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DIASPORA, GENDER AND NARRATIVE JOURNEYS: ITALIAN MIGRANT WOMEN IN IRELAND

Carla De Tona

PhD 2007

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my beloved grandmother, Erminia Armillei,
and my great-uncle, Luigi Santamaria,
who were there when I started it but could not see me reach its end.

This thesis has not been previously been submitted, wholly or partially for any other academic award at this or any other university. The work is entirely my own. I agree that the Dublin University Library may lend or copy the thesis on request, subject to normal conditions of acknowledgement.

Carla De Tona

Dublin, 30/10/07

Acknowledgments

It's 14.00 hours, 29th of October 2007. It is a bank holiday in Dublin and there is a marathon just outside near Trinity College. I went down on the street, to look at the runners and think of them, to find inspiration to write these few lines. I have never run a marathon, but I think working on my PhD has been the closest I ever got to that experience. For me, this has been a proof of endurance, motivation, and will, a far too slow but sometimes too hectic process of learning that had to be so tiring to feel so rewarding at the end. Reaching the end has only been half as important as the journey to it. However, there is one fundamental difference I can think of: unlike these marathoners who deserve all the merits of their enterprise, I would have never been able to do it on my own.

Perhaps because doing a PhD was part of the reason of my 'being away' and 'distant' from everyone I loved and from all that was familiar to me, and because, for many different reasons, the last six years which I have spent to work on this project have been the most intense of my life, perhaps more than ever, I must express my immense gratitude to all of those who have helped me go through the stages and years that this project took. In this PhD journey I have most benefited from their support, intelligence and love.

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Maybe next year I will run a marathon …

ABSTRACT

Diaspora, Gender And Narrative Journeys: Italian Migrant Women In Ireland
Carla De Tona

This study concerns Italian migrant women in Ireland, who are the most invisible subjects of a forgotten yet 'exceptional' history of migration. It focuses on migrants' sense of belonging and affiliation, conceptualising the Italian women's condition of being in migration as that of a 'double diaspora' (doubly invisible and removed, as migrant and as women but also as actors of a two-tiered sociality).

The analysis is based on open-ended and unstructured interviews conducted with 29 Italian women of first, second and third-generation migrants and on document analysis, focusing on existing representations of Italian migrants in Ireland and on the politicisation of diasporic discourses in Italy. This study holds women's personal narratives as *informative* of gendered meanings of migration, and as *performative* practices, which allow shifting gender norms to sustain the fluidity of diasporic identities.

The analysis demonstrates that in diaspora, women's narrative practices function as a social strategy to create collective (gender and diasporic) boundaries, which are both stable and shifting. Women's narratives allow the women to forge new gender roles within their families and groups and to find a place in their diasporic destinations, supporting their migration process, providing them company and containing their isolation.

SUMMARY

In this study, 29 Italian migrant women have contributed to unearthing the gendered meanings of living in diaspora. These women have either a personal or family history of migration to Ireland, and they are first, second or third-generation migrants. I conducted open-ended and unstructured interviews with the women, which I have examined through narrative analysis. I also conducted document analysis, focusing on existing representations of Italian migrants in Ireland and on the politicisation of diasporic discourses in Italy. Being reflexive and positioning myself as an Italian migrant woman researching Italian migrant women was a methodological choice that proved particularly relevant.

Gender And Migration

To create a space to think about the gendered meanings emerging from the women's narratives, I had to engage critically with existing migration theories. Migration studies have in fact been largely gender-blind, representing women as somewhat lesser migrants, whose experiences have been defined vis-à-vis male models. This was particular so in the case of Italian migration studies.

Italian Diaspora In Ireland

Of all the analytic paradigms of migration studies, diaspora proved to be the most relevant tool for creating a space to think about the complex social contexts in which migrations occur. I argued that as a tool of the social sciences, diaspora can either denote taxonomies of complex migratory histories or focus on the societal processes and social condition of being in migration. This latter usage of diaspora proved more relevant in my study because it allows destabilising essentialised and politicised notions of belonging. I demonstrated this capacity by showing how in the Italian case, the term diaspora has been resisted. I also described how at the same time the diasporisation of Italian migration has been manifested, clearly affecting in Ireland both the early waves of Italian migration (largely occupied in the catering business and in the 'fish and chips' shops) and the recent and long-term waves of migration (professionals, students, *gente di passaggio*). I discussed the existence of diasporic discourses and practises among Italian migrants (informing connectivity and resource-sharing) that also exposed the limitations of 'ethnicised' and 'othered' representations of Italian migrants in Irish hegemonic discourses.

Narratives and Double Diaspora: Italian Migrant Women In Ireland

Italian migrant women are the most invisible subjects of a forgotten yet 'exceptional' history of migration. The analysis of women's personal narratives highlighted the structuring force of gender in influencing women's decisions to leave or to stay in migration, and the struggles and

acts of resistance informing their lives thereafter. I became particularly interested in how gendering the diaspora offered a framework to think of the role of narrativity and memory, not only in changing feminised identities but also in the production of a stable and continuous sense of belonging amidst the changes of diaspora.

I theorised Italian migrant women in Ireland as living in a 'double diaspora': women are away, distant and marginal even when they are at 'home' in their diaspora in Ireland. Migration simultaneously works as an emancipatory and constraining force for them and the tensions of its contradictory forces are often played out between women themselves, particularly between mothers and daughters.

Through positioning myself reflexively within the analysis of the women's narratives, I examine how from the taken-for-granted practices of everyday, intimate *caring about* and *story-telling*, women play out the tensions inscribed in double diaspora and negotiate shifting boundaries. Women's narratives are *informative* of gendered meanings of migration, but are also *performative* tools that shift the centres of normativities and legitimise (diasporic and gendered) counter-hegemonic socialities.

I argued that in the case of Italian migrant groups in Ireland, it is primarily through women's patient, intimate, daily and attentive narrative acts that diasporic marginality and difference can be transformed into a dominant and enabling condition, and that the diaspora can be lived and imagined both as fluid and stable, marginal and dominant, emancipatory and constraining (characteristics that in the literature are often associated with diaspora but are not sufficiently unpacked and explained). Ultimately, it is the women's narrative practices that move the diasporic story further on.

This study questions entrenched assumptions about Italian migrant women in Ireland and problematises their subjective and collective practices of belonging. It does so by (en)gendering migration theories and studying Italian migration as a diaspora. This leads to the notion of Italian women's double diaspora and to the emphasis on the women's voices and narratives as both informative and performative. In this era of in-migration to Ireland and continuing emigration from Italy, I hope the study of these early but 'forgotten' groups can teach us about the diasporic future of so many other migrations and of their inherently gendered intimations.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION: THE STORY OF A SOCIOLOGICAL JOURNEY AND A JOURNEY TO THE 'HEART OF DIASPORA'

> On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that it is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey sky in the middle of the day...
>
> (Avtar Brah, 1996: 192)

This is a study of a group of 29 Italian migrant women in Ireland, of their experiences of diaspora, of the gendered implications of migration and of the force of their narratives both in performing diasporic belonging and in informing this work. When I arrived in Ireland in 1999, as a one year master's student, I never expected that my life would become so entangled with the questions of migranthood, 'Italianness' and gender, as it eventually did while I worked on this study. Neither did I know that I would stay long enough in Ireland to become an Italian migrant myself. In a sense, I never chose this topic of research; it came to me. During my first year in Dublin, I sought to avoid meeting Italians. Like many recent migrants, I left Italy because I was disappointed by its social, economic and political structures and found liberating potential in being away from my native country. I did not want to know about Italy and Italianness. However, in 2000, when I had to pick a topic for my dissertation towards my master's in Ethnic and Racial Studies, I instinctively responded to ideas and feelings that lay both outside and within myself.

At a time when migration was becoming the subject of passionate political and intellectual debate in Ireland, there was a wide gap in knowledge about Italian migrants in this country. The history of Italian migration could provide interesting insight with regard to such debates. Also, at the end of the 1990s, academic interest in gender and women had matured, and new phases of Italian emigration (to Ireland

and elsewhere) had revived Italian migration studies and highlighted the need to rewrite the history of Italian female migration. When I started to work on my dissertation, I found myself positioned right in the middle of all these criss-crossing theoretical interests.

I finished my master's dissertation in September 2000, but realised that there was still much to uncover about Italian migrant women in Ireland, whose realities I had just begun to make visible. In September 2001, I embarked on my sociological journey towards a PhD. A journey that has lasted until this moment, in the summer of 2007, and has brought me to where I am now sitting 'here' in front of my computer converting my research and my experiences into a text. This text is a story I have constructed from the many stories and journeys that have comprised the last six years of my studies. My PhD is a journey into the lives of Italian migrant women in Ireland and is itself a journey of self-discovery and apprenticeship in the world of sociology (chapter four). It could not have been anything but an intense and complex experience.

Mapping The Challenges And Developments Of The Research Project

At a practical level, I had several basic issues that I wanted to address. These issues emerged during my early work towards my master's dissertation. First, there is a dearth of evidence and research on Italian migrants in Ireland. Italianness in Ireland seems to reside deep within the Irish social fabric as something 'visibly' familiar and known in relation to food, tourism, and Catholic religious aspirations; in stories concerning Italians in the chronicles of life and history in Ireland; even in the bright colourful signs of 'fish and chip' shops with Italian-sounding names written in capital letters all over Ireland. Yet simultaneously, Italian migrants remain 'invisible': they are usually absent in intellectual discourse and debate on Irish multiculturalism and there are few composite accounts of their history even in the academic context. Their invisibility is particularly manifest at the level of representations of Italianness that rarely move beyond the stereotypical, centred mostly on Italian migrants' original activities in 'fish and chips' shops. These representations paper over the heterogeneity of Italian migrants in Ireland and accentuate the migrants' marginality and invisibility, limiting their spaces of expression to self-referential and subaltern spheres of sociality.

Italian migrant women are the most hidden subjects in the discourse about Italians in Ireland, and live in a symbolic and social marginality, typical, as Silvia Cavallin notes, of 'those who do not make trouble' (Cavallin, 2004: 245). However, from my early research, it emerged that Italian migrant women in Ireland not only have specific trajectories and stories to tell about their migration, but their gendered roles are fundamental to the socialities of their migrant families and groups. Conducting a gendered analysis that uncovers women's experiences of migration has the potential to reveal a great deal not merely about Italian women but about Italian migrant groups in general.

In engaging in this theoretical study of Italian migrant women in Ireland, my research has encountered several challenges. Theories of migration have largely been gender-blind, as has been the scholarship on the history of the 27 million Italians who emigrated during the last two centuries. Moreover, the predominance of male-centred perspectives tended to evaluate migration primarily through the lens of careers and labour markets that marginalised migrant women, who are more likely to take into account family commitments (for example, the upbringing of children or the care of relatives) and other more 'grounded' factors when explaining the rationale of moving or staying in migration (Halfacree and Boyle, 1999: 10). Such positivist and economic deterministic perspectives still persist and proved largely irrelevant to my case study. Therefore, I had to engage critically with the existing concepts to create a space to think and interrogate some of the simplifications and embedded assumptions about migration and women. Rather than tinker with the existing models and attempting to 'add' women in, I sought theories that would better account for women's lives and women's stories. This was an exciting opportunity for me to create a novel way of theorising gender and migration in a manner that was contextually relevant to Italian migrant women in Ireland.

To create this 'thinking space', my engagement with feminist critiques was crucial to the initial stages of this study. The work of a number of feminist theorists has alerted me to the need to emphasise women's voices (Riessman, 2004, 2002; Lentin, 2000; Byrne and Lentin, 2000; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). The lack of women's voice in the existing literature overlapped with the gap in the research on Italian migrant women in Ireland, which meant that I had to rely as much as possible on women's own accounts of their lives and to rethink conceptions of

migration and gender primarily through the women's voices. In interacting with the Italian migrant women in my study, listening to their stories, participating in the narrative construction of (our) diasporic belongings, and building research relationships *with* them, I became able to articulate the basic questions of my research: how do the Italian migrant women conceive of themselves and of their experiences in migration? What do they tell of the factors that compel them to leave and to remain in migration? How do the women express and formulate belonging and identity in their migratory projects? And finally, how do women's stories about their journeys resonate with the story I constructed during my own journey into the sociological world?

To answer these research questions, I had to interrogate and recognise the role of gender practices, discourses and identities in migration and settlement processes, regarding gender as an ingredient that enters into different societal mechanisms rather than being constituted as a discrete system (Anthias, 2000: 16). I aimed to engage both with the politics of gendered migration (the way migration experiences are invested with power) and the poetics of migration (its own way of working and the discourses and narratives that shape it). Another important feature of my study has been my commitment to reflect on, and render visible, my positionality in the process of translating the women's voices into this academic text, taking into account that, as feminist critiques have shown, knowledge is always a matter of positioning:

> It is the space from which we speak, the political, the disciplinary and social inheritances that we travel through, which leave traces and marks upon us, enabling us to see some things and be blind to others (Skeggs, 2004: 43).

As an Italian migrant woman researching Italian migrant women, my positionality had to be put reflexively under scrutiny to understand the very dynamics of the research process. This exercise was useful in unpacking the modalities of how identification with Italianness is contingent, negotiable and gendered, an argument that is central to my study.

Also because of how I saw (and experienced) the complexities of migration, belonging and connection, I found the concept of diaspora to be a relevant tool in my analysis of Italian migrant women in Ireland. In a world marked by the visions of people in motion (Carter, 2003: xv), migration studies have rarely adopted new

paradigms to theorise the current differentiation, acceleration, feminisation and globalisation of migration (Castles and Miller, 2003: 9). However, the concept of diaspora has been readopted and readapted to fit the contemporary consequences of migration. Interestingly, the *ancient* term 'diaspora' has come to represent a '*new* vocabulary' in the social sciences, registering the formative and constitutive power of space, spatiality, distance, travel and movement that were once premised upon time, temporality, fixity, rootedness (Gilroy, 1997: 324; my emphasis). Repositioned in relation to feminist theories, a *gendered conceptualisation of diaspora* brought forth in my study the thinking space that I was looking for. It allowed me to begin imagining a more complex understanding of belonging and affiliation, of enabling and disabling outcomes of migration, and of the hybridity and threshold condition that characterise Italian migrant women's experiences in Ireland.

My research focus evolved during the course of my fieldwork, and two specific questions have most captured my interest. First, migration holds the potential to be an emancipatory force for the Italian women in Ireland, but simultaneously works to constrain and limit them. I wanted to explore how these different forces of migration could coexist and I questioned how the tensions between these two forces are often played out between women, particularly between mothers and daughters. Moreover, I wanted to investigate how Italian migrant women resolve the tensions by actualising parallel spheres of sociality, a condition which I conceptualise as a *double diaspora* and which holds several collective implications for Italian migrant groups in Ireland. At one level, Italian migrant women invest in seeking commonality and connections configured in terms of Italian identity, to maintain a reassuring sense of continuity and tradition. While traditions continue to constrain and subordinate these women, they also root the Italian diaspora in a stable and fixed ground of belonging. However, at another level and without disrupting the hegemonies of their groups, the migrant women simultaneously achieve emancipation and undergo transformation starting from the very nature of their gender roles and relations.

The second question that emerged as a major theme in my study was how diasporic belonging is constructed primarily through narrative acts, particularly narratives of the past that make Italy a 'semantic narrative strategy'. The 29 women who participated in my research spoke eagerly about their stories, memories and

lives, their choices exercised within constraints, their past made to fit their present, their 'hidden' agency. I became interested in how Italian migrant women have access to their groups' memory and how they become the main *tellers of the diaspora*, given their roles as the main intergenerational collectors and transmitters of their families' memories and narratives. Essentially, I wanted to unravel the modalities with which the Italian migrant women speak about themselves and use narratives strategically, also to resolve the tensions created by the diverging forces of migration. Drawing from narrative theories, I asked how women's narratives are adaptable and can harmonise fragments of migrant women's scattered experiences, journeys and memories (Ahmed, 2003; Fortier, 2000; Brah, 1996).

These notions involved grappling with another central issue concerning how women's narrative strategies of sustaining their double diaspora overlap with the narrative construction of diasporic belonging. Does diaspora enhance the resonance of women's narrative practices? Do women's specific gendered positions within their migrant groups grant their narrative acts the potential to transform marginality into agentic power? If Italian migrant women are the principal tellers of the diaspora, and their story-telling practices are inherently steeped in multiple (and contested) meanings, can the fluid nature of diaspora be reflected in, and constructed by, women's fluid capacity to narrativise the 'traditions' (memories) and identities (stories of the self) of their groups?

In this regard my research revealed that women's stories not only represent rich *informative* sources, but are also important *performative* tools in the making of diaspora. While Italian migrant women's parallel socialities are sustained primarily through narrative practices, these gendered practices are reproduced as a societal process and a social condition for the larger migrant groupings. As I demonstrate, the Italian migrant women have a central role in these practices, because of existing gender divides. Italian men also talk about themselves, but often in a heroic, public way, while Italian women tend to tell stories about their intimate and daily struggles and acts of resistance (Jedlowski, 2000, 2002; La Cecla, 2000). My analysis uncovered several outcomes of these gendered narrative roles.

First, socially constructed, shared and legitimised, narratives make space for change not only in the women's lives but also in their families and in the diaspora at large. Second, diasporic narratives 'construct' members who belong to the diaspora and define how membership is articulated (and often contested)

contextually. Third, while creating a traditional and continuous story-line of the Italian diaspora, women's narratives also actualise hidden agency, creating a space to legitimise not only their own agency but also their groups' moving and empowered history. It is primarily through Italian migrant women's narrative acts that the Italian diasporic marginality and difference in Ireland can become dominant and enabling, and that the diaspora can be lived and imagined as both fluid and stable, both marginal and dominant, and both emancipatory and constraining.

Signposting The Journey...

In order to examine the Italian migrant women's experiences of migration, their double diaspora and the performative nature of narrative, my research collected two kinds of data. First, I conducted document analysis on Irish discourses and representations of Italian migrants in Ireland in order to reconstruct their history of emigration and to understand the material and symbolic structures of power into which Italian migrants are embedded. I also conducted participant observation in various settings where Italians meet and Italianness is performed, including the process of interviewing - my second type of data.

Between 2000 and 2006, I conducted a series of open-ended unstructured interviews with Italian migrant women and men in Ireland. From these interviews, I selected 21 interviews with 29 women for analysis. These interviews have been transcribed and analysed in relation to their narrative content, which involved raising questions about why the stories were told in certain ways (the *hows*), and about what meanings the narratives conveyed (the *whats*). The choice of this method is grounded in the identification during my fieldwork of a double function of narratives: narratives that *inform* and express meanings and narratives that *perform* and create meanings. Ultimately, the aim of my narrative analysis was to learn from the women's own accounts about their lives and the meanings they attached to them.

The use of terms like diaspora, gender, and narrative are ambiguously employed in the literature and my thesis seeks to eliminate this confusion by elaborating working definitions in each of the chapters. However, I would draw attention from the very beginning to my usage of the term 'diaspora' vis-à-vis the term 'migration'. I have opted to maintain the term 'migrant' when talking about

the Italian women in Ireland, despite its old-fashioned ring and the allure of the trendier – if problematic – term 'diasporic'. Two reasons dictate my choice: first, the term 'migrant' is closer to the language of the women who participated in my research and I wanted to reflect the way in which the women defined themselves.

Second, in my work diaspora specifically refers to a category of analysis that focuses on the social condition of being in migration (Anthias, 2000; Brah, 1996) and *not* on types of migrations. In this sense, the distinction between diaspora and migration is not substantial (it is not about the history of being scattered, the reasons for migration, etc). Even though not all migrants are diasporic people, the distinction for me is in the degree of consciousness about the consequences of migration: diasporic people are more aware of being in-between, unable to 'return home', incomplete. In this sense, I talk about migrants being 'in diaspora' and not 'the diaspora' as often encountered in the literature.

I also prefer to use the term 'Italian migrants' and not 'Italian emigrants', to signal the irrevocable and permanent consequences of migration. For the same reason, I define third generation Italo-Irish subjects as 'migrants', because even when they are 'born and raised' in Ireland, the consequences of their family's migration remain salient.

The Thesis: An Outline Of The Chapters

This thesis is a product of both ethnographic and theoretical work, and its chapters engage with both analytic levels. Chapter two reviews the existing literature on migration and women and underlines both the shortcomings of the scholarship vis-à-vis gender and the relevant analytic directions highlighted by feminist critics. In the second part of chapter two, I reflect on the studies of Italian migrant women that follow the general trends of the scholarship on migrant women: the initial invisibility of women, a revisionist phase (the so-called 'stir and add' women perspective that does not problematise fully gender) and a search, in recent years, for less compensatory approaches in the study of Italian migrant women.

Chapter three engages with the theories of diaspora and proposes a working definition of diaspora, which is necessary because of the many layers and meanings of the concept 'diaspora' that risk corrupting its heuristic capacity. I distinguish between diaspora as a historic event, a political discourse, and an analytic tool.

Opting to work with this latter definition, I also differentiate between diaspora as a typological tool and as a condition of being in migration. The second part of chapter three deals with the historiography of Italian migration and shows how the concept of diaspora has generally been disregarded by Italian scholars who prefer the term 'Italian emigration', arguably because of the capacity of diaspora to destabilise its nationalistic assumptions. Not surprisingly then, I demonstrate how Italian diasporic scholars (that is scholars abroad who claim an affiliation to Italianness) have been more eager to develop the analytic potential of diaspora to theorise Italian emigration. To illustrate this theme, I include personal conversations with the social historian Donna Gabaccia and the social anthropologist Loretta Baldassar on the matter. The last section of chapter three reviews the existing theoretical articulations of a gendered diaspora. This exercise leads to my conceptualisation of the *double diaspora of migrant women*, which refers to the condition of migrant women of being 'away' and 'marginal' not only in the countries of new settlement but also within their own diaspora. The literature suggests that women actualise parallel spheres of sociality when facing contradictions and threshold conditions, and I explore theoretically the ways in which migrant women at the threshold of diaspora face and resolve the tensions and contradictions of migration.

Chapter four reviews the documents, accounts and representations that deal with Italian migrants in Ireland in order to deconstruct the invisibility of Italian migrant women and of Italian migrant groups in general. I explore the meanings of these representations in relation to structures of ethnicised hierarchies, particularly othering practices and national foodscapes. The last section of chapter four deals with the representations of Italian migrant women in Ireland both in Irish and in Italian diasporic discourses, looking at the narratives of 'women's beautiful bodies' and 'women behind the counter'.

Chapter five engages reflexively with the methodology of my study, its research problems and assumptions. I illustrate my PhD journey through the analysis of three phases: 'going there', which is about the theories that I considered relevant prior to starting ethnographic work (feminism, grounded theory and reflexivity); 'being there' which is about my actual participation in the field (document analysis, and open-ended interviews), and 'being here', which is about the very construction of this text. Even though I chose to present these phases as

separate for analytic purposes, in reality they have often overlapped and have continuously fed on each other.

Chapter six is the first of the three chapters in which I introduce the narratives of Italian migrant women and examines the informative nature of the women's narratives, that is how these narratives 'say something', and how they reveal the compound nature of women's identities and experiences of migration. In particular, I analyse three themes: first, the discourses of Italianness, its similarities and differences across several axes of differentiation; second, I consider the gendered similarities of women's experiences and how women's gendered positions are used to mark identitarian boundaries; third, I focus on narratives that reflect the sense of incompleteness and in-betweenness which accompany women's experiences of diaspora and their struggles to surrogate a sense of home/belonging in the diasporic 'global space of pain' (Cohen, 1999).

Chapter seven continues the work of unearthing and excavating the women's narratives in relation to their struggles and acts of resistance, exposing the contents of what I call the 'double diaspora'. Borrowing from Liz Stanley (1997a), I use the term 'double diaspora' to describe the condition of being 'away' and distant from Italy but also of being 'away' and distant from the chains of power and authority of Italian migrant collectivities. I show how while 'away', women construct a two-tiered parallel sphere of sociality in which they act both as traditional keepers of Italianness and as powerful and emancipated agents. At one level, in migration, women find space for empowerment, while at another, they experience further constraints. I show how the tensions between these conflicting outcomes of migration are often played out between women, particularly between mothers and daughters.

Chapter nine analyses the performative/transformative nature of narratives, that is what narratives do. It focuses on the coexistence of both stability and fluidity and the capacity of Italian migrant women's narratives to perform a mediation between these diverging forces. I argue that gender is doubly important in this cultural exercise. On the one hand, diasporic groups rely on the sanctity of women's gender roles to project a sense of continuation and boundedness of identity and belonging. On the other, the narratives that shape the contents of diasporic identities are products of social practices strongly influenced by gender norms and gender roles. For the Italian migrant women of my research, telling

stories is a strategy of negotiating the contradictions of diaspora. The women's capacity to narrativise the groups' traditions (memories) and identities (stories of the self) plays a fundamental role in the constructions of the fluid essence of the Italian diaspora in Ireland. In this sense, as Anthias (2000) suggests, gender lies at the very heart of the Italian diaspora in Ireland.

This study questions entrenched assumptions about Italian migrant women in Ireland and problematises their subjective and collective practices of belonging. It does so by (en)gendering migration theories and studying Italian migration as a diaspora. This leads to the notion of Italian women's double diaspora and to the emphasis on the women's voices and narratives as both informative and performative. In this era of in-migration to Ireland and continuing emigration from Italy, I hope the study of these early but 'forgotten' groups can teach us about the diasporic future of so many other migrations and of their inherently gendered intimations.

Chapter Two

THEORISING (ITALIAN) MIGRANT WOMEN

> Indeed, the truth is I call myself all kinds of other things
> (Stuart Hall, 1999: 151)

Despite their relevance and specificity, gender issues have largely been left unexplored in migration studies. When women were included, they were often portrayed as 'dependent on men' (Buijs, 1993: 1), as 'followers' (Kofman, 1999), or as passive and subjugated spectators of their family migrations. Feminist critics in the 1970s and 1980s have successfully denounced mainstream migration studies as gender-blind or as appearing to be gender-neutral while instead utilising models of migration based on the experience of men (Anthias, 2001a, 2001b; Anthias and Lazaridis; 2000; Kofman et al. 2000: 3; DeLact, 1999; Brah, 1996; Wright, 1995; Buijs, 1993). Gender-blind and male biased frameworks are particularly damaging in Italian migration studies because they have, for the most part, contributed to devalue not only migrant women but the experiences of Italian emigration in general (Gabaccia, 2003, 2000).

Feminist work in this area has addressed the complex and significant experiences of migrant women. However, in mainstream migration studies throughout the 1990s, lacunae and omissions regarding gender and migrant women persisted. This is evinced by the tendency to portray women as 'lesser' migrants; women are represented as less physically mobile than men and are associated more with settling down and with the local (Freeman, 2001; Mazali, 2001).

In this chapter, I review theories about migrant women in general and Italian migrant women in particular, which emerged in the 1990s. I had to engage with these theories in order to find a space from which to theorise the 'invisible' case of Italian migrant women in Ireland. In the first section, I look at contributions in the

field of migration studies which deconstructed women's invisibility and devised new approaches and frameworks from which to make women more visible. I analyse the theoretical approaches advanced in the last decade reflecting on what I have learned from the important contributions of feminist scholars. Some themes that emerged in the course of my study as particularly relevant are highlighted (the non-monolithic category of womanhood, the emancipatory effect of migration and the tension between agency and constraints) together with the lacunae that still remain.

In the second section of the chapter, I analyse accounts of Italian migrant women which divide into two geographical areas of interest, the Americas-Canada-Australia and Europe. I am particularly interested in showing how Italian migration studies have 'discounted' Italian women but also how Italian migrant women have organised themselves to assert their relevance and rights (in migrants' organisations, conferences, etc). Italian migrant women's organization, I argue, reveal the contemporary phenomenon of 'diasporisation' of Italian migration. Diaspora emerges as both a political discourse for migrants' mobilisation and a tool for analysis of the social sciences, particularly attentive to the complexities of belonging and affiliation. In both senses, diaspora is a central notion in my study and the next chapter will engage with its layered meanings.

RE-COUNTING MIGRANT WOMEN'S INVISIBILITY (AND VISIBILITY)

The initial neglect of women in migration studies was part of a more general tendency to homogenise migrants and to see them as 'carrying only one piece of cultural baggage' (Harzig, 1999). Migrant men and women were subsumed under a univocal category, and in a domain characterised by patriarchal ideology, the category of men functioned as reference for all. The invisibility of migrant women was often justified by the supposed historical reason that during the mass migration phases, women's presence was *numerically inferior* to that of men. If women were considered, they were largely seen as dependents and 'followers' of men (Page Moch, 2005). However, women not only had always migrated and been a significant presence, but even when they did not move they still had an impact on,

and were affected by, the family's decisions to migrate, a case that would have deserved close attention.

In the 1980s and 1990s, feminist scholars have rewritten the history of migration and of migrant women, denouncing gender-blind and male biases, and incorporating the relevance and heterogeneity of women's migratory experiences into the analysis. Feminist works demonstrated that even as dependents, women's roles required specific consideration. For example, it may be easier 'for women than for men to become dependents because of the overall male breadwinner ideology that expects them to do so' (Erel, et al. 2003: 11). Moreover, the emergence of smaller proportions of women in the earlier stages of mass migration could be the result of unspecified and approximated estimates. In fact, feminist analyses show that during certain phases of mass migration women were travelling roughly in the same proportion as men (Kofman, 1999: 270; DeLact, 1999).[1]

Hania Zlotnik states that the belief that women were less numerous than men was 'rarely based on statistical evidence', as, 'both then and now, data on international migrants was not often classified by sex' (Zlotnik, 2003). Zlotnik maintains that until recently:

> A comprehensive set of global estimates permitting an assessment of the extent of female migration was not available. The first such set, containing estimates for the period 1965-1990, was released by the United Nations Population Division in 1998 (Zlotnik, 2003).[2]

While gender-disaggregated data now exist, the drawback is that it still remains largely unaccounted for and underpublished (Kofman et al. 2000). While there are still delays and lacunae in the quantitative evaluation of women migrants and migration in general, statistical data on its own cannot account for the complex meanings of migration. Moreover, migration is a highly ambiguous and elusive

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[1] Reconsidering statistical evidence, authors like Kofman, Zlotnik and Harzig, show that migrant women were actually present in all different migratory phases and in larger numbers than previously assessed (Kofman, 1999; Zlotnik, 2003; Harzig 2000 cited in Erel, et al. 2003 :11). Even in the guest worker system, which is frequently associated with male migration, female labour was increasingly employed before the cessation of mass labour migration in the early 1970s; similarly migrant women were present during colonial regimes, when they were also employed in professional occupations.

[2] The limitation of statistical evidence is also dependent on the transnational nature of migration, which is generally not successfully revealed in migration statistics that remain anchored to lists and analysis derived from national sources. Only recently, statistical accounts have been matched cross-nationally through the establishment of harmonising programmes at the European Union level, in the shape of its Statistical Service (Eurostat), and in the United Nations (Kofman et al. 2000 :10).

phenomenon and 'migration events are so ill-defined and sometimes transitory they are rarely recorded' (Pooley and White, 1991: 3). Therefore, quantitative work on migration must take into consideration the series of gender '*discounting*' mechanisms that take place (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003: 4; my emphasis).

The claim that migrant women were a minor presence in the labour migrations of the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, is strictly dependent on the gender discounting mechanism of how labour is defined without including women's work (often done by unpaid members in family businesses owned by male 'breadwinners'; Morokvasic, 1983, 1993). Similarly, in the contemporary case of domestic and sex labour in which a growing number of migrant women are employed, women are 'discounted' from official reports and statistics because the work they do is generally performed in private spheres and is illegal (Phizacklea, 2003a, 2003b; Kofman et al. 2000). Moreover, recent female migratory flows often comprise women of colour subject to 'racial' discounting (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003: 4). Because of these intersecting levels of exclusions, it is not surprising that among the undocumented migrants, women constitute a significant presence. This is in contrast to men's professions such as taxi driving, which make men visible outside the home and thus valued more highly (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Anthias, 2001a; Anderson and Phizacklea, 1997).

While on one hand, migrant women are 'invisible' and 'counting' them is a limited exercise, on the other, migrant women are becoming more and more visible and are increasingly voicing their presence. Zlotnik's study reports for example, that in 2002, there were 29 million female migrants in Europe and 20 million in North America (Zlotnik, 2003). Female migration is a key constituent of global migration because is increasingly linked to the 'feminisation of job supply' and the 'feminisation of business opportunities', ultimately link to the 'feminisation of survival' in specific world areas (Sassen, 2003a, 2003b). For a range of factors related to global restructuring, the feminisation of survival implies that 'it is increasingly women [often migrant women] who make a living, create a profit and secure government revenue' in the developing countries (Sassen, 2003b: 61).[3] These gendered encoded processes account for women's projects of migration as a

[3] One example is the case of the Philippines and Cape Verde (Andall, 2003), where female migration is predominant.

source of family support and as a family strategy (Anthias and Lazaridis, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). In this sense, women migrants 'cannot be made invisible' any longer.

Feminist Scholarship From The 1990s Till Now: Two Emerging Approaches

Before considering the theoretical advancements of recent years, it must be mentioned that an early phase in shifting the approach to researching migrant women took place during the 1970s and 1980s when scholarly works on migrant women started to make their way through the 'invisibility curtain'. This followed a 'general interest in women's position in society, the feminisation of the foreign population, the increasingly visible economic presence of immigrant women, and the production of knowledge by immigrant women themselves' (Kofman et al, 2000; Kofman, 1999: 269). During these decades, the so-called revisionist phase allowed for greater attention to be directed to women in migration. The rehabilitation of the economic role of migrant women and their positions in the labour economy seemed to be the main focus (Morokvasic, 1983, 1984; Phizacklea, 1983). However, many analyses followed an 'add and stir model'. They looked at the presence of women in migration regimes but they did not really examine the *gendered* meanings and consequences of migration. Mainstream migration studies were still missing a 'maturation of feminist thought, which would have allowed a shift from a merely women-centred analysis to a truly gendered understanding of this aspect of human life' (Pedraza, 1991: 305). The initial revisionist phase remained mostly 'compensatory' and descriptive (Page Moch, 2005).

