

Performing Cross-Cultural Relations, Identity and Conflict in Contemporary Scottish Theatre: Expatriate Italian Communities in Marcella Evaristi's *Commedia* and Ann Marie di Mambro's *Tally's Blood*.

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In her first momentous speech in Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987), La Corbie gives voice to the complexity of Scottish national identity by presenting multiple definitions of Scotland without endorsing any of them singularly, thus leaving the question 'Scotland. Whit like is it?' open. By means of this evasiveness, La Corbie implicitly expresses a critique of essentialist definitions of Scottishness. As a matter of fact, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, which Peter Zenziger has identified as the years of the 'New Wave' of Scottish drama, Scottish playwrights both responded to the socio-cultural impact of Thatcherism and attempted 'to redefine Scotland's identity in the context of global changes' (Zenziger 1996: 125). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that this redefinition, associated with the consequences produced by multiculturalism and multiethnicity, emerges in some dramatic works written by authors from Scotland's immigrant communities, such as Marcella Evaristi's *Commedia*, published in 1983 and premièred the year before at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, and Ann Marie di Mambro's *Tally's Blood*, commissioned by Ian Brown, then Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre, in 1990, and in print since 2002 in a standard edition for Scottish schools curricula.¹

As examined by several critics (McMillan 1986, Triesman 1993, Bain 1996, McDonald 1997, Scullion 2000 and 2001, Horvat 2005, Maguire 2011), how discrimination, marginality and displacement impinge upon individual identity is a preoccupation shared by many contemporary Scottish women playwrights. For both Marcella Evaristi and Ann Marie Di Mambro, this concern must be added to their personal experience as second-generation immigrants from Catholic Italo-Scottish families who must learn how to come to terms with their hyphenated identities. In Tom Maguire's words, '[f]or Evaristi and others, her Italian roots add a further dimension of hybridity to

an already hyphenated subaltern identity' (Maguire 2011: 155), since for women immigrants it is impossible to separate national affiliation from gender. Here Maguire refers to the limited recognition, if not marginalisation, of women playwrights in Scotland at least until the 1970s, despite the emergence, already in the earlier decades, of distinguished dramatists such as Ena Lamont Stewart, Ada F. Kay, and Joan Ure. Although *Sugar and Spite*, the revue that Evaristi wrote with Lochhead, was staged at the Traverse in the late 1970s, it was not until the 1980s that Evaristi and di Mambro were seen as part of a 'school of women playwrights' in Scotland (Bain 1996). Starting from their personal and family histories, they tend to confront general identity problems 'metonymically' (Maguire 2011: 155), suggesting how national questions can be conveyed through an exploration of local and even autobiographical experiences.

In *Commedia* and *Tally's Blood*, such questions are linked with the authors' Scottish-Italian ancestry and the complex condition of the Italian migrant community in Scotland, which historians have identified as the second largest one after the Irish. Genre-wise, as well as in terms of register, style and tone, the two plays diverge consistently: *Commedia*, contrary to what the title suggests, is a tragic play or a domestic tragedy, while *Tally's Blood* is a theatrical soap-opera featuring comedic aspects, including the happy ending; Evaristi's intimate style and dialogues gradually bring the audience inside the characters' psychology, while di Mambro's slice-of-life realism and laconic lines are marked by a rhythm and an immediacy that conjure in our mind the typical naturalistic situations of a domestic comedy. The romantic and sentimental impetus pervading di Mambro's play, waxing maudlin at the end, may sometimes seem dramatically incoherent in the context of the historical and social traumas it stages, but it does not prevent deeper meanings from shining through.² The author deliberately chooses to stage sociological and cultural problems of a multicultural and multi-ethnic society from the inside of a specific Italian family while leaving the larger historical scenario in the background; the effects of World War II on the private life of the Pedreschis rather than the war itself is what di Mambro is mostly interested in.

In fact, both *Commedia* and *Tally's Blood* bring the reader and spectator face to face with the many-sidedness of multiculturalism, the tensions and the prejudices against the foreign that mark the Italian community in Scotland, as well as, despite the local specificities of each migration experience, any more general condition of linguistic, racial and ethnic 'interstitiality' or 'double belonging' (Král 2009: 8) provoking personal displacement and relocation.³ The plays essentially differ in the way in which they problematise and qualify the diasporic subject's experience: in di Mambro's case, it leads to integration and the rise of 'contact zones' and 'transnational communities'; contrariwise, for Evaristi multiculturalism often implies traumatic drawbacks and an unremitting sense of non-belonging, which leaves cultural and personal conflicts unresolved, almost echoing cultural theorist Stuart Hall's poignant statement 'migration is a one way trip. There is no 'home' to go back to' (Hall 1987: 44).

