Collaborating on whiteness: representing Italians in early White Australia[1]

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This article examines the experience of Italian migrants as 'ethnic whites' in the period before World War I through two foreign language newspapers, *L'Italo-Australiano* (1905-1909) and the *Oceania* (1913-1915). The social history that emerges from these newspapers provides insight into Australia's national history and is complemented by views from the mainstream press. Italian community leaders used resistance and compromise to validate the whiteness of Italians, appealing to nationalistic values. The editors engaged with the polemics of Italian immigration by articulating a counter-ideology to Australia's obsession with creating a homogenous society which frequently relegated Italians to the periphery. Their attempt to promote an Italian agricultural village illustrates this ideological stance. Its failure to take hold in the manner they had envisaged suggests the contradictions inherent in the processes of nation-building, especially regarding the discourse of whiteness. Italians were central to a lively debate over preferential migrants - a debate still relevant today.

Keywords: Italian migration; Italo-Australian history; Giovanni Pullè; foreign language press; ethnic identity; community construction; whiteness studies

Well known in Australia's history of settlement and rural development are the British migrant and soldier settlement schemes.[2] Less acknowledged are the attempts by those classified as 'white aliens' to establish agricultural village settlements and the implications of such endeavours.[3] Yet, ethnic group experience is integral to Australian history, not simply an appendage for separate treatment in Australian historiography.[4] The history of Italian migrants Before the outbreak of World War I, debate in the Italian foreign-language press suggests that Italians took part in Australia's early nation-building, offering a measure for assessing Australia's national history. In spite of strong anti-Italian sentiment, Giovanni Pullè (1854-1920), Italian migrant, businessman and journalist, along with other Italian intellectuals, formulated a counter-ideology that used the rhetoric of Italy's standing as a civilised European nation to create a unified image of Italians. Through his newspapers, *L'Italo-Australiano* (1905-1909) and *Oceania* (1913-1915), Pullè linked Italians to two key aspects of nation-building: farming the land and racial fitness.

In 1907, Pullè published an article in his newspaper, *L'Italo-Australiano*, inviting the Australian government to work with him and other Italians in establishing an Italian agricultural village (see Figure 1).[5] Agricultural settlement schemes, having become popular from 1884 under the Closer Settlements Acts, resulted in the sale of earlier selector land to develop farms. They became an important symbol of national

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progress, relieving urban centres of over-crowding and unemployment. Pullè's gesture, however, was less an open invitation to the Commonwealth than a signal to Italian migrants that employment might be found for them and future Italians on the land. Playing a part in the nation's foundation meant colluding on the values associated with inventing a 'white' and 'civilised' nation. Yet, Pullè demanded the unquestionable privileges of being white without loss of 'ethnicity'.[6]

The history of Italians in Australia is long and rich.[7] It is a history that has attracted multi-disciplinary attention and approaches, including greater integration of their story within the Australian meta-narrative. However, Italian migration history, particularly prior to 1914, is problematic for three reasons. First, historically few Italians have considered themselves 'Italian' in the first place. They have identified according to regional and familial bonds, not national sinews.[8] Secondly, the experience of Italy's 'two races' represents another reality transposed into diaspora settings.[9] The disparity between privileged urbanites, generally in Italy's north, and the poverty-stricken rural people of the south was couched as 'the Southern problem' and exacerbated by the *Risorgimento* [Italian unification].[10] Finally, the relatively small number of Italian migrants and scattered nature of their settlements have contributed to a view that a unified sense of community and identity remained fragmented until 1960.[11] Although

Figure 1. Giovanni Pullè, circa 1906.

important research on regional and local communities has resulted from these thee historic experiences, the appearance of a collectivising agency for Australia's Italians long before the 1960s remains largely unacknowledged and unexplored. During this period, outspoken Italian figures - notably journalists - invoked a place for Italians as a unified component of white Australia's future.[12] The concept of whiteness provided an ideological tool for situating Italian community-building within the structure of the new nation. What made their proposition so daring was the tenuous position of 'ethnic whites' in an Anglo-Celtic dominated society.

Most of the literature relating to Italian 'ethnic whites' stems from American scholarship, due largely to the volume of migrants entering the United States over Europe's first mass migrations (1871-1914).[13] The collective experience of Italian migrants offers insight into the ambiguous parameters of Australian whiteness. Whereas Italians were Europeans and therefore white, they were also relegated to that space of 'limbo' described by Ruth Frankenberg or, as Matthew Frye Jacobson puts it, being 'white *and* racially distinct from other whites'.[14] For example, the Italian Vice Consul for WA, between 1902 and 1908, Leopoldo Zunini once remarked:

> Italians were not held in high esteem at that time. According to public opinion we were classed somewhere between the Chinese and the blacks. I am not exaggerating when I say that we were often dubbed 'black fellows'.[15]

It is important to keep in mind that Italian migrants remained politically distinguished from the more oppressed or excluded non-white groups within society. Zunini's observations therefore articulate an experience not unlike that of the Irish a generation earlier, which has continued to be repeated for various ethnic groups over Australia's history.[16]

Attacks on the nature and character of Italian migrants unveiled their invisibility, but it was also more complex than this. By becoming more visibly 'Italian', Italians as a whole could claim a legitimate role in inventing the new nation. Such fantasies were possible because the first mass migrations had produced an aspiration for cultural pluralism across Western nations before the 'cosmopolitan ideal' was repressed by the onslaught of war.[17] As the American case suggests, before 1914 immigrants from diverse cultural origins felt that the host society 'may already be a political state, but its nationhood - its peoplehood - was yet unfinished'.[18] In this era of rapid social change, the foreign language press became an ideal conduit through which ethnic groups might imagine themselves as valid participants in an emerging national community.[19]

For a short time in Australia's history, Italian newspapers became the collective voice of Italian migrants. Before 1914, there tended to be two main responses in Italian journalism, defined as the socialist stance and the assimilative orientation, as Samuel Baily points out, and both approaches encompassed social and cultural support for Italian migrants.[20] However, while radical newspapers tended to espouse socialism in Italian migrant communities abroad, the bourgeois press could accommodate all classes and diverse political persuasions.[21] Pullè's newspapers embraced the assimilative approach with one difference: he promoted assimilation in an acculturation sense, as we understand the term today; that is, integration without loss of culture.[22]