Despite two decades of feminist research on migrant women and 'the long reach of feminist-inspired studies in so many other areas' (Cohen, 1995, in Kofman, 1999: 270), in the 1990s gender still had little impact on migration theory (Page Moch, 2005: 96) and much of the analysis on migrant women was not truly a gendered analysis. Moreover, gender continued to have 'little impact on policy makers, on mass media presentation, or on the main body of migration literature where male bias continued to persist in spite of the growing evidence of women's

overwhelming participation in migratory movements' (Maynard, 1996 cited in Kofman et al. 2000: 42). [4]

Nonetheless, in the 1990s, important advances were also made in the studies of migrant women. In this section, I want to outline two main areas of theoretical contribution, with which I had to engage during my research. I critically evaluate both their heuristic reach and the lacunae still remaining. The first approach comes from structuralist accounts of migrant women and in particular, from works on women's participation in the labour economy and on women's legal status and citizenship (Page Moch, 2005: 97; Calavita, 2004; Phizacklea; 2003a, 2001; Anthias and Lazaridis, 2000; Boyle and Halfacree, 1999; Boyle Paul et al. 1998; Morokvasic, 1993). Drawing from 'migration systems theories' (Castles and Miller, 2003: 25-26), the works within this area of interest consider the ways in which class, gender and ethnicity intersect to determine migrant women's subordination in the labour market and women's resistance within hierarchies of power. For example, Annie Phizacklea has highlighted how migration is ultimately influenced by poverty, unemployment and economic necessity. She argues that it is an expression of uneven economic development on a global scale, in which women represent a relative labour surplus more often than men (Phizacklea, 1998). A new phase of global, economic and political restructuring has brought new relevance to the structural mechanisms which influence migration, and consequently new vigour in structural analysis (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Sassen, 2003a, 2003b; Andall, 2000; Phizacklea, 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). These works generally take into consideration the global segmentation of labour based on gender roles, especially in the division of domestic labour and sex labour.

The second approach has critically considered migrant women's experiences in processes loosely linked with settling down, connecting, returning, 'getting by',

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[4] This tendency is confirmed by a brief overview of some manuals on migration published in the last decade, which hardly include gender as a special area of interest (for example, Massey et al. 2005; Boyle Paul et al. 1998). Even Stephen Castles and Mark Miller's third revised edition of *The Age of Migration,* which introduces the notion of the feminisation of migration, talks specifically of gender and women only in a few paragraphs and mainly in relation to labour and citizenship (2003: 4; 161-2; 187-8). The *Worlds in Motion* (Massey et al. 2005) that these authors envisage are dominated by a framework that still seems to exclude the influence of migrant women in spheres of social life other than their participation in politics, economy and labour. Women's participation in economy and labour is certainly a relevant aspect of migrant women's experiences but it is not the only one.

which migration involves. This area of interest has been enriched by meso-level analysis of informal institutions, networks and private spheres of interaction (Decimo, 2005). It has also been sustained by *post-structuralist* approaches, which focus on the cultural aspects of migrants' experiences and often derive from literary criticism and cultural anthropology to include migrant women's own accounts of their lives (Page Moch, 2005: 101-103). The contributions that fall under this area of interest have been critical of economic deterministic and structuralist perspectives because, while they can explain the timing and scale of specific migratory movements, they fail ultimately 'to account for ways in which migration engages historically with other social and cultural goals, including the "open" goal of migration *per se*' (Chamberlain, 1997: 6).

This second approach has been supported by an intense production of empirical studies which illustrate the gendered workings of migration in relation to integration and settling down experiences. The issues considered include women's 'appropriate behaviour', the role of women in bounding and binding communities, the complexities of migrants' identities, and migrant women's subjective experiences (Decimo, 2005; Page Moch, 2005: 101-103; Salis, 2003; Al-Ali, 2002; Vasta, 2000; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). These works have valorised the active and agentic role of women, the private spheres of interaction and symbolic and emotional intra-psychic relations. Methodologically, the emphasis has often been laid on women's personal narratives, oral histories and memories (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004; Lentin, 2000a, 2000b; Brah, 1996). As Anthias notes, with this growing theoretical interest in gender, *diaspora* theories have also become more prominent in migration studies (Anthias, 2001b: 148; see for example Fortier, 2000; Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Brah, 1996). I consider in the next chapter this link between diaspora and gender theories that proved relevant for my study, allowing the 'thinking space' I was looking for.

Both theoretical approaches on gender and migration (the structuralist and the post-structuralist) have enriched our understanding of women in migration albeit differently. They have truly en-gendered migration, looking at processes and discourses involving both women and men and their relations to one another (Erel, et al. 2003: 10-11; see also Anthias, 2001b: 147). These research approaches grappled with the subtleties of 'how male and female are constructed, how the

construction changes and how it is experienced subjectively' (Page Moch, 2005: 101). They recognised how gender is at the heart of migration itself, and often at the heart of the 'most damaging [negative and racist] constructions of today's immigrants' (Page Moch, 2005: 104).

In particular, gender is seen as central to migration because its discourses and practices influence and shape individual and collective senses of belonging and identity and because 'irreducibly gendered subjects act as a display of unchangeable cultural continuity' (Fortier, 2001: 25). Gender casts both women and men into specific roles but women are often required to carry the 'burden of representation' of their collectivities, be they national, ethnic or otherwise (Yuval-Davis 1997). As Yuval-Davis maintains, migrant women:

> Are constructed as the symbolic bearers of collectivities' identity and honour, both personally and collectively... Women, in their "proper" behaviour, their "proper" clothing, embody the line which signifies the collectivities' boundaries (Yuval-Davis 1997: 45-46).

Migrant women embody the biological and symbolic reproducers of their collectivities' boundaries and this gendered role gives women special relevance within their groups and families. More than men, migrant women are expected to care for and nurture the social and affective relations within which they are socialised (Decimo, 2005: 38). For Decimo (2005: 39), this factor also explains why women's projects of migration are often orientated towards the unity and well-being of their households, rather then their own individual fulfilment. However, I want to argue, these two levels of enabling outcomes do not mutually exclude each other.

The en-gendering of migration studies in the last decades points significantly to the fact that women's reasons for, and outcomes of, migration are often related to gender emancipation, particularly the necessity to escape from a society where patriarchy is an institutionalised and repressive force. Women may migrate to avoid having to relinquish pay cheques to a husband or father, defer to an abusive husband, raise children without male help or escape gendered violence such as female genital mutilation (Gray, 1996; Phizacklea, 1996). Even if migration is underwritten by economic necessity, women's migration is not simply a response to economic hardship of women but a calculated move on the part of individual

gendered actors to escape from constraints and limitations (Kofman, 1999: 286; Morokvasic; 1993, 1984). Even when women migrate for reasons which are similar to men's, the consequences of their migration projects are always specific to their gender.

While migrant women, like most migrants, generally come from the richest classes and are the most resourceful and socially equipped members of their societies, migration empowers women in a distinctly gendered way. For example, given the low social esteem and worth accorded to girls in many societies, women's ability to earn money and send it home through remittances can increase their social worth and independence. Even while there is some debate on whether paid work leads to real independence for migrant women (Christie, 2002), women's economic contributions often translate into social emancipation, particularly from gender constraints. This condition is confirmed by the greater number of divorced and separated women among migrants groups (Morokvasik, 1993) and by the starkly contrasting perspectives that migrant men and women reveal on returning home. As Manuh maintain, men seek return as an opportunity to reinstate their traditional power, while women refuse it for fear of reducing a new-found independence (Manuh, 2003).[5]

Another important contribution of the two research approaches described above is that they highlighted the co-existence of gender emancipation and gender constraints (what I conceptualise respectively as acts of *resistance* and *struggles* in the course of my study) in migrant women's lives. Most of the early studies (in the 1970s and 1980s) took a dichotomised approach; either migrant women were subjugated or they were empowered and emancipated. Moreover, to 'compensate' for the absence of women, the role of structural constraints was often overemphasised. This produced an impression that migrant women were victims of the circumstances (Anthias, 2001b: 160). After the 1990s, the scholarship has instead reassessed women's agency, showing that migrant women are not objects of the ideologies and policies aimed at controlling their roles but are also active and dynamic agents of their lives and take advantage of migration. Migrant women enact powerful strategies of resistance in their social networks, households and

[5] Another example is provided by Hollands who shows that refugee 'men tend to refer to the past in which they were something, whereas women refer to the present and future where they might become something' (Hollands, 1996 cited in Anthias, 2001s: 162).

families with many liberating outcomes (Anthias, 2001a, 2001b; Kofman, 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). For example it has been demonstrated that migrant women may seek greater acculturation than men in the hope of gaining more egalitarian roles (Ong, 1995).

Simultaneously, the scholarship in the 1990s continues to highlight the structural constraints influencing migrant women's lives. Racial and sexual discrimination in the labour market often militates against migrant women, who experience occupational deskilling and are pushed into un-unionised and illegal forms of labour (Kofman et al. 2000; Phizacklea, 1999). Women's experiences are mediated by discriminatory immigration policies that tend to treat women as confined to male regulated 'private' spheres (Luibhéid and Lentin, 2004; Anthias, 2001a, 2001b; Kofman et al. 2000; Brah, 1996; Ong, 1995). Citizenship and childbearing rights of migrant women for example, are often contested and women are targeted by exclusionary nationalist practices in a gendered way (Lentin, 2004). Thus, in the case of citizenship, when migrant women enter a country as spouses, their entry is often conditional. This reinforces migrant women's dependency on their husbands. At the same time, when migrant women enter countries as independent workers, the kind of jobs available to them, mostly those in the domestic sphere and in the sex industry, are not considered labour (Kofman, et al. 2000). In the countries of departure, women's migration may be dictated by the 'feminisation of poverty' (such as global structural adjustment programmes) which impacts most heavily on women's work in both waged and unwaged sectors of the economy (Sassen, 2003a). Therefore, women's increased migration is not always an indicator of their increased freedom of movement (Morokvasic, et al. 2003).

Another important contribution to a gendered analyses of migration in the last decade is the deconstruction of essentialised notions of migrants 'communities' and womanhood. Intersecting 'ethnicity' and 'race' with gender demonstrates that not all migrant or ethnic group members are positioned in the same way within their collectivities (Brah, 1996). 'Communities' are not homogeneous, nor are 'women migrants'. Power relations and hierarchies exists within ethnic communities, even though these 'communities' may be presented and constructed as culturally homogenous. There is no generic gender oppression, nor is there a generic articulation of womanhood either, and the gender variable is one of the many cross-cutting variables that construct identities –and oppression. In other words, gender

intersects with other social categories, positioning women differently within hierarchies of power and domination, which may be experienced simultaneously at different levels.

Clearly, the coexistence of enabling and disabling mechanisms in migration leads to contradictory outcomes for the migrant women. The theorisations that have been most relevant for my research have been precisely those directly dealing with the complex coexistence and interplay of struggles and acts of resistance in migrant women's lives. For example, Yuval-Davis underlines that while:

> Often wives of immigrants are at least partially excluded from the public sphere, because of legal restrictions, a lack of work opportunities or linguistic inadequacies, while at the same time, they are expected to remain the primary bearers of a distinctive 'home' culture. This is one of the main reasons that stronger social control is likely to be exercised on girls than on boys, especially among the children of immigrants (Yuval-Davis, 1994: 197).

Similarly, Gina Buijs maintains that migrant women 'live within a contradiction':

> They increase their self confidence and domestic authority, while acquiring new skills and new potentialities, and they experience a stiffening of norms which regulated their behaviour into a mechanism to maintain group distinctiveness and separateness (Buijs, 1993: 1-6).

Even though these issues have been often addressed, I found that there was still scope for theorising how the contradictions and contrasting forces of migration were experienced and played out by migrant women. I return later in this thesis to this question that is indeed central to all my study.

The Lacunae: Scope For New Directions?

Despite the significant achievements in the theorisations of gender and migration in the last decade, gaps still exist that need to be filled. For most of the 1990s, too much emphasis has been still placed on the rehabilitation of the economic role of migrant women, their positions in the labour economy and their citizenship status. These analyses ended up crystallising the binary logic of economic/non-economic actor and erroneously suggested that the role and value of migrant women is based on their economic contribution and is often linked to recent globalisation factors. In a sense, focusing on migrant women's economic

contribution and legal status is a useful political tool because it speaks the same 'utilitarian' language of nation-states and can (counter)-interact with them. However, this focus also risks obscuring rather than deconstructing the complexities of gender and migration if the analyses conducted are not inserted in more holistic theoretical frameworks. The contemporary relevance of the feminisation of labour and feminisation of survival, which have spread on an impressive global scale over the last two decades, brought further attention to these issues (Sassen, 2003a, 2003b; Kanji and Menon-Sen, 2001).[6] Similarly, because of the often restrictive immigration policies, many studies of migrant women focused on women's legal status, citizenship issues and visibility in public institutions.

Given its scale, it is understandable that so many studies have concentrated on the intersection of migrant women, labour and citizenship. Nonetheless, I think we have to be careful not to allow these questions to limit us in developing independent and alternative foci of analysis. Moreover, the analytical perspectives on labour and citizenship didn't prove particularly useful in my study of Italian migrant women in Ireland. They could not help describe and understand the complex and often 'hidden' meanings of the women's experiences. Italian migrant women's labour participation, particularly in the case of early-waves migrant women, was indeed present but was certainly not the most relevant aspect of their lives. Moreover, socialised in the dominant ideology of labour, Italian migrant women have internalised a sense of inferiority attached to their status as 'minor' economic contributors within their families and they could not tell me anything significant about it. To theorise what was meaningful in their lives, I had to look elsewhere, because indeed many aspects of their gendered experiences beyond questions of labour and citizenship, were neither trivial nor inconsequential and deserved attention.

I had to create a space to interrogate some of the taken-for-granted aspects of women in migration beyond questions of economic contribution, legal status and visibility in public institutions. This seemed especially relevant while dealing with the literature on Italian migration, as I demonstrate in the second section of this chapter. Although, during the last few years in which I have been working on my

[6] For example in the Filipino case, 89 per cent of the total number of Overseas Filipino Workers deployed between 1992 and 2001 were women, most of them employed as domestic helpers, caregivers, nurses and entertainers (De Guzman, 2003).

research interesting works have appeared which have broadened the analytical interests in Italian migrant women (Zontini, 2004; Baldassar, 2007, 2001), a challenge to uncover the multiple meanings of migrant women's experiences across structural and personal accounts remains.

Before I conclude this section, I want to isolate the three main theoretical ambiguities I encountered in the literature and with which I had to engage in my study. First, the articulation of gender in the analysis of migrant women is not always explicit and I wanted to critically consider how to avoid just 'adding women in'. There is often an analytical confusion between women's questions and gender questions. Needless to say, gender is not just about women, but rather stands for the social and cultural ideals, practices and display of masculinities and femininities (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). However, this notion is often left unproblematised, which risks reducing the analysis of migrant women to static, homogenised or stereotyped accounts, obscuring 'the non-innocence' of the universal category 'woman' (Harraway, 1991: 157).

Second, I needed to deal with the analytical tension between agency and structural constraints and between the disempowering and empowering outcomes of migration. One important aim for me was to create a framework to look at these contrasting forces dialectically, to understand the modalities with which disadvantages and advantages, struggles and acts of resistance coexist in migrant women's lives. The risk here is that, on the one hand, insisting on women's agency may obscure the degree of constraint and violence influencing the trajectories of female mobility and settling down (domestic violence; lack of opportunities and education; etc). On the other hand, I needed to keep in mind how, even in the most harrowing of conditions, women are not just passive victims. Even those who are in marginal positions can negotiate and resist hegemony on a repeated basis, because 'dominance, no matter how multidimensional, can never be complete and is always contradicted by resistance' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 54). Unless we recognise the degrees of agency and resistance embodied by women we will never make sense of the complex experiences of migrant women. Migrant women will continue to be viewed as passive victims, helpless in the face of 'the impersonal cycles of

international capital and bowing to oppressive patriarchal structures' (Kofman et al, 2000: 25).[7]

In the specific case of Italian migrant women in Ireland, this meant risking a failure to address the specific struggles and resistance of those women associated with family reunification, represented as 'subjugated' and 'constrained' in traditional roles as family caregivers, mothers, etc., and averse to participation in official institutions. How can we know about these women's experiences? Or better, what can the women themselves tell us about their lives? Allowing the women a voice to express themselves, we can in fact see how on their own terms and within their own limits, the Italian migrant women in Ireland act at the threshold of belonging and affiliation, where agency and constraints, change and continuity, fluidity and stability happen simultaneously. In other words, there is a dynamic and organic process of accommodation, resistance and change that I needed to understand beyond the simple and more static division between economic/personal autonomy and family constraints (Sharpe, 2001), a question with which I engaged in the analysis of Italian migrant women's narratives in chapters seven and eight.

In this sense, it seemed to me that the post-structuralist and cultural approaches highlighted above proved more fruitful, moving away from a 'male-informed' approach of labour economy, better problematising gender and belonging in migration. Viewing women as involved in a more complex set of experiences rather than simply as workers, wives, etc., yielded valuable insights into the texture of migrant women's lives, recognising the agency migrant women and elucidating the workings of migrant groupings (Page Moch, 2005: 98). I wanted to include women's hopes alongside their concerns with the remaking of homes, the effects of individual circumstances and the growth of independence. The pleasure as well as the pain in crossing boundaries had to be taken into account (Anthias, 2001b; Anthias and Lazaridis, 2000;160; Buijs, 1993).

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[7] Migration linked to sex labour is a particularly critical example of the tension between agency and structural constraints. Do we theorise migrant women in the sex industry as victims or can they also be agents of their lives? Even in the highly-exploited sex industry, there is evidence that some migrant women are likely to make more use than men of recruitment agents, more or less explicitly involved in the business of sex workers, particularly those who facilitate clandestine migration (Lim and Oishi, 1996).

All of these points are particularly relevant to Italian migration studies, in which women have too often been invisible or represented as passive 'followers'. In the next section, I review the literature on Italian migrant women in the world, showing how dominant structuralist and positivistic accounts limited our understanding of their complex experiences of migration, their specific achievements, struggles and resistance. In chapter three, I move on to analyse the diaspora theories that proved useful to me for constructively theorising Italian migrant women in Ireland.

DOV'ERANO LE DONNE? THE 'HORIZONS' OF ITALIAN MIGRANT WOMEN

At the launch of Gabaccia and Iacovetta's work *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World* (2002), Gabaccia provocatively asked '*dov'erano le donne?*' [Where were the women?], alluding sarcastically to the gender blindness and misrepresentations of women in Italian migration studies (Airos, 2003). Searching for accounts of Italian migrant women in the mainstream literature, I was continuously struck by their exclusion as well.[8] Italian migration studies, with their nationalistic approach and disinterest in the qualitative experiences of Italian migrants (see next chapter), have been consistently gender-blind and have promoted a representation of Italian women as passive, subjugated, silent and house-bound.

These representations have been justified by the numeric predominance of men among those Italians migrating during the early phases of mass migration. However, as I argued above, early statistic surveys discounted women and did not attend to important questions for Italian women migrants, questions like : how women may have supported men's circulatory migration, run households and family businesses, administrated remittances participated in family decision-

[8] To take just one example amongst many, in a 1986 monograph on Italian emigration, Pittau and Ulivi devoted very little space to Italian migrant women, even though they mentioned – but left unproblematised - that Italian women's decision to migrate was indeed affected by higher levels of female unemployment and by the lack of maternity benefits in Italy (Pittau and Ulivi, 1986: 111-114). This was an obviously relevant issue, but the authors, in a book that explicitly deals with Italian emigration, spend only a few lines on this critical issue.

making about migration (Ramella, 2001: 151)? Moreover, there is a qualitatively significant history of Italian women's circulatory migration within Europe dating back from the early nineteenth century (especially for seasonal and domestic work such as rice weeders, wetnurses, etc; see Bianchi, 2001: 257; Sanfilippo, 2001b). This gendered history has been largely ignored even though it shows that in certain cases, Italian migrant women outnumbered men.

Feminist critics have denounced the ideological rather than substantial invisibility of Italian migrant women, re-articulating women in Italian migration studies following the trends of the general migration literature that I have discussed above. First came a 'compensatory phase' in the 1980s and 1990s, which tended to 'compensate' Italian women's absence and/or to overemphasise the agency of women in migration and their family roles, particularly as mothers (Di Leonardo, 2001; Tirabassi, 1998, 1992; Del Negro, 1997; Pesman, 1992; Chistolini, 1986). By the late 1990s, a new analytical phase has instead built more comprehensive analytical frameworks to unpack the multilayered meanings of migrant women's experiences, attempting to balance the relation between women's agency and structural constraints dictating their migratory choices (Baldassar, 2007, 2000; Baldassar et al, 2006; Reynolds and Zontini, 2006; Gabaccia, 2005; Gabaccia and Iacovetta, 2002; Fortier, 2000).

These recently produced works look at transnationalism, diaspora, social networks and social capital theories and use interdisciplinary and qualitative approaches. The heterogeneity of women and complexities of gender have been further exposed by looking at Italian migrants' queer identities (Fortier, 2001) and at forms of migrants' 'transgressive sexual identities' (Anderlini-D'Onofrio, 1998). However, for the most part, the question of Italian migrant women's roles in their family remains at the centre of the analyses. This is perhaps due to the strong importance of familism and motherhood in Italian culture (Zontini, 2004; Di Leonardo, 2001; Lever-Tracy and Holton, 2001).

Notably, in all the different analytical phases, the most significant contribution to the literature on Italian migrant women has come from Italian/diasporic scholars outside Italy (Baldassar, 2007, 2000; Gabaccia, 2003, 2000; Tirabbassi, 1998, 1992; Vasta, 1993, 1992) especially from social historians wishing to re-write women's history (Reeder, 2003; Gabaccia, 2003, 2000; Iacovetta, 1986). Italian

feminist scholars in Italy who have dealt with Italian migration have been fewer in number. This is probably because in Italy of the 1990s, the maturation of a feminist paradigm in migration studies corresponded to a historic shift that saw Italy going from being a country of emigration to a country of immigration, a phenomenon that ended up attracting the greatest attention (Balsamo, 2003, 1997; Ambrosini and Zandini, 1996; Vicarelli, 1994; Favaro and Bordogna, 1991).[9]

Yet a growing interest in Italian migrant women is evidenced not only by the general literature inside and outside Italy, but also by the associative practices of Italian migrant women established worldwide. Italian migrant women's associations worldwide are numerous. These were founded especially at the end of the 1990s. Many of these women's organisations have been sponsored by the Italian Governments' *Dipartimento per le pari opportunita* [Department for Equal Opportunities]. [10] Italian migrant women's associations reflect Italian women's awareness of their differences and relevance in migration. They also reveal the extent to which diasporisation is developed in the case of Italian migration.

Women migrants' social and political relevance has also been confirmed by their inclusion in the *Prima Conferenza degli Italiani nel mondo* in December 2000, with a Special Symposium on Italian migrant women, prepared during a preliminary *Conferenza delle donne Italiane all'estero* held in 1997 in Italy. The conference proceedings show an impressive level of confidence by the migrant women associations' representatives regarding the importance of migrant women's issues. In particular, the representatives spoke about the 'delicate' role of migrant women in 'mediating' different cultural worlds. They also spoke of the need for 'women's voices to be transmitted by women and the fact that migration often represents a strategy for gender emancipation (Prima Conferenza degli Italiani nel mondo, 2001). Following the Symposium, a legislative document was also

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[9] This trend is still continuing and recent Italian feminist works on migration are almost exclusively about immigrant women in Italy (Decimo, 2005; Andall, 2003; Corso and Trifiro, 2003; Mariti, 2003; Salih, 2003).

[10] For example, there is the *Associazione donne Italiane in Svizzera* [Association of Italian women in Switzerland], founded in 1998; the *Coordinamento Donne Italo-Uriguaiane* [Committee of Italo-Uruguayan Women], founded in 1999; the *Coordinamento Donne Italo-Argentine* [Committee of Italo-Argentinean women], founded in 1998; the *Coordinamento Federale delle Italiane in Germania* [Federal Committee of Italian women in Germany], founded in 1998 (Inform, 2007). Several organizations are also formed along regional affiliations such as the *Donne Pugliesi nel mondo* [Women from Puglia in the world] (Italian Network, 2006).

produced, concerning the establishment of the ODIE- *Osservatorio Donne Italiane all'Estero* [Observatory on Italian Women Abroad]. According to the intentions of its founders, the ODIE would function as a governmental advisory body, monitoring the social condition of Italian women abroad. However, currently the ODIE's legal foundation is still awaiting approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 2006b).

These organisations tell us about the consolidation in recent years of the Italian diaspora and its institutions. As I explain in the next chapter, diaspora emerged in my study as a relevant political discourse of mobilisation of the Italian migrant population and of its governing bodies, as well as a useful theoretical concept which creates space to think about the complexities of migration. Another interesting materialisation of the Italian gendered diasporama is the publication of a 'Guide book for the rights of Italian women abroad' titled *Orizzonti* [Horizons] (Fanfan et al., 2000) sponsored by the *Commissione nazionale per la parità e le pari opportunità tra uomo e donna* [National committee for equality and equal opportunities between men and women]. This work introduces Italian migrant women to their rights in relation to citizenship, international family affairs, school and university, social welfare, maternity, employment and financial matters. This publication shows an unprecedented interest in migrant women, even though it is not clear how widely it has actually been circulated among the migrant communities.

Interestingly, *Orizzonti* included legal data that proved the lasting effect of the discrimination against Italian migrant women in the Italian jurisprudence. Italian migrant women were excluded from transmitting Italian citizenship to their children until 1986. The first citizenship law of the Italian State in 1912 stated that only men who were Italian citizens could transmit Italian citizenship to their children, automatically excluding single Italian migrant women or Italian women in mixed marriages from such rights. This law was changed in 1986 but its retroactivity is valid only for children born after January 1948 – the year the Italian Constitution was signed (Fanfan et al., 2000: 19). Therefore, Italian legislation continues to discriminate against migrant women, who, unlike Italian migrant men, are denied the right to pass Italian citizenship to their progeny.

The retroactivity limit and its gender discrimination may seem of small relevance at present, but it is actually extremely important for Italian descendants who wish to reclaim Italian citizenship. Reclaiming citizenship is a growing phenomenon, given that Italian law sanctioned dual citizenship only in 1992 and many Italian migrants who were compelled to renounce Italian citizenship prior to this date, have applied for citizenship in the last decade. The extent of this phenomenon is well exemplified by the list in the Buenos Aires Italian Consulate which had 17,000 reclaims of Italian citizenship in 2002; some from relatives who went to Argentina in the middle of the nineteenth century (Tobar, 2002). Though some have appealed the citizenship laws, they have had little success (Fanfan et al., 2000: 19) and it is clear that this 1986 citizenship law with its retroactivity only until 1948, actually does little to repair the institutional discrimination against Italian migrant women. Thus Italian women are still discriminated against and in a sense penalised, for the courage and transgression of their migration projects.

If the early literature on Italian migrants has not been generous towards women, feminist scholars have successfully grappled with the complex experiences of Italian women in migration. These works are reviewed in the next section, divided into two categories: the Americas/Canada/Australia context and the European context. The review concludes by highlighting the remaining flaws in the literature.

'Too Facile And Destructive': Representations Of Italian Migrant Women In The Americas, Canada And Australia

Most case studies of Italian migrant women have been published in the Americas and Australia, probably due to the long and dense history of Italian migration in these areas. Italian and European scholars have turned their attention to Italian migrant women only later. Although early works in the Americas and Australia mostly concentrate on quantitative analyses (which, as I demonstrated above, tend to be not strictly relevant), some early gendered accounts about Italian migrant women also exist. For example, Maddalena Tirabassi (1998) recovered two surveys commissioned in 1909 and in 1911 by the Italian government on Italian emigration in the US, in which Amy Bernardy (the daughter of an America diplomat and a Florentine woman) reported the conditions of Italian migrant

women and children in New York. Bernardy showed that Italian migrant women were employed in small factories 'working with their children at their breasts' and were often smuggled from Italy for labour and sexual exploitation (Tirabassi, 1998: 149-161).

Italian migrant women have always been a consistent presence in the US, forming 30 per cent of Italian immigrants in the 1890s, reaching 60 per cent in the 1980s and in the 1990s. They still slightly outnumbered the men in the Italo-American population (Tirabassi, 1992: 135). Australia, which was the last country to encounter the waves of Italian mass migration, started to receive a significant number of Italian migrants arriving in the 1950s. These were initially men, but by 1971, when there was a 900 per cent growth in Italian migration, women accounted for 45 per cent of the population (Pesman, 1992). In Canada, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Italian women, particularly from South Italy, formed a relevant part of Italian migration there. It has been argued that these women participated in family decisions to migrate and helped, in less formal ways, by contributing income to the household economy (Iacovetta, 1986; Sturino, 1986).

The literature produced in the 1990s contradicted the stereotypes of Italian migrant women, especially the Southern Italians, as passive, ignorant and subjugated. Such were the stereotypes which had persisted throughout Italian migration studies until then, which were often so negative that 'women appeared almost as victims of researchers who treated them as objects not subjects' (Pesman, 1992: 158). Besides being androcentric, past research on Italian migrant women tended to be ethnocentric too, and approached immigrant women from a liberal-individualist stance, as if there were only one model possible of emancipation for the Italian women and their migrant groups in general (Pesman, 1992). Moreover, as I show in the next chapter, Italian migration studies have also largely been biased by nationalist and classist ideologies, doubly discounting and devaluing migrant women of working-class origins (Gabaccia and Ottanelli, 2001). As Pesman points out, stereotyping immigrant women as an oppressed and powerless group was facile and condescending, but also 'destructive', because the descriptive easily became the prescriptive and the women themselves have been deprived of models to effect change (Pesman 1992: 158).

Feminist accounts convey a fairer image of Italian migrant women, highlighting the emancipatory role of migration in women's lives and women's

agency and resistance to family and societal constraints (Tirabassi, 1992: 136). Two works are often cited in the literature as classic precursors: the biography of *Rosa: the Life of an Italian Immigrant* (Ets, 1970)[11] and Anthony Orsi's *The Madonna of 115 Street* (1985). Both highlight the higher status of Italian wives and mothers in the family, as objects of special respect and love. These works also underline gendered conflict taking place in the Italian migrant families and deal with the gendered consequences of migration. This was how, paraphrasing Rosa's own words, migration was important because it taught women 'not to be afraid' (Ets, 1970, in Tirabassi 1992: 141).

In the 1980s and 1990s, especially in the North American context, the ethnic question replaced the migration discourse. The focus became cultural change and women negotiating cultural models during the so-called 'Americanisation' phase (Tirabassi, 1992: 140). 'Modernisation' and the 'integration' of women in the receiving countries was theorised as a condition that migrants negotiated and reinvented (Tirabassi, 1992: 149). This new interest led to focusing not on geographical displacement but on the process of settlement and ethnic relations. Ethnicity and gender have been theorised as intersecting factors. Aspects of women's lives outside their family caring role, in religious, political or associative practices have been analysed (Vasta, 1993; Pesman, 1992; Tirabassi, 1992). These analyses demonstrate how Italian migrant women can gain self-esteem and emancipate themselves from the constraints of their families, without however having to identify with the dominant model of the receiving countries (Tirabassi, 1992: 140).

The analytical attention to the intersection of gender and ethnicity highlighted not just the similarities of gender struggles but also the differences among women in terms of social classes, regional background, and age. The unity of the family is problematised, considered in relation to a wider context, looking for example, at how women build and nourish the transnational and local networks that protected the interests of the family and their own interests (Baldassar, 2001; Pesman, 1992: 159).

[11] Narrated by Marie Hall Ets, a social worker at a Chicago settlement house for poor immigrants, *Rosa* documents a young girl's life in an impoverished northern Italian village, and her forced immigration to America to join her husband.

Most recent works in the North American and Australian context centre on the complex meaning of familism and kinship, on women's diversity and on the subtleties of their agency and resistance (Gabaccia and Iacovetta, 2002; Di Leonardo, 2001). Gabaccia and Iacovetta demonstrate for example the range of roles Italian migrant women play outside their families, showing women as peasants, factory workers, small enterprise owners, active trade unionists, politicians and even radical political activists (Gabaccia and Iacovetta, 2002: 3-33).

The tension between social constraints, emancipation and agency emerges as an interesting research question in all these works. The tension is manifested in the often tormented choices that second and third generation Italian migrant women face (Tirabassi, 1992; Pesman, 1992). Research focuses in particular on choices made in relationships between mothers and daughters (Baldassar, 2001; Vasta, 1992). Mother-daughter relationships can be very complex, because on the one hand, Italian migrant mothers can be heroic agents of change on their 'daughter's behalf' (changing not only patriarchal codes but also resisting racism and discrimination from the larger society; Vasta, 1992). On the other hand, mothers can also be 'constraining matriarchs' at the expenses of their own daughters. The tragic point often made here is that women/mothers may ultimately constrain their daughters in their own attempts to resist the gender constraints they also suffer. The stark contradictions of motherhood in the Italian migrant women's lives are central to their experiences of migration and to the analysis of the tension between agency and constraints which I noted in my general literature review at the beginning of this chapter.

The European Context

Having highlighted the critical issues emerging in the American and Australian literature, which as I explained I now survey the European context. Europe was the first destination for Italian migrants both at the beginning and at the end of the long phase of mass migration (1870-1970), and it remains the first destination, with an estimate of two million Italian citizens living in Europe in 2001 (Genga, 2003). European policies of 'free' movement and social welfare systems complicate the meaning of migration, making migration a way of life which involves intense relational, emotional, and spatial connections, and breakages.

The countries most affected by Italian migration have also produced the most extensive literature on Italian migrants, namely Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium (Ganga, 2005; Sponza, 2005; Meyer Sabino; 2002; Morelli, 2002; Pugliese, 2002; Vial, 2002), even though very few recent analyses have directly looked at women of the Italian migration (Zontini, 2004; Fortier, 2000; Chistolini, 1986). My frustration at the low level of research on Italian migrant women in Europe was a strong motivation for this study.

An analysis of Eurostat data shows that in the last decades many Italian women migrate of their own volition as single women (Ackers, 1996: 328), which I think suggest a need to further explore the gendered emancipatory role of migration for women. Statistical data cannot, however, uncover the underlying meanings of Italian women's migrations and I have turned to more qualitative studies. Two works have been of special interest in my study: Sandra Chistolini's (1986) research on Italian migrant women in Scotland and Anne-Marie Fortier (2000) on Italian migrants in London.

Chistolini's work was useful for my study because Italian migration to Scotland is linked with migration to Ireland; as chain migrations from the Frosinone Province, a central region of Italy, arrived first in Scotland, then moved to Northern Ireland and subsequently to the Republic of Ireland. In the years 1973-1983, between 600 and 1200 Italians arrived in UK each year, 40 per cent of whom were women (Chistolini, 1986). These waves of migration were characterised by cohesive kinship groups with connections in other European countries which functioned as a base for diasporic affiliations. Chistolini identifies the reasons for women's migration as economic necessity and family reunification, showing how women of the second and third generation still worked predominantly in family catering businesses. She highlights the relevance of women's roles as mothers and wives and considers the 'protective' function of the family and of village-based migration.

However, in her study, women's narratives are left unproblematised and ultimately convey an image of women 'out of place' in the Scottish urban landscape, subjugated and confined to their homes. Chistolini's research was conducted in the early 1980s, and is imbued with the positivistic beliefs of the time. It does not problematise gender fully and is replete with problematic claims (for example that women 'subordinate their psycho-social maturation [to] the

instrumental and moral needs of the family'; Chistolini, 1986: 187). Indeed, deconstructing the meaning of migration in women's lives requires a much deeper understating of gender.

Despite her study's shortcomings, Chistolini points out significantly the contradictions of migrant women's lives. She shows the 'double standards', which limit women more than men (particularly in relation to sexuality), and highlights the ambiguities deriving from internalised moral sanctioning practices (often associated with Catholic faith). Enmeshed in a strong ethos of self-sacrifice, women become self 'controllers' and in social conflicts, 'more than the rebellion of the daughters, the mediation of the mothers prevails' (Chistolini, 1986: 206).

Almost twenty years later, the UK based sociologist Anne-Marie Fortier's study of the Italian community in London (Fortier, 2000) presents a much more developed gender analysis (which manages to say more about women than Chistolini's study, even though Christolini's study is entirely dedicated to women). Fortier's focus on familism remains salient throughout her work and as she specifies:

> Although not necessarily family bound, the identity of [Italian migrant] women remains represented as deeply family based... [because] the definition of local particularity is familiarised, and its familiarisation naturalises gender differences (Fortier, 2000: 49).

Gendering her analysis, Fortier problematises the notion of community and theorises 'migrant belongings' rooted in memory and in 'cultural forms configured around stories of migration; stories of beginnings; ... stories of continuity and stories of change' (Fortier, 2000: 157). Her analysis is supported by a diasporic framework that calls attention to the 'social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration' (Gilroy, 1994 in Fortier 2000: 157). Within this framework, Fortier looks at Italian migrant women as 'vectors of transition', who mark the thresholds of identity and difference, being and becoming in their migrant groups (Fortier, 2000: 48). This is a central notion to which I return later in this study.

Fortier's diasporic paradigm also highlights how 'gender is the central vehicle for the mobilisation of family and generations in the collective re-enactment and displays of cultural continuity' (Forier, 2000: 167). But it is on a 'mouvant Italian émigré culture' that Fortier focuses, a 'continuity of becoming' constructed and

experienced precisely through narratives of gender and sexuality (Fortier, 2000: 170).

Fortier demonstrates how, fusing nation and family together, diasporic 'discourses of national alliance naturalise the different positions men and women occupy within national and ethnic communities: men defend and protect, women reproduce and embody' (Fortier, 2000: 97). But norms of belonging can be invariably deployed in practices of migrant identities. The 'crystal clear' difference between men and women becomes the blueprint of any norm of belonging, encased in Italian femininity and masculinity, not as fixed positions but rather as the 'product of saturation of particular settings in which gender, kinship and belonging intersect' (Fortier, 2000: 97).

The enactment of diasporic continuity is supported by an essentialised representation of femininity, which however, is not rigidly determined or experienced. Fortier notes that Italian migrant women in London are not just passively standing at the threshold of tradition, rather, they appear as agents of both change and continuity (Fortier, 2000: 171-172). I explore further this notion of the teleology of continuity of becoming in the rest of my study, especially in my articulation of the double diaspora. To sum up, Fortier's work displays how gender analysis makes it possible to better grasp not only the meanings of migrant women but of migrant 'communities' in general. Gendering diaspora and migration studies shows how women are key actors in the foundation of their 'communities' and also in its ongoing transformation (Fortier, 2000: 173).

The Telling Story Of Italian Migrant Women's Stories

It is noteworthy how the history of Italian migrant women has largely been reconstructed by recording women's voices and personal narratives. An interesting example is provided by Maddalena Tirabassi. While traditional quantitative sources revealed the rarity of exogamy within Italian migrant groups in US, her collection of narratives and oral testimonies presents another image, of 'women who were looking for change' even if they were marrying men of Italian descent (Tirabassi, 1992). Giovanna Del Negro's work, *Looking through my mother's eyes. Life Stories of Nine Italian Immigrant Women in Canada*, shows how women managed to stretch the boundaries of culture through narrative practices, finding ways of

criticising the status quo without openly challenging the fundamental values of their society (Del Negro, 1997: 16). Del Negro looks at the narratives of women 'talking behind closed doors' (Del Negro, 1997: 15), an image that vividly resembles my account of Italian women in Ireland 'behind the counter' and in the 'back kitchens' of the 'fish and chips' shops (see chapter six). 'Behind closed doors' is a metaphor of contested and multi-layered socialities and of how women actualise their personal autonomy developing 'ways of speaking against, with, through and for the patriarchal structure' (Del Negro, 1997: 102). [12]

I found Del Negro's notion extremely useful in understanding the different and powerful acts of resistance of Italian migrant women, whose relevance is in part rooted in my own experiences of 'Italianness', in my own stories of female relatives and acquaintances in my village in Italy. My admiration for the Italian women's lives I have known in Italy, admiration for their strength and courage in the face of constraints, informed my interpretation of the Italian women's lives in Ireland.

I set out in this study to be reflexive about my personal involvement as an Italian researcher researching Italian women. This is for me is a matter of intellectual honesty and working with the 'intelligence of emotions' that is the ways in which my emotions shape the landscapes of my mental and social life (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004: 237). This is a fundamental methodological choice of my study, as I explain in chapter five.

Conclusion

The literature on gender and migration highlights how migration can simultaneously be empowering and disempowering for women, even though no comprehensive theoretical framework has been offered yet for analysing the complex interplay of these different levels of experiences. Having argued against

[12] The relevance of narratives in Italian migrant women's lives is also reflected in the oral histories collected on behalf of migrant associations and research institutes, especially outside Europe. In Australia for example, oral histories of Italian migrant women were recorded by institutions such as *Federazione Italiana Lavoratori e Famile - FILEF* [Federation of Italian workers and families], the Italian Historical Society and the Catholic Intercultural Resource Centre (CIRC) , Italian-Australian Women's Association (Kahan-Guidi and Weiss, 1989) and an online oral histories called *Vite Italiane* (2006). In Canada, particularly relevant was a conference on women's history organised by the 'Multicultural History Society of Ontario' in 1985, whose proceedings were collected in the volume *Looking into my sister's eye: an exploration in women's history* (Brunet, 1986).

the emphasis on labour migration, I want to argue that in order to unearth the complex meanings of female migration it is necessary to call into question the conception of migration as an end in itself. Following on from this, I choose to cast migration in dialogue with diaspora, to consider the extent to which migrants' identities are lived and imagined as a diaspora and to illuminate how diasporicity can be seen as a condition of being in migration. These questions are explored in chapter three.

These themes have been central to the setting up of my research agenda which engages with the role of narrativity and memory in diaspora, raising further questions as to their gendered implications. How do women stand at the threshold of continuity and change, stability and fluidity both of diaspora and of gender norms? How can they reconcile the ensuing contradictions? To answer these questions, I theorise women's double diaspora and elucidate the meanings of diaspora in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

GENDERING DIASPORA: THE DESTABILISATION OF NOTIONS OF BELONGING AND AFFILIATION IN THE CASE OF ITALIAN EMIGRATION

> Here the invented traditions of diaspora take on their full weight, as the story of an epic journey from eternity to here (and maybe hell) and back again
>
> (Cohen, 1997: 7)

In chapter two, I surveyed the theorisation of gender and migration and how it relates to Italian migrant women in particular, and I concluded by arguing that diaspora theories can help create a space in which to think fruitfully about gendered struggles and acts of resistance in migration. My decision to work within a diasporic framework arose for several pragmatic reasons. Firstly, since there is a scarcity of literature that deals with Italian migrant women, the few meaningful contributions I was particularly inspired by, such as the works of Donna Gabaccia (2000) and Anne-Marie Fortier (2000), both produced in an Anglo-Saxon academic context, were highly influenced by diasporic theories.

Secondly, having worked on my PhD in an Irish academic context, I was exposed to the diasporic theorisation of Irish migrants and Irish migrant women in particular, a theorisation that has productively uncovered the gendered meanings of migration and its complexities (Feldman, 2006; Gray, 2004, 2002; Walter, 2001). Thirdly, the start of my PhD project in 2001 corresponded with the height of diffusion of the diaspora concept in Anglo-Saxon scholarship.[13] Fourthly, diasporic theories 'felt' like a more 'humane' (Gabaccia, 2000) way to theorise migration and

[13] Different usages often depend on disciplinary backgrounds and traditions, and on the cultural domain in which the term is used. For example, in the Anglo-Saxon world, the concept of diaspora is generally far broader than in the French, Italian and German contexts (Gabaccia, 2005; Ma Mung, 2002; Cohen, 1999). In Germany for example, researchers seems to use it often to apply to ethnic Germans in Russia, but "they do not extend the same generosity of application to cover the Turks" (Cohen, 1999: 6).

women, and indeed, they allowed me a space to think fruitfully about Italian migrant women.

Before discussing the gendering of diaspora, I examine the different usages of diaspora in the first section of this chapter, and discuss its advantages and disadvantages as a conceptual tool. There is palpable confusion among theories of diaspora and a lengthy examination is needed in order to render the concept good 'to work with'. Since diaspora is a contested notion, I also enter the debate about whether Italian migration can be conceptualised as a diaspora or not. This debate is interesting in showing the potential of diaspora to unshackle patriarchal and nationalist conceptualisations of Italian migration and the second section of this chapter is dedicated to exploring this question. The third section returns to the question of women and reviews the existing literature on gendered diasporas, suggesting the especial relevance of memories and narratives in diaspora.

DIASPORA: TOWARDS A WORKING DEFINITION

Why do we need a working definition of diaspora? Diaspora is an 'ancient' term with a long-lived resistance to changing times and a surprising capacity to adapt. Since the 1990s, it has become 'a new vocabulary' (Gilroy, 1997) in the social sciences to register the formative and constitutive power of space and movement and to shed light on contemporary forms of migration, comprising, under its theoretical premise, central concepts of contemporary social sciences such as transnationalism, fluid identities and hybridity (Cohen, 1999; Anthias, 1998; Cohen, 1997; Brah, 1996; Yuval Davis, 1992; Hall, 1990). The popularity of diaspora as a concept is recent and still growing (the vast majority of books dealing with it have been published since 1990; Cohen, 1999: 20). However, diaspora remains both an overused and an under-theorised term (Anthias, 1998: 1), whose underlying meanings are obscured by the familiarity of the word in the Anglo-saxon world ('the shape of a wave breaking gently on native shores', as Cohen puts it, 1999: 1).

Since diaspora remains widely contested both as a term of reference and as a concept of research (Kokot et al. 2004: 4), we need to attempt a definition of diaspora - one which is flexible enough to contain the 'heterogeneous, ever-

changing set of norms and knowledge of behavioural and cultural practices' (Tötölyan, 1996: 31). In order to do so, I isolated three different usages of diaspora in the literature: diaspora as an historic entity, as a discourse, and as an analytical tool. The first two usages can be defined as 'categories of practice' while the latter represents a 'category of analysis' (Brubaker, 2005). I am particularly interested in the latter usage of diaspora – diaspora as an analytical tool. This can be further divided into two other approaches: the concept of diaspora as a *typological tool*, which categorises and describes types and characteristics of diasporas; and the notion of diaspora as a *social condition and a societal process*, which focuses on the consequences of *being* in diaspora. After having surveyed the literature, I look critically at the uses and abuses of diaspora in the context of Italian migration studies.

'What's In A Word'? Layers Of Semantic And Social Meanings Of Diaspora

Vertovec and Cohen note that the most recent definitions of diaspora are so flexible that the term applies to every population that resides in a country other than that from which it originates (Vertovec and Cohen, 1999). In other words, diaspora's meanings have been stretched to accommodate the various intellectual, cultural and political agendas 'in the service of which it has been enlisted' (Brubaker, 2005: 1). The etymological meaning of *dia-spora* originates from the classical Greek *dia* 'through' and *sperein* 'to scatter' or 'to sow' (Helmreich, 1992). The term alludes to an abrupt, yet natural, process of the scattering of seeds from the parent body that both disperses and reproduces the organism. From its very semantic foundation, diaspora implies the 'fusion of scatter and sow into a single organic image [that] makes it possible to equate dispersal with dissemination' (Cohen, 1999: 8).

However, even the early usages of diaspora are tinged with its contemporary ambiguities (Tötölyan, 1996: 11). In the Athenian historic context, diaspora referred to a traumatic destruction and a coerced departure of an entire population from its homeland, with no reference to a productive resettlement. In the Jewish-Babylonian case, it referred instead to an exile limited to a class of priests and scribes, with no uprooting of an entire population or the destruction of the homeland mentioned

(Tötölyan, 1996: 11). [14] To further the ambiguities, over the centuries, diaspora has been applied to describe different historically contingent cases of dispersal and scattering. For example, in the eighteenth century black thinkers such as Olauhad Equiano (1745-97) and Phillis Weathley (1753-85) transcoded the idea of diaspora from its biblical source and the Jewish traditions to theorise about the African diaspora. Diaspora was used, to consider the questions of identity and belonging constituted in between dislocation and displacement and to express the conflict between the duties deriving from the place of origin and those different obligations that belong to the place of sojourn (Gilroy, 1997: 328) During the Enlightenment, another layer of meaning was added as diaspora was articulated with marginality and displacement, and contributed to 'the metaphysics of alienation and dual-consciousness' which has dominated European thinking since then (Cohen, 1999: 10).

In the twenty-first century, there has been a new and growing emphasis on diaspora, due to an extraordinary convergence of discursive and material events that contributed to the 'spreading of diasporas', both in the sense of formation of new diasporas and in the sense of renaming other migratory experiences as diasporas (Tötölyan, 1996: 27). Especially during the 1980s and the 1990s, structural changes (such as the improved communicative and transportation technologies, the geo-political repartitioning and the crisis of nation-states[15]) involved the intensification of large-scale migrations that strengthened the awareness of the consequences of migrating, both for new and old migrants and for settled people. Robin Cohen conceptualised this renewed phase as that of 'global diasporas', highlighting the strict relation of diasporas with the 'world economic system forms of international migration, the development of global cities, the creation of cosmopolitan and local cultures, and a deterritorialisation of social

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[14] To further the ambiguity, by the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in the first century AD, and the dispersal of rural Jewish populations in Judea, the term diaspora was applied to designate the Jewish people in general in the Greco-Roman world. However this term that came to designate the Jews was never used in the Hebrew language, where diaspora remains translatable between the often interchangeable *galut* and *golah*, meaning exile and scattering (Tötölyan, 1996: 11).

[15] Tötölyan lists among these historical contingencies the events of the civil rights for African Americans (1964); Immigration Act (1965); French theory (1966-67); Israeli victory (1967); delegation of the US government from 1964, the Cold war convention to 1968, the Tet offensive; the appearance of a new wave of feminism; the integration of the university (Tötölyan, 1996: 27).

identity' (Cohen, 1997: 157). These are among the reasons that explain the proliferation of the term in recent years, when diaspora became a 'kind of mantra' (Anthias, 1998: 1), a 'portmanteau word' (Cohen, 1999: 5), used to describe the processes of settlement and adaptation relating to a large range of historical and contemporary migrations, including global processes of deterritorialisation, transnational migration and cultural hybridity (Kokot et al., 2004: 1). Since then, the term diaspora has become (often a too loose) semantic container for the meanings, consequences, uncertainties, wonders and disorientations of global migration. [16]

The revival of the term diaspora in the 1990s also derived from an unanticipated ineffectiveness of the concepts of nationalism and 'subaltern imperialism' (Gilroy, 1997: 328), and the need to devise new frameworks to conceptualise global mobility. Moreover, in the international political arena, diaspora has been assumed as an instrument of self-reference and collective identification that sustains political mobilisation of migrant collectivities. It thus functions as a common cause against racism, assimilationalism and marginalisation (Brubaker, 2005; Olwig 2004: 4; Cohen, 1999; Wieviorka, 1998; Brah, 1996).

Despite its success and growing literature, diaspora usages are still confused and often, contradictory. The overlap of diaspora experiences and theories in late twentieth century everyday life involves a further difficulty of maintaining a univocal definition of diaspora. Many scholars and intellectuals have claimed that the multiplicity and slippage of meanings makes diaspora a dangerously promiscuous category (Tötölyan, 1996; Clifford, 1994; Butler, 2001) but for others, this very quality of diaspora as a general and all-embracing notion ('the positive modern flavour of the ancient word' Gilroy, 1997: 329) makes diaspora a heuristic tool capable of comprehending 'the novel sociality of recurrent displacement, flight, exile, and forced migration which are transforming the terms in which identity needs to be understood' (Gilroy, 1997: 329).

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[16] Several other reasons are offered as an explanation of the fortune of diaspora; for Koser, the spread of the term benefited from the longstanding association of diaspora with the dispersal of Jews and African slaves, which promoted a general sympathy within the migrants' receiving countries and has been treated favourably by the media as well (Koser, 2003: 7). Butler and Cohen claim that one has to add the 'infatuation effect' for diaspora in academia, where it become 'sexy' to use diaspora (Butler, 2001: 190). For example diaspora became helpful as a 'buzzword to flag up books to its potential readership and organize various texts thematically' (Cohen, 1999: 4).

Weighing up these two views, I agree with Brah that there is not a univocal quality of diaspora and that its multiplicity signals both its weakness and its strength (Brah, 1996: 196). However, I also believe that in order for the notion of diaspora to be useful to work with, we must eliminate any ambiguities by distinguishing the different meanings and usages of diaspora. I start by differentiating three principal usages emerged in the literarure: diaspora as a concrete experience with its own specific history; a set of discursive practices with often political finalities; and a 'humanist-constructed' conceptual approach. I must also underline however that these three levels of understanding diaspora are analytical constructions and are intrinsically linked in practice. What we recognise as historic diasporic formations is often dependent on the way we conceptualise and define it, and of course we cannot think of diasporas had they not existed as empirical historic formations.

Diasporas as historic entities

As historic entities, diasporas imply a set of diachronic and material structures and experiences. Better understood in the plural and often written with a capital letter, diasporas are institutionalised historic formations, like the Jewish Diaspora, the Armenian Diaspora, etc. In this usage, diaspora refers to migrants' groupings which have developed historically and are connected by lived and imagined common origins (national, ethnic, geographical). Some diasporas can also originate from a variety of national origins and have multiple foci of articulation (the African diaspora vs. the Senegalese diaspora). Not unlike ethnic groups, diasporas can be delineated in terms of a set of constant cultural markers and can be dormant till certain political and discursive conditions prompt them to manifest as such, like the Italian, Indian, and Chinese diasporas. Different taxonomies and typologies of diasporic historic entities have been developed, and I consider these various typologies below.

Diasporas as discourses

The manifestation of multiple or late diasporas in recent decades has been possible because of discursive practices, which 'incubate' and 'nurture' the renaming of various migrations as diasporas, attributing new 'diasporic' meanings to them (Tötölyan, 1996: 27). This is a phenomenon that has characterised recently

the case of Italian migration, as I suggested in the previous chapter. According to Clifford (1997), in recent years we have witnessed the formation of a 'diasporama', where more and more dispersed ethno-national groups identify themselves as diasporas. The power of diasporic discourses lies in their capacity to legitimise political and ideological representability, triggering off the 'dispersed nationalism' in diasporic migrants' communities that activate new political agendas for the resolution of old aspirations and/or the emergence of newer anxieties (Singh, 1999: 10).

Diasporic discourses are a means of internationalising domestic politics and polarising support from migrant communities, functioning as a 'new currency' to satisfy specific collective needs (Koser 2003: 6; Butler 2001; Singh, 1999; Clifford, 1997, 1994; Tötölyan, 1996). Diasporic discourses have the advantage of constituting a 'language game', which allows nationalism to act at a distance, so that the homeland may constrain the autonomy of the diaspora and significantly reterritorialise its main objectives (Cohen, 1999: 9; Singh, 1999: 9). At the same time, diasporic discourses function as a 'homing devise' which enables expatriate communities to exert considerable influence on their 'mother countries', even if they never lived there (Cohen, 1999: 9). In this sense, diasporas can be both 'anti-nation' (Sayyid, 1997) and ultra-nationalist.

Diaspora as a heuristic tool: a typology and a societal process

Finally, the concept of diaspora functions as a heuristic tool, developed in the social sciences, but used also in the humanities, in cultural studies, history, geography, and politics (Brubaker, 2005; Ifekwunigwe, 2003; Butler, 2001; Cohen, 2000; Clifford, 1999; Vertovec, 1997; Brah, 1996; Tölölyan, 1996, Gilroy, 1994).

This is a particular kind of diasporic discourse that theorises both the structural existence of diasporas and the conditions with which diasporic discourses and practices are experienced by those who live in/with the diaspora. The social sciences have increasingly generated bodies of scholarly literature that adopt this usage of diaspora. Although other configurations are possible[17], I choose to follow

[17] For example, Elaine Unterhalter has isolated three main usages in this approach: firstly, diaspora in ethnic studies, 'where the diaspora is largely delineated in terms of a set of constant cultural markers' associated with *home*; secondly, diaspora in the cultural perspective where diaspora is seen as contingent and constantly 'created and re-created in relation to other formation'; and lastly,

Floya Anthias, who separates this usage of diaspora between diaspora as a typological tool and as a social condition and societal process (Anthias, 2001, 1998)

As a typological tool diaspora is often defined as a 'cartographic' (Hesse, 2000: 29) or 'ethnographic' (Butler, 2001: 190) approach that classifies historical types of diasporas, relying on empirical cases and describing the 'migratory contours of particular communities from a historical place of domicile to geographically different places of generational settlement' (Hesse, 2000: 20; see also Sheffer, 2003; Cohen, 1997; Saffran, 1991). Different typologies[18] tend to focus on the reasons and conditions of dispersal, relationship with the homeland, relationship with the country of settlement, interrelationships within communities of the diaspora, comparison with other diasporas, and the institutional organisations of diaspora (Ma Mung, 2002; Butler, 2001: 195; Gabaccia, 2000; Cohen, 1997; Tötölyan, 1996). More recent typological theorisations look at the identitarian criterion of classification, rather than the more classical types based on geographical criteria. For Koser, this identity turn represents a more 'expressive' criterion, because it allows the inclusion of different aspects, ranging from the history of dispersal, the myths and memories of the homeland and the 'ambiguous' relations with the host society (Koser, 2003: 5).

The typological approach refers mainly to the public spheres and civil society, and uses political economy and structural analysis, often focusing on the leadership elite and on the hegemonies, such as the committed and the activists of the diasporic communities (Tötölyan, 1996: 18). This perspective emphasises 'doing' over 'being' and looks mostly at political activism and the social structures of diaspora. It does not deal in depth with the symbolic and cultural aspects of the everyday lived experience of diaspora. Moreover, although the multiplicity of diasporic identities might be acknowledged, there is a tendency to analyse the features of specific and bounded diasporic cases. Therefore, even though the

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diaspora in an interpretative sociological position 'where diaspora provides its own meanings which interact with those of the analyst and of diaspora peoples' (Unterhalter, 2000: 110).

[18] In *Global Diasporas* (1997), Robin Cohen posited a very detailed taxonomy of diasporas, distinguishing between victim, imperial, cultural and labour diasporas, formed for different reasons and holding specific characteristics. Some other types of diaspora have been considered. Butler, for example, distinguishes between captivity diaspora, state-eradication-exile diaspora, migration diaspora, emigration diaspora, and imperial diaspora (Butler, 2001: 200-202). Donna Gabaccia conceptualises cosmopolitan, transnational or village-based diasporas (Gabaccia, 2000).

elements of this usage of diaspora are overtly straightforward, aiming to eliminate incongruence and incoherencies, it seems that its implications remain problematic. As Brubaker recognises, n its effort to refine the meaning of diaspora, this usage of diaspora risks re-territorialising and re-essentialising the same notion of community and belonging that 'diaspora' set out originally to deconstruct (Brubaker, 2005).

Becoming normative and positing a univocal connectedness to a place and original bonds,[19] this usage of diaspora underestimates the 'circumstances that intervene in the mutable representations and developments of diasporas' (Koser, 2003: 8), fails to distinguish between diasporic formations and other kinds of migrant formations, [20] and ultimately declines to include marginal groups within the diasporas. Though interesting, this usage of diaspora was not particularly useful in my attempt to deconstruct the invisibility of migrant women in their 'communities'.

The other meaning with which the concept of diaspora has entered the social sciences language is as a social condition and a societal process. This strategic use of diaspora seems a more profitable analytical framework to deal with the 'problematics of the late twentieth-century transnational movements of people, commodities, technologies, information and cultural forms' (Brah, 1996: 241). As an ensemble of investigative technologies, the analytical term diaspora allows the construction of an 'interpretative frame' (Anthias, 1998) to think about the social condition of 'being' as well as 'doing' diaspora, in relation to local, regional and international specificities (Ifekwenigue, 2003; Hesse, 2000; Anthias, 1998; Brah, 1996). Understanding what it means to be in diaspora involves looking at societal processes and interactions that construct the diaspora as both a lived and an imagined formation, and in which 'elective affinities' connect transnationally communities that invest in imagining themselves as part of a diaspora (Hesse, 2000: 20). It also implies understanding the 'various configurations of power that

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[19] Paradoxically, this usage of diaspora renders conceivable (and even desirable?) a massive return of diasporas to their 'original' countries as Kim Butler notes, as it has been proposed for the African diaspora (Butler, 2001).

[20] Robin Cohen, one of the most central contributors to this conceptualisation, recognises that typologies of diaspora risk being lost in their 'morphological quest' and attempts to resolve the impasse by distinguishing diasporas vis-à-vis *world religions*, *borderland cultures* and *'stranded minorities'* (Cohen, 1997: 187). However, he has to take into considerations several exceptions and his definitions are not always cogent, as for example, the distinction between diasporas and borderland cultures in the case of the migration between the Mexico-USA border (Cohen, 1997: 190).

differentiate empirical diasporas internally as well as situate them in relation to one another' (Brah, 1996: 242).

This theorisation of diaspora as an analytical term is often associated with the terms, *diasporicity* and *diasporisation* (Brubaker, 2005: 4; Soysal, 2000; Cohen, 1999). *Diasporicity* alludes to the existence of symbolic and cultural practices of signification, such as narratives and stories, which form a particular way of mapping territories of meaning (Cohen, 1999: 5). In my study, diasporicity also signals the conception of diaspora as a tool to understand the condition of being in migration. *Diasporisation* similarly refers to an 'explanatory fortitude in narrating the presence and condition' of migrant populations (Soysal, 2000: 2). The focus on narrativity and diaspora is salient, and in chapter eight, I examine in depth the relation of diaspora and narrativity that is highlighted in the above definitions.

This usage of diaspora draws on a general definition of diaspora as a migration that involves global and cultural displacement in different countries. However, the focus is not so much on the characteristics of the diaspora as on the collective and individual experiences, practices and discourses that construct the diaspora. Not all migrants are in diaspora; those migrants who live migration as a temporary and one-off occurrence might not experience the degree of fragmentation, marginality, in-betweenness and incompleteness that characterises the diaspora. This compels diasporic subjects to recreate belonging out of their dispersion, connecting to each other and to other groups that share the same experience. As Brah eloquently puts it, at the heart of a diaspora there is the image of a journey, even though not all journeys can be understood as diasporas; diasporas are not casual travels, nor temporary sojourns, but rather 'journeys about settling down, putting roots "elsewhere"' (Brah, 1996 : 182).

Thus conceptualised, diaspora deconstructs both the material and symbolic circumstances that create fragmentation, looking at the 'tactics, dimensions and articulations' (Clifford, 1994: 254) that are individually and collectively adopted in the process of experiencing, resisting and adapting diaspora (Cohen, 1999; Brah, 1996; Clifford, 1994: 254). Clearly, this approach considers diasporas as composite formations, not homogeneous groups;[21] it deals with the complexities of migrants'

[21] James Clifford metaphorises diasporas as ropes of many different threads, which are tangled together but remain separate elements (Clifford, 1999). Avtar Brah (1996) similarly speaks of the diaspora as a journey of many journeys to different parts of the globe, 'each with its own history, its

belonging and affiliation, problematising the journey from 'here' to 'there', taking into consideration the space in-between and the act itself of 'travelling along the route'. Paul Gilroy has highlighted the relation of 'roots' and 'routes' in diaspora, where the sense of belonging is based not in a fixed place, but in the reality of not having a fixed place (Gilroy, 1993). 'Rooting in routes' is a metaphor for the diasporic condition, implying that while being perennially 'away' and from 'somewhere else', diasporic people are articulating a new way of belonging as marginal and different (a condition typical of postmodern subjects, who fight to make themselves at home in a global domain; Ifekwunigwe, 2003; Fabricant, 1998).

This definition of diaspora acknowledges the partial and contested nature of diasporic identities. In a sense all identities are multiple, shifting and in-between, but migrant people are more often exposed to the practices and consciousness of mutability and therefore their identities are still more fragmented, more partial, more contested. In effect, diasporicity makes the very notion of identity redundant, if identity is theorised as commonality and similarity. As Stuart Hall comments, it is more profitable to look at difference rather than identity if we wish to theorise diasporic belonging. Hall claims that the diaspora experience is defined:

> Not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity. By a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference, by hybridity (Hall, 1996: 6).

This notion of diaspora complicates our understanding of belonging, often epitomised in the image of 'home'. However, the cultural connection and the general orientation towards home remain distinctive elements of diaspora (Safran, 2004: 10). Sometimes, home is a mythical place of origin, which individual and collective imagination maintains and models anew. In this sense, home is often condemned to remain a place of non-return (Brah, 1996), because the geography and politics of the original 'homeland' can hardly correspond with the introspective and opportunistic project of the imagination.[22] This also implies that the

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own particularities. Each such diaspora is an interweaving of multiple travelling; a text of many distinctive and perhaps even disparate narratives' (Brah, 1996: 183).

[22] Literature has successfully captured the complexities of migratory experiences, perhaps more successfully than the analytical tools of the social sciences. The Irish poet Evan Boland eloquently exemplifies the 'powerful impulse to imagination' that migration involves; 'away' and 'somewhere else', the migrant imagination slowly and intensely reconstructs 'a childhood which had never

'cartographies of diasporas' (Brah, 1996) have to be redesigned because in diaspora, 'the place and their names will not stick together, because the place and their people have not stuck together' (O'Toole, 1994: 25). Diasporic homes must be mapped from the imagination of memory and desire, as well as physical terrains.

Sometimes, home has been destroyed by violent and tragic circumstances, sometimes it is a site of damaging practices, of dangerous sexist, racist or nationalistic projects (Papastergiadis, 1998, 2000; Fabricant, 1998), and there may be no desire or intention to 'return home' tout court. As Brah claims, not 'all diasporas inscribe homing desire through a wish to return to a place of origin' (Brah, 1996: 193), yet the homing desire remains encoded in the diasporic make-up. Though diasporic displacement implies these ambiguities of home, the impossibility of return often accentuates the desirability of home even further. The search for a place to feel 'at home' remains a perennial quest of diasporas that are often built on 'the future oriented projects of constructing a sense of belonging in a context of change and displacement' (Papastergiadis, 1998: 9). In this sense, diaspora can be understood as a 'kind of passage, yet a passage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving' (Carter, 2003: x).

Another interesting aspect of this theorisation of diaspora is the question of transnationalism and the strength and resilience of migrants' connections and networks. Migrants' networks in diaspora are not 'fixed in a place for all time, but rather structures that come to be essentially "reworked" in practices varying from one place to another' (Carter, 2003: xi). They are dynamic, interlocking and independent structures of material and symbolic exchange, which are also 'localized constituencies' that create a 'continua of diasporic spaces' (Ifekwunigwe, 2003: 58; see also Werbner, 2002b, 2000; Parker, 2000). The cultural work that creates networks and homes is extremely important because it also makes diasporas into imaginatively thinkable social formations (Werbner, 2000: 8) and into both changing and continuing formations, as I suggested in the previous chapter. This is the very reason why diasporas are better understood not as places and types, but as a condition and a process.

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happened (...) triggered by a fragrance or a trick of light that create an inconvenient and unglamorous place' not marked on any physical maps, whose 'exclusion must call the very act of cartography into question' (Boland, 1997: 22).

Interim Conclusion: Advantages Of The Diaspora As An Analytic Tool

The theoretical approaches to diaspora presented above are often not clearly separate in scholarly works or in communitarian and popular discourses, but frequently overlap, further complicating the usage of diaspora. However, despite its complexities and limitations, diaspora has proved analytically useful and continues to constitute a popular discursive and political tool (Gilroy, 1997; Ifekwunigwe, 2003: 58). Even though diaspora has been valuable as a typological tool insofar as it has brought sophistication and nuances to the discourse of migration (Butler, 2001: 191), the notion of diaspora as a condition of being and a societal process has been most fruitful when theorising the 'wealth, subtlety, and prestige of explorations' (Tötölyan, 1996: 28) of belonging and affiliation; it also created space to think about the differences and experiences of migrant women. However, before discussing the diaspora framework as a useful way of conceptualising migration, it is necessary to highlight the issues that need to be taken into consideration through the analysis of diaspora as a social condition.

Scholars have especially criticised this usage of diaspora for being a deviation from its original meaning and for failing to underline the distinguishable characteristics of diaspora (Kokot, et al., 2004; Butler, 2001; Tötölyan, 1996; Van der 1995). Diasporicity has been criticised for having constructed an overgeneralised and loose definition of diaspora, which runs the risk of becoming a synonym for the postmodern experience of fragmentation, 'a master trope for modern and complex identities' (Clifford, 1994: 266). It also faces criticism for representing diasporic subjects as tropes 'for double and multiple consciousness, for a split, even dispersed subject-in-process that criss-crosses boundaries and resists totalisations' (Tötölyan, 1996: 28). In other words, the question is whether the conceptualisation of diaspora as a social condition and as diasporicity subverts the semantics of language by retreating into methodological individualism and excluding structural factors. As Stanford Friedman puts it, is diaspora 'a passive and comfortable - if linguistically sophisticated- intellectual quietism ... for those located in a space of relative power and privilege like academia'? (Stanford Friedman, 1998: 92). And if not - as I want to argue - what validity does diaspora still hold?

Indeed, the academic interest in how diasporas shape complex ambivalent subjectivities and identities might be tied to scholars' attempts 'to shape their own

cosmopolitan commitment' (Ong, 1999 in Skeggs, 2004: 51; Gabaccia, 2002) and to the wish of scholars to contribute something 'constructive to political activism, beyond the classroom or the pages of publication' (Stanford Friedman, 1998 :103). Yet this engaged and inward-looking reflexive academic gaze represents for me an enabling characteristic of the analytical term diaspora that makes it a more 'humane' way (Gabaccia, 2000) of thinking about migration.

Clearly, we are not all becoming diasporic, and there are specific structures and lived experiences of diaspora that define what diaspora is. I will illustrate these characteristics through the analysis of Italian migrant women in Ireland, but I can aver here that diaspora is largely dependent on the migrants' awareness of being in-between, 'incomplete', marginal and powerful and dominant at the same time. In simpler words, not all migrants are diasporic people, but potentially all migrants can experience diasporicity.

Indeed, long before 'diaspora' became fashionable, sociologists had already unpacked the meanings of the layered, complex and transnational forms of migration. Diaspora is not the only alternative to 'immigrationalist, assimilationist, (methodologically) nationalist and teleological' approaches to migration (Brubaker, 2005: 7) but it is one that works well. For Brubaker the originality of diaspora lies in the alleged novelty of the phenomenon itself more than in the actual inventiveness of the literature (Brubaker, 2005). However, claiming that the actual reality of diaspora comes before its conceptualisation seems tautological. I agree instead with Stanford Friedman, that diasporicity represents an evolution of the concept, which mirrors the growing range of types, functions, orientations and political modes which diaspora has acquired over time (Stanford Friedman, 1998: 103).

Other scholars have criticised the static precepts of diaspora, which ultimately refer to nation-state and ethnic models (Brubaker, 2005; Anthias, 2001b, 1998; Soysal, 2000; Brah, 1996). For Brubaker, diasporic theories re-territorialise and re-essentialise boundaries at various levels (Brubaker, 2005) and for Anthias, positing a link with a 'father-land', they slide 'into primordiality' and prove nothing more than a 'deterritorialised ethnicity' (Anthias, 1998: 569). Similarly, Yasemin Soysal criticises diaspora because it functions as an extension of the nation-state model and lack analytical rigueur: but one can question whether diaspora is necessarily destined to be a trope for nostalgia – the issue she raises (Soysal, 2000: 3-13).

For Brubaker the problematic issue is that the notion of diaspora must have recourse to groupism, to 'a metaphysics of community and identity' which ultimately represents a non-territorial form of essentialised belonging (Brubaker, 2005: 11-12). To overcome the problem, Brubaker proposes to talk of diaspora not in 'substantialist terms as a bounded entity' but rather to distinguish, as others have done (Anthias, 2001b; Brah, 1996) and as I have proposed to do in this chapter, between a *category of analysis* and a *category of practice*. As a *category of analysis*, diaspora represents a typological tool and framework to theorise about being in diaspora. As a *category of practice*, diaspora is made of political discourses, 'of specific idioms, stances, and claims', which are used 'to articulate projects, to formulate exceptions, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties' (Brubaker, 2005: 12). [23] In the former sense, diaspora *describes* the world of migration, in the second it seeks to *remake* it. [24]

Although some grey areas about diaspora remain, a non-exclusionary nor exclusivist approach of diaspora, one that is able to 'produce neither fragmented nor trivialized accounts of the lived experiences of individuals' (Ifekwunigwe, 2003: 63), can prove its validity. Beyond the specific position and usefulness in my research, there are several factors that contribute to the validity and relevance of diaspora. In the last two decades migration studies have experienced a return to classical assimilationist and positivist frames of analysis (Bommes, 2005; Brubaker, 2005). Despite migration being one of the most critical issues of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, migration studies have produced few groundbreaking and innovative approaches, diaspora being, however, one such innovative approach. The revised meaning of diaspora as a social condition allows us to grasp the complexities of migration, more so than the search for definitions of diasporas in the typological approach. It sheds light on the transformations of

[23] As a category of practice, a small minority of the population of political and cultural 'diasporic' entrepreneurs formulate the identities and loyalties of a given population at diaspora; but not all members of putative diasporas may identify themselves with the diasporic stances (Brubaker, 2005: 13-14).

[24] One last controversial point about diaspora refers to the celebratory tone of diaspora by intellectuals and community representatives which often obscures the negative implications of diaspora in the 'real' world (Koser 2003: 11). In particular Khalid Koser mentions the illegal activities and totalitarian politics of certain diasporic organizations. In fact, 'the influence of diasporas is often narrowly focused ... so often the diasporas further the causes of the elite in the home country, rather than those who are subjected to poverty, corruption or violation of human rights' (Koser, 2003: 10; see also Gilroy, 1997: 304).

migrants' 'traditions of resistance, protest and cultural innovation at the interface of global economic, political, gendered and racialised hierarchical structures' (Ifekwunigwe, 2003: 62). A diasporic framework also incorporates a variety of conceptual models, levels of analysis and multidisciplinary approaches, which scholars of migration have called for (for example Massey, et al., 2005) but rarely applied. In fact, Avtar Brah explains how diasporic frameworks:

> Are best understood as constituting a point of confluence and intersectionality, where insights emerging from [different] fields inhere in the production of analytical frames capable of addressing multiple, intersecting, axes of differentiation. In other words, it is a space of/for theoretical crossovers that foreground processes of power inscribing these interrelationalities; a kind of theoretical creolization (Brah, 1996: 210).

The 'theoretical creolisation' of diasporicity emancipates migration studies from mere quantitative questions which often characterise classical theories of international migration that set out to explain *why* and *how* international migrations begin (world system theory, social capital theory and new economics of labour migrations, see Massey et al., 2005). Diasporicity focuses instead on how migration is practiced, experienced and sustained. It includes the internal diversity of diasporas, which allows a reassessment of diasporas out of their conventional monolithic position in previous understandings. In this perspective, Brah posits the question 'who is empowered and who is disempowered in a specific construction of the (diasporic) we? How are social divisions negotiated in the construction of the we?' (Brah, 1996: 184). These questions have important implications in terms of grasping the existence of parallel spheres of signification and sociality, and of understanding various practices of exclusion and resistance within diasporas. The importance of this heuristic reach can be seen when analysing the gendered nature of diaspora, as I demonstrate in the last section of this chapter.

Through this diasporic perspective, we can grasp the implication of extra-national, trans-cultural processes better than through global theories with their 'totalising immodesty and ambition' (Gilroy, 1997: 339). Diasporicity also offers an explanation of how contingent diaspora can function as a non-place based social solidarity and forces us to look simultaneously at the places to which migrants travel, at the connections among them and at the relation with those who are represented as indigenous. This analytical attention is what Brah (1996) calls

'diaspora space', a view which brings the 'global and circulatory character of migration into focus' (Gabaccia, 2000: 10).

Diasporicity de-stigmatises migration and reinstates the human creative potential of migration. This philosophical position bears important consequences. Diasporicity treats migration as being a perpetual renewal rather than being about loss (Luke, 2003: 395). It rehabilitates the ontology of absence, distance and far-away-ness of migration. 'The excluded people' (Helmreich, 1992: 45), the 'permanent orphanage' (Cohen, 1999: 17), the ones who are not there (Kokot et al. 2004: 5), the ones who cannot return and who cannot belong, reclaim through diasporicity a presence in their 'being away' and 'being from somewhere else'. Migrants' 'global space of pain' (Cohen, 1999: 19), their 'global loneliness' (Safran, 2004: 10) become in diaspora, at least potentially, a 'site of hopes and new beginnings' (Brah 1996: 193).

Diasporic people embody their desire and right to be different (Anthias, 1998: 10). Their exile represents not only a sign of bondage or self-alienation, 'but of freedom from constraints' (Cohen, 1999: 15-19). Diaspora is the liminality of a new and creative site in which hybrid cultural forms can be produced and become individual and collective acts of affirmation. Playing on Clifford's (1994) metaphor of diaspora as a currency, Ifekwunigwe underlines the significance of the 'marketable millennial cultural currency [of diaspora]... which re-casts our recurrent homelessness as an asset rather [than] a deficit' (Ifekwunigwe, 2003: 58).

A corollary to the rehabilitation of migrancy is the fact that diaspora remains an experience of suffering, an experience of separation, of dislocation and of trauma. Even if not unanimously, scholars generally agree on the loss (Cohen, 1997; Gabaccia, 2000), desperation (Gilroy, 1997: 318) and traumatic ruptures (Carter, 2003: xv) of diaspora. Trauma has underlying causes which, as Gilroy claims, makes diaspora more than a 'voguish synonym for wandering or nomadism: there is an urgency, a sense of despair' (Gilroy, 1997: 318). It is not just a movement, but a 'desperate movement' which creates displacement, not a freely chosen experience (Gilroy, 1997: 318). [25]

[25] Carter claims however that 'trauma and traces of loss may not always be the defining aspects of a diasporic identity' (Carter, 2003: x). He criticises Clifford's notion of 'collective histories of displacement and violent loss' in diaspora as being not the only articulations of identity possible, but rather one of the myriad possible positions that diasporic formations may occupy (Clifford, 1994 in Carter, 2003: x). The question whether diaspora signals free or forced migration is problematic

Another positive element of diasporicity analysis is that it is both holistic and particularistic, looking at distinctive historical experiences as well as intrinsically diverse phenomena. It considers both modes of institutional organisations and human agency, looking at the socio-economic and political conditions of diaspora, and at its discursive and representational practices as well as how these representations are resisted and contested (Werbner, 2000: 7; Brah, 1996: 16; Tötölyan, 1996: 14). From this perspective, there is a positive valorisation of the symbolic and cultural domains in diaspora formation. This concerns both the aesthetics of diaspora and the daily lived experience of diaspora. It is necessary and relevant to look at this symbolic order is relevant because of the 'potential intimations of heterotopic futures' (Chambers, 1994: 6) inscribed in migration. The ruptures of migration, the 'discontinuities of personal biographies and wrinkles in the skin' (Ahmed, 1999) are mended by imagination, by memory and by narratives. In other words, diaspora is deeply connected to narratives and memory, representing one location for the 'recollection' and 'actualisation' of migrants' past lives (Soysal, 2000: 2).

In fact, diasporic communities actively maintain a collective memory of the lived experiences of journeys and localities, 'the highs and humdrum of everyday lived culture' (Brah, 1996: 192). It is in the day-to-day 'realities of communication, exchange and reciprocity, [in] a high degree of social cohesion and a shared repertoire of symbolic and collective representations' (Kokot et al., 2004) that diasporas are sustained. Dreams and visions, as Clifford claims, can have powerful material effects and often serve as a force of resistance (Clifford, 1994: 254). I set out to explore these specific characteristics in the next chapters.

One last issue I wish to raise is the emancipatory potential from nationalist projects inscribed in diaspora, and how some nations are reluctant to use the term diaspora to describe their emigrants, 'for it takes on a subversive meaning in the context of the nation building project or contestation' (Anthias, 1998: 569). [26] This

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because it is wrongly placed in a framework which dichotomises voluntary and involuntary migration. Analyses of diasporicity have started problematising the role of migrants' individual agency of vis-à-vis structural constraints and the fact that trauma and violence may have hidden subordinate meanings, especially in relation to classed, gendered or sexualized minorities.

[26] Anthias gives the example of Cyprus, in which the state is reluctant to designate Cypriots living abroad as a diaspora because of the connotations this has 'in terms of loss of identity and unlikelihood of return. The Cypriot state, therefore, wishes to retain the use of the term 'migrant' for

seems true in the case of Italian historiography and Italian migration studies, both of which have been deployed to serve the nationalistic project of the Italian state. Italian scholars in Italy have only reluctantly taken up the diasporic approach, whereas scholars outside Italy – often of Italian diasporic origins - have successfully deployed the diaspora concept to describe Italy's long history of migration. One possible explanation, as I argue in the next section, is the potential of diaspora (both as a category of practice and of analysis) to subvert the nationalistic approach and the celebratory tone of much of the literature on Italian migration.

SUBVERTING NATIONALISTIC ASSUMPTIONS IN ITALIAN MIGRATION STUDIES: THE DIASPORISATION OF ITALIAN MIGRATION

Some languages and cultures are reluctant to use the concept of diaspora to describe their emigrants. Here I examine why this is so in the Italian case. Firstly, I analyse the dense historiography on Italian migration and the analytical categories used to conceptualise it, from which 'diaspora' is often absent. Secondly, I consider the literature produced outside Italy which has on the contrary often employed the concept of diaspora to talk about Italian emigration, and I show the growing parallel presence of diasporic politics and diasporic institutions among Italian migrants in the world. Thirdly, I introduce the positions of two 'Italian diasporic scholars', Donna Gabaccia and Loretta Baldassar, who in their interviews with me, confirmed my argument that diaspora disrupts static and nationalistic Italian migration paradigms.

The ultimate aim of this analysis is to show how in the Italian context, diaspora creates space to think about the diversity of migration and breaks away from the auto-celebratory or positivistic approaches of Italian migration studies - this is one of the main reasons why I chose to apply the diaspora framework to my study of Italian migrant women. Moreover, I aim to show the progressive

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Cypriots abroad, even those of the second and third generations, because it wishes to retain the group' (Anthais, 1998 :569).

intersection of diaspora (both as a category of practice and as a category of analysis) and Italian migration. I demonstrate the capacity of diaspora to shed light on the complexities of migration. After having analysed these particular aspects, I refocus on the case of Italian migrant women at the end of the chapter.

27 Million Italians Who Did Not Count: The Case Of Collective Amnesia And Removal Of Emigration.

There is extensive literature on Italian migration, which followed the long and complex patterns of development of Italian migration itself. In recent years, webpages and websites on Italian migration have flourished on the internet, enriching its narratives and discourses. The term diaspora to describe Italian emigration is not as popular in the Italian literature as it is in the literature in English.[27] Italian migration studies by Italian scholars usually focus on structural aspects of emigration history, such as the demographic, economic and political consequences of migration (see for example Bevilacqua et al, 2001, 2001b).

The late realisation of Italian political unity in 1861, combined with regionalistic and particularistic identities complicate the meaning of Italian nationalism and thus of Italian emigration. This can be seen in the existence of a scattered and weak 'national community', of a plurality of *Italies inside Italy* and of *Italies outside Italy* (Gabaccia, 2000). In fact, emigration is ambiguously represented and articulated in national discourses. On the one hand, Italian migration is portrayed in a negative way, as a 'loss' of people or a mass of uneducated people that failed to provide for themselves at home (Golini and Amato, 2000 :48), often seen as an expression of economic crisis in the Italian South (Gabaccia, 1999: 1122). On the other, the plurality of *Italies outside Italy* has been extolled as an extension of national pride, an instrument of the 'civilising mission' of the 'Italian genius' (Barberis, 2004; Bechelloni, 2003; Della Loggia, 1998). In this sense, emigration is instrumental to laud the 'great importance' of the Italian national ethos and Italians' 'historic civilizing mission', which 'contains essential keys for understanding the progress of humankind' (McLean, 2004: 2).

[27] For example, searching google.com for 'Italian emigration' returns 960,000 entries, while searching for 'Italian diaspora' returns 1,400,000 entries. However, searching in the localised Italian websites (www.google.it) we see an opposite trend. 'Emigrazione italiana' returns 1,620,000 entries, while 'diaspora italiana' returns only 217, 000 entries.

The most critical approaches to Italian emigration by Italian scholars originate from the cultural studies field. Jean-Jacques Marchand shows how Italian literature studies have largely excluded Italian emigrants' literature. According to Marchand this shows how emigration has both consciously and unconsciously been thought of as a:

> Haemorrhage due to the inability of the state to assure a decent life to its citizens (...). Emigration put the nation (Italy) in a debtor-condition, instead of a creditor-condition, as it was for other big colonial nations. Emigration could only be removed, devaluated, represented as a mass of uneducated and uncultured people, able to offer to the receiving country only the strength of their arms (Marchand, 1991: 6).

Marchand demonstrates how this attitude still persists in the Italian Law that recognises emigration only for the purpose of work.[28] Likewise, Emilio Franzina demonstrates how Italian 'high national culture' took no interest in the works of emigrants (Franzina, 1996). Thus, neither Italian literary criticism nor school and university curricula included works by Italian migrant writers - only one example of the collective amnesia and removal of emigration in Italian culture.

This is particularly striking in a country marked by the mass emigration of 27 million people over a century, a country which in March 2000 still faced the fact that almost 4 million Italians were registered as having settled abroad (mainly in Europe; Sanfilippo, 2001b: 77). [29] These numbers give an idea of the impact of migration on Italian society, and make the dismissal of migrants even more puzzling.

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[28] The *Testo unico sull'emigrazione* 1919, and Circolari del Ministero dell'Interno 1968 and *Minitero degli Affari Esteri* 1968, construct migrants as those 'citizens who become expatriates exclusively for manual work' (Marchand, 1991: 6-7). These laws are underpinned by a disturbing contempt towards emigrants, which still persists.

[29] Golini and Amato distinguish four main waves of mass migration from Italy: the first between 1876 and 1900; the second from the beginning of 1900 to World War I; the third between World War I and World War II; and the fourth, from the end of World War II to the 1960s (Golini and Amato, 2000: 48). Even though qualitative and statistical data are full of gaps- leading to grave distortion and errors within the field of migration studies (Sanfilippo, 2001b: 78), we know that between 1876 and 1988 circa 27 million Italians emigrated; of these, between 11 and 13 million have returned (Golini and Amato, 2000 :48; Sanfilippo, 2001b :77). Departures and returns were massive considering also that in 1887, the Italian population was about 27 million, and in 1991, about 56 million. In 1920, nine million Italians lived outside Italy – a quarter of Italy's resident population then (Gabaccia, 2000: 177). Officially, mass migration has stopped since the 1970s, however, in 2000, Italian descendants all over the world amounted to circa 59 million - more than the population of Italy in the same year!

The involuntary Diaspora: Characteristics And Organisations Of An Emerging Italian Diasporama

The general amnesia and negative attitude towards emigrants run parallel to the scant evidence of the use of the concept of diaspora in the literature on Italian migration by Italian scholars. In more recent scholarly works, diaspora appears only sporadically, albeit with a persistent negative inflection (Tirabassi, 2005). Even in the important work of the Italianist Jean-Jacques Marchand, the concept is used to talk of 'involuntary diaspora' (Marchand, 1991: 6), in a context which conveys an idea of passivity and subjugation of migrant masses.

One possible explanation for the sporadic application of diasporic frameworks to Italian emigration might be related to the promise of diaspora 'to release [Italian migrants and migration studies] from the tyranny of the national' (Gabaccia, 1999: 1117). Mainstream literature on Italian emigration has tended to essentialise and instrumentalise national belonging and Italianness, rather than revealing its complexities and heterogeneity. In the Italian case, this tendency is further complicated by the fact that Italy only started to exist as a state in 1861. Nationalist movements emerged late and their projects could only be judged as being completed, if at all, in the aftermath of the Second World War, when it was possible to articulate a national sense of identity in preference to the perception of identity based upon regional and local sense of belonging (Gabaccia, 1999). Thus the question is, as Gabaccia puts it, if for much of the era of Italy's mass migrations there was no Italian nation, how can we speak of an Italian diaspora before there was an Italian nation? (Gabaccia, 1999: 8).

Yet, diaspora has entered popular and communitarian discourses on Italian migration, despite its blurred meanings and the reluctance with which it has been accepted. Analysing the *diasporisation* of Italian emigration is difficult, since diasporisation developed in a fragmented way which is not always recorded or possible to assess systematically. However, monitoring news and discourses about Italian migrants in newspapers, journals and internet websites between 2000 and 2006, makes it clear that diaspora has been increasingly used.

The relevance of diasporic discourses and politics is exemplified by the inclusion of Italian migrants in Italian politics. This is signified by a law - approved

in March 2003 - that allows Italian citizens abroad to vote in Italian elections.[30] This law confirms the new acceptance of Italian migrants' political involvement and their administrative and civic status.[31] To an extent, it also signals the Italian state's aspiration to maintain control over citizens abroad and the reification of Italianness in blood-lines terms.

The April 2006 election in Italy showed timely the importance of Italian migrants abroad, as their votes were decisive in the fall of Berlusconi's government. About 2.7 million Italian citizens living abroad regularly listed in the AIRE list, cast their ballot papers by mail and voted for their own representatives in the Italian Parliament - 12 deputies and 6 senators, all of whom live abroad. This model of political participation and representation is a diasporic practice par excellence, and has drawn attention to the possible impact Italian diasporic groups can play in Italian politics. It has opened a new phase of migrants' participation in Italian politics, which is still being assessed.

Another important diasporic institution which has recently been consolidated is the *Ministero per gli Italiani nel mondo* [Ministry for the Italians in the world]. This Ministry without portfolio was created under Berlusconi's conservative and nationalistic government in June 2001. It is strongly influenced by the minister Mirko Tremaglia, [32] a right wing politician, who has been lobbying to favour Italian migrants abroad since the 1960s (Baldacci, 2005).

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[30] The right to vote for emigrants was sanctioned, with the amendments of articles 48, 56 and 57 of the Italian Constitution in 2000 and 2001, and the approval of a Legge Ordinaria 459, passed in December 2001 and approved in March 2003 (Iannuzzi, 2003). This law had been planned since the first Congress of Italians Abroad in 1908, during Mussolini's government in a sort of 'arruolamento emotivo' [emotive recruitment] of Italian citizens (Mussolini wasn't around in 1908!), but had been criticised alternatively from left and right political forces over the last 80 years (Franzina, 2004). The law has been proposed to the Parliament several times during the twentieth century (in 1911, 1914, 1923, 1945, 1955, 1993, 1998, see Colucci, 2001: 606).

[31] This includes the harmonisation of the list of Italian citizens living abroad, in particular by unifying the *AIRE* list (*Anagrafe Italiani Residenti all'Estero*) managed by the Ministry of Interior and the Consular lists managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Iannuzzi, 2003). Moreover, more power and funds were granted to the *Comites –Comitato Italiani residenti all'estero* [Board of Italian residents abroad] in October 2003. The Comites is an Italian migrants' representative organ established in 2001, which deals with Italian consulates in any area with more than 3,000 Italian migrants listed (Legge 23 October 2003, n.286). Comites support at a national level the international work of *the CGIE – Consiglio Generale degli Italiani all'Estero* - which was established in 1989 and is a consultative body with advisory power on emigration based in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 2004).

[32] Tremaglia's role has been extremely relevant in centralising and realising the political participation of Italian migrants, and for this he is often praised by Italian migrants' associations, even though his conservatism has also been contested (*La Repubblica*, 12 October 2004).

The emergence of specialised media agencies for Italian migrants (that generally use internet sites)[33] and numerous programmes that support Italians migrants[34] clearly sustain an Italian diasporama, even though not all diasporic politics and diasporic institutions are named as diaspora. The current diasporisation of the *Italies outside Italy* is however a meaningful reversal of the long decades of disinterest by the Italian state and the erasure of Italian migrants from Italian politics. It has encouraged a renewed confidence [35] among Italian migrants who can now enter Italian politics from their diasporic spaces.

Diaspora In Intellectual And Academic Discourses: Discussing The Practices Of A Naming Strategy In Conversation With Gabaccia And Baldassar

The term diasporic is loosely emerging out of this new phase of Italian migration and Italian migration studies, even though it mainly remains a trope for political mobilitisation (as I demonstrated in the previous section) and for intellectual and academic discourses (as I want to argue here) rather than an item in popular culture and common parlance.[36] At the turn of the new millennium, intersecting and concomitant discourses and practices developed in different spheres (political, cultural, and academic) and at different levels (local, regional, national, and international) to cement the institutions and discourses of the Italian diaspora. Thus, in December 2000, the first *Conferenza degli Italiani nel mondo* [Conference of Italians in the world] was held in Rome under the aegis of the

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[33] AISE, GRTV, INFORM, Italian Network, News Italia Press, Pronto Italia/ADN-Kronos.

[34] For example, *Premio italiani nel mondo* [Prize for the Italians abroad], started in June 2001 (Ministero Italiani nel mondo 2001), and *Comitato degli imprenditori italiani nel mondo* [Board of Italian entrepreneurs abroad] (Confederazione degli italiani nel mondo, 2006.).

[35] One voice for the many, Italian journalist Vittorio Zucconi who lives in USA, describes the new confidence of Italians abroad. He says that 'we Italians outside Italy, with stereotypes as obsolete as TV programmes which are still looking for the Italians in the little Italies where they haven't been in ages ... Italy outside Italy is not any longer the one that Mirko Tremaglia foresaw.. the idea that our emigrants and their families were sad nostalgic persons, fainting in front of the Italian flag and ready to vote whoever waves the flag in front of their noses, is proved wrong... Italy outside Italy is rather a more refined and evolved community than Italy itself, because it is exposed to the different worlds, cultures and media. But there is a new Italy, made of academic researchers, small and big businesspeople, professionals, 'nationality commuters', career and family women aware of their rights as women citizens' (Zucconi, 2006).

[36] For example, during the eight years I lived in Ireland I never came across any Italian migrant who called themselves diasporic. However, diaspora appears more and more often in the discourses about Italian migration in Ireland and elsewhere.

Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Ministero Affari Esteri, 2006c), marking a new inclusion of Italian migrants –and also of intellectuals of Italian origins living outside Italy - in Italian politics and poetics, not 'as people to assist' as claimed during the conference but as protagonists who await their recognition (Tassello, 2000).[37]

This conference brought the elements of Italian diasporic institutions together and marked a confident inclusion of Italian migrants in Italian politics. Even though perplexities existed regarding the politics of naming Italian migrants[38], diaspora represented one of the innovative ways of defining Italianness as a new terrain of global affiliation and belonging. Since 2000, diaspora often appears in the discourses of Italian migrant communities. One need only peruse a few websites of Italian migrant associations to be struck by the frequency with which diaspora is endorsed, even if in an unengaged and sometimes particularistic manner, linked to specific regional origins or interests.[39]

Among the many examples is the Italian-based research group *Globus et Locus*, which has researched the 'Italic diaspora', and has underlined the need to acknowledge and appreciate Italian migration as a unique resource: 'a resource for the receiving and sending society; a resource for local and regional communities of

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[37] Because of its truly global scale and approach - and the availability of new technologies of globalisation - this conference had a much larger impact in Italy and outside Italy, than the previous conferences of the same genre - the *Prima Conferenza nazionale dell'emigrazione*, held in 1975 and *Seconda Conferenza Nazionale dell'emigrazione*, held in 1988 (Golini and Amato, 2001: 58). The first *Conferenza degli Italiani nel mondo* gathered all the different sections and sub-sections of the Italian diaspora, arranged by a horizontal structure of local and regional pre-conferences held between March and December 2000 in all the continents.

[38] During the 2002 *Conferenza degli Italiani nel mondo*, diaspora was used to describe the history of Italian emigration the human and social costs of migration, such as trauma, loss, sacrifice (Toros, 2000) and to address the need of 'memory' and 'recuperation of emigrants' cultural heritage' (Narducci and Iannetti, 2000). The conference proceedings also show the impasse of naming Italian migrants (for example as 'inestimable heritage', 'an invaluable resource', 'an agora of values and knowledge', 'a demos without borders', 'a new category of the soul'; Tassello, 2000), showing that 'the definition of the nature of Italians abroad does not correspond to the reality and strategic choices in Italy' (Tassello, 2000). Elsewhere, the naming impasse has produced poetic neologisms such as '*Altreitalie*'; 'gente venuta dal mare' [people who came from the sea] (Zucconi, 2006); 'the Italy outside Italy'; or '*Italico*' ,'*Italiacitá*' [Italicity] which incidentally is increasingly deployed to describe an Italian 'comunità di sentimento' [community of feeling] and the relevance of cultural affiliations over ethno-linguistic or legal forms of belonging (Basetti, 2007). However creative and beautiful these definitions sounds, ultimately they are unable to resolve the naming impasse.

[39] We see the term diaspora applied to regional migrations such as *Diaspora Friulana- Friuli nel mondo* (Friuli nel mondo, 2006), or *Diaspora Siciliana* (Prestigiacomo, 2005). The usage is both vast and vague, and has been applied, for example, to describe the 'media diaspora' (Coen, 2005: 1-2), the *Italian Jazz Diaspora* (Gennari, 2006) or the Italian 'scientific diaspora' (CNR, 1998).

belonging; and a resource for the uncertain and fragile world' (Basetti, 2007). Roberto Morrione, the director of *Rai International* (a satellite TV channel broadcasting TV programmes for Italian migrants in Italian in different regions of the world - a service which has existed for the last forty years but was restructured in 1995), has recently deployed the term diaspora, highlighting diaspora as the 'modern' ground of 'unification' of the vast 'potential' of Italian migrants in the world (Morrione, 2006). Clearly, there is wide-ranging inclusion of diaspora in contemporary intellectual discourses on Italian emigration, which demonstrate how diaspora functions as a naming strategy, useful to articulate (and legitimise) Italian migrants' belongings and affiliations, while acknowledging the sense of trauma and loss that accompanies migration. [40]

Having described some of the diasporic discourses and practices that Italian migrants deploy, I now move to discuss academic discourses in particular, which illustrate where the use of diaspora is perhaps most relevant (Fortier, 2000; Gabaccia, 2000; Cohen, 1997; Verdicchio, 1997; Tötölyan, 1996; Rosoli, 1994; Pozzetta and Ramirez, 1992; Baily, 1989). In the last decade, several conferences and symposiums have incorporated diaspora as a means of theorising about Italian migration, both in Italy and outside Italy. Examples include the conference held in Australia in 2003 ('Diasporas Share the Neighbourhood', 2003) and the one held in 2004 in Turin at the Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli (*Emigrazione Italiana: percorsi interpretativi tra diaspora, transnazionalismo e generazioni* [Italian emigration: interpretative trajectories between diaspora, transnationalism and generations], 2004).

The proceedings of these conferences reveal the confusion between the usage of diaspora as a typological tool and as a social condition. They also signal a general scepticism among Italian scholars about diaspora. This is strikingly different from the wider and more sophisticated use of a diasporic approach to conceptualising Italian emigration outside Italy, especially by 'Italian diasporic scholars'. In the typological use of diaspora, the Italian emigration case is often used as an example of a classic type of diaspora, even though there are those who

[40] For example, in the *Associazione internet degli emigrati Italiani,* diaspora echoes as a signifier of migration traumas, defined as 'the period of ambivalent transition, a chance of development, which involves also the concrete danger of dissolution and loss' (Inglese, 2003: 8-9). In the website of the *Associazione dei Ristoranti Italiani nel mondo* diaspora is directly linked to the 'enormous and unknown biblical exodus of the population who abandoned Italy' (*CiaoItalia*, 2007).

argue against its categorisation as a diaspora tout court. Thus, Robin Cohen uses the Italian migration as an example of the labour/trade type of diaspora, even though he cautioned against the weak link Italian migrants have to their country of origin and their degree of integration in other societies, both being factors which diminish their diasporic connections (Cohen, 1997: 60).

Sheffer also conceptualises Italian migration as a classic type of diaspora, in what he calls the 'veteran' diaspora, pointing out the latent form of the Italian 'sleeping diaspora' which has emerged in the 1980s (Sheffer, 1995). Butler focuses on the late manifestation of the Italian diaspora as well, claiming that 'it may take an extended period of time for the group to develop a diasporan identity and intergroup relationship' (Butler, 2001: 202). Tötölyan maintains on the contrary that Italian migration is not a diaspora, because of the fragmented nature of its collective and institutional practices (Tötölyan, 1996). Instead he claims Italian migration is characterised by a form of 'self-identification' manifested in culinary, musical, religious-festive, linguistic practices and rituals that may be observed only on special occasions, such as in parades and in 'fraternal-typo' (sic) organisations which occasionally raise money for the ancestral home villages (Tötölyan, 1996: 15-16).

In contrast with the above typological approach, which lacks consensus among scholars and seem not very fruitful when applied to the Italian case, Donna Gabaccia (2000, 1999) proposes a more useful paradigm, which problematises the typological use of diaspora and advances diasporicity. Gabaccia claims that it is not possible to distinguish a unique type of Italian diaspora; rather, historically, there have been many kinds of diasporas. She describes the trade diaspora before the 1500s, the cultural diaspora of the Renaissance period, the nationalistic exiles and the labour migrants during the modern era. These migratory trajectories created a variety of diaspora ideologies (such as Catholic and labour Internationalism, anti-fascist nationalism, etc; Gabaccia, 2000: 175).[41] Without a coherent notion of national identity, Italy's migrants could not form one single 'Italian' diaspora.

[41] Italy's many diasporas were diasporas of residents from a single town, such as the Biellesi of Biella, or of a region such as the Siciliani of Sicily. Most communication within these diasporas, furthermore, occurred between the home village and its colonies (as Italians called them) abroad; there was limited circulations of people from one diaspora satellite to another (Gabaccia, 1999: 8).

Migration was such a central phenomenon in Italian history, that Italy was never a nation 'unbound' by migration (Gabaccia, 1999: 8). However in most of its migration phases, 'the Italian state hesitated to promote much political participation among citizens abroad' (Gabaccia, 1999: 9), which makes the current political involvement so remarkable. Gabaccia revisits the Renaissance notion of *civiltá Italiana* to talk about the set of collective representations that support an idea of Italianness; she claims that the 'last diaspora' shows a *civiltá Italiana* made of 'Milan's sofas or menswear, the leatherwear of Fendi, Tuscan food, or a generally romantic and hedonist zest for living'; but this '*corporate version*' of diaspora, which reflects 'the urban pleasures of the Italian style of the Renaissance' is but the product of different historic diasporas, and certainly 'it is not the largest of Italy's diasporas, the ones formed by the workers of the world' (Gabaccia, 2000: 187-188; my emphasis).

Despite the multiplicity of diasporas, Gabaccia believes it is heuristically helpful to imagine the possibility of a single diaspora that 'forces us to look simultaneously at the many places where migrants travelled and at the connections among them' (Gabaccia, 2000: 9). The advantage of looking at a single Italian diaspora is that it forces us 'to ask what difference Italy's connections to the wