

TWO HALVES OF THE SAME KIWI: ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE AMONG NEW ZEALANDERS OF ITALIAN ORIGIN

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1. ITALY, BUT UPSIDE DOWN

New Zealand, or Aotearoa in Māori, is an archipelago in the southwestern Pacific Ocean consisting of two main islands and a series of smaller ones, which became a colony of the British Empire in 1840 when the leaders of the indigenous population, the Māori, signed the Treaty of Waitangi. Currently New Zealand is a member of the British Commonwealth.

New Zealand is almost the antipode of Italy. However, if you compare the maps of New Zealand and Italy, you can understand why a 19th century promoter of Italian migration pointed out that New Zealand «bears a striking resemblance to Italy, upside down with the toes pointing up» (Copland, 2005: § 1). Despite the similarities in both surface area and shape, Italy is quite populous with its 65 million inhabitants, while the population of New Zealand has only recently exceeded 5 million residents². Among these New Zealanders, informally known as Kiwis³, how many Italians are there?

According to the *Anagrafe degli italiani residenti all'estero* (A.I.R.E., 2022), the official registry office of Italians living abroad, on December 31 2020 there were 5,284 (3179 families) Italians in New Zealand, an increase compared to 4,953 (2,967 families) in 2019.

Italians in New Zealand represent only 0.1% of the 5,652,080 Italians residing abroad (9.5% of the Italian population and more than the total population of New Zealand!) (Licata, 2020).

To this small number, it is necessary to add those with a temporary visa for work reasons (high-level professionals and skilled labour), young people on working holidays, high school and university students on an exchange program, PhD candidates, and people linked to sporting and entertainment events. At the time of writing, many of these remain temporarily “stuck” in the country after the March 2020 closure of the borders as a protective measure against the Covid-19 pandemic, while very few migrants are allowed to enter. An exception was that of the *Luna Rossa* sailing team with their families, who enrolled their children in New Zealand schools and participated in the social and cultural activities of the Italian community in Auckland during their brief stay.

A.I.R.E. data, issued by the Italian Foreign Minister, include only Italian citizens who moved to New Zealand for a period of more than 12 months and those who already

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² The estimated resident population in New Zealand as of December 31, 2020 was equal to 5,106,400 (Stats NZ, 2020).

³ The Kiwi bird (*Aptyx australis*) became a symbol of New Zealand in the late 19th century and, by metonymy, the term Kiwi is used in New Zealand English (and elsewhere) as a synonym for New Zealander. For example, during World War I, New Zealand soldiers in Europe were called “Kiwies”. As for the famous fruit, until the 1970s in New Zealand it was called “Chinese gooseberry”. With the beginning of the export of the fruit to the United States in the 1950s, it was more neutrally renamed “giant kiwi berry”, which later became the well-renewed “kiwifruit” (Kinder, 1986).

reside in the country, both because they were born there from an Italian family, and from subsequent acquisition of Italian citizenship. However, it does not take into account those who, being of Italian origin, have not taken citizenship. On the contrary, the New Zealand census provides a fundamental local perspective on the presence of people who recognise themselves as being of Italian origin, regardless of their passports. Therefore, other data to consider, are the numbers of Italian New Zealanders—that is both New Zealanders of Italian origin and Italian-born people who reside in New Zealand.

The 2018 NZ census (Stats NZ, 2018b) counted 5,352 persons who identified with the Italian ethnic group, an increase compared to the past: in 2013 there were 3,795, and 3,114 in 2006. Ethnic group is used here as a measure of self-perceived cultural belonging, as opposed to race, ancestry, nationality or citizenship, and it includes some or all of the following characteristics: a common proper name; one or more elements of common culture that need not be specified, but may include religion, customs, or language; a unique community of interests, feelings, and actions; a shared sense of common origins or ancestry; a common geographic origin (Stats NZ, 2018a: § 1).

Furthermore, an interesting fact emerges from the census, which goes beyond the interests of this research, namely the particular links between the Māori and Italian populations. As Giorgio and Houkamau (2019) pointed out, proportionately more Italians than any other group identified their second ethnicity as Māori and, in the 2013 census, 28% of New Zealanders who claimed Italian ethnicity also identified as Māori⁴.

From a linguistic point of view, in an officially bilingual country, though with a clear predominance of English and only 4% native speakers of the indigenous language, *Te Reo Māori*, only 35.9% of Italian New Zealanders speak two languages and 10% three, and Italian may not be any of these (Stats NZ, 2018b).

As an Italian from Milan who emigrated to New Zealand in 2014, I am, according to the 2018 census (Figure.NZ, 2018), one of the 9,903 (being 0.21% of New Zealand population) Italian native speakers. In short, the presence of Italians and Italian language in Aotearoa New Zealand – one of the smallest Italian communities in the world (Hill, 2011) – is quite low, and considerably different from that of neighbouring Australia, which counts approximately 2 million people of Italian origin and was among the destinations of the second great migratory wave from Italy, lasting up to the 1970s⁵. Such a specific context makes our case study particularly valuable for a thorough study of the diffusion of Italian.

2. FIVE STORIES OF ITALIANNES IN AOTEAROA

Given these numbers, I performed a micro-ethnography on a specific group, composed of five female subjects, aged between 16 and 68, residing in greater Auckland⁶, who are Kiwis of Italian origin (with one, two or more citizenships) and who speak

⁴ See the studies conducted by Adalgisa Giorgio and Carla A. Houkamau (2019, 2020) on hybrid identities among Māori Italians, a topic that has not been examined for the purposes of my research.

⁵ The first wave of Italian emigration (1876-1913) goes from the unification of Italy to the beginnings of WW1; the second wave from the end of WW2 (1945) to 1973, the first year with a positive migratory balance for Italy. Between 1861 and 1973, about 27 million Italians left their home country. The last wave started at the end of the 20th century and has involved lower numbers of emigrants than the previous waves. Since it is associated with a higher level of tertiary education, it is also called the brain drain.

⁶ Auckland, located on the North Island, is the most populous city in New Zealand with its 1.5 million inhabitants in the urban area. It is also home to the largest Polynesian population in the world and the first destination for many of the migrants arriving in the country.

English as their first language and Italian as their second, at different levels of competence⁷.

Their small number makes them not representative for quantitative considerations, yet they have ethnographic relevance: they are informants on key aspects of the Italian language and cultural identity in New Zealand. I carried out a series of face-to-face semi-structured qualitative interviews, lasting from two to four hours, conducted in the linguistic and environmental setting chosen by the interviewees, and based on several sessions of *participant observation* involving immersion and interaction in the socio-cultural context of the informants.

Each of these five stories of Italianness in Aotearoa testifies to and enhances a particular trait of the relationship between Italian language and culture and the New Zealand social and historical context. In particular, I addressed the following: Italian as a language of migration, Italian as a language of culture, Italian taught at university, Italian as part of a fluid and transnational multi-identity, and Italian in the global market.

I adopted an eclectic approach that combines sociolinguistics, language teaching methodology, and cultural anthropology. Regarding the first two perspectives, I have analysed several factors, including:

- 1) the degree and type of linguistic and cultural contact with Italian language;
- 2) the variety of Italian known by the respondents;
- 3) the respondents' proficiency in Italian;
- 4) the degree of dispersion of Italian among the family generations;
- 5) the characteristics of both input and output in Italian of the respondents; and
- 6) the context of their learning process.

1. Typically, linguistic contact in the first generation of speakers who emigrate to a foreign country is unbalanced with respect to the language of origin; in the second generation, there is a multilingual competence, and in the third, it is biased towards the target language. Cultural contact, after the first generation, appears to be filtered by the family and community context: it is therefore an indirect contact (Diadori, 2011).

2. The varieties of Italian include the following: the diachronic varieties, which are the historical phase of the spoken language; the diatopic or geographical varieties; the diastratic varieties, by which it is meant the social group of speakers; the diaphasic or situational varieties, which relate to the communicative setting; and the diamesic varieties, which are the physical means by which language is expressed. As Berruto (1993) argues, we should imagine these dimensions of variation as a *continuum*, a variation scale that has two very distinct varieties at its ends and, between these, a series of varieties that fade imperceptibly into the other without it being possible to establish well-defined boundaries between one and the other.

3. Among the Italian speakers of Italian origin, there are those who have a proficient knowledge of the language, often limited in the areas of personal use but extendable to other uses, those who are partially competent, with only basic knowledge, and those who are barely competent and need to reconstruct their identity in relation to the country of origin (Diadori *et al.*, 2009).

4. The different contexts of use and the level of competence of Italian and dialect are examined, along with the progressive use of English and the loss of Italian within the family. This loss has various stages: from an initial reduction and fading of the lexicon

⁷ This micro ethnography, which could be extended in the future, was initially motivated by my participation in *Italy in Transit*, the fifth international symposium organized by the Florida Atlantic University in March 2021.

and morphosyntactic simplification, the next generation passes to a fragmentary language limited to a few lexical elements, and eventually to the disappearance of the original language (Diadori *et al.*, 2009).

5. Did the learning of Italian take place in a natural (spontaneous learning), formal (guided learning) or mixed environment? For this factor, it depends on the type of input⁸ the learner is exposed to, the ways in which this exposure is carried out, and how the learning process is activated. Furthermore, language learning takes place because the environment offers the learner opportunities for output: that is, for use and practice in the target language. The environments in which learning takes place are placed in a social, cultural, educational and historical scenario, namely a context (Diadori *et al.*, 2009).

6. A context, for example, is the Italian learned from a person of Italian origin residing abroad, who had a variety of Italian as the language of primary socialisation or who has learnt Italian to recover their origins.

I also recorded some diastatic variables of the respondents: age, gender, nationality, educational level, socio-cultural background, knowledge of other languages, and motivation for learning Italian. These motivations can be instrumental, integrative, and cultural (e.g., travelling, social integration, communicating with family, interest in the target language or culture, interest in literature; Pallotti, 1998).

Moreover, considering language a linguistic and cultural node of identity (Vedovelli, 2003), I also examined the relationship of the interviewees with the idea of Italy and Italianness: in what respects Italy is part of their self-perception and socio-cultural identity; how they have fabricated a legacy presumably left them by their ancestors; what their knowledge and preferences are of Italian literature, music, art, pop culture, and cuisine; which life projects brought them to Italy; what their image and interpretation of Italian contemporary society is; what strategies they undertake to keep their Italian side alive and, if relevant, pass on to future generations; and how they are involved in local Italian events⁹.

All the interviews started from a list of questions¹⁰, asked in no particular order, following the flow of the conversation and welcoming various topics brought to attention by the interviewees. This plot served more as a pretext and spur for a free and sometimes emotionally liberating narrative and touched on the most disparate topics. Some questions turned out to be too rigid and not very productive, while those that emerged during the conversation were often more meaningful. Both family members and my assistant photographer participated in the interviews and actively contributed to the flow of the stories, marked by frequent episodes of code switching between Italian, English and several Italian dialects such as Venetian, Piacentino, Tuscan, Sardinian, and Milanese. At the end, I asked everyone to name four words or short sentences associated with their idea of Italy: these answers turned out to be a worthy summary of the entire interview, highlighting significant differences and similarities compared to those provided by other individuals, such as native Italians and students of Italian who are not of Italian origin.

Both the semi-structured interviews and the participant observations were informed by a dialogic, or rather polyphonic, approach to ethnographic work, which considers the communicative exchange between the people involved as reciprocal, intersubjective, contingent, circumstantial, procedural and dynamic. As Clifford states (1988: 41):

⁸ The term input indicates the linguistic material with which the learner comes into contact. By output we mean all oral and written content produced by the learner (Pallotti, 1998).

⁹ See Appendix for a summary of the interviewees' data and answers.

¹⁰ See Appendix for the complete list of questions.

A discursive model of ethnographic practice brings into prominence the intersubjectivity of all speech, along with its immediate performative context. [...] Every use of *I* presupposes a *you*, and every instance of discourse is immediately linked to a specific, shared situation: no discursive meaning, then, without interlocution and context.

Thus, it is not possible to separate the content of the dialogue – a non-sequential multivocal oral performance – from the forms in which the opinions of the participants were expressed, nor from the spatial context in which they occurred, without compromising, at least in part, the possibility of communicating with others and understanding the dialogue itself.

Sharing a social space, indeed, conveys multiple information that reinforces, contradicts and expands what is communicated verbally. A central role is also played by the body, a *mindful body* as Lock and Scheper-Hughes (1987) called it, which is a conscious body that actively relates to the social world, is the subject of cultural processes, a producer of meanings, and is immersed in the space of sharing.

For this reason, I paid attention to the fact that my presence in the polyphonic event of the interview was a somatic mode of attention, a culturally elaborated way of engaging, with my own body, in contexts that include the embodied presence of others (Csordas, 1999). Moreover, crucial importance was given to analysing the informants' experience, which is the socially located and historically subjective experience that people have of the world by inhabiting their culturally informed bodies: that is, an analysis of how people live, through representations, themselves and the world.

Finally, I employed the anthropological notion of a dynamic, relational, negotiable, contextual and contrastive socio-cultural identity that individuals form as a result of interactions with the socio-cultural environment in which they grow up. Because when humans are born, they are in a place – an environment, a society and a culture – they are always surrounded by networks of relationships that will gradually bind them to people, objects, events, emotions, propensities, and meanings. Their individual subjectivity immediately enters a long process of constant construction, which will lead to determining their identity from the first years of life to death. To the extent humans grow up immersed in a space and surrounded by other people, identity will unfold on multiple levels such as subjective identity, cultural identity and social identity¹¹.

Identity, however, is never a fixed result, but rather a never interrupted development subject to evolution, transformation, crisis, and strictly connected to the presence of the others and to the relationships that are established with them. The existence, opinion and judgement of other persons are indeed essential: identity is also a way to categorise the distinction between *I* and *you* and *us* and *them*, in a process of inclusion and exclusion that allows people to identify (as a subject or as a group) and, at the same time, differentiate and distinguish from others.

In this constant and dialectical interaction and differentiation between identity and otherness, identity is a compromise, a negotiation and a hybrid human product, which should avoid essentialising and intolerant discourses about ethnic or cultural purity and authenticity. In reality, purity is too often associated with identity and «if identity is equated with integrity, the others produced by such identity inevitably become a menace» (Remotti, 2012: 140). As the wars of the 21st century have tragically and globally demonstrated, struggles for identity have historically involved individuals and societies, causing pragmatic effects on people's lives, often in the form of marginalisation, ethnicisation and negative self-perception, leading to ethnic persecutions and carnage.

¹¹ For an anthropological conceptualisation of identity, see among others: Aime (2004), Augé (2017), Geertz (1973), Fabietti (2000), Remotti (2005; 2010), Remotti, Mariano (2002), Todorov (2008).

This tendency to essentialise ethnic identity is not a prerogative of the past. On the contrary, today, *ethnic* has become a term linked to both positive (e.g., fashion, music, cuisine, design) and negative (war, invasion of foreigners, religious extremism) values that emphasises the local and localism in a world of advanced globalisation and has brought back into vogue an alleged cultural purity to be defended and exalted. Thus, in the era of the praise of multiculturalism, there is evident, in the current political rhetoric, a super-tribalisation of social groups and relations that produces a hierarchy among *cultures*, since the nineteenth-century concept of *races* was finally abandoned (Aime, 2006).