Pullè founded *L'Italo-Australiano* with his friend, Dr Quinto Ercole, a socialist and medical practitioner; his *Oceania* was initially managed by both Antonio Folli, an entrepreneur (later Pullè's son-in-law), and Achille Rimoldi, a mechanical engineer, before Pullè took over (see Figure 2). These amateur journalists promoted an Italianisation campaign, positioning 'Italians' within the new nation with two specific strategies. First, the broadsheets were bilingual, intended for both an Italian- and an English-speaking audience - an 'Anglo-Italian newspaper', Pullè called it.[23] Secondly, both newspapers included a regular column to invite public opinion and to instigate debate.[24] Pullè described the venture as providing 'the first nucleus around which Italian life may develop [… to reflect…] an identity, a moral and material face for our [scattered] communities'.[25] Presenting a united ethnic front proved to be an uneasy process not only because of the fragmented nature of Italian settlement and identity, but also because of the narrative of race. Italians were subjected to
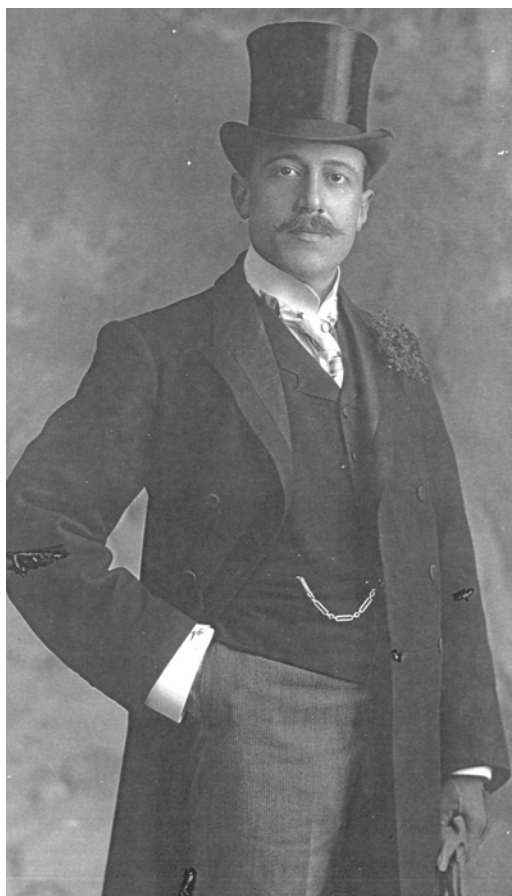

Figure 2. Dr Quinto Ercole [courtesy of Margaret and the late Boyd Ryan].

traditional labour force fears and allusions to moral degeneracy, both of which threatened 'white Australia'.

The issue for Italians was not whiteness as only a physical descriptor, but as a social construction that awarded 'power, privilege, and property'.[26] Whiteness mattered because it was a vehicle for upward mobility. What was innovative here was how Italian community leaders positioned a discourse of Italianness within the paradigm of Australia's national whiteness agenda.[27] They interpreted and negotiated their 'white alien' status at a time when white Australians were being invented. Land was the central issue at stake. While population growth and economic advantages through agricultural produce were central to the aims of closer settlement policy, so too were the values of equality and independence.[28] Furthermore, closer settlements were also tied to the issue of Australia's defence. Pullè's newspapers ran with all of these key factors in an attempt to assert the worthiness of Italians for Australia's future.

Whiteness within the Italian historical context

Census data indicates the significance of Italians in the politics of whiteness. From the outset Italians were numerically weak, but they dominated the non-Anglo-Celtic landscape after 1933.[29] Prior to 1866 (and sometimes even after), they fell under the generic category of 'Other Europeans'.[30] Only from 1866 were they to be classified as a separate national group. This demographic reality did not match their perceived status which fluctuated according to the vicissitudes of political and public opinion. Australia privileged the British first and Northern Europeans second, but had little regard for the Southern European. The presence of Italians frequently instigated antagonism despite being accepted through colonial migration before 1901 and not officially excluded thereafter.[31] Brian Murphy points out that the 'revised pecking order' of the 1901 policy in fact shifted Southern Europeans to 'the bottom of the preferred list'.[32] Their questionable whiteness was based on their traditional work choices and practices, family and community values, and skin colour. As Helen Andreoni notes, perception of the ''colour' of Italians was always an issue'.[33] To counteract resistance against their acceptability, Pullè and Ercole catapulted Italian immigration onto the national agenda. This action caught the attention of the mainstream press. In 1907, the *Sydney Morning Herald* interviewed Pullè about his 'Italian Village Settlement' idea.[34] Such exposure confronted assumptions about Italians as a racial category in the construct of 'white Australia'.

Inventing Australians was an ideal driven by belief in a racial hierarchy, typical of the emergence of the modern nation state.[35] Although the first mass migration period can be characterised by a 'racial mutability' trend that co-existed across Western nations generally,[36] the Anglo-Australian was preferred in Australia, lending credence to the science of social Darwinism. The Assisted Passages Scheme (1831-1982) and the White Australia policy (1901-1972) prioritised Britishness.[37] Non-white peoples and non-British migrants were usually disadvantaged by both. From the late nineteenth century, politicians expressed anxieties about protecting the virility of the nation because of the fear of being overtaken by the 'servile' races.[38] Marilyn Lake explains how they took their cue from American debates which championed the notion of renewed civilisation through white male leadership.[39] However much as Italian migrants might have

wished to remain culturally Italian, whiteness meant adherence to a British-Australian model of assimilation.[40]

Australia's nationalistic ideology at the turn of the twentieth century crystallised the boundaries of acceptable whiteness, but also impinged on any dreams of cultural pluralism. The 'imperative to create a national, white population', as Jon Stratton argues, changed certain dynamics with the result that those formerly racialised as inferior - the Irish - were welcomed into the fold of whiteness, now characterised according to the echelons of race.[41] Although Irishness in many ways remained stigmatised throughout the twentieth century, Laksiri Jayasuriya states that the Irish made this transformation in the early twentieth century through Labor Party membership and the establishment of private schools.[42] Italianness, on the other hand, remained peripheral to Anglo structural assimilation. Thus, with Indigenous people segregated from the societal gaze and Asian migrants excluded after 1901, and with the Irish having more or less shed the image of racial inferiority, the spotlight fell on Southern Europeans generally and the more numerous Italians specifically. Their visibility intensified and their whiteness fell into doubt.

