Choosing: A Candid Life-Memoir of an Italian Scot* (2017), Pieri’s and Pia’s respective first memoirs, both revisit the horrors of the Second World War while maintaining strong ties to the present. Pieri includes a detailed description of Île Sainte-Hélène today, while Pia reflects on immigration as a ‘pilgrimage’ and expresses gratitude to Scotland as an inclusive, multiethnic country. Their works affirm that the hardships of their early lives were pivotal in shaping their complex identities. Belonging to different historical periods and endowed with unique sensitivities, Pieri and Pia also represent the earliest stages and latest trends of Italian Scottish migration literature. After analysing these memoirs – especially their relationship between past and present – the article concludes with Pia’s *Magnacioni ... My Food, My Italy* (2023). A ‘Te Deum’ of Italian culture, this hybrid work confirms that time, self-reflection, and writing are distinctive features of this under-researched branch of the Italian diaspora in Anglophone countries.

Rooted in the past, but strongly projected into the future, Italian Scottish literary writings exhibit clear and definite traits: they are rich and varied, covering a wide range of textual genres and migration-related issues, but more importantly, their authors – starting with the versatile Marcella Evaristi and Ann Marie Di

Mambro – have gained international recognition. At a time when interest in the marginal areas of the Italian diaspora is growing,¹ it is crucial to examine the evolution of this particular literary branch not only to see what it represents today, but also how it can develop in the broader context of Italian Studies in Anglophone countries.

In fact, compared to America, Canada, and Australia – where academia has canonised the huge literary output of Italian immigrants since the late 1800s² – Britain and Italy have only just begun to explore this type of writing. The first studies date back to the early 2000s, and even in the years since, research has largely focused on two writers: the first-generation immigrant Joe Pieri, brought to Glasgow by his Tuscan parents after the First World War, and Mary Contini OBE, the director of the deli shop Valvona & Crolla, a true symbol of Italianness in Edinburgh.³ I believe that these two figures have garnered scholars' attention over the last decades because they shared their personal and family stories, while establishing a more direct cultural connection between Scotland and Italy.

Recent research indicates that this literary branch of the Italian diaspora in Britain began with the publication of *Wandering Minstrel: The Life Story of Cagliardo Coraggioso* by the Edinburgh-based Eugenio D'Agostino in 1938,⁴ and that it was in 1983 that Marcella Evaristi staged her successful *Commedia*. Since then, other influential figures have written about themselves and the Italian community in Scotland: Ann Marie Di Mambro, Baron Charles Forte, Pietro Tognini, and more recently Mary Contini, Anne Pia and Robert Rossi. They never elaborated a common literary project, but were – and continue to be – closely interconnected. At a time, however, when Richard Demarco's work is increasingly featured in publications and research projects,⁵ it is undeniable that his role as a theatre promoter and cultural commentator has been crucial in building strong networks and promoting the literary and artistic contributions of Italian Scots.

This goes to say that after the Second World War, the Italian community produced several talented authors who stood out also for their creativity and social commitment. This was the case for the surrealist sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi⁶ – whose *The Manuscript of Montecassino* (1991) can be found in front of the beautiful St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh – and it remains true for each of the nine authors that I have mentioned. By creating a rich and diverse

body of work, they have recounted stories of humiliation and pain, while also expressing pride in their heritage and professional achievements. Readers who may be initially attracted to the Mediterranean – even exotic – flavour of their works could also learn more about multicultural Scotland, and respond to their authors' call of tolerance and social inclusiveness.

We can find all these important elements in a textual corpus which is made up of twenty-one pieces of prose, verse, and drama,⁷ particularly in the memoirs of Joe Pieri and Anne Pia. Published between 1997 and 2022, and enjoying a considerable editorial success, they symbolically represent the development of this under-researched literary branch of the Italian diaspora. The increasing thematic depth and formal creativity in this part of their production will captivate readers and scholars alike, fostering the creation of a genuine literary canon that can be fully recognised both in Italy and across major English-speaking countries.

Of course, this is an open question which will be discussed by the academic community in the next years. The reason, however, why Pieri and Pia in particular deserve our attention is that they propose a dynamic idea of time and memory, which helps not only to see how the greatest contemporary events changed the course of their lives, but also to consider the evolution of their complex identities and sense of belonging. In fact, even though they represent two different generations of immigrants, they are proud Scots who only gradually learned to value their Tuscan and *Laziale* origins. We can understand why Pia in particular proposes migration and writing as journeys of discovery and self-acceptance.

Part of a larger research project on the literary side of the Italian diaspora in Britain,⁸ this article considers specifically Pieri's and Pia's plurilingual memoirs from an intertextual perspective. Reflecting the transnational identities of their authors, they retrospectively recount the key events of contemporary times alongside their painful personal stories. The following sections will show that they also unveil the rich cultural and life experiences of the Italian community in Scotland.