3. DAUGHTER OF MIGRANTS

Since the 1870s, New Zealand has seen an ongoing stream of Italian migrants who found their way here, often by chance or after trying their luck in Australia (Copland, 2005). For many years, they experienced discrimination, marginalisation and racism, along with episodes of support and generosity, only more recently seeing a change in the attitude towards them (Giorgio, Houkamau, 2020). This was still true when, after World War II, a number of refugees arrived as displaced persons, many from provinces ceded by Italy to Yugoslavia. Some worked in forestry, but most moved to cities (Copland, 2005). The story of Liliana¹², our first informant, begins like this.

She was born in New Zealand to an Italian father of Albanian-Croatian origin and an Italian mother of Italian, Hungarian, Croatian and Greek origin. They were originally from Zara (Zadar), which for centuries was one of the most important cities of the Republic of Venice, later an Italian enclave surrounded by Dalmatia and finally annexed by Yugoslavia. They fled the bombing and ethnic persecution and moved to the refugee camps of Gaeta until they left for a place “*they knew nothing about except that the Māori were dangerous*” (Participant Liliana, 2021). In 1951, the 21 years old electrician father and 18 years old housewife mother set sail, along with 1200 others, aboard the *Goia*, a ship that sank on its return journey. Poor and undernourished, traumatised by the war and with no English, little by little they settled in the new country, built a house, had four children and set up a prosperous business.

Growing up surrounded mostly by Italians and other minorities, primary school was a turning point for Liliana, the eldest of the four children, not only for learning English, which later became her primary language, but also for developing a multicultural identity. Before school, she only spoke the Venetian dialect of Zara and a little Croatian. As a child, she remembers, “*I was so much a mix, a bit of everything, this and that and a little less of that because of my other origins*” (Participant Liliana). She claims that, especially at home, she felt fully Italian, even if her Italian friends questioned her Italian purity, because in that context she mainly spoke Italian, she was nourished with Italian food and culture, and she frequented the homes of other Italians. It was at school where she started feeling different because of her foreign name and habits (she used to eat salami sandwiches for lunch and coffee and milk for afternoon tea). Thus, she felt proud of her Italian culture but, simultaneously, was aware of her difference as an outsider.

In other words, until 30 years old, Liliana felt very confused. “*I was in desperate need of tūrangawaewae, a Māori word that means our place of standing, of belonging*,” she continues (Participant Liliana). Her first trip to Italy, in 1981, was a revelatory experience: there, together with her mother and aunts, standing on the bones of her ancestors, surrounded by the Venetian dialect of her childhood, she felt like she had come home. Through several other moments of powerful spiritual connection with her blood lines such as this,

¹² I used pseudonyms to keep interviewees' names confidential for the purpose of this article.

for example praying in a church vault in Santa Eufemia (Croatia), dipping her feet in the Ionic sea, and going to Gaeta's waterfront, she was able to negotiate the multiple parts of her identity, and she made peace with them. "*Italy made it clear who I was: a New Zealander with an Italian background, and the rest following*"¹³ (Participant Liliana).

The empowering awareness of such a hybrid identity, according to her, was a resource in her social work with the Māori and Pasifika¹⁴ community, especially as a counsellor for abused women and displaced people from the Caribbean. As she says, "*we are different people but with the same experience; the wairua, the spirit, is similar*" (Participant Liliana). Besides this, her darker skin colour and her Italian education and multicultural perspective allowed her to connect with them more easily than her Pākehā (New Zealand European) colleagues did. Liliana explained this as being because they were too immersed in the Pākehā-ruled society.

When the discussion moves to Italy, however, such a positive idea of cultural hybridity changes and appears limited by the perception of a culturally essentialised identity that involves people, places and products, which are losing their true Italian authenticity. Liliana recalls her more recent visit to a Venice sacked by day-trip tourists and literally bought up by Chinese investors: "*The whole culture has changed: so many languages, vibrations are changed, the atmosphere has changed, dresses are changed*" (Participant Liliana). In all these cases, she perceives a negative turn that involves people, cities and the artefacts that have lost their true Italian character, attacked, subdued and almost killed by the progress of heavy Asian investment¹⁵.

This perception and interpretation of the most recent Italian environment produces a sadness, the feeling of being alien, which is contrasted by the positive memories collected in some country towns, especially in the Tuscia area, "*more down to earth*" (Participant Liliana), where she could still find the Italian uniqueness. These places were those of Liliana and her husband's last journey through Italy, from Taranto to Trieste, following the route of the soldiers of the NZ army and the father of Liliana's Pākehā husband in particular, who fought in Italy during the Second World War as a driver of the 4th Field Ambulance. Thus, family memories and war sentiments actively entered the way in which the places have been experienced by Liliana and her husband, endowing villages and cities with a historical and emotional depth and a magical aura that other places no longer have.

In Liliana's story, it emerges how the conflict and the interplay of different and contradictory discourses contribute to shape and reshape the experience of oneself and the surrounding world, just as the Covid-19 pandemic suddenly limited Liliana's chances of going to Italy and made her look at New Zealand with new eyes: a wonderful country that made her forget the need to go abroad. After all, now it is possible to communicate with your family via Zoom and WhatsApp.

This knot of contradictions has a lot to do with the evolution of the linguistic and cultural identity of a person who was born in the 1950s as the daughter of Italian working-class migrants and raised in the social and cultural transformations of New Zealand. Back in that time, intolerance and prejudice were widespread in all destinations of Italian immigrants, mostly poor and with a low socio-cultural background. Already, in 19th century New Zealand, Italian settlers had been discriminated against and stereotyped as

¹³ Here she is referring to her paternal origin from Croatia and Albania.

¹⁴ This umbrella term refers to people, cultures and language of ethnic groups migrating from the Pacific Islands – Sāmoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu, and other smaller Pacific nations – and living in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

¹⁵ See Clifford (1988) on the fabrication of authenticity in the era of technical reproducibility, its link with Western creativity, and its aesthetic and economic value on the market. See also Augé (1979) on the search for and claiming of an original identity as a reaction to a widely shared feeling of crisis and disorientation caused by the massification of social life and the spectacular invasion of anonymous capital.

undesirable immigrants (Boncompagni, 2000), while during fascism and the Second World War, various Italian migrants (including naturalised New Zealanders or born in the country) suffered exclusion, humiliation, job loss and, in some cases, imprisonment as “foreign enemies” (Giorgio, Houkamau, 2019). Alternatively, as an adult, Liliana has lived in a country that has progressively embraced an inclusive attitude towards minority communities, starting with the indigenous Māori one, and developed a growing interest in Italian culture, language, art, fashion, design, and cuisine. However, the idea that a multifaceted identity is a lifelong resource, for Liliana, remains confined, so to speak, in New Zealand, while with respect to today’s Italian society, to which she has filtered and limited access, the fear of losing a uniqueness (more imagined than real) prevails for her.

It is not uncommon to find examples of fractures and contradictions in interpretations of reality in the second generation of immigrants who have suffered the effects of unequal power relations and social stigma (Božić-Vrbančić, 2005). It is therefore not surprising that, on the one hand, Liliana takes sides against the structural racism of New Zealand society dominated by the Pākehā majority. On the other hand, she expresses her anger towards the aggressiveness of Asian investors, in which she sees a form of cultural imperialism that threatens the image of an authentic Italy, probably forgetting how Italian uniqueness is actually the result of a long history of cultural mixing and dominations.

Also, on a linguistic level, Liliana shows a clash between her idea of the Italian language, one associated with culture, to be preserved and handed down, and the reality of cultural hybridisation and the substantial loss of that language over generations. In her family, Liliana represents the second generation of Italian language speakers and she demonstrates a fluency in Venetian regional variety of Italian, mixed with her parents’ dialect (presumably that of Zadar) and modernised during the months spent in Italy travelling and living with aunts of the same age. She considers herself as bilingual but “*a bit rusty in Italian*” (Participant Liliana). However, the use of Italian is limited to the colloquial register expressed through the oral medium; for years, it has only been used to communicate via telephone or WhatsApp with family and friends in Italy¹⁶.

As Rubino (2003) points out, the level of linguistic competence in the second generation is linked to family factors; for example, birth order affects the loss of language and culture across generations. According to Liliana, her younger siblings only have passive proficiency in Italian that was accompanied by a less adventurous attitude: they never went to Italy, they did not see the society their parents came from and, because of this, they found it more difficult to connect with them. The linguistic situation of Liliana’s family moved from the multilingualism of her parents, for whom English was only instrumental to living and working in the new country, while they continued to use the Venetian dialect within the family, to the English monolingualism adopted by her children and granddaughter. Although they feel proud of being of Italian origin, they know little more than *grazie*, *buongiorno* and a little swearing in all that “*funny language*” of their maternal ancestors (Participant Liliana).

Despite the almost total loss of the language, Liliana’s hope is that the older generation will teach the younger generation what they know of the past, holding onto it as a treasure, a *tesoro*, or in Māori *taonga*, a legacy to preserve that can be inherited by young Italians. This heritage, deeply blended with Kiwi-English culture, is expressed above all in the domain of the family, and in particular of food, relatives’ names, daily greetings and the memory of a maternal Catholic religiosity. This is confirmed and summarised by the four

¹⁶ The four hours of the interview were conducted mainly in English, with numerous episodes of code switching with Italian both on my part and on Liliana’s part. Italian emerged above all in moments of strong emotion, in some specific areas and when I decided to rephrase the question/sentence to be clearer, given that Italian is my mother tongue.

Italian words/expressions chosen by Liliana: *io ti amo; la vita è dolce; mangia mangia; and che Dio ti abbraccia*¹⁷. Moreover, while her preferences in the field of Italian art and cinema and music reflect a generic interest in Italy, sometimes merged with family memories (such as the folk songs sung by her mother), when it comes to food, her words are precise, strongly influenced by the Venetian dialect in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation but they do not fail to include typical dishes of the Kiwi cuisine: *fritole, crostole, agnello arrosto con cipolle, chicken soup [sic], pomodori dell'orto, gnocchi, strudel*¹⁸. For Liliana, “*culture is like being in a family: Italians are very big on food, on hospitality, on wine, on inviting people and having a shared meal. It is natural to me*” (Participant Liliana).

4. PASSPORT FOR THE CULTURE

The second interviewee is Maura from San Francisco, California, adopted at birth by an Italian mother and an English father, married to a Kiwi and who moved to Auckland in 1982. Although, she says, genetically she has nothing Italian, she is very proud of her Italian household. She was raised by an Italian woman and spent most of her youth with her Italian family and the Italian-Mexican neighbour's family of Ligurian origin. Her mother was born in the United States to a father who immigrated from Lucca to California in 1906 and a mother born in America to parents from Piacenza.

Italian was the language of her adoptive grandparents: her grandfather, who worked for the Italian consulate in Seattle and San Francisco in the 1920s, and her grandmother, an elegant, cultured and progressive *nonna*. Maura's only trip to Italy, in 2007, was aimed at finally seeing the places of her maternal origin. She went to the town of Lucca to obtain the birth certificate of Gioachino Unti, the other great-grandfather. According to family lore, repeated frequently “*around the dinner table*”, he was the first public accountant in Italy, and was a rich and cultured man who sponsored a talented young musician, Giacomo Puccini. Among the treasured family heirlooms stands a postcard sent to him by Puccini¹⁹.

During this trip, Maura spent a few days in Florence with her stepsister, walking and visiting museums. “*I loved it. I felt at home. Even though I had never been there and hadn't studied Italian, the pronunciation wasn't bad after a few glasses of wine and communicating was easy*” (Participant Maura, 2021). She was also surprised by a racist thought that she unwittingly had: she saw an Asian salesman who spoke perfect Italian and imagined the voice of her old-fashioned great-grandfather saying “*what are you doing? Asians don't speak Italian*”. “*But the world and Italy have changed*”, she added, “*and that's okay*” (Participant Maura).

Italian for Maura is a language of culture, which leads to Italian places of art and beauty that are enriched by family history. It is also a language of the heart, which was spoken at the dinner table; “*Italian was around me all my life*” she says, and was made up of words like *condito, a tavola, risi e bisì, cacciatore, salsa*²⁰ (Participant Maura). It is mostly in the kitchen – and especially in cooking for others – that her Italian heritage is expressed: the baking learned from the mother, the recipes of the grandmother, the pasta tricks of her grandmother's second husband, an architect from Brescia. Italian is also a legacy that is probably going to be lost, as Maura's daughter preferred learning Spanish and Mandarin over Italian, and the same fate happened to the cooking. Thus, the words chosen by

¹⁷ This last sentence, meaning “may the Lord embrace you” is in Venetian.

¹⁸ *Fritole* are roundish and soft fritters, rich in raisins and pine nuts, typically prepared for the Venetian Carnival. Also, *crostole*, crispy fried Italian pastry, are popular during Carnevale. The other dishes are: roast lamb with onions, chicken soup, garden tomatoes, gnocchi, and strudel.

¹⁹ The family is currently in the process of gathering documentation to substantiate these “around the dinner table” tales.

²⁰ *Risi e bisì* is a Venetian recipe based on rice and peas.

Maura at the end of our interview confirm her particular link with the Italian culture as made up of expressions – in Italian, in a mixture of Italian and northern dialect and in a grammatically incorrect Italian—which are useful for naming food, love, and family: *andiamo, sopra coscia, abre la bocca, avere voglio di cucinato, vieni qui, bacime*²¹. It is interesting to note how these words differ from those chosen by Emily, a Kiwi friend of the same age and a schoolmate of Maura at the Dante Alighieri School, who participated in the interview. She is passionate about Italy but has no Italian origins. Emily's words –*amici, il cibo, l'arte, la lingua* – reveal her appreciation for beautiful Italy, but not that intimate bond with culture which, on the other hand, represents one of the strongest motivations in students of Italian origin to rediscover the language of their motherland.

After her trip to Italy, Maura decided to study Italian and enrolled in the Dante Alighieri society, one of the agencies for the diffusion of the Italian language and culture in New Zealand, together with the Club Garibaldi and Circolo Italiano in Wellington, and Club Italia in Nelson²². It was established in Auckland in 1955 and in Christchurch in 1960.

Among the educated social classes, interest in the study of Italian is still alive today. Italian is seen as the Romance language closest to classical Latin (apart from Sardinian), already widespread in the 16th century in music, art, theatre, the Catholic clergy, classical literature and archaeology. Moreover, in recent decades, other factors have been added to this intellectual curiosity: the effects of the great Italian emigration, which created Italian communities all over the world and pushed countless learners of Italian origin to reconnect with the motherland through school and university studies; the worldwide success of *made in Italy*, which has brought Italianisms into the language of design, fashion, food, and wine; and mass cultural tourism (De Mauro, Vedovelli, 1996). Among other factors, Law 153/1971 established language and culture courses, coordinated by Italian authorities but organised in local schools, with the purpose of maintaining the cultural and linguistic roots of the Italian families who emigrated abroad (Vedovelli, 2003). Also, Law 297/1994 has incentivised the teaching of language to Italian descendants for maintaining the Italian identity²³.

Thus, in countries where the Italian language and culture have found a new prestige, schools like Dante Alighieri have great appeal, both for local students and for those whose mother tongue is that of the host country but who feel a particular bond with Italy. The worldwide network of Dante Societies, a non-state organisation, works alongside the Italian Cultural Institutes, the departments of Italian Studies, and the Italian schools abroad. In doing so, it not only offers language and culture courses but also organises cultural tourism and conferences and promotes Italian books, periodicals, and podcasts (De Mauro, Vedovelli, 1996).

When Maura arrived in Auckland in 1982, there was practically “*no Italian community at all*,” she says (Participant Maura). It was difficult to find typical products, such as salami, mortadella, Parma ham, focaccia, ravioli, and polenta.

²¹ Some explanation is needed for the non-standard Italian expressions: *sopra coscia*: chicken thigh (non-standard Italian); *abre la bocca*: open your mouth (regional Italian); *avere voglio di cucinato*: I feel like cooking (incorrect Italian); *bacime*: kiss me (regional Italian). It should also be added that the first word chosen was a “bad word,” but the interviewee preferred not to count it on her word list.

²² Wellington's Club Garibaldi, founded in 1882, was probably the first Italian club in the southern hemisphere. The Circolo Italiano, affiliated with the Dante Alighieri Society, was created in the capital in 1959. A Club Italiano was also active in Auckland from 1925 until the Second World War (Hill, 2011).

²³ More recently, the FIRB 2009-2012 research project, funded by the Ministry of Education and developed by a network of universities, investigated Italian within the multilingual environments of the descendants of Italian immigrants in the world, it implemented remote language training models for the recovery of the Italian language, and created advanced training courses for the industrialisation of the Italian language and culture in the world (Vedovelli, 2012).

I cried, I made my ravioli, until 25 years ago when Sabato and Delmaine opened their shops. ... We used to buy huge jars to share with the neighbours. [...] Another example: how to make ossobuco? Veal was rare but the Dutch who lived in east Auckland had it. You adapt to what is around you! (Participant Maura)

Then she began attending the annual Italian festival organised by the Dante Alighieri, the film festival and the language school. As a student, she started “from zero” (Participant Maura), as a beginner, and she has no different skills compared to her classmates. She does have a latent linguistic competence (Balboni, Santipolo, 2003), a greater cultural affinity, and a personal relationship with the idea of Italy, mediated by family and affection, which influence her motivations in studying. This type of stimulus can positively encourage the student’s commitment, but at the same time, it can raise high expectations of oneself, thus causing anxiety and activating the *affective filter*, which inhibits effective learning. However, Maura’s primary purpose for taking lessons does not differ from that of most of the approximately 260 students enrolled in 2022 at Auckland’s Dante Alighieri²⁴: getting ready for cultural tourism in the *Bel Paese* and for an intensive course, perhaps in Bologna or Lucca. More precisely, that of Maura’s is a cultural *tourism of the roots*, a phenomenon that is emerging in Italy as in other European countries with a history of strong migrations, especially towards the Americas. Migrants who have been away for a long time, or their descendants, especially if they have lost all or part of the bond with the language, culture, and places of origin, return on vacation to their family’s places. They usually experience an emotionally rich and touristically sustainable journey, as opposed to mass assault tourism, which plunders the territory, leaving behind mainly garbage. This niche tourism integrates aspects of cultural tourism with those of experiential tourism and is usually deeply involved with local and international communities (Ferrari, Nicotera, 2021; Lemmi, Pinagli, 2016)²⁵.

5. ITALIAN AT UNIVERSITY

Italian in New Zealand is also taught in the language departments of the Waipapa Taumata Rau – University of Auckland, and Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington. Over the years there has been a drastic decline in the number of enrolments, especially of those who major in this subject²⁶.

An example of this is the School of Cultures, Languages, and Linguistics (CLL), which, in the Faculty of Arts, represents the centre for studying European and Asian languages,

²⁴ About 200 students enrolled in the first semester of 2022, plus about 60 who participated in the intensive Italian language week in January. Of these, about one-third are men and two-thirds are women, who represent the majority, especially in the intermediate and advanced courses (Dante Alighieri School, private communication, February 9, 2021). Even if the average age is quite high, young couples of Italian origin, mainly South American, who attend a preparation course for the Italian citizenship exam, are on the increase. The number of students enrolled in beginner courses, however, has fallen significantly due to travel restrictions imposed by the New Zealand Government as a protective measure against the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent almost impossibility of tourism in Italy.

²⁵ As regards migratory phenomena and *genealogical* tourism from the city of Lucca, in particular, since 1978 the *Lucchesi nel mondo* association has been involved in maintaining and developing relations between the territory, local authorities, and communities residing abroad. The association is also the owner of the Puccini Museum, dedicated to the musician, and is an active part of the project *The lands of Giacomo Puccini*.

²⁶ A comprehensive and clear discussion of the teaching of Italian in New Zealand can be found in Manai (2017).

literature and cultures, language teaching, linguistics, and translation at the University of Auckland. Here, a variety of Italian language courses are offered for undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral students wanting to learn to speak, read, and write Italian from beginner to advanced levels. In particular, the undergraduate language acquisition courses are delivered in three stages (beginners, intermediate, and advanced), divided into two progressive levels (1 and 2), and normally carried out in 3 years (Martelli, 2020).

Compared to the past, when in the 1990s there were about 150 students enrolled in the first year, 70 in the second one and 30 in the third, taking Italian as a major, in 2021 the number was drastically lower, with a total of 232 students and only two majoring in the subject and two doctoral candidates. The highest number (145) is represented by GenEd²⁷ students enrolled in *Introductory Italian Language*, who take Italian as a general education course and will not continue thereafter. Among the reasons for this choice, there is certainly the idea that Italian is an easy exam to pass, but there is also its proximity to other Romance languages studied in high schools and, to a lesser extent, having Italian origin or knowledge of the language in the family.

Students of Italian represent only 5% of the total of students enrolled in the CLL school in March 2021, ranking in a medium-low position when compared to the other foreign languages taught, such as Chinese (10%), French (8.8%), German (4.7%), Japanese (14.2%), Korean (12.5%), Latin (0.9%), Russian (1.06%) and Spanish (11.1%)²⁸ (CLL School, private communication, March 16, 2021). This reduction derives in part from the general trend in the global language industry and the marketability of Italian, but it is also influenced by New Zealand educational policies, which, despite the rhetoric of multiculturalism, do not encourage language learning at high school. Italian, in particular, is still absent in the language curricula, while at university it competes with Spanish, French, German and especially the Asian languages of countries with strong economies, China and Japan.

As Vedovelli (2016) argues, this crisis, which is spread all over the world and closely related to the sharp cut in Italian institutional funds, has seen a 30% drop in students enrolled in Italian language and culture courses. Thus, the linguistic education that, since the beginning of the 1970s, had brought Italian into schools in many countries, not only among young Italian descendants but also among many children of different origins, has steadily reduced. This decline also affects teachers, reducing their number and jeopardising the educational attraction of Italian within the competitive dynamics of the global language market. At the level of tertiary education, Italian Departments suffer the pressure from other languages that are supported with greater resources by their respective countries, which affects the possibility of teaching advanced competences in Italian.

Gaia, our third informant, is a student of law, linguistics and German at the University of Auckland. She was born in New Zealand to a Kiwi mother and an Italian father, a university lecturer of Italian studies who transmitted to her not only the language but also the love for Italian literature, art, popular culture, as well as a heartfelt attachment to their Sardinian identity. Although she is not herself enrolled in Italian, several of her classmates have suffered from the gradual reduction in the courses being offered, especially literature, and ended up choosing other majors, due to the increasingly reduced number of teachers employed, mainly in language acquisition courses.

²⁷ Some programs at the University of Auckland require students to choose one or two general education (GenEd) courses. These are papers they take outside of their main program, which help them acquire new skills, such as a foreign language.

²⁸ I consider here only foreign languages, which together reach 65% of CLL enrolments as March 2021. Other subjects are also taught, such as academic English, comparative literature, linguistics, etc., bringing the total to 100%.

Gaia considers herself half Italian and half New Zealander but, overall, more Kiwi, since she was born and raised in New Zealand. Still, Italy plays a big part in her identity, “*not as it happens to some Italian Americans whose only link is Italian-American cuisine*”²⁹ (Participant Gaia, 2021). Indeed, only one generation separates her from Italy, a place where she goes often and would like to live for a while in the future. In addition, she has native speaking competence in spoken Italian, not limited to the colloquial register but also applicable in more formal contexts. However, her written proficiency is not on the same level and would require some study to be acceptable on a professional or academic level.

For Gaia, Italian is the language of her paternal family, which is normally spoken not only at her father’s house in Auckland but also in Sardinia, especially when with her grandmother, relatives and family friends. “*My Italian identity is my Sardinian identity,*” she says. “*When I think of Italy, I think of Sardinia: dazzling white quartz sandy beaches, gnocchetti, the Sartiglia carnival in Oristano*” (Participant Gaia). This is the place where she has gone every year since she was 9 months old, and where she has attended primary, intermediate and then high school for at least one month a year. At the age of 14, she enrolled for 6 months at *liceo scientifico*, finding a few things difficult, like the number of subjects, Latin, and making friends, because many of her classmates lived even two hours away from school. However, she loved having a hot meal at home in the middle of the day.

Her preferences in terms of cinema, literature and music clearly show the influence of the eclectic tastes of her father, an Italian professor, who has shared with her films, songs and books, just as a Sardinian gastronomic heritage emerges in her broader love for good food. However, Gaia does not fail to refer to the most recent Italian pop culture, keeping up to date thanks to RaiPlay, Spotify and friends. The four words/expressions chosen at the end of the interview were: *su moenti no pappu zaffarani*³⁰, *la spiaggia*, *gelato*, *mia nonna*.

Her competence in Italian allows her to speak it in any context: depending on the communicative situation, she chooses whether to express herself in one or the other language. She is extremely aware not only of her linguistic competence, but also of how different language codes imply different socio-cultural attitudes: for example, she says, in an English context she appears a bit weird, while in an Italian milieu she might be perceived as more reserved. It is precisely the most conservative traits of Italy, such as less freedom in dressing and a widespread sexism in social and family interactions, that disturb Gaia the most, as well as the cultural homogeneity that prevails in Sardinia, which contrasts with the multicultural social fabric of the Auckland neighbourhood where she grew up.

Gaia represents an example of a serenely developed identity through a bilingual linguistic and cultural education that did not place the two languages and cultures on different levels of a social hierarchy, although English prevails as the language of her primary socialisation and the language of the country in which she spends most of her time. This type of education acts above all on the level of personal self-realisation, making her feel fully herself – even if different – whether she speaks Italian or English, a citizen of two communities or rather of the whole world. Cultural relativism and curiosity for the different are also encouraged, making her recognise where she prefers to be within the multicultural community (Balboni, 2002).

According to her words, she does not feel completely Italian because she is not perfect with the language nor does she know certain habits but, on the other hand, she also feels not entirely Kiwi: her surname can easily be taken as Māori or Pasifika, as can her darker

²⁹ This is a translation of the original sentence, as this interview was conducted in Italian.

³⁰ This is a Sardinian saying that means “the donkey does not eat saffron”, that is, uncultured people don’t appreciate beautiful things.

skin and hair. Nevertheless, neither of the two perceptions makes her feel confused or lacking, being instead a conscious self-analysis useful to see limits, flexibility and richness of her intercultural communicative competence.

6. NEW GLOBAL CITIZENS

Although the process of reparation and reconciliation with the native Māori population and other minorities still has a long way to go, the younger New Zealand population is oriented towards multiculturalism³¹. Auckland, in particular, with its growing diversity, is the most ethnically diverse region in New Zealand, with 43% identifying as European, 28.5% as Asian, 11% as Māori, 15.5% as inhabitants of the Pacific Islands and 2% as Middle Eastern and Latin Americans or African (Education Review Office, 2018).

Not only are children and teenagers increasingly multilingual and competent in different cultures but they are also aware of the social appreciation of this aspect. They do not feel pushed to choose between affiliations: they are citizens of a global world that appreciates local value, and their roots stretch until they touch many territories, cultures and identities. The same perception of multiple identities is replaced by a hybrid and multi-located identity: these *bricoleurs* of cultures play different roles fluidly, strategically activating one or the other, while immersed in a spirit of coexistence, inclusion and mutual acceptance (Giuffrè, Clemente, 2009).

However, to better frame the situation of Gaia and the other young women interviewed for this research, the words of Zygmunt Bauman (2004) are perhaps useful. According to the philosopher, such a vision of the multicultural era risks reflecting only the experience of a self-referential global elite, which is free to travel across a vast social, cultural and spatial horizon and choose from a multicoloured range of life possibilities.

So speaks Elsa, 16 years old, born in Auckland to an Italian mother who emigrated in 1992 from Milan and a New Zealand father:

Because I am half Italian, people in New Zealand think: oh, that is so cool. When I am here, I feel more Italian because everyone else is so Kiwi, but when I am over there I feel like, oh I really am a Kiwi, a hundred percent. I definitely feel like I am split right in the middle. I am not one side or the other. And I love being Italian. (Participant Elsa, 2021)

This love, according to her, derives from the fact that among all the places in the world, she has been lucky enough to have a special bond with a wonderful place, where there is the best of everything: the cuisine she loves, the cities, the beautiful coasts.

Born and raised in Auckland, the closest subjects to Italian she studied at school were Latin, plus a Tarantella club after school. She has a passive proficiency in Italian but a

³¹ Long-term injustices, such as the loss of land and power and the impoverishment of the Māori people, which followed the controversial treaty signed between Māori and the British Crown in 1840, demanded compensation in the late 20th century, and many of the breaches were finally recognised. The Waitangi Tribunal was established in 1975 to hear allegations of treaty violations by the Crown. Since 1985, the court has been able to hear complaints relating to violations dating back to 1840 and has issued reports on these allegations. This process of restoration included formal apologies from the Crown and involved cultural reparations such as restoring Māori toponyms (Hill, 2012) and returning human remains (Favole, 2003). Above all, apologies are not just about the redistribution of rights and land but also about recognition as part of a social narrative that aims to mend the fractures in national collective memory, heal the present and resettle the future. It has also worked as a way to contain political dissent and limit civil disharmony (Celermajer, Kidman, 2012).

very keen interest in some aspects of Italian culture, such as cooking and design, mostly filtered by her family experience. Her mother, in fact, owns an Italian interior design import company that is among the sponsors of the Italian film festival, an exciting moment for Elsa, and of the Italian festival organised by Dante Alighieri, where she goes in search of Italian *Molino Bianco* biscuits, just like myself.