Italians found themselves on the borderline of a segmented society, emphasising 'racial purity and protection of living standards' and integration in an 'Anglo-Celtic national family' from which Italians were largely excluded.[43] Their settlement patterns, often based on shared occupations and/or regional origins, did not help.[44] Their tendency to speak in dialects and display regional traditions drew negative attention from certain quarters. The Labor Party's rhetoric, for instance, played on ghettoisation and the fear of being 'swamped by non-British aliens' whose housing arrangements qualified as sub-standard, but whose success resulted in 'economic envy'.[45] It is against this backdrop that Pullè and Ercole boldly inserted Italians into the national rhetoric:

> … we believe that [Italian] immigration will secure immense benefits for the immigrants as much as their adopted country. It is only we who insist that these immigrants are to be treated well, like true white men, like true brothers, like true Australian citizens, and that extended to them will be all of the duties, all of those privileges and all of those guarantees of communal benefits that should be extended to every white person, of whatever nation, who lands here to plant his roots and those for his descendants.[46]

This move was about the need to belong as much as accessing certain rewards. The opportunity to contribute to the nation-building process went hand-in-hand with workers' protection and social acceptance, and the possibility to buy land. Pullè's defensive tone can be explained by decades of antagonism over Italian immigration.

Headlines in the Italian foreign press highlighted the attitude of 'Italian Peril' or 'Italophobia' in Australian society.[47] Three major episodes in Italo-Australian history had shifted the irrational prejudice previously shown to migrants from China and Ireland onto Italians. Each had to do with group settlement. In 1880, a group of Italian peasants, surviving a horrendous expedition to the New Hebrides, were rescued by Sir Henry Parkes' government only to be told that it was against 'the customs of the country' and 'undesirable', in fact 'impossible', for them to settle as an Italian enclave.[48] Despite this, by 1885 they had regrouped in the Richmond River region of NSW, near Woodburn, to establish the New Italy agricultural, viticultural and silk-making community.[49] In the early 1890s there was hostility towards

another group of northern Italian farmers recruited for northern Queensland's sugarcane plantations. The *Boomerang* used colourful language, describing them as 'the contingency of a mafia or camorra' who resolve 'labour disputes and family quarrels […] by the knife' and bring with them 'the terror of organised assassination…'.[50] In 1891, they formed an important and growing Italian community in Queensland's Herbert River district.[51] Finally, by the early 1900s, Italians had been working in sufficient numbers in the mining and timber industries of Western Australia to provoke two Royal Commissions into their work practices.[52] After protests over the 'alarming importation of Italian cheap labor', concerning contracts which were illegal, 12 Italians were refused landing in Freemantle in 1902. They were vilified in the press and parliament as 'scabs', claims that later proved false.[53] While a fabrication, the 'Italian Peril' was powerful enough to place the future of Italian immigration in jeopardy. What Pullè and his like recognised was the need to launch a counter-ideology based on the notion that Italians shared a white heritage. Such a belief was possible because of the transformative state and the sense of crisis that accompanies nation-building.[54] Similar circumstances had led to 'an ideological counterattack' in the US around 1900.[55]

The Italian counter-ideology

The Italo-Australian counter-ideology was based on an assumption that a collective Italian identity was not incompatible with the emerging national identity. As Pullè saw it:

> In Australia there are, or at least should be, neither English, nor Germans, nor French, nor Italians, nor Scandinavians. All of these old distinctions of race should disappear. This is the country that we have chosen in which to work and live and where our children and descendants will work and live, calling it their country. For such reasons we must all call ourselves Australian, but without forgetting our patriotic feelings towards our countries of origin; but better still calling ourselves proud of being descendants if of one then of another of the great nations of Europe. Always nurturing such sentiments we all should loyally and sincerely appear worthy of our adopted country.[56]

Pullè claimed that the message about ethnic otherness did not intend to threaten loyalty to the host-society. Loyalty was assured because the right kind of migrants brought with them strong sentiments for their homelands. Italians, one reader asserted, would be 'ready and willing to defend the liberties which we, in common with all Australian citizens, enjoy'.[57] Cultural pluralism was at the heart of such sentiments. Without patriotism for the homeland, migrants might identify as workers of the world whose internationalism contradicted national boundaries.[58] The editors justified Italian inclusion based on Italy's standing as one of 'the great nations of Europe', thereby equal to Great Britain and, hence, the newly federated Australia. Although originating from 'the least of the Great Powers of Europe',[59] Italians were in fact distinguished from other Southern Europeans by the Naturalisation Act of 1870 and the 1883 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Britain and the Italian Kingdom. The Act stipulated access to naturalisation without the loss of their foreign nationality, allowing the same civic duties and rights.[60] The Treaty, which endured until 1940, again reinforced the official status of Italians as the legal equals of British subjects, signifying reciprocal arrangements in travel, residency, and

the possibility of purchasing land.[61] Through Act and Treaty, Italians of diverse regional, linguistic and class backgrounds were legitimised within the framework of Australia's population, not relegated to its periphery. But, this was not always the reality as the 'Italian Peril' had demonstrated.

Pullè's push for group and individual Italian agriculturalists and labourers must be seen in terms of the new counter-ideological position and its two overarching double attributes: land and Australia's population and economic needs; and the racial pedigree of the 'Italian' and the threat of Asia. These attributes fed directly into the ideal of Italian migrants as loyal workers for the nation's future which was invoked in numerous ways by the editors and their reading public, engaging with the polemics of Italian immigration. Pullè's newspapers are filled with references to Italy's ancient and modern history in a typically positivistic approach, as well as contemporary examples of migrant societies abroad, again in a celebratory tone. Yet, to counteract antagonism towards Italians, the editors' objective was to marry the racial equality of Italians as civilised whites with society's values of population, progress and defence. This meant tackling misconceptions and stereotypes that Italians were wage breakers, cowards (and incapable of defending the country), bastardised by degenerative blood, and illiterate so therefore inherently criminal in nature. Such views had legal ramifications in the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, which could enforce deportation.[62] Pullè's counter-ideology also implies the on racialisation of groups like the Chinese, other Southern Europeans, Pacific Islanders and Indigenous Australians. According to Pullè, the White Australia policy was a 'barbaric law', not for its discrimination against Asian and other peoples, but for its impact on perceptions of Italian as settlers.[63]

Land and Australia's population and economic needs

Two years before Pullè published his open invitation to the Australian government to co-operate on an agricultural scheme for Italians, his aim had been to purchase land. With the assistance of others, he proposed buying a portion of up to 15,000 acres to support 50 to 100 Italian workers.[64] The scheme was conceived, he claimed, by constant letters from unemployed Italians, looking for work, and it was pitched as a venture that would benefit future migrants. It would allow Italian settlers to buy their own farms and ensure commercial success. Leaving Italy as a result of poverty and unemployment, many Italians had the knack of cultivating crops specialising in rice, maize, diverse fruit and vegetable products, and silk, and contributing in time to chain migration as the case of the New Italy settlers revealed. This was a frequent theme in Pullè's newspapers.[65] Inspired by the New Italy community, the editors argued that Italians were 'hardy, intelligent, and industrious farmers, with sufficient capital to settle on the land, and to extract from the soil the riches which are now lying idle'.[66] Yet, fighting for inclusion on racial grounds as 'white men' meant confronting constant attitudes in the public arena, like: '… the Italian is immoral… The Italian is dirty… The Italian makes money in Australia but he does not spend it in Australia'.[67] Indeed, the popular and nationalist weekly *Bulletin* had questioned the agricultural skills of the 'bucolic' and 'dull-witted' Italian, stressing his 'primitive' and 'impoverished' abilities in comparison with British agriculturalists.[68] The racial status of Italians hinged on the concept of whiteness *vis-à-vis* the politics of 'black' and 'white' labour.

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Many Italians unwittingly became positioned outside the boundaries of acceptable whiteness. In the early 1890s, for instance, there had been an opening in the sugar industry for 'white' workers.[69] Yet, when Italian sugarcane workers were brought in to replace 'coloured labourers' - the Pacific Islanders - anti-Italianness erupted due in part to the assumption that they would be indentured.[70] This was also work considered unfit for white people. As Jacobson explains of the American context, although Italians 'were white enough to enter the country as "free white persons" [they] could lose that status by their association with nonwhite groups'.[71] For the Australian context, Vanda Moraes-Gorecki's analysis shows how the label, 'black Italians', became part of the 'colouring of ethnicity' in association with work in the tropics.[72] A general belief in the physical and mental degeneration of white bodies in tropical climates prevailed.[73] In simple terms, if you worked in the tropical north, your whiteness was uncertain.

The debate from the 1890s about Italian skin colour and racial status had prepared the Italian editors who, by 1907, adopted popular racism. Their aim was to distinguish Italians from those deemed 'inferior' generally:

> White labour means white wages, and to make such labour remunerative, particularly in the northern parts of Australia, it also means that a white man's work should be worth, at least, that of two or three coloured men. That is the difficulty… its only solution is the Italian. He certainly will not work for less than other white men, but he is adapted to the conditions in which he would find himself… Britain helped Italy in her struggle for independence, unofficially, but none the less, materially and Italy, not ungrateful, remembers.[74]

Emphasising the traditional alliance between Britain and Italy, the issue was not solely about Italians taking over from the Pacific Islanders. It was also about the suitability of white men in a geographical space that was scientifically deemed threatening to the white civilisation. Warwick Anderson refers to the threat as 'the degrading lassitude of tropical territories'.[75] Although Italians were stereotyped as 'extra-cheap foreigners [ready] to cut already miserably low wages', the editors claimed that Italians 'are bellicose in their demands for what they are entitled to' and, as 'sober, industrious, conscientious, and loyal to their fellow-workers', suitable for hard work in a tropical climate.[76] More importantly, population and defence issues dominated concerns about white settlers in the tropics.

Insults from the *Bulletin* triggered the polemics of race. In 1907, the *Bulletin* described the kind of migrant that Australians wanted: '"They should be of a race that we can assimilate by intermarriage - people who will become White Australian citizens… they must be intelligent and industrious… [and] from a race with a good fighting record"'.[77] Listing the acceptable 'races' for immigration, Italians were missing because, as the *Bulletin* argued, they lacked these qualities. Retaliation followed swiftly with *L'Italo-Australiano* stating: '… these remarks smack strongly of prejudice, in fact, the whole article is extremely rancorous towards the Italians'.[78] Juxtaposing the lack of sufficient numbers from Britain with the millions already emigrating abroad from Italy each year, the Italo-Australian editors pursued these polemics: 'If we are to have that desideratum of the native-born Australian, a "white Australia," the door must be opened without restriction to all Europe and the two Americas'.[79] Official demographic issues raised the stakes in this argument which took the criticisms against Italians one step further.

The racial pedigree of the 'Italian' and the threat of Asia

The perceived danger of the open and depopulated north moved Pullè and his colleagues to accentuate the racial pedigree of Italians. A process of reinvention had been taking place in Australia's northern tropics from the late nineteenth century.[80] The whiteness of Italians might therefore be grafted onto a black landscape although Indigenous people were not featured in the equation. This was about a different kind of blackness. Having read accounts of the Russo-Japanese war with interest, and the Japanese victories in particular, the editors couched the need for Italian immigration in terms of resisting invasion from the overpopulated Asian region, remarking on the 'absolutely unprotected condition of Australia, should Britain be involved in a war with other powers, and be unable to render assistance…'.[81] The people of Asia had long been fortified as a potent enemy in the Australian psyche.[82] And, the editors had no hesitation reiterating this tenet:

> If we are to have a White Australia, which Australians ardently desire, we must have the assistance of aliens. Population is imperative to defend and keep a "white" Australia. We have to defend our door [from] a colored population, amounting, including India, Japan and China, to something like 700,000,000. And we have less than 5,000,000.[83]

The threat of border penetration from a regional invasion was an imagined reality as was the need for an infusion of white immigrants. The editors argued that maintaining the racial purity of Australia needed a 'white population' boost and that Italians were emigrating in their millions annually.[84] The national currency of this argument confronted ethnic stereotypes by linking Italian suitability with a traditional work ethic, virility, and white strength - notions on which the nation was being constructed.[85] By emphasising the presence of an aggressor at Australia's shores, Italians could be represented as racially and morally sound. Nevertheless, doubts persisted over Italian virility and loyalty.

Pullè's Italian agriculturalist plans met with not only resistance, but also slander. In 1907, the *Bulletin* reported: 'In the South of his boot-shaped country he [the Italian] has considerable admixture of African blood, which is a serious drawback. In the North he has a considerable streak of German blood, but the German element in him seems to have degenerated'.[86] The Italian editors applied their counter-ideology at once. Whereas the influence of Germanic blood on Northern Italians was dismissed as 'ancient history', they pointed out that African blood referred to the term 'nigger', but that the only racial mixture influencing Southern Italians was 'the Moors… a race that conquered and civilized Spain'.[87] This alignment of the superior racial status of Italians with the Muslim ability to conquer, civilise, and defend was reinforced by the mindset that Italy gave the world the Renaissance. The editors drew on Italian history by placing Italians 'in the very front ranks of practical science', invoking famous Italians from Marco Polo to Guglielmo Marconi.[88] The rhetoric of Italy's achievements was then knitted into the motif of the Italian worker, either currently present in Australian society or as a potential migrant, who could boost population growth, agricultural development, and latent defence needs. On the notion that Italians were not 'a race with a good fighting record', readers were rhetorically asked: 'Did the men who followed Garibaldi ever show the white feather?'[89]

An esteemed history of explorers, scientist and legendary military heroes Italy may have had, but it could not quell the West's faith in science. The US, for example, debated the issue of illiteracy from the early 1900s, which culminated in the 1911 Dillingham Commission's Report into Immigration, producing *A Dictionary of Races or People*. The report maligned Italians on the basis of the 'racial hygiene' of a civilised nation, calling for a eugenicist approach to immigration policy.[90] When the Dillingham Burnett Bill was being proposed in the US three years later to exclude migrants who were illiterate, there was an outcry from Australia's Italian migrant circles over the lack of evidence.[91] It is no surprise that agricultural work was advanced as the means for addressing illiteracy.[92]

Pullè's Italian Agricultural Village Scheme

It is not possible to argue that the public furore over Italians had been fuelled to some extent by Pullè's success in securing bi-national support for his Italian agricultural village scheme. Notably, the Department of External Affairs had started registering an annual amount of £200 to be paid to the Agricultural Institute in Rome for the dissemination of agricultural information from 1907.[93] Pullè's 'crowing and actions' on the banks of the Yarra were portrayed by one of the *Bulletin's* artists in a comical caricature that played on his namesake and family crest (see Figure 3).[94] This 'crowing' must refer to his newspaper articles in pursuing a dairy co-operative and land selection to build a factory, 'founded mainly by Italian capital' although 'not intended to exclude other nationalities'.[95] Approval was announced for his scheme at the end of 1907, by which time Pullè had already received enquires from about 150 families.[96] Prospective settlers were invited to contact the Intelligence Department in April 1908.[97] What is astonishing in these negotiations is Pullè's audacity to attempt to influence government policy. Given previous debate in the parliament of Western Australia, he stipulated the condition that 'no absurd language tests' should be given.[98]

Official dealings over Pullè's vision of the 'sprinkling of Italians' throughout the nation, as he once put it,[99] constituted a structurally assimilative thrust, not cultural assimilation. Had Italians emigrated in the mass numbers envisioned by Pullè, his village settlements might even have allowed access to power structures, reflecting George Lipsitz's notion of 'possessive investment of whiteness' and Aileen Moreton-Robinson's discussion of 'the emotional economy of white possession of the Australian continent'.[100] The fact that there were few further details printed in Pullè's newspapers after 1908 suggests conflict between the federal and state governments as the case of Salvation Army General William Booth's scheme in 1905 had already shown. His proposal to send out 5,000 British families (20,000 people) had the full endorsement of the federal government, but was withdrawn because of both public and state resistance.[101] While the Commonwealth handled approvals on immigration schemes, responsibility for releasing land lay with the states. Booth publicly explained that the time was 'inopportune' for large group settlements given the conflict between federal and state governments over the availability of resources even if Queensland and Western Australia would accept small contingents.[102] The stigma of racial pedigree extended to the British.[103] For Pullè's efforts, official correspondence between the Commonwealth and Italy suggests that, after 1908, different arrangements for Italian settlement in Queensland, the Northern
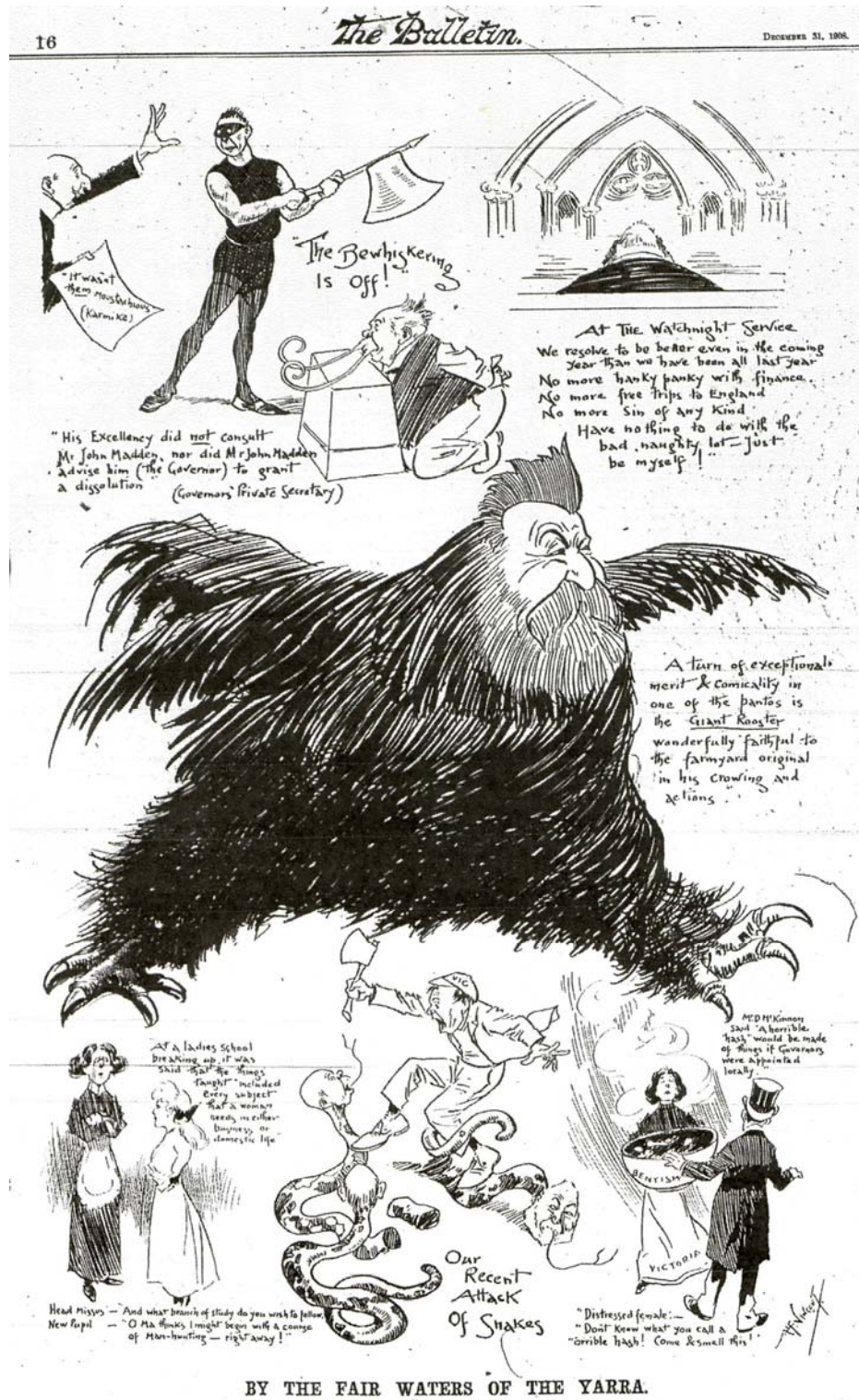
Figure 3. 'By the Fair Waters of the Yarra', *Bulletin*, 31 December 1908.

Territory and NSW were in progress.[104] Italians trickled in through sporadic group settlement and chain migration. Pullè's dream of a 'sprinkling of Italians' manifested. His settlement scheme, however, tells us more about the dynamics of Australian nation-building.

Early Italian involvement in the discourse of whiteness makes a statement about the stigmatisation of minority groups throughout Australia's invasion/settlement history. Convinced that Australians would benefit from Italian agricultural expertise and other skills, Italian community leaders nevertheless did not expect Italians to sacrifice their culture of origin. But, the method of combining whiteness with Italianness simply would not gain momentum on a national level until well after 1945. Ultimately, cultural pluralism could not be reconciled after 1914, a phase defined by 'racial homogeneity'.[105] As W. Lippmann once remarked about the myth of homogeneity, Australians 'resent the development of group consciousness by minority groups'.[106] Pullè and other Italian intellectuals were men before their time, whose battle against the inflexible doctrine guiding Australian migration policy remains alive today, recently pointed out by Waleed Aly.[107] The twist in this history, however, is that the presence of Italians continued to challenge the homogenising myth long after the crystallisation of the editors' counter-ideology on land and racial distinction.

Notes

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[2] See S. H. Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement*, Macmillan and Co. and Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1924; Samuel Wadham, R. Kent Wilson and Joyce Wood, *Land Utilization in Australia*, 4th edn, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1964; J. P. Gabbedy, *Group Settlement*, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, WA, 1988; Marilyn Lake, *The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria, 1915-38*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1987.

[3] MS, NAA: A432 (A432/85); 1938/390, 'White Alien Immigration, 1937,' 1937. The term largely referred to 'Italians, Greeks, Yugo Slavs and Poles'.

[4] Elena Govor, *Russian Anzacs in Australian History*, UNSW Press, Sydney, pp. 2, 5, 13; Hsu-Ming Teo, 'Multiculturalism and the Problem of Multi-cultural Histories: an overview of ethnic historiography', in H.-M. Teo and R. White (eds), *Cultural History in Australia,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2003, pp.145-6.

[5] *L'Italo-Australiano* 25 May 1907.

[6] Although coined in 1953 and inadequate in relaying the vast cultural diversity of Italians, my use of the term 'ethnicity' refers to Italian cultural difference in a dominant Anglo-Australian culture. See John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds), *Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1991, pp. 3-5.

[7] See Gianfranco Cresciani, *The Italians*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1985; Stephen Castles, Caroline Alcorso, Gaetano Rando and Elli Vasta (eds), *Australia's Italians: Culture and Community in a Changing Society*, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli and Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1992**.**

[8] Robert Pascoe 'Place and community: the construction of an Italo-Australian space', in Castles et al., *Australia's Italians*, p. 92.

[9] Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, University College London Press, London, 2000, pp. 38-9, 42-5.

[10] Cf Denis Mack Smith (ed.), *The Making of Italy, 1796-1866: Selected Documents*, Macmillan, London and Melbourne, 1968, pp. 364-79.

[11] Pascoe, 'Place and community', p.96.

[12] Apart from Pullè's newspapers, there were two other Italian weekly newspapers before World War I: Francesco Sceusa's *L'Italo-Australiano*, 1885 and Giuseppe Prampolini's *Uniamoci*, 1903-1904.

[13] See E. Nathaniel Gates (ed.), *Racial Classification and History*, Garland Publishing, New York, 1997; Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno (eds), *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America*, Routledge, New York and London, 2003; Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1998; Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*, Berg, Oxford and New York, 2000.

[14] Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993, p 6; Jacobson, *Whiteness of*, p 6 [emphasis in original].

[15] Leopoldo Zunini, *Western Australia as it is Today*, Margo Melia and Richard Bosworth (eds and trans), The University of Western Australia Press, Perth, [1906] 1997, p. 50.

[16] Jon Stratton, 'Borderline anxieties: what whitening the Irish has to do with keeping out asylum seekers', in Aileen Moreton-Robinson (ed.), *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2004, p. 232; Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos, 'Discursive constructions of the Southern European foreigner', in Susanne Schecht and Ben Wadham (eds), *Placing Race and Localising Whiteness*, Flinders Press, Adelaide, 2004, p. 73; Waleed Aly, 'Migrant history repeats', in *The Australian*, 23 February 2006, p. 10.

[17] A. G. Hopkins (ed.), *Globalization in World History*, Pimlico, London, 2002, p. 25; Jon Stratton, 'Multiculturalism and the whitening machine, or how Australians become white', in Ghassan Hage and Rowanne Couch (eds), *The Future of Australian Multiculturalism: Reflections on the Twentieth Anniversary of Jean Martin's The Migrant Presence*, Research Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1999, pp. 166-168.

[18] Kathleen Neils Conzen, David Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George Pozzetta and Rudolph Vecoli, 'The invention of ethnicity: a perspective from the USA', *Altreitalie*, aprile, 1990, p. 42.

[19] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, Verso, 1991, p. 62.

[20] Samuel Baily, 'The Role of Two Newspapers and the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, 1893-1913', *International Migration Review*, vol 12, no 3, 1978, p. 325. On the social and cultural support provided by the two types in Australia, see Gianfranco Cresciani, 'The making of a new society: Francesco Sceusa and the Italian intellectual reformers in Australia 1876-1906', in John Hardy (ed.), *Stories of Australian Migration*, UNSW Press, Kensington, NSW, 1988, p. 88; Miriam Gilson and Jerzy Zubrzycki, *The Foreign-language Press in Australia 1848-1964*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1967, p. 18.

[21] Baily, 'The Role', pp. 325-6.

[22] See Gaetano Rando, 'Aspects of the history of the Italian language press in Australia, 1885-1985', in Gaetano Rando and Michael Arrighi (eds), *Italians in Australia: Historical and Social Perspectives*, Department of Modern Languages, University of Wollongong and Dante Alighieri Society, Wollongong, NSW, 1993, pp. 199-200.

[23] *L'Italo-Australiano*, 11 March 1905.

[24] See regular 'Voce del Pubblico' in *L'Italo-Australiano* and 'Vox Popoli' in *Oceania*.

[25] *L'Italo-Australiano*, 11 March 1905.

[26] David Goldberg, *The Racial State*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2002, p. 196.

[27] Italian community leaders were inventing and offering *italianità* [Italianness] on a number of levels, such as in the forms of pageantry, international exhibitions, and the Italian *festa*, all of which were attuned to the Australian context.

[28] Ted Henzell, *Australian Agriculture: Its History and Challenges*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Vic., 2007, p. 63.

[29] Australia's Italians numbered 1,880 by 1881 and there were 5,678 by 1901. Their numbers climbed to 8,135 by 1921, but dramatically jumped to 26,756 in 1933. See R. Pascoe, 'Italian settlement until 1914', in James Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, its People and their Origins*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1988, p. 598; Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, *Community Profiles 1991 Census: Italy Born*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994, p. 7; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census 2006*, 'Country of Birth', 1301.0 - Year Book Australia, 2007, www.abs.gov.au/websitesdbs [retrieved 7 October, 2007].

[30] W. D. Borrie, *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation*, Angus and Robertson, Melbourne, 1954, p. 49.

[31] John MacDonald and Leatrice MacDonald, 'Italian migration to Australia', *Journal of Social History*, Spring, 1969-70.

[32] Brian Murphy, *The Other Australia: Experiences of Migration*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 40.

[33] Helen Andreoni, 'Olive or white? The colour of Italians in Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies*, March, no 77, 2003, p. 81.

[34] Cf *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 September 1907, p. 4.

[35] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 10, 107-8.

[36] Jacobson, *Whiteness of*, pp. 6-8.

[37] James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2003, pp. 16-19.

[38] Marilyn Lake, 'On being a white man, Australia, circa 1900', in Teo and White (eds), *Cultural History,* p. 102.

[39] Lake, 'On being', pp. 98, 103.

[40] Alastair Davidson, *From Subject to Citizen: Australian Citizenship in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 144; Murphy, *The Other Australia*, p. 30.

[41] Stratton, 'Borderline anxieties…', p. 235.

[42] Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, NSW, pp. 295, 299-301; Laksiri Jayasuriya, *Immigration and Multiculturalism in Australia*, School of Social Work and Social Administration, the University of Western Australia, Nedlands, W.A., 1997, p. 52.

[43] Murphy, *The Other Australia*, p. 30; Davidson, *From Subject to Citizen*, p. 66.

[44] Charles Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1963, pp. 222-6; Borrie, *Italians and Germans*, pp. 144-5.

[45] Price, *Southern Europeans*, pp. 204, 213.

[46] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 2 March 1907.

[47] See *L'Italo-Australiano*, 25 March 1905 and 14 March 1908.

[48] Cf Gianfranco Cresciani, *Migrants or Mates: Italian Life in Australia*, Knockmore Entreprises, Sydney, 1988, doc. 11.

[49] Gabriella Dondi, 'Coloni per caso, emigranti per forza: I Veneti di New Italy fra otto e novecento', in Emilio Franzina (ed.), *Un altro Veneto: Saggi e studi di storia dell'emigrazione nei secoli XIX e XX*, Francisci Editore, Padova, 1983, pp. 396-401.

[50] Cf Douglass, *From Italy*, p. 49.

[51] Don Dignan, 'Chiaffredo Venerano Fraire, 1852-1931', in M. Brändle (ed.), *The Queensland Experience*, Phoenix Publications, Brisbane, 1991, p. 50; William Douglass, *From Italy to Ingham: Italians in North Queensland*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1995, pp. 37-63.

[52] Borrie, *Italians and Germans*, pp. 146-7.

[53] MS, NAA: A8, 1902/112/120, 'Arrival of 31 Italian immigrants by SS "Bremen" and 'Imported alien labor: Italians under contract', *The Age*, 18 January 1902' [excerpt]; and cf Cresciani, *The Italians*, p. 47.

[54] Goldberg, *The Racial State*, p. 187.

[55] See James Crispino, *The Assimilation of Ethnic Groups: The Italian Case*, The Centre for Migration Studies of New York, Staten Island, New York, 1980, p 7.

[56] *L'Italo-Australiano*, 2 June 1906.

[57] Francesco Lubrano, cf *Oceania,* 4 October 1913.

[58] Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos, 'The making of Greek-Australian citizenship: From heteronomous to autonomous political communities', *Modern Greek Studies*, vol 11-12, 2003/2004, p. 171.

[59] Richard Bosworth, *Italy, the Least of the Great Powers: Italian Foreign Policy before the First World War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979, p. 2.

[60] Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Constitution of England from Queen Victoria to George VI, vol II*, Macmillan, London, 1940, pp. 343, 351; *L'Italo-Australiano*, 15 April 1905.

[61] John MacDonald, 'Migration from Italy to Australia with Special Reference to Selected Groups', PhD Thesis, Australia National University, 1958, p. 126; Cresciani, *The Italians*, p. 37.

[62] Cf Barry York, *Admissions and Exclusions, Canberra: Studies in Australian Ethnic History*, no 9, Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, ANU, Canberra, 1995, p. 14.

[63] *L'Italo-Australiano*, 30 November 1907.

[64] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 22 April 1905.

[65] Dondi, 'Coloni per caso', pp. 400-1; cf *L'Italo-Australiano,* 24 June 1905.

[66] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 5 August 1905.

[67] *Oceania*, 9 August 1913.

[68] *Bulletin*, 21 February 1907, pp. 6-7.

[69] Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, Vic., 2002, p. 88.

[70] Cf Douglass, *From Italy*, pp. 40, 39, 48. Douglass points out that the word, 'indenture', here referred more to an apprenticeship as a precursor to buying the land although it was not interpreted this way at the time.

[71] Jacobson, *Whiteness of*, p. 57.

[72] Vanda Moraes-Gorecki, ''Black Italians' in the sugar fields of north Queensland: a reflection on labour inclusion and cultural exclusion in tropical Australia', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, vol 5, iss 3, 1994, pp. 306, 307.

[73] Anderson, *The Cultivation*, pp. 75, 80, 112-22.

[74] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 6 July 1907.

[75] Anderson, *The Cultivation*, p. 73.

[76] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 30 September 1905.

[77] *Bulletin*, 14 March 1907, p. 6.

[78] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 23 March 1907.

[79] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 16 September 1907.

[80] Anderson, *The Cultivation*, p. 75.

[81] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 23 March 1907.

[82] Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne [1923] 1967, pp. 19-69.

[83] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 23 February 1907.

[84] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 12 October 1907.

[85] Stephen Alomes, *A Nation at Last?: The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, NSW, 1988, pp. 35, 40.

[86] *Bulletin*, 14 March 1907, p. 6. On the positivist anthropological measurement of Southern Italian skulls, see Thomas Gulglielmo, '"No color barrier": Italians, race, and power in the United States', in Guglielmo and Salerno (eds), *Are Italians*, p. 33.

[87] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 23 March 1907.

[88] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 21 September 1907.

[89] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 21 September 1907. The *Bulletin's* article of 14 March 1907 was entitled, 'The dubious variety of immigrant'.

[90] Jacobson, *Whiteness of*, pp. 78-9.

[91] See *Oceania,* 21 March 1914.

[92] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 11 March, 22 April and 29 July 1905.

[93] MS, NAA: A1 (A1/15); 1907/7790, 'External Affairs. Estimates 1907-1908', 20 August 1907.

[94] *Bulletin*, 31 December 1908, p. 16.

[95] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 3 and 10 August 1907.

[96] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 12 October and 9 November 1907.

[97] *L'Italo-Australiano,* 4 April 1908.

[98] MS, NAA: A8 1902/112/120, 'Arrival of 31 Italian immigrants by SS "Bremen" and 'Imported alien labor: Italians under contract', *The Age*, 18 January 1902' [excerpt]; *L'Italo-Australiano,* 25 March 1906.

[99] Cf *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 September 1907, p. 4.

[100] George Lipsitz, 'The possessive investment of whiteness: Racialized social democracy and the "White" problem in American Studies', *American Quarterly*, vol 47, no 3, September, 1995, pp. 370-1; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'I still call Australia home: Indigenous belonging and place in a white postcolonizing society', in Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller (eds), *Uprootings/Regroupings: Questions of Home and Migration*, Berg, Oxford and New York, 2003, p. 37.

[101] *Sydney Mail*, 27 July 1905, p. 784.

[102] *Daily Telegraph*, 11 October 1905, p. 9.

[103] *Bulletin*, 3 December 1908, p. 7.

[104] Cairns *Morning Post*, 20 January and 25 January 1908; MS, NAA: A6662, 1334, 'Governor General's Office – Correspondence – Reverend Dr Capra – proposed visit to Northern Territory

with view to Italian Immigration', dated 5 January 1909; A2, 1916/1711, 'Immigration of Italian Colonists from Argentina to Australia' and A461 (A461/8), N349/1/5, 'Immigration encouragement – Early schemes. Correspondence with States – Queensland'; NAA: A1, A1/15, 'Immigration to Australia of a number of Italian agricultural labourers.

[105] Stratton, 'Borderline anxieties…', p. 245.

[106] Cf Jean Martin, 'Migration and social pluralism', in Australian Institute of Political Science, *How Many Australians? Immigration and Growth*, Angus and Robinson, Sydney, 1971, p. 113.

[107] Aly, 'Migrant history'.