By focusing on the frustrating life of a middle-aged Italian woman in Glasgow, Evaristi's *Commedia* subtly suggests the difficulty of self-reinvention and repositioning for a first-generation immigrant struggling to set herself free from the grip of a traditional Italian family, which here as well as in other works by Evaristi is an arena of conflict. This play represents the Italian community as a self-enclosed, rather impermeable system, whose liminality, between a home country which is an 'imaginary homeland' and a host country that often exacerbates that community's sense of alienation, produces no middle ground or, in Bhabha's terms, no 'third space' of positive hybridity (Bhabha 1994). On the other hand, di Mambro's female protagonist, Rosinella, a second-generation Italian who eventually manages to defeat her own ingrained prejudice against the Scots, turns out to embody a condition of in-betweenness that challenges essentialist concepts of identity and replaces them with an idea of transcultural and transnational human collectives (Appadurai 1991).

In the following sections, the issue of individual and national identities, combined with the themes of cultural encounters and hybridity, will be analysed by focusing on two main aspects of the two plays: first, the leading role of the mother figure in relation to the constraints and the

internal conflicts of the Scottish Italian community; and, secondly, the many-sided question of cultural cross-pollination and clashes embodied not only by the two female protagonists but also by other characters.⁴

Mother figures within the Italian-Scottish community

Through her anti-heroine Elena, in *Commedia* Evaristi stages the double oppression exerted by gender and national culture, a theme with a strong autobiographical thrust that pervades her *opera Omnia*, from her very first play, *Dorothy and the Bitch* (1976). Elena's gradual disenchantment with life and personal failure are tightly linked with her role as an Italian widowed 'Mamma' of two adult mama's boys locked away in their childhood and expecting her to behave as her Catholic education prescribes.⁵ Although in this play, contrary to other works,⁶ the Catholic theme may appear marginal, it is embedded in the image of Elena's family assigning her the burdensome role of a homely Madonna and guardian of the hearth within a prevailing patriarchal and self-righteous Italian-Glaswegian community – as her younger lover tells Elena, the only 'choice on offer' that her family gives her 'is that between the whore and the madonna, It's no choice at all' (Evaristi 1983: 24).

Indeed, the tragicomic story of the ironically titled *Commedia* revolves around Elena's failed attempt to break out of her overbearing domestic duties and entrapping motherhood by getting involved in an affair with Davide, a teacher from Bologna working in Glasgow and about twenty years her junior, an age gap to which her orthodox sons strongly object. However, despite her family's disapproval, they plan a transgressive romantic escape to Bologna, but, unfortunately, when her family unexpectedly visits them there, the idyll turns into tragedy. This happens in 1980, during the so called 'years of lead' in Italy, and one of Elena's sons gets killed in the bombing of Bologna's railway station.⁷ This *coup de théâtre* upsets Elena and Davide's plans, obliging them to return immediately to Glasgow, and, in Elena's case, to a stifling domestic routine. As usual in Evaristi's theatre, not only do crises erupt within the family, but the private inner world is upset by

the public one, thus suggesting that a true escape from the entrapment of family and societal oppression is very unlikely.

In *Commedia* this sense of claustrophobia acquires further meaning if it is associated with Elena's predicament as an immigrant struggling to relocate herself, personally and socially, in Glasgow, and to find a compromise between the cultural constraints of her Italian 'roots' and the potential opportunity of new 'routes' that she glimpses in her relationship with Davide (Gikandi 2010).⁸ In the end, however, Elena fails, because she cannot overcome her sense of non-belonging, of being always somehow different and displaced. Ultimately she seems to be affected by the fear, to borrow Zygmunt Bauman's words, 'of losing individuality' and of 'loneliness' regardless of the place that she inhabits (Bauman 2011: 20). In Bologna, Davide and his friends might have offered her an opportunity to reposition her identity within a new community, to find both a new protective world and her own independence. Yet, despite her attempts, Elena can never find a balance between – adapting Bauman's words again – her 'longing of a sense of belonging within a group' and 'a desire to be distinct from the masses, to acquire a sense of individuality and originality', or between 'a longing for safety' and 'a longing for freedom' (Bauman 2011: 20).⁹

In other words, her resistance to any closed system of thought and group identity increases her sense of alienation, mainly as a woman in a male-chauvinist world, but implicitly also as an Italian in Glasgow, as she reveals to her sons at the start of Act II:

[...] I don't understand you all anymore. You've got your own families, your own lives. I lived for my boys, that's the way it was done then, right or wrong. [...] All closed up with your children. Private. Your father would go off to the shop and make the money and I did my part of the bargain. That was the deal, right or wrong. It's a life that makes you shy if you're not shy already. It doesn't make you a cabbage or dowdy or drab, it doesn't make you an idiot, but what it does is turn everything outside the front door into a different territory. I'm probably not putting it very well. It makes everything outside seem foreign, a different country. (Evaristi 1983: 29)

Elena's escape to Bologna is an attempt, albeit temporary, to liberate herself from both the burden of her past obligations and the sense of alienation, foreignness and difference she feels in her present life. Indeed as opposed to Glasgow, Italy offered a prospect of freedom and identity redefinition. However, once in Italy, the reality of facts clashes with her expectations – a drastic conflict symbolised by the bombing at the station and the consequent loss and trauma that Elena suffers as a form of punishment for her transgression. As Maguire writes,

Patriarchal limits on women's mobility operate as 'a crucial means of subordination' confining women to particular places, frequently within the domestic sphere, allowing only men to access the public sphere. [...] Where female characters transgress boundaries of place, they face isolation, exclusion or confinement as prisoners or mad women. Yet in moving into new spaces, female characters are also able to reinvent themselves and the sense of the world they inhabit. (Maguire 2011: 161)¹⁰

Thus, while Italy is a place belonging to an irretrievable past rather than one in which to build a new present, Scotland belongs to a here and now in which she continues to feel displaced. Mobility, of whatever sort, is forbidden to Elena – a pessimism conveyed by the symbolic blackout at the end of *Commedia*, a darkness in which the image of her family dissolves, together with its suffocating rules and conventions, while Elena sings the nursery rhyme 'Tin Mags the kitchen witch', a favourite of her sons when they were children, '*at first softly, almost absentmindedly; but as she continues her voice becomes loud and frenzied and angry*' (Evaristi 1983: 38).¹¹ Elena is angry because, once again and this time against her will, she must play the role of a Mummy who never overcomes the boundaries prescribed by that role, like the witch of the song, a once in a while lady of misrule – but only within domestic walls.

The drawbacks of a close-knit Italian community and an Italy that disappoints the immigrants' expectations are also staged in di Mambro's *Tally's Blood*. However, contrary to Elena, the heroine Rosinella eventually succeeds in bridging the gap between her imaginary and real

homeland. The title¹² of the play is not only a metaphor for ice-cream raspberry syrup – the protagonists, like many Italians during World War 2, run a confectionary and ice-cream shop – but it also refers to the strong ties of race, family and national culture that are principally personified by Rosinella, another version of the Italian ‘mamma’, but this time from a working-class family from the southern part of the region of Lazio, and, compared to Elena, a more encumbering, manipulative, yet also more resolute, woman, who does not elicit immediate sympathy in the reader.

In *Commedia* the action takes place between the Hogmanay of 1979 and the spring of 1980. The narrative in *Tally's Blood* spans a much longer period, since it concerns three generations of Scottish Italians (the Pedreschis) from 1936 to 1955. Rosinella is the fulcrum of the story from beginning to end. Her development as a heroine, from an initial selfish rootedness to a successful reconfiguring of cultural differences within her own existence, alludes to the instability of the migrants' predicament, their living in a condition of becoming rather than being. Indeed, di Mambro herself defines Rosinella as ‘both innocent and guilty’ and her prejudice apparently ‘harmless, almost amusing’ but in fact ‘quite dangerous (di Mambro 2002: 2), because she is caught between two cultural worlds that at first she sees as totally disjointed with no possibility of contact zones. From the beginning, she does not seem to be aware of the negative impact that her cultural myopia can have. For a long time, in fact, she seems to straddle these worlds without feeling any true belonging to either, to the extent that, when her husband proposes to move back to Italy, she strongly hesitates as if she were entrapped in her in-betweenness.

Before the war, Rosinella appears inflexible in her tireless defence of Italianness against Scottishness, which seems to confirm the argument, advanced by some scholars of migration studies, that the diasporic condition may generate the opposite of hybridity and actually lead to a resurgence of nationalist sentiments, essentialist notions of identity, and the consequent disavowal of the Other¹³ – for example, she impedes the love affair between her brother in law Franco and the Scottish girl Bridget, and indirectly pushes the young woman to have an abortion when she

gets pregnant. How blinded she is by her cultural and ethnic prejudices clearly emerges in the following conversation she has with Franco, in which the stereotypes are reinforced rather than challenged:

ROSINELLA: You're surely no keen on this Scotch girl?

FRANCO: What if I am?

ROSINELLA: Then she must be giving you something you can't get from an Italian girl. I'm telling you, you better watch yourself.

FRANCO: You know nothing about Bridget.

ROSINELLA: Now you listen good to me, son. These Scotch girls they're all the same. They just go out with you for one thing. Because your father's got a shop and they think you've got money.

FRANCO: (*Indignant*) Thanks very much.

ROSINELLA: Alright. Alright. And because you're tall...

FRANCO: Good-looking...

[...] ...a good kisser, a good dancer ...

ROSINELLA: Aye, but that's because you're Italian.

FRANCO: Oh, they like that alright. All I have to do is say 'Ciao bella' and they're all over me.

[...]

ROSINELLA: Listen – these girls. [...] You're no different from all the other Italian men. You're young, you've got the warm blood. But it's one thing to play around with them, so long as you marry your own kind. [...] (di Mambro 2002: 24-25).