Within the family, where mainly English is spoken, Italian has become the language for some special moments: car trips with mum or after dinner card games, moments when Elsa tries to improve her fragmented language. She is very aware of her limited competence and places great expectations on herself: she recently enrolled at Dante Alighieri, both because she is planning her gap year in Italy and because she feels she has to carry on this legacy. Her dream is to spend some time travelling and working in the places of her family (Milan, Capri) but also in the places of her imagination, such as Tuscany, where she will be shopping in the morning markets, taking long walks and playing lots of music.

As often happens in the case of children and adolescents of Italian origin who include Italian in their school or extracurricular *curriculum*, motivation is activated primarily by parents who want to keep the bond with their origins alive in their children as well. To this is also added both the instrumental and emotional drive to communicate with Italian family members.

Not surprisingly, then, Elsa chose these words to symbolise her relationship with Italy: *famiglia, bella, amore, history* [sic], while her first pick in food made all the participants in the interview laugh³²: “*avocado on toast... but with cherry tomatoes on top!*” (Participant Elsa). As in the case of Gaia, when it comes to cinema and music, her inherited love for old fashioned Italy mixes with new tastes in terms of pop culture.

The reflections/projections of Elsa are mainly polished memories and mythologised images of Italy – the grandmother’s house in Ischia, the ancient villages, the great metropolis – that reflect her passion for antique things, as opposed to New Zealand where everything is quite recent. This is also evident in her experience in the family *made in Italy* furniture business, and in the vagueness of the projects of a fortunate teenager of the new millennium. At the same time, she has a realistic perception of the city where she spent the most time, Milan, and where she has been so often that she does not even know how to describe it: she is “*just glad to have first-hand experiences of one of the great metropolises of the world*” (Participant Elsa).

Moreover, Elsa’s positive opinions and fascinating images of Italy reveal how, in the new millennium, the profile of Italian migrants has changed. Today, those arriving in New Zealand are highly qualified or skilled entrepreneurs and professionals looking for an alternative lifestyle and a less precarious and overpopulated labour market. Not only has the attitude towards them improved, but their self-perception is also different: they see themselves as citizens who make an important contribution to the host country. Expanding on this, in the next paragraphs, I will discuss how Italy and Italian things are recently enjoying a new prestige (Giorgio, Houkamau, 2019).

7. MADE IN ITALY

The circulation of Italian products in New Zealand is relatively recent. It was only with the arrival of the last large group of Italians to New Zealand in the 1960s and 1970s – highly skilled engineers, tunnellers and miners, working in two large hydroelectric schemes in the North Island – that, for the first time, Italian food and wine appeared in

³² In addition to Elsa and me, her mother and my assistant photographer also participated in the interview.

the local supermarket and Italian festivals were celebrated (Hill, 2011). Subsequently, the Italians employed in Team Prada during the America's Cups led to a greater diffusion of *made in Italy* products, including luxury brands such as Gucci, Versace, Furla, Molteni & C, and Poliform.

Now, several cultural events are organised every year, such as the aforementioned *Italian Film Festival*, the *Festival Italiano* in Auckland, and the *Festa Italia* in Wellington, that marry the Italian enogastronomy with cultural shows, mainly tailored to local taste.

Made in Italy contributes to the promotion of Italian within the competitive language industry, exploiting the creative and technological prestige of fashion and design, gastronomy and winery, architecture and infrastructural, biomedical and nautical engineering. Even if Italian does not have immediate marketability, especially in New Zealand, unless someone operates in niche sectors such as opera singing, ancient art, or language teaching, it is enjoying a renewed attractiveness. All over the world, there is a revival of Italian products, which have become the symbol of a commercially seductive, highly exportable and mythologised Italian essence. Just as Italy attracts millions of tourists every year to see the masterpieces of art, listen to opera in the theatre, savour the delicious regional dishes, and immerse themselves in the crystalline waters of the islands, the *made in Italy* artefacts have the power of aesthetic evocation.

Italian fills billboards and menus with pseudo-Italian names, often creatively reworked by marketing agencies, which evoke a way of being different from everyday monotony. Thus, a cheap beer like Peroni is advertised by a beautiful and refined woman who sips it on a boat in the Mediterranean. Italian has become an exotic language endowed with a symbolic value that has lasted for hundreds of years, thanks to its formidable historical, culinary and artistic heritage. The globally spread *made in Italy* goods testify to an identity that is the direct heir of the classical age, enriched by centuries of fruitful cultural intertwining (Vedovelli, 2016).

Made in Italy brings us to our last interviewee, Chiara, who has successfully created a brand of excellence thanks to her Italian-New Zealand cultural identity. Double citizenship, bilingual, she grew up between New Zealand, Japan and Italy, where she spent most of her school years.

After graduation, she returned to New Zealand and created an import company selling Italian wines. In the 2000s, the prestige of Italy and Italian products was already consolidated in this country. However, as she says, even if “*everyone in New Zealand loves Italy, Italians and all the Italian things, few people can tell a good product from a less good one*” (Participant Chiara, 2021)³³. This is because, until very recently, there was not much passion for what to eat and what to drink to accompany food.

Thus, she began to import her favourite blends from the vineyards near her maternal home in Veneto. To launch the brand on the market, she valorises her Kiwi half: the company takes its name from the All Blacks and the player number of her father, a famous rugby union coach and former player. On the other hand, to convince customers of the authenticity and quality of the product, she treasured her bond with Italy, rooted in the Treviso hills. Each wine is named after a family member or close friend and comes with a short story that explains what kind of experience it offers: as simple as “*Nonno Mario*” or refined as “*Malanotte*” (bad night), the wine that was, according to a local legend, the wine of the last supper.

By combining quality products, personal experience and storytelling, Chiara has benefited from the plurality of her identities and produced a synthesis of tradition, creativity and knowledge of the territory designed for clients who associate positive social, aesthetic and gastronomic values with Italy. Many of them regularly undertake cultural

³³ This is a translation of the original sentence, as this interview was conducted in Italian.

tourism in Italy and, for this reason, are also often motivated to learn Italian. For Chiara, who feels more Italian than Kiwi, this job is also a way to stay connected with both of her countries and, in particular, with her beloved *nonni*.

At the end of our interview, her selection of films, books, dishes and, above all, musical groups, such as Calcutta and Pinguini Tattici Nucleari, bring her closer to the tastes of her Italian peers than any other participants in my research. Among them, Chiara is also the only one to have attended a long and continuous period of school in Italy and to demonstrate a perfectly balanced bilingual competence in Italian and English. Her four Italian words/expressions stress her positive thoughts associated with Italy, which for her is primarily her family: *famiglia, amore, stare insieme, felicità*.

8. IDENTITY: A GLOBAL SOUP FOR LOCAL TASTES

With these five stories I illustrated a significant cross-section of the small community of New Zealanders of Italian origin who are also Italian speakers or learners. At the antipode of Italy, all the participants in the interviews have expressed a strong sense of a multi-layered, composite, hybrid Italian identity that has been built and maintained with a number of linguistic and cultural strategies.

I also argued that the development of such a mixed identity is an ongoing process, closely related to the family context and the social affiliations of the people, as well as the evolving socio-cultural situation of the places in which they grow up, which influence both self-perception and that of others. In other words, my micro-ethnography confirmed the notion of identity as it has been long established in the anthropological discourse, that is: identity is a constant producer of cultural representations that guide the way people experience and interpret the world.

Italian for Liliana was a language of migration, which accompanied her parents in the oceanic journey that saved them from war and misery and marked the first years of a harsh settlement in a remote country, sometimes hostile and other times kind. It was then kept as the language of family intimacy, regressing behind the growing thrust of English and the need for cultural integration but tied to emotions, memories, family bonds and powerful images still today.

The story of Maura, the same age as Liliana but raised in an educated and wealthy family in progressive San Francisco, tells of a different bond with the Italian language and culture. On the one hand, for Maura, childhood memories also speak an Italian dialect and smell of ancient homemade recipes. On the other hand, her Italian origin has never been a reason for shame or confusion, but rather it has always been linked to an idea of elegance, open-mindedness, and culinary refinement.

There are differences between the two women in their relationships with both the Italian community of Auckland and with Italy. For Maura, Italian is mainly spoken in New Zealand, at the Dante Alighieri school, a place for socialising and studying. Despite perceiving a strong connection with Italy, in particular thanks to the heraldic reconstruction of family ties with the city of Lucca, that country remains a distant place, a cultural destination of choice and pleasure. On the other hand, for Liliana, Italian is commonly spoken on the phone with family members who reside in Italy, a place where she has been many times, not only for tourism, but also and above all to retrace and heal a branched and dramatic family history.

Gaia, Elsa and Chiara belong to younger generations and were born and raised in half Kiwi and half Italian families, with Italian parents deeply involved in the Italian community. Even though they speak Italian at different levels of proficiency, all three were encouraged to create a positive image of Italianness and to integrate it in their

multifaceted identity as citizens of an increasingly multicultural New Zealand. All three also enthusiastically participate in local events that promote Italian culture in New Zealand, both on a commercial level as in the case of Chiara and Elsa, with their commitment in import-export businesses of *made in Italy* products, and on an academic level, particularly for Gaia, who has recently revitalised the Italian Club at the University of Auckland, involving classmates and friends.

Finally, we cannot but observe, that, despite all our informants saw their identity as dynamic, fluid and heterogenous, on several occasions they have emphasised the sensation of being (or not being) a *true* Italian, a *true* Kiwi, or simply different. Does it confirm that identity is still deeply affected by ethnocentrism, even in the era of supermodernity (Augé, 1992), which immerses people in a global and increasingly delocalised flow of information, images, people, things? It certainly says that human beings both need and love to invent an *us* to oppose a *them* that is always and in some way different from *us*. It is possible to think of the identical (what remains similar to itself for a certain period) only by drawing a boundary with respect to the other (Bellagamba, 1997). Identity is the dynamic and dialectical fruit of a contrasting and contextual process for which, in order to think of an *us*, we must contrast an *other*, and vice versa (Fabietti, 2000).

In short, identity is like a soup made of disparate ingredients that come from every corner of the globe and whose origin is lost in a millenary mixture of cultural traditions, but when it is poured into the plate, the alleged authenticity and originality of the local taste is inevitably praised. The myth of multiculturalism, now more fashionable than ever, ends up re-proposing cultural diversity in a non-conflictual key, but focusing on diversity instead of remembering that every culture is already multicultural (Aime, 2004).

The three young women perceive themselves as global citizens of the new millennium, members of a planetary community who can travel across the globe, activating different belongings in the dialectical game of identities. Their experience, however, encloses a privileged point of view on an Anthropocene that is turning into a huge department store with colourful shelves where very few can grab what they prefer, while the great majority, no matter their relative identities (Deutsch, 1998; Dummett, 1981; Geach, 1972; Hawthorne, 2003; Noonan, 2017), do not enjoy the same freedom.

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APPENDIX

List of Questions

- Name and surname
- Age
- Citizenship/s
- Profession (and parents’ profession when relevant)
- Level of Italian proficiency
- If Italian is not her first language, what is it?
- Where was she born?
- If she was not born in Italy, has she ever been there? Where exactly? How many times? For how long? For what reason? Did Italy appear foreign or familiar to her? Was it as she expected/remembered it? Was there something she expected to find that she didn’t find? There was something she didn’t expect to find and found instead? In general, has something surprised (or disappointed) her?
- If she has studied Italian, why did she study it? Did she encounter any difficulties? Which ones? Did she like it? Does she like to talk about it?
- Does she feel “Italian”? If so, what does it mean for her to be Italian? Is there any aspect of Italian culture in which she recognises herself more? On the contrary, are there any aspect in which she does not recognize herself?
- Is she familiar with Italian literature? Is there any author in particular that she likes? Why? On the contrary, is there any author she doesn’t like? Why?
- The same question can be repeated for Italian art, music, cinema, TV series, television programs, comics, fashion, design, cooking, etc.

Interviewees’ selected answers

Name: “Liliana”

Age: 68

Nationality: New Zealand

Art: Michelangelo, Uffizi

Film: *Under the Tuscan Sun*

Food: *fritole, crostole, agnello arrosto con cipolle*, chicken soup, *pomodori dell’orto, gnocchi, strudel*

Music: Puccini, Verdi, Mario Lanza

4 Words/Expressions: *io ti amo, la vita è dolce, mangia mangia, che dio ti imbraccia*

What do you think about Venice: “Venezia is not the same anymore, taken over by China. It breaks my heart ... *tristezza* was huge: so many true Venetians are leaving. ... I said ‘please don’t give up’”.

Name: “Maura”

Age: 67

Nationality: USA, New Zealand

Film: *Dogman*

Food: *lasagne, gnocchi alla romana, salame, mortadella, prosciutto, focaccia, ravioli, polenta, ossobuco*

Literature: Elena Ferrante, Donna Leon

Music: Pavarotti

4 Words/Expressions: *a tavola, andiamo, sopra coscia, vieni qui*

What do you think about Venice: “Venice was like Disneyland on steroids.”

Name: “Gaia”

Age: 21

Nationality: New Zealand, Italy

Art: Uffizi, David, Vatican Museum

Film: *Il Commissario Montalbano, The Winx, Il piccolo diavolo, Vamos a matar compañeros*

Food: *pasta al pomodoro fresco, bottarga, melanzane impanate, carne in umido, purè di patate*

Literature: Dante, Boccaccio, Pinocchio

Music: Venditti, Battisti, Rita Pavone, Fedez, Pausini, Diodato, Arisa, J-Ax

4 Words/Expressions: *su moenti no pappa zaffaranu, la spiaggia, gelato, mia nonna*

What do you think about Venice: “Venezia a novembre era bellissima. Le riviste ci avevano spaventato ma invece non puzzava, non c’era tanta gente, potevamo esplorare”.

Name: “Elsa”

Age: 16

Nationality: New Zealand

Art: ancient architecture, interior design, classicism

Cinema: *Shrek* in Italian

Food: avocado on toast with tomatoes on top, iced vanilla coffee, *risotto*

Music: *Buonanotte fiorellino*

4 Words/Expressions: *famiglia, bella, amore, history*

What do you think about Venice: “When I went to Venice it was exactly how I imagined that: a little city built on the water”.

Name: “Chiara”

Age: 27

Nationality: New Zealand, Italy

Art: architecture, Vatican museum

Cinema: *La vita è bella, Gomorra*, Italian comedies

Food: *pizza, gelato, pasticceria, antipasto di pesce*

Literature: Carofiglio, Noir fiction

Music: Calcutta, Pinguini Tattici Nucleari, indie

4 Words/Expressions: *famiglia, amore, stare insieme, felicità*

What do you think about Venice: “Amo Venezia. Tutti hanno questa idea di Venezia che ogni volta che ci vanno rimangono delusi perché c’è troppa gente, perché puzza, perché è sporca, ma Venezia è meravigliosa, è un’unica città al mondo sull’acqua e se ti non fai il percorso ... principale dove vanno tutti i turisti dalla stazione a piazza San marco. Ogni volta prendi una via diversa, laterale e vai per le calli, dietro, e scopri degli angoli di Venezia, ogni volta uno diverso, uno nuovo, ed è affascinante, è spettacolare”.