PIERI AND GREAT EVENTS OF HISTORY: THE SECOND WORLD WAR

An active member of the Italian community in Glasgow until he died in 2012, Joe Pieri began to dedicate himself to writing after he retired, in the late 1990s.⁹ He

had been the proud owner of The Savoy Café for over thirty years, but wanted to leave a trace of the most important events of his life: published in 1997, *Isle of the Displaced: An Italian-Scot's Memoirs of Internment in the Second World War* was unexpectedly in line with the plays and memoirs which other Italian Scots had written until then.¹⁰ Considering the literary output of subsequent years – such as Mary Contini's *Dear Olivia: An Italian Journey of Love and Courage* (2006), Pia's *Language of My Choosing: The Candid Life-Memoir of an Italian Scot* (2017), and Robert Rossi's historical novels *Italian Blood British Heart* (2020) and *Jewish Heart Italian Heart* (2022) – it becomes evident that the Second World War remains a central theme of Italian Scottish writing.

Isle of the Displaced was thus Pieri's debut memoir, but more importantly, it was an editorial success. It was avidly read both in Britain, particularly by the members of the Italian communities, and in the Barga area in northern Tuscany.¹¹ They all appreciated its crude descriptions and lucid reflections: compared to the above-mentioned works – and those which appeared since the early 1980s – *Isle of the Displaced* provides a more detailed representation of internment in Britain, on the Isle of Man and in Canada. It is only in the concluding chapters that Pieri focuses on the professional success that he achieved after he was released and returned home in 1943.

We may never gain a clear vision of Pieri's creative universe, yet it is patent that the Second World War represents the main topic in his production. *Isle of the Displaced*, for instance, is rich in dates and precise references to its principal events, which are the product of his continuous documentary research; at the same time, we cannot but consider it a real ode to memory. Even as an octogenarian, in fact, he could minutely remember not only the different stages of his detention at camp S on the Île Saint Hélène in Canada, but also his past feelings: shock, anger, resentment, and only at the end, a strong sense of fulfilment.¹² Respectively published in 2009 and 2010, Bernard Moscardini's *La Vacanza* and Peter Ghiringhelli's *An English Boy in Fascist Italy* are equally powerful war memoirs, but only rarely express their authors' fears as children living with their expatriated families in Italy.¹³

Pieri decided to dedicate himself to writing to show how he and the rest of the Italian community lived through those bleak times, while proudly projecting a clear image of his transnational identity. Indeed, he began with the intimate but highly political choices that he made before Mussolini declared

war on France and Britain. Taken from chapter 2, 'Allegiances,' the following extract explains why he did not apply for a British passport, while anticipating his future destiny as an 'enemy alien':

By the age of 20 I had become a voracious reader, and was well aware of my position as a foreigner and as a possible future enemy alien. [...] Why did I not follow in my father's footsteps and swear allegiance to the British flag? After all, acceptance was certain: I had lived in Britain for 18 of my 21 years, had no political leanings and no blemish on my character, but I elected to remain as I was born. After the passage of almost 60 years it is probably impossible to analyse with any degree of accuracy the personal motives for decisions made so long ago, but as far as I can remember, I believe my memory to be sound, my reasoning went as follows.

Despite my almost purely Scottish lifestyle, I just did not feel British. Almost daily I was reminded that I was Italian. [...] Moreover, the fact that as a British subject I would have had to do the military service was probably the most important factor to remain as I was. [...] I had no desire to be placed in the position of possibly having to fight against cousins and relations already serving in the Italian army.¹⁴

His choice resulted from a long and painful reflection which mostly regarded his sense of national belonging. Following a strict chronological order, the ensuing chapters recount how he was arrested and then deported to the Île Saint Hélène in Canada.¹⁵ The crude description of the men's physical condition after twelve days of sailing echoes those by Les Servini and Hector Emanuelli in *A Boy from Bardi. My Life and Times* (1994) and *A Sense of Belonging [...] Memories of a Welsh-Italian Englishman* (2010).¹⁶ The two Italian Welsh writers, who were living the same experience as Pieri in those same years, had been taken to several internment camps in the north of Britain before they were finally transferred to the Isle of Man. They too continued to wonder if this could be the reward for all they and their families had done for Britain.¹⁷

Touching but lucid, Pieri's account, however, also includes visual descriptions of Camp S on the little island opposite Montreal, and of the other detainees: they are in the form of black and white drawings or photographs, which are

part of the author's personal archive.¹⁸ Other engaging parts in the story are the mutiny of the detainees and the preparation of their escape plans. They are presented as fierce reactions against the inhuman treatment that they were receiving, but also shed light on Pieri's strong personality and charisma. From the moment when he 'shouted': 'What can they do to us? [...] We have the right to a visit from an International Red Cross representative. Now's the time to get decent conditions',¹⁹ he became a key member of the community and earned increasing respect also by the highest military ranks in the camp. The plurilingual trait of this specific part of *Isle of the Displaced* confirms that he quickly learned to speak German and that in those three years he also served as a translator and a cultural mediator.²⁰

He was released in 1943, but first he was transferred to Onchan Camp on the Isle of Man.²¹ When he returned to Glasgow, he found it difficult to adapt to his freedom as he felt a strange anxiety and apprehension. The warm atmosphere around him helped him to adapt to a new normality:

Remarkably enough, when I did go back to serving the public, I found that attitudes seemed to have been transformed. Complete strangers, ex-soldiers who had fought in the Italian campaigns and who correctly assumed that I was Italian, would regale me with their stories of Italy. For whatever reason, the war seemed to have broadened attitudes and increased people's tolerance. Paradoxically, after all that had happened for the first time in my life I began to feel welcome and a part of the society in which I lived.²²

Although we can find the same happy ending in most Italian British memoirs – which symbolises the upward arc in the lives of their authors – Pieri continued to propose himself as a testimony of contemporary times, focusing in particular on the history of the Italian community in Britain. In 2005, the Prologue of the award-winning *The Scots-Italians: Recollections of an Immigrant* informed the reader that he had 'drawn on a lifetime of personal experience as an Italian immigrant who arrived in Scotland in the early part of the twentieth century, and whose life had mirrored that of many of the immigrants of those and subsequent times'.²³ He thus continued to include personal and family memories, but more importantly, he used history to give shape to an orderly narrative

whose core chapters focused, again, on the war and the internment experience. Although we only know that the idea of writing *The Scots-Italians* originated from a conversation that he had with his friends in Barga that summer,²⁴ his decision to quote from *Isle of the Displaced* confirms that the past still haunted him.²⁵

Yet, his specific focus in this new piece of non-fiction is more on the history of the Italian community in Scotland. Beginning with the early stages of settlement and continuing with its social and economic developments, he provides a far more complete representation of the system of persecution that was set up against its members during the Second World War. The latest research has proved that this was definitely more brutal than in the other English-speaking countries, particularly in Canada:²⁶ we can understand why especially the tragedy of the *Arandora Star* was perceived as a form of punishment by its members and considered as a taboo for decades. Taken from chapter 9, 'Internment', the following extract gives voice to a Jewish survivor, which emphasises the choral trait of this narrative:

The water was full of oil and I hung on to a big piece of wood floating beside me and after a while I managed to pull myself on to it. [...] I could hear shouts of help in all languages Italian, German, English and Hebrew but they grew less and less as people began to die. [...] Hours later we were pulled out by a Canadian destroyer and we were given hot chocolate to drink and blankets to cover ourselves. [...] The officers and crew on the destroyer treated us well and I would like to thank them for their kindness.²⁷

Recalling the Italian Glaswegian Rando Bertoia²⁸ – who was the only Italian survivor at the time when *The Scots-Italians* first appeared – Pieri also wanted to discuss the political consequences of the tragedy. 'The sinking of the *Arandora Star* and the heavy loss of Italian life', as he reports, caused a 'furore in the Italian population, and the American Ambassador in London, John Kennedy, [...] raised the question as to why the International Red Cross had not been notified of the status of the ship.'²⁹ The British government responded only by saying that those were truly tragic times and that thousands of soldiers, for instance, lost their lives during the retreat to Dunkirk.

Rich in new details about Pieri's internment in Canada, but also giving voice to other Italians who were going through the same experience in other parts of Britain and on the Isle of Man, *The Scots-Italians* finishes with the chapter titled 'Modern Times.' Once again, the post-war years are associated to the growth and economic success of the Italian community; as for Pieri, he wanted to express his sense of professional achievement and his love for Scotland, the country where he belonged.

Pieri continued to be haunted by the horrors of the Second World War and retold his story also in *River of Memory: Memoirs of a Scots-Italian* (2006) and *Tales of the Savoy: Stories from a Glasgow Café* (2012). Chapter 3 of *River of Memory* begins with a brief account of his visit of Montreal and the Île Saint Hélène in 1974. As he writes, at that time, he was in the company of his wife Mary and could see the changes of the island after thirty years, reporting the inscription on the plaque of the prison cells: 'During the Second World War this fortress served as a prison camp for Nazi and Fascist prisoners. These are the punishment cells used for the more dangerous of them' – he could only comment that 'the first casualty in war is truth'.³⁰

Indeed, the desire to bring to light the hidden truths of such an important historical event is at the very root of Pieri's rich oeuvre. Starting from *Isle of the Displaced* in 1997, he wrote about how he faced those difficult times, which helped him not only to overcome his sense of shame, but also to enjoy the benefits of social integration. A new choral memoir, which recounts his numerous human encounters, *Tales of the Savoy* presents facts and stories – also of the Second World War – from the perspective of a winner in life. Again, the decision to give more emphasis to the heroic figure of 'Big Emma' is revealing of his desire to show the strength and courage of the Italians. A Tuscan widow who was living with her children in Glasgow on the terrible night of 10 June 1940, she fought fiercely against the Scottish hooligans who wanted to destroy her fish and chip shop. The dramatic dialogic sequence at the core of the episode shows that she was finally able to save both her little shop and her family.³¹

LOOKING BACK: PIA'S QUEST FOR IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Pieri died in 2012 leaving behind six memoirs and other pieces of non-fiction that bear witness to some of the cruellest events of contemporary times. Traditional in

form, these works clearly reflect his conservative views, but project a clear image of his transnational identity. As he writes in *Isle of the Displaced*, he was proud of his ‘chameleon-like personality’ and his capacity to live between two cultures,³² and was certain that Scotland was his true home.³³ Combining his activity as a writer with continuous social commitment within the Bargan-Glaswegian community, he is remembered today as one of its most prominent members.

Building on the foundation laid by Pieri, Anne Pia’s writings offer a contemporary perspective on the Italian Scottish experience, further enriching this literary tradition. Her idea of ‘pilgrimage’ is clearly related to her continuous evolution as an individual and as an author.

Language of My Choosing: The Candid Life-Memoir of an Italian Scot symbolically represents the beginning of this special pilgrimage. It was published in 2017 and it was awarded the prestigious Flaiano Prize the following year: incorporating phrases in Italian, Viticuser and French, it follows the times of Pia’s memory and soul, which represents a unique feature in the wider context of Italian British autobiographical prose. The titles of its six sections – ‘Openings’, ‘Backlights-Backdrop to My Life’, ‘Highlights-Early Influences’, ‘Spotlights’, ‘Footlights’ and ‘Viticuser’ – clearly symbolise the numerous passages from light to darkness – and from darkness to light – which marked most of her life.

Indeed, unlike Pieri and Tognini, who followed the course of history in their autobiographical writings, she dedicated two chapters to the horrors of the Second World War, but then focused primarily on her story and that of her Italian family. Her way of blending memories and personal considerations is engaging: the reader can quickly perceive how difficult it was for her – at a certain point of her life – to come to terms with her transnational identity. Taken from the chapter ‘The Power of an Italian Grandmother’, this extract depicts the rural customs of her family in post-war Edinburgh while expressing her profound sense of uneasiness:

She [Pia’s grandmother] bought rennet from the chemist to make her own ricotta and would occasionally persuade Rico to drive to a farm where she would buy two live chickens, put them in the boot of the car where they clattered and clucked all the way home; and disposed of them at the back of the house with a pair of scissors. I can still see bloodstains on the paving stones at the back of our Bruntsfield flat.

She would then gut them in the kitchen sink, a gruesome, smelly task, remove the feathers and hang the birds between two dining chairs to rid them of any residual blood and fluids. That done, they were ready for the pot.³⁴

This 'Candid Life-Memoir' is rich in sensory and emotional stimuli: Pia significantly evokes her 'complicated relationship with milk'³⁵ to recount the hard time that she had as a young student at a Catholic school in Edinburgh. In those early years, she did not want to separate from her mother and could not stand the strict rules of her nun teachers; when she became more aware of the stigma of being an immigrant, she preferred to remain in silence,³⁶ which greatly hindered her integration. As she recounts, this was the time when the Italians had to be 'invisible' in Scotland.³⁷ We can understand why, after taking 'care not to establish a connection with the Italian or Polish children in [her] class',³⁸ she decided to become a teacher and focus primarily on her weakest students.³⁹

Completely absorbed in this first experience as a writer, Pia could thus not only give voice to the pain, 'indignation' and hidden sense of rebellion that she felt in those years, but also explain why she too always considered Scotland her true home.⁴⁰ Its openness, inclusiveness⁴¹ – and also its capacity to value difference – represented a refuge from the injustices and forms of violence that she witnessed during the first part of her life. They were closely related to the matriarchal system that her grandmother had imposed on their family,⁴² but also to the controversial values and convictions that the woman believed in. Despite her immense courage and countless skills as a businesswoman,⁴³ she had never abandoned either her vision of religion nor the mentality and ancient traditions of Viticuso, the remote *Laziale* village where she came from. The darkest pages of *Language of My Choosing* clearly represent a form of liberation also from the ignorance and superstition that those traditions were imbued with.

Yet, like the majority of young Italian Scots, Pia was given the opportunity to complete her studies and gain distance from that environment. Her time as a university student in France in 1977 was pivotal, allowing her to encounter a new culture and reflect on herself and her future aspirations.⁴⁴ The following extract shows that, after returning to Edinburgh, she began her 'journey of gradual detachment' from her Italian family.⁴⁵ By creating an alternative model

of marriage and family, she finally put an end to ‘the repressive,’ ‘gut-wrenching old order’ that she had been forced to follow until then:

My marriage was to be I thought, a definitive final ascent from that ghetto; a positive move, together with my husband, to create something of ours; our joint desire to leave the family, the system, and create our own professional, liberal lifestyle of equality, refinement, culture and the arts. I had a vision of a professional couple sharing, growing and learning every day; with each new baby and each new career move, gaining distance from where we had been; putting that repressive, gut-wrenching old order based on survival in different times and a different context – the village, the war – behind us. Indeed I saw us criticising, challenging and despising what it had tried to do to each of us. And I saw an intelligent, artistic lifestyle, a family thriving within it, a life of gentle art and ideas, of idealism and creativity.⁴⁶

Unlike Pieri and Tognini who dedicated themselves to writing to share especially their war experiences, Pia, who was born in 1949, could only mention her grandfather, who was one of the 446 Italian victims of the tragedy of the *Arandora Star*, and refer to the battle of Monte Cassino. The ‘sensual and ethereal’⁴⁷ monument of Mamma Ciociara⁴⁸, which pays tribute to the ‘thousands of women aged eleven to eighty-six who were dragged by the hair like livestock, beaten and then raped by Les Goumiers’⁴⁹ from January to May 1944, shows that in those years, the Italians were victims of terrible atrocities also in their home country.

Giving shape to a hybrid and markedly plurilingual work, Pia significantly finishes chapter 2, ‘The Night Neighbours Became Enemy Aliens’, with the poem entitled ‘Viticuso, 1913 and 2005’. Here the remote *Laziale* village is metaphorically presented as ‘an unfamiliar book’ that she and her daughters had taken down only for one day and then had ‘put back’ to its ‘shelf’.⁵⁰ Reinforcing Pia’s ties with southern Lazio – and showing also her curiosity about it – these lines clearly express her need to distance herself from the pain of the past.

Further references to the village and its heritage can be found in the core chapters of this ‘beautifully written and razor sharp’ memoir.⁵¹ Again, it is generally evoking the bulky figure of her grandmother – her line of thought,

her gestures and especially her dialect – that she reveals all her internal conflicts and aching doubts about her sense of belonging. Even though she is clear on the fact that ‘the ingestion of another language [...] offers new possibilities for identity’,⁵² she confirms that Scotland is the country where she could evolve as an individual and her true home.

‘The Candid Life-Memoir of an Italian Scot’, *Language of My Choosing* is thus a clear testimony of Pia’s ‘conflicted relationship with Italy’, her ‘undeniable ethnicity and [her] rejection of it’.⁵³ It is in the chapter titled ‘The Mammissima’, however, that she also writes about gender and her commitment to elaborating alternative models of womanhood and motherhood. Stemming from her educational experiences, her travels, and especially her long journey through time and memory, these models are significantly neither Italian nor Scottish.⁵⁴

She continued to look back to the past, while sharing her memories and lucid thoughts in *Keeping Away the Spiders: Essays on Breaching Barriers*. Published in 2020, ‘when the pandemic loomed’,⁵⁵ this new piece of non-fiction begins with the ‘screaming disagreements and hair pulling’ that she witnessed in the early years of her life.⁵⁶ Once again, she rejected the Italian conception of womanhood as ‘self-sacrifice’ and painfully recalled all her frustrated efforts to be accepted as an individual and a professional.⁵⁷ Even though she still felt a strong resentment against those who had never made her ‘feel valued or cherished’,⁵⁸ she could finally realise that ‘she was equipped to meet men on equal terms’.⁵⁹

We may consider this concluding statement as the ideal conclusion of the first part of her reflection on her complex identity not only as an Italian Scot, but especially as woman. In this part of her path, though, food plays a really crucial role: starting from her memories of her grandmother’s ‘simple, rural cuisine’,⁶⁰ of the times when she, Pia, began to hybridise her regional dishes,⁶¹ she finally rediscovers the beauty and significance of those family traditions and proposes them as a way of showing love and care for her family and friends.⁶²

She began this process when she first described the tasty *pizzas* and *frittatas* of her grandmother in *Language of My Choosing*.⁶³ From this point view, even though ‘the collages’ of this new memoir ‘are unrelated and inconsistent, as non-sequential and random as life’,⁶⁴ we can find a *fil rouge* which connects all the main phases of her production. Enriched by verse and creative responses to the great classics,⁶⁵ this diverse body of works, however, also includes *Magnaccioni*.

My Food... My Italy (2023), which combines personal memories and precious advice on how to prepare the main Italian dishes. Considering her ability to describe the tastes, flavours and consistency of their ingredients, *Magnaccioni* has been rightly seen as ‘a glorious “Te Deum” of [Mediterranean culture and of] Italy’.⁶⁶

The opening page of the Introduction features a collage of photos of her, her mother and grandmother. The reader quickly perceives that her memories and her idea of food are closely tied to her roots. For the first time, though, the pain and rebellion she once felt are replaced by positive sentiments such as admiration and respect. It is in the section titled ‘Where to start’ that the remote village in the Comino Valley is more than the ‘unfamiliar book’ that she had briefly opened years before:

I am here in Rome with my family. We are also visiting Viticuso, about 40 minutes by car from Cassino in the Val Comino, a valley in the Abruzzi mountains through which flow the rivers Liri and Melfa. Viticuso is the village of my daughters’ great grandparents on my mother’s side. I am anxious to share this heritage with them and they feign interest remarkably well. At least I know for sure that they will enjoy the food that Aldo and Assunta will serve in the simple hotel L’Aquilone.

[...] On this night, surrounded by my bright-eyed, intrigued girls, I am both emotional and proud at connecting them to their heritage. My voice drops a tone, my consonants and vowels elide and I am warm and settled in southern dialect mode. These are my people and I am connected in.⁶⁷

FORESEEING THE FUTURE: REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

Including over eighty recipes, and engaging the reader in an intense sensory journey across Italy, *Magnaccioni* reminds us of the distinctive features of Mary Contini’s popular family saga. *Dear Francesca: An Italian Journey of Recipes Recounted with Love* (2002) – the above-mentioned *Dear Olivia* – and *Dear Alfonso: An Italian Feast of Love and Laughter* (2017) combine precious

memories and southern dishes as symbols of the ancient traditions of the little villages of Picinisco and Pozzuoli.⁶⁸ Contini could see traces of those traditions in every word and gesture of the most charismatic members of her family: after feeling that she 'had no heritage' for many years, she was eager to show all her pride for them and their principles.⁶⁹

Yet, despite these similarities with Contini's family saga, *Magnaccioni* must be considered in the context of Pia's long inner 'pilgrimage': as she recounts, it was originally connected to a period of 'significant personal crisis' which ultimately led to the discovery of the cathartic power of writing.⁷⁰ It was after the publication of two memoirs, two collections of poems,⁷¹ and 'a cookery book that not only teaches you to cook like an Italian but also to live like one' that she could project a more balanced vision of her transnational identity where love and emotional 'connection' replace the bitterness and sense of rebellion that she felt for most of her life.⁷² Given her belief in constant evolution and change, we can expect that her works will continue reflecting the times and movements of her soul.

Together with a small group of Italian Scottish writers, Pia represents the present and the future of Italian Scottish writing. The earlier generation of authors – that of Eugenio D'Agostino, Joe Pieri, Piero Tognini and Baron Charles Forte – has passed away, which has certainly facilitated a shift from conservatism to formal innovation. The ways in which Pieri and Pia approach their autobiographical writings clearly reveal their differing life perspectives and levels of experimentalism.

Indeed, as we have seen, the former began to write mainly to leave a trace of his hard but rewarding experience as an immigrant. Even though *Isle of the Displaced* is harshly critical about the system of marginalisation and persecution that he and the Italian community were victims of until 1945, he followed the course of history to give his works an orderly shape, which could better convey his message of courage and resilience. A winner in life who knew exactly where he belonged, he recalled his experience in those bleak times until he died.

The literary works of the younger generation of Italian Scots reveal that elements such as time and memory are essential to expressing their complex identities. This holds true for Marcella Evaristi and Ann Marie Di Mambro, whose innovative and plurilingual plays are now part of the national canon, as well as for Mary Contini, the award-winning Anne Pia and Robert Rossi.

In a time when ‘universal concerns about immigration and the movement of people dominate world politics’, they will continue to recount ‘tales of strength, self-belief and optimism’,⁷³ which revive the past while laying the foundation for a better future. The time is ripe for the academic community to appreciate them within the broader context of Italian diaspora literatures in English-speaking countries.

Notes

- 1 Here I refer specifically to Manuela D’Amore, *Literary Voices of the Italian Diaspora in Britain. Time, Transnational Identity and Hybridity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023); and Maria Chiara Marchetti-Mercer, Anita Virga, *The Italian Diaspora in South Africa Nostalgia, Identity, and Belonging in the Second and Third Generations* (Routledge, 2023).
- 2 On the scholarly discourse on the literatures of the Italian diaspora in north America and Australia, see D’Amore, *Literary Voices of the Italian Diaspora in Britain*, pp. 4–6.
- 3 See Joseph Farrell, ‘Tallies and Italians. The Italian Impact on Scottish Drama’, in *A Theatre That Matters: Twentieth-Century Scottish Drama and Theatre. A Collection of Critical Essays and Interviews*, ed. by Valentina Poggi and Margaret Rose (Unicopli, 2000), pp. 121–34; Carla Dente, ‘Personal Memory / Cultural Memory: Identity and Difference in Scottish-Italian Migrant Theatre’, in *Performing National Identity: Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions*, ed. by Manfred Pfister and Ralf Hertel (Rodopi, 2008), pp. 197–212; Elizabeth Wren-Owens, ‘Remembering Fascism: Polyphony and Its Absence in Contemporary Italian Scottish and Italian Welsh Narrative’, *Journal of Romance Studies*, 1 (2015), pp. 73–90, doi:10.3167/jrs.2015.150104; Manuela D’Amore, ‘Identità, straniamento e resilienza in Joe Pieri, *Isle of the Displaced: An Italian-Scot’s Memoirs of Internment in the Second World War* (1997)’, in *Testo e Metodo, elaborazione elettronica. Isolitudine, confine, identità*, ed. by Sabrina Costanzo, Domenico Cusato and Gemma Persico (Lippolis, 2019), pp. 83–98; Souhir Zekri Masson, ‘Real Men Mark their Territory! Spatial Constructions of Masculinity in Joe Pieri’s Autobiographical Narratives’, *European Journal of Life Writing*, 8 (2019), pp. 47–68, doi:10.21827/ejlw.8.35563; and Souhir Zekri Masson, ‘Autobiography through Anecdotes in Joe Pieri’s *Isle of the Displaced*’, *European Journal of Life Writing*, 11 (2022), pp. 1–11, doi:10.21827/ejlw.11.38661.
- 4 It was Carlo Pirozzi, a former faculty member of the University of Edinburgh, who rediscovered and edited D’Agostino’s memoir. The new edition was published by Woking Press in 2018.

- 5 We can consider among others Laura Leuzzi, Stephen Partridge, Elaine Shemilt (eds), *Richard Demarco: The Italian Connection* (John Libbey Publishing, 2022) as the product of the eponymous project, whose features and results can be found at italian.demarco-archive.ac.uk [accessed 30 October 2024].
- 6 On Paolozzi's Italian heritage and connection, see also Derek Duncan, '“The path that leads me home”: Eduardo Paolozzi and the Arts of Transnationalizing', in *Transcultural Italies, Mobility, Memory and Translation*, ed. by Charles Burdett, Loredana Polezzi and Barbara Spadaro (Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 127–54.
- 7 Here I refer to both of the works listed in the addendum to chapter 1 of D'Amore, *Literary Voices*, pp. 20–23 and Anne Pia's *Magnaccioni. My Food ... My Italy* (Luath Press, 2023).
- 8 This project began in 2015 and led to the discovery of twenty-one British writers of Italian descent and over forty literary writings. See D'Amore, *Literary Voices of the Italian Diaspora in Britain*, p. vii.
- 9 After he retired, Joe Pieri recounted the story of his life in his numerous works. See also Flavio Guidi, 'La morte di Joe Pieri, memoria della storia dell'emigrazione barghigiana in Scozia', *barganew.com*, 7 April 2012, www.barganews.com/2012/07/04/la-morte-di-joe-pieri-memoria-della-storia-dellemigrazione-barghigiana-in-scozia [accessed 30 October 2024]; and D'Amore, *Literary Voices of the Italian Diaspora in Britain*, pp. 271–77.
- 10 They are Evaristi's *Commedia* (1983), Forte's *Autobiography* (1986), Tognini's *A Mind at War. An Autobiography* (1990) and Di Mambro's *Tally's Blood* (1992).
- 11 Guidi, 'La morte di Joe Peri'. The Pieris originally came from the little hamlet of Barga in the Garfagnana district.
- 12 On the elements of trauma also in Pieri's *Isle of the Displaced*, see Manuela D'Amore, 'The Healing Power of Writing: Traumatic Memories and Recovery in Italian British Narratives of WW2', *Altre Modernità*, 32.2 (2024), pp. 1–14, doi:10.54103/2035-7680/27287.
- 13 These two war narratives have been neglected by literary critics. See D'Amore, *Literary Voices of the Italian Diaspora*, pp. 200–08.
- 14 Joe Pieri, *Isle of the Displaced: An Italian-Scot's Memoirs of Internment in the Second World War* (Neil Publishing, 2014). Kindle. See ch. 2, 'Alliances', par. 2–3, 7.
- 15 Part of a rich bibliography, the latest publication on this topic is Gilly Carr and Rachel Pistol (eds), *British Internment and the Internment of Britons* (Bloomsbury, 2023).
- 16 Pieri, *Isle of the Displaced*, ch. 8, 'Reception', par. 1
- 17 See Les Servini, *A Boy from Bardi. My Life and Times* (Hazeltree, 1994), p. 21; and Hector Emanuelli, *A Sense of Belonging. From the Rhondda to the Pottery: Memories of a Welsh-Italian Englishman* (Six Town Books, 2010), pp. 71–74.
- 18 We can find Pieri's drawings of Camp 43 in *Isle of the Displaced*, chap. 8, 'Reception', par. 12, and in ch. 9, 'Île Saint'Hélène', par. 4. The rich photographic insert, instead, follows the 'Epilogue'.
- 19 Ibid., ch. 10, 'Mutiny', par. 18.
- 20 Ibid., ch. 19, 'O'Connor', par. 5–6.
- 21 On the internment system on the Isle of Man, see Connery Chappell, *Island of Barbed Wire: The Remarkable Story of World War Two Internment on the Isle of Man* (Robert Hale, 2017).
- 22 Pieri, *Isle of the Displaced*, ch. 23, 'Aftermath', par. 11.

- 23 Pieri, *The Scots-Italians*, p. 1.
- 24 Guidi, 'La morte di Joe Pieri'.
- 25 He quoted from his debut memoir in the chapters titled 'The War, 'Anomalies' and 'Internment'.
- 26 See Luigi Bruti Liberati, 'The Internment of Italian Canadians', in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, ed. by Francesca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe (Toronto University Press, 2000), pp. 76–98 (p. 83).
- 27 Pieri, *The Scots-Italians*, p. 110.
- 28 Biographical details about this last survivor can be found in 'Rando Nilo Bertoia (1920–2013) Montereale Valcellina', www.pacitti.biz/aran-rando-bertoia.html [accessed 30 October 2024].
- 29 Pieri, *The Scots-Italians*, p. 110.
- 30 Joe Pieri, *River of Memory: Memoirs of a Scots-Italian* (Mercat Press, 2006), p. 41.
- 31 Joe Pieri, *Tales of the Savoy: Stories from a Glasgow Café* (Glasgow: Neil Wilson Publishing, 2006), Kindle. Here I refer to p. 142: "Mussolini, Mussolini, there's a Tally shop, do it in". She stretched to her full height and raised the chip basket, shook it at the crowd and roared in a thick Scots-Italian accent. "Fuck Mussolini. Fuck Hitler. Fuck you all. Don't you touch anything, you bastards, You would all eat shite if I fried it!" This magnificent non sequitur stopped the crowd dead in its tracks. A hush descended and a laugh at Emma's words rippled through the mob. A shout rang out. "Come on, we'll find some place else to do in. Ye canny touch her, she's a wumman." And the mob drifted off in search of another Tally target'.
- 32 Pieri, *Isle of the Displaced*, ch. 23, 'Endings', par. 12.
- 33 *Ibid.*, ch. 1, 'Origins', par. 15: 'It is easier to raise and prosper from a slum than to have lived in a society which offered no opportunity and would almost certainly have claimed me and my brother as a cannon fodder of Fascism'.
- 34 Anne Pia, *Language of My Choosing. The Candid Life-Memoir of an Italian Scot* (Luath Press, 2017), p. 64.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 15. This is the title of the chapter included in the section 'Openings'.
- 36 *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 75.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- 39 Here I refer to Anne Pia Guest Blog, particularly to the section entitled 'It's Time to Tell the Story', posted on 27 February 2023. See luath.co.uk/blogs/bookbanter-blog/anne-pia-guest-blog [accessed 30 October 2024].
- 40 Pia, *Language of My Choosing*, p. 132.
- 41 It is in the section 'On Home (Scotland)' of the unpublished prose *Plurilingualism, Becoming and Belonging* – which Pia presented and discussed at the University of Catania (Italy) in 2021 – that we can find a tribute to 'Faiite gu Alba' as a 'forefront of societal change'.
- 42 Pia, *Language of My Choosing*, pp. 83, 184.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- 44 *Ibid.*, pp. 103–12. This chapter is significantly titled 'Glorious France: A Study in Self-Making'.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- 46 *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

- 47 Pia, *Language of My Choosing*, p. 26.
- 48 The monument is in Castro dei Volsci, a little village in the Sacco Valley, fifty-five miles from Rome.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 25. The battle of Monte Cassino began on 17 January and ended 18 May 1944. On the Moroccan *goumiers*' violent misconduct against the local population, see among others Emiliano Ciotti, *Il dossier segreto dei crimini francesi. Le 'marocchine'* (independently published, 2022).
- 50 Pia, *Language of My Choosing*, p. 35.
- 51 Ann Marie Di Mambro's review of *Language of My Choosing* is available at luath.co.uk/products/language-of-my-choosing?variant=42807627972758 [accessed 30 October 2024]
- 52 Pia, *Language of My Choosing*, p. 59.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- 54 *Ibid.*, pp. 183–85.
- 55 Anne Pia, *Keeping Away the Spiders: Essays on Breaching Barriers* (Luath Press, 2020), p. 11.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 60 Anne Pia, *Magnaccioni*, p. 14.
- 61 Pia, *Keeping Away the Spiders*, pp. 100–02.
- 62 *Ibid.*, pp. 91–93, 98, 106.
- 63 Pia, *Language of My Choosing*, pp. 63–64.
- 64 Pia, *Keeping Away the Spiders*, p. 16.
- 65 *The Sweetness of Demons* (Vagabond Voices, 2021) is Pia's 'emotional', 'intellectual' and also 'linguistic' response to Charles Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal*.
- 66 See the blurb of *Magnaccioni*.
- 67 Pia, *Magnaccioni*, pp. 29–30.
- 68 A little village in the Comino Valley in southern Lazio, Picinisco is 102 miles from Rome.
- 69 Mary Contini, *Dear Francesca: An Italian Journey of Recipes Recounted with Love* (Ebury Press, 2003), p. 9.
- 70 See Anne Pia Guest Blog, namely the section entitled 'It's Time to Tell the Story'.
- 71 They are *Transitory* (2018) and *Dragons Wear Lipstick* (2022).
- 72 *Ibid.* This is Giovanna Eusebi's definition of Pia's book.
- 73 Pia, *Language of My Choosing*, p. 11.

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