Then, during the xenophobic war period, at the time of Churchill's infamous cry 'Collar the lot' (cf. Pieri 2005: 88), when Italians were included in the List of Enemy Aliens, imprisoned in several camps and deported to Canada and Australia, Rosinella plays a central role in managing the family business when her husband Massimo is interned in Canada for four years.¹⁴ After the war, when tragedy changes into a domestic comedy set in Italy, Rosinella is again centre stage but with a new attitude towards her own and her family's hybridity, as shown by her encouraging the cross-cultural relationship between her adopted niece Lucia and their Scottish neighbour Hughie, as well as by her accepting Bridget as a worker in the family shop. As argued by Maguire, 'journeying provides her with a way of revisiting her assumptions and prejudices, dismantling the binary opposition

between Scotland and Italy. Destabilising her sense of place and opening up new possibilities and relationships enable her to reconfigure her sense of “home” (Maguire, p. 162). By reconfiguring her double cultural belonging, Rosinella also manages to overcome her selfishness and what Ian Brown has defined as her ‘tyranny of love’, her oppressive and restrictive notion of family ties.¹⁵

Rosinella’s role as mediator and even ‘translator’ between different languages and cultures emerges in particular when in Italy she tries to negotiate with Lucia’s authoritative and conservative father, Luigi, in order to convince him to let her return to Scotland and marry Hughie instead of the wealthy Italian man with whom he wanted to match her. Throughout the play di Mambro never diminishes the painful side of migration and the consequent relocation within a new cultural and social environment, yet, at the end, in order to prepare her readers and spectators for the happy ending, she introduces comedic and farcical aspects in the conversation between Rosinella and Luigi by deliberately playing with cultural stereotypes:

Luigi fills his own glass, eyes Hughie up and down.

LUIGI: *(to Rosinella)* I wouldn’t have noticed if you hadn’t said, but he is quite ugly, right enough.

ROSINELLA: *(Defensive)* he’s no ugly. I wouldn’t say he was ugly.

LUIGI: No. Maybe no. Maybe it’s just the colour of his cheeks and his hair.

ROSINELLA: That’s no his fault.

[...]

LUIGI: And what’s on his face?

Rosinella looks closely at Hughie.

ROSINELLA: He’s peeling.

LUIGI: He’s what? He got burnt in the sunshine? È pazzo, no? *(Leans over to Hughie, very emphatic, speaking very slowly and deliberately to make him understand, accompanied by exaggerated gestures – e.g. eyes squinting in the sun, wiping perspiration, pointing to sun in sky, sun beating down on head, weariness, panting for breath, etc. Hughie trying to make sense of it)* (di Mambro 2002: 162).

Rosinella acting as intermediary between Italian and Scottish cultures is part of what Carla Dente, in relation to the development of this character, has defined as ‘a strategy of harmonisation and

effective integration' (Dente 2008: 211), paving the way for an acceptance and a new appreciation of a condition marked by instability and the absence of straightforward cultural belonging.

Intercultural contacts and clashes

In *Commedia*, the complexities of social and cultural integration are staged not only through Elena's experience but also through the conflicting relationship between her two sons, Cesare and Stefano – the former a successful entrepreneur married to the housewife Gianna; the latter a low-end actor married to an American photographer. Cesare's sense of displacement in Glasgow emerges from the very beginning of the play, when he explains the reasons why, as a boy, he decided to rechristen himself as Harry:

STEFANO: I'm working, Harry. I'm doing the odd bit of radio. Voice-overs.

CESARE: Why the Harry?

STEFANO: You get called both, Ces. Don't you Harry. You re-christened yourself Harry, don't blame me.

CESARE: Well, you try being five years old in a Glasgow school and introducing yourself as Cesare. Caesar. God Almighty I'd have been dead by dinner time. Harry was the first name I thought of when I walked through the gates. But now only Scotchese, stranieri, call me Harry (Evaristi 1983: 6).

Later in the same scene, without fully realising the dramatic implication of her statement, Cesare's naive wife tells Lucy, the American woman who married Elena's younger son, that Cesare is 'America absolutely nuts' and that he would like to be an immigrant in Little Italy in New York (Evaristi 1983: 8). As shown by various historical and anthropological studies, in the 20th century, Italian immigrants in Scotland did not concentrate, as in Australia or the US, in 'Little Italies' but were scattered in various urban neighbourhoods (Farrell 2000: 125 and Dente 2008: 201), which, theoretically, should have facilitated their integration with the Scots. Such is, for instance, the situation described in *Tally's Blood*, in which the Pedreschis and the Devlins live side by side. Paradoxically, though, Cesare's preference for a migrant condition in America rather than Scotland

suggests that he would feel less marginalised in Glasgow, if he were part of a more compact and thus more separatist Scottish-Italian community.

In the play Cesare acts as the main interpreter of the drawbacks that may arise when a culture is translated into a foreign context and risks losing its authenticity. At one specific moment, this central issue of diasporic writing climaxes into a skirmish between the two brothers. Stefano has accepted reciting the part of an Italian guy in a TV series, which Cesare sees as quite diminishing because, to his mind, it means encouraging the stereotype:

ELENA: [...] Listen, Stefano's in business, just the way you are. He's offered work and he takes it. Allora?

CESARE: Haven't said a word, Mamma. Have I said a word? No, everything's crystal sodding clear. Sorry, Mamma. You take the worst soap opera that Scottish television has to offer and then find that the Scotchese actor that's playing the corniest Tony the Tally part, you discover, surprise, surprise, that actor is offered a better part, and then, no surprise, you find an out-of-work actor to take over said part. [...]

Tell me. Now your Scotchese predecessor has left and moved on to 'The Sweeney' are you going to dye your hair? Are you going to inherit his big black moustache or are you going to grow one? Oh and his accent was unique! Just one cornetto! Point of interest, did he *train*? Or if you're not going to inherit his phoney accent along with his phoney moustache, can you tell us exactly what you *are* going to do to make the performance...what's the word I'm looking for? Authentic? (Evaristi 1983: 11)

Moreover, from the heated conversation between the brothers, we discover that the tragedy of Italian internments during the war – an interesting cross-reference in Evaristi's and di Mambro's plays – has left an indelible scar on Cesare's memory, sharpening his ingrained resentment against the Scots, or the British in general: 'what are you doing to the memory of those hard lives?', he asks Stefano (Evaristi 1983: 12). On his part, Stefano is also aware of that historical trauma – 'I know the insults hurled, I know about the bricks through the café windows during the war, I know about internment then' (12) – but he sees nothing wrong in exploiting the stereotypes in order to make money, which may be read as his own way of 'writing back'¹⁶ to the Scots and

their clichéd representation of Italians. On the other hand, acting could just be a means of escaping reality and his identity problems by assuming someone else's personality for a while.

Despite his sense of humour and his apparent efforts of integration, Stefano shares with his brother a scepticism about the actual possibilities of multiculturalism and hybridity. His playful comment on the New Year's Eve they are celebrating is telling in this respect: 'Ah – Italian Hogmanay! You get stuffed full of pasta and pollo alla cacciatore and wine, and then we all remember just in time and manage to down a finger of whisky before the bells. And nobody knows the words to "Auld Lang Syne"' (Evaristi 1983: 10). Sometimes, his remarks about his condition are less witty, as when he admits feeling 'like a refugee from a country that never existed' (18), thus suggesting that Italy is for him only an 'imaginary homeland' yet without the positive implications that Rushdie associates with it. Like many second-generation immigrants, Stefano cannot see his 'double belonging', his 'straddl[ing] two cultures', to quote Rushdie again, as a privileged fertile 'territory' providing 'new angles at which to enter reality'. (Rushdie 1992: 15). And, like many second-generation immigrants, Stefano even questions his Italian roots, recognising his physical and mental distance from the real Italy:

We're not Italiani! Our parents, the first generation, had a right to the name, because their knowledge of Italy was first-hand, it was a real memory brought over by people that led such hard lives they needed something warm to remember on the way to the fish market on a freezing drisly Glasgow morning. (Evaristi 1983: 12)

Stefano's eventual breaking up with Lucy is the climactic expression of the general disenchantment, and estrangement that affect his whole existence, which deprive him of self-confidence and independence, so that the only solution at the end is to return to his family nest.

On the other hand, Gianna, Elena's daughter-in-law, does not seem to be affected by such interior conflicts. 'I've never had a chip on my shoulder about being Italian' (Evaristi 1983: 11), she says. The fact that she has a British passport is reason enough for her not to be considered an

immigrant, but, in any case, as she qualifies: 'if I was an immigrant I wouldn't have a chip. I mean, as far as I'm concerned, one glance at the history of opera and it melts. That and the Renaissance of course' (11). In other words, Gianna's Italy and Italianness are constructed ideas based on her tourist-like perceptions of the country rather than on first-hand experience, and her attempt to celebrate Italian art and history ends up in a distorted, anachronistic and artificial vision of Italy. When Gianna tells Lucy about how the widows in Italy never recover from the loss of their husbands, 'just age overnight' and change from chic women into 'wee *donnin[e]*', Elena promptly replies 'I don't think that's so true anymore' (Evaristi 1983: 8-9). By the same token, she shows a limited and narrow-minded knowledge of Elena, as symbolised by her gift to her of a Gainsborough tapestry to weave – suggesting fixity against the promise of mobility and change represented by the alternative life she could have with Davide.

Indeed, for most of the characters of *Commedia*, Italy is a place of the mind rather than of reality. The only exception is Davide, Elena's lover and temporary resident in Glasgow, who constantly travels to Italy and possibly intends to settle there permanently. Contrary to Elena, he does not regard their escapade to Italy simply as a holiday but as a step forward in their relationship – 'I just think of us as being in Italy together. Elena and Davide having come home' (Evaristi 1983: 25). Moreover, quite brutally, when he realises that Elena's family intends to hinder their relationship, because, as Gianna says, 'Families close ranks at times like this' (Evaristi 1983: 29), Davide exposes their fallacious and myopic vision, and, inadvertently, refers to the hurtful conflict between past and present, imagination and reality that immigrants of all ages have often experienced:

What century are you people living in? Italy has moved on a bit, or haven't you noticed? I just wanted to tell you that, Steven, before you tried to avenge your mother's honour. D'you ever look at this country you visit for one month and then mythologise for the rest of the year? You're like creatures from a time capsule! You're so busy looking to your own good name, that the world, Scotland, Italy, Milwaukee, progresses unnoticed. (Evaristi 1983: 30).

What Davide intends to suggest is that the glorification of an Italy that no longer exists on the part of Elena's family produces a deracination from the home country rather than a strengthening of their national belonging.

A melancholic strain pervades *Commedia*, often conveyed by the Italianised Glaswegian of the characters, or their peculiar English sprinkled with Italian words and mispronounced English forms to make them sound Italian – such as 'fish ana chipsa' (Evaristi 1983: 11). For example, there is a nostalgic note in Elena's remark that they always 'use Italian words in the kitchen', even when they're speaking English, such as 'Salvia, oregano, basilico, rosmarino' (Evaristi 1983: 33). Her patriotic feeling contrasts with the embarrassment that accompanies Stefano's observation: 'No doubt about it. It's a very sensual language' (33), again showing his difficulty in coping with cultural and linguistic in-betweenness, or, contrary to what he suggested earlier, with the stereotypes. In fact, even the characters' use of the Italian language hybridised with Scots sometimes suggests distancing from the home country rather than cultural and linguistic cross-pollination, for example when Cesare, Gianna and Stefano refer to Scottish people as 'Scotchese' rather than the correct Italian translation 'Scozzesi'.

In *Tally's Blood*, the language, because of its hybridity, mixing English, Scots and Italian, can be taken as a 'metaphor for the nation, both in her relations with the outside, Englishness, and the inside, ethnic migrant groups' (Dente 2008: 199). In this play the characters' sporadic Italian and a Scottish-English marked by the typical syntactical or lexical mistakes an Italian would make evoke and convey a collective unconscious and cultural memory passed on from generation to generation and thus forming an imagined community – in Benedict Anderson's terminology¹⁷ – sharing the same traditions and values. Quite strikingly, the little Lucia refuses to speak English at school, unconsciously alluding to the deep connection between language and identity, to how the language of the heart, as it were, often clashes with that of the mind.

And it is in this light that Massimo's sentimental reference to the tragedy of the *Arandora Star* should be read: 'Arandora Star. Non vi scorderemo mai. [...] We will never forget you' (di Mambro 2002: 79).¹⁸ Massimo's account of the liner bound for Australia but sunk in 1940 by a German submarine with the loss of over 400 Italian deportees is the climactic melodramatic moment in *Tally's Blood*. It occurs in scene fourteen of the first act and is meant not so much to narrate the historical episode as to highlight the general amnesia which has affected British official historiography, or, in Walter Benjamin's words, 'to brush history against the grain' – hence Massimo's underscoring the memory motif.¹⁹ In the 1940s the Italo-Scots' sense of alienation was heightened by their being regarded by the British government as enemies, when they in fact were contributing to the economy of the country by means of various business enterprises – their diaspora was, in fact, in Appadurai's terms, one 'of hope', not one of 'terror' or 'despair' (Appadurai 2003: 6). This contradiction is clearly highlighted by Rosinella with words which still have a strong resonance in the geocultural contexts which must confront the question of mass migration: 'Italians are good for this country. Who else is prepared to work till eleven o'clock every night, eh? [...] And we work for ourselves, it's no as if we take any jobs away from any Scotch people. We stick together, pay our own way, stick to the laws. What more do they want?' (di Mambro 2002: 57).

According to Rosinella, 'Italians have got to stick together' (di Mambro 2002: 112): when shouting mobs of Scots ransack and destroy their shop, not only does she ratify her own difference from them, but she lays stress on her and her family's Italianness, thus reinforcing ethnic and cultural separateness against possibilities of integration. On the other hand, her husband Massimo is traumatised by his sense of the Italians being ostracised and rejected as enemies of the state: 'I've lived here since I was a wee boy', he says, 'I went to school here, my brother was born here, Mammie's buried here. I always thought I was lucky. I had two countries. Now I feel as if I haven't got any' (di Mambro 2002: 58). His younger brother Franco, born in Scotland, does not experience this sense of total loss and rootlessness. 'I was born here. That makes me British', Franco says (di Mambro 2002: 51), a line which by itself conveys one of the central issues confronted in *Tally's Blood*, that is, the question of what nationality and national identity mean and how they change in a

world of globalised geopolitical networks and unstable geographical boundaries. Indeed Franco feels entrapped by his family's work ethic and the obligation of pursuing his father's business, so much so that he joins the British army during the war not only because he feels more British than Italian but also in order to free himself from what he senses as an imprisoning condition. Interestingly enough, before the war he sings with his brother the Italian song 'Giovinezza', which in the 1920s had become the anthem of the National Fascist Party: neither Franco nor Massimo are clearly aware of the political connotation of this song, which is instead associated with a purely emotional nostalgia and the attempt to preserve their native traditions.

Contrary to Franco, Massimo personifies the condition of the migrant whose mind constantly turns towards the motherland. As has been noticed, this nostalgic attitude often recurs in diasporic literature and is expressed by the remembrance of 'fragments' of the native country in a situation 'of either temporary displacement or permanent exile' (Král 2009: 7). In Massimo's case, these 'fragments' are reified in the mental image of his father's old house in Italy, symbolising loss yet also a desirable return and restoration of the past in the present. His memories are fixed on that past, as shown in this passage:

MASSIMO: My faither's got a house in Italy. I've no been back since we got Lucia. Her dad's supposed to look after it for us. [...] It's just got the two rooms, bare walls, bare floors, and the hens march in and out all day long. There's not water, no cludgie, no lights, no gas. You've to walk two miles for water and cook on a big black pot on the fire. If you want a keigh you've to go outside. There's a hole in the ground with a plank across it and the flies buzz round your arse. (*A beat*) God, I wish I was there now. (di Mambro 2002: 65).

However, at the end of *Tally's Blood*, the Scots-Italians are only temporary exiles in Italy, and eventually return to Scotland. Massimo's mythologisation of the imaginary homeland clashes with the reality of the rural provincial Italy they must confront when they visit Lucia's controlling father. In this respect, I share Joseph Farrell's opinion that 'Scotland is [for the Pedreschis] a desirable place when set beside this Italy' (Farrell 2000: 130). The Pedreschis' return to Scotland would seem to

suggest that eventually they recognise the host land as their home. On the contrary, the characters in *Commedia*, Elena and Stefano in particular, remain unsettled till the end, unable to reconcile imagination and reality, desire and concrete possibilities. The dejected Elena returns to Scotland after her abortive romance in Italy; Rosinella and Massimo also leave Italy at the end, but at least they seem to be reconciled with each other, their past and their divided identities.

In their works, both Evaristi and di Mambro show how the past is always embedded in the present. 'I think that the process of a writer [...] is 'a going back'. You must have a special kind of memory to be a writer ...', Evaristi once wrote.²⁰ In both plays, the special memory of Italy the authors hold is expressed by means of vivid imagery, a colourful language and cultural references that form their own and many Italian immigrants' Italy of the imagination, sometimes interlaced or clashing with its actual reality. Compared to the Pedreschis, Elena experiences migration more dramatically, 'as a one way trip', to return to my initial Hall quotation, since 'there is no "home" to go back to' (Hall 1987, p. 44). Evaristi's dystopian vision of family and ethnic relations therefore contrasts with di Mambro's final glimpse of hope that cultural and ethnic preconceptions can be overcome by abandoning the provincial outlook and embracing a global one, yet without abjuring national cultural specificities. The Pedreschi family's return to Scotland after plunging into their cultural roots in Italy may suggest the possibility of a third space located in the host country yet pervaded by the experience of the home country, a locus in which they can also re-assess their double outlook.

Ultimately, in different ways Evaristi and di Mambro expose the bi-univocal nature of prejudice, which may affect the host country as well as the migrant community, in order to oppose ghettoised ideas of nationality, race and gender, and show the importance of travelling transcultural 'routes' without abandoning one's family and country's 'roots', however hard this may be. Despite di Mambro's happy ending, the underlying message in both plays is that the reconfiguring and reinvention of identity for immigrants and expatriates must necessarily involve moments of complex renegotiation with one's origins and repositioning in the new reality – a

process whose goal, in a world marked by a resurgence of nationalist feelings combined with the fear of the Other, is not always easy either to identify or achieve.

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¹ *Tally's Blood* appeared in an Italian translation by Laura Cicognani in C. Cavecchi, M. Rose, S. Soncini, eds., *Caledonia Dreaming, an Anthology of Contemporary Scottish Plays* (Milano: Oedipus, 2001: 83-207).

² For example, according to Farrell, 'the conclusion with its facile uplift is a disappointment, and is scarcely equal to the turbulent conflicts which the work had exposed. Anne Marie di Mambro draws on the styles of the romantic novel and even of the high class soap-opera, but the genre has equally evident limitations' (Farrell 2000: 130)

³ Other relevant plays dealing with the same or similar themes are Emanuela Rossini and Margaret Rose's *Six Months Here Six Months There* (2000), and Carlo Iacucci, Maggie Rose, Wilma Stark's *Walking Through Stones*, (2002). The former was performed at the Gilmorehill Theatre in Glasgow and the Gateway Theatre in Edinburgh in 2000; the same year it was published by the Italian Institute of Culture. It also appeared in translation as *Mary e le altre* (Ravina, TN: Grafiche Dalpiaz, 2002). The latter was premiered in an abridged version and with a different title (*Scars of War*) at the Apex City Theatre in August 2002 as part of the Edinburgh International Fringe Festival, but, as far as I am aware, it has never been published. Evaristi's and di Mambro's works often include references to Italian culture, stereotypes and traditions. For example, in Evaristi's *Brightflight*, Martha has a crash on an Italian waiter who perfectly responds to the typical Latin lover figure, whereas in Di Mambro's *Joe* (1987) an elderly Italian visits her husband in hospital and tells him about the prejudice she must face as an immigrant.

⁴ My research on Evaristi's and Di Mambro's Italo-Scottish playwriting is indebted to the groundbreaking work carried out, in the fields of literature, anthropology, ethnology and sociology, by Federica Pedriali, director of the Italo-Scottish Research Cluster of the University of Edinburgh (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/literatures-languages-cultures/delc/italian/italo-scottish-research-cluster>), Mario Dutto, and academic scholars such as Wendy Ugolini, Margaret Rose, Valentina Poggi, Joseph Farrell, Jan McDonald, and Carla Dente. See the reference list for their major contributions.

⁵ Interestingly enough, the national stereotype of Italian 'mammismo' has recently attracted the attention of the academic world: for example, it is the topic of a project, directed by Dr Penelope Morris (University of Glasgow) and Prof Perry Willson (University of Dundee), whose results were presented at a conference in Edinburgh on the 17 May 2015. See <https://lammaitaliana.wordpress.com/tag/mammismo/>.

⁶ For example in *Hard to Get* (1980) the protagonist, Anna is the mouthpiece of the most fearsome aspects of Catholicism which she has been inculcated. Also in *Wedding Belles and Green Grasses* (1981), Evaristi presents three girls whose life has been indelibly marked by their Catholic upbringing: two of them are of Irish origins, while the third one comes from the Scottish-Italian community.

⁷ For the sake of historical accuracy, one should specify that the terrorist bombing at the train station in Bologna did not happen in the spring of 1980, as Evaristi indicates in a stage direction at the beginning of scene 3, but in the summer of the same year and precisely on the 2nd of August.

⁸ The two terms have become common in postcolonial-theory terminology to indicate the possibility of combining the respect of geographical local specificities with the changes produced by globalisation and the conception of transnational and transcultural elements bridging different regional realities. See, for example, Gikandi 2010: 22-35.

⁹ In this respect, I don't share Tom Maguire's opinion that 'her travels enable Elena to renegotiate her relationships to both Italy and Scotland. Her sense of self is founded in both, and the journeying between, as her identity is multiplied: lover, grandmother, mother, worker, woman' (Maguire 2011: 161-162).

¹⁰ The internal quotation is from Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

¹¹ The italics are in the original.

¹² 'Tally' is a shortened form for 'Italian', apparently with less derogative and racist connotations than similar terms in the US.

¹³ See Vijay Mishra, *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁴ Rosinella recalls the character of Nona in Rose and Rossini's play *Six Months Here, Six Months There*. A remarkable difference between them, though, is that she pretends not to be Italian when her grandchild is arrested in 1940 and changes her family name from Collini to Collins to sound foreign.

¹⁵ See Ian Brown's paper on *Tally's Blood* delivered at the 2013 ASLS Schools Conference, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqh9Y7tMvys>.

¹⁶ Here I am borrowing the phrase from Salman Rushdie's 1982 article 'The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance', which Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin famously used for their 1989 book on postcolonial theory and literature *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*. The idea in both cases is that postcolonial writers respond to the Western literary canon by means of parody and irony aimed at critiquing its central assumptions and assets. By the same token, Stefano exploits the Italian stereotype constructed by the Scots in order to turn it to his advantage.

¹⁷ Cf. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

¹⁸ In *Six Months Here, Six Months There*, the whole seventh scene is dedicated to the tragedy of the Arandora Star. The chorus of voices of all those who died say: 'Seven hundred enemy aliens. All drowned, in a deathtrap. 1 July 1940. The Arandora Star set sail from Liverpool bound for Canada. 1564 men were on board. Germans, Italians, enemy aliens. 2 July 1940. They were herded down in the hold. Barbed wire everywhere hemming them in. trapped tight in the hold as the water flowed in. No escape. At 7 am on 2 July, the Arandora was torpedoed 125 miles west of Ireland by a German U-boat, U47. The ship sank in thirty minutes and 700 men drowned. Two thirds were Italians. The ship: the Arandora Star. Arandora Star! Now, the Star of Shame. It went down with all those men onboard. 465 Italians.' Notebook 9 of the Italian Cultural Institute of Edinburgh, p. 18. Joe Pieri provides a detailed description of the episode in his 2005 study *The Scots-Italians* listed in the bibliography.

¹⁹ About the need to revise orthodox historiography see Walter Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History', in Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, eds., *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). Di Mambro's father was interned during the war, so she is personally touched by this general neglect on the part of British historians, and is critical of the British government for not compensating the survivors or the relatives of the victims. Her embedded critique therefore aims at denouncing the perpetuation of the injustices and prejudices against the Italian community even after the war.

²⁰ M. Evaristi, 'Convent Girls', in Bennett, J., Forgan, R., eds., *There's Something About a Convent Girl* (London: Virago, 1991: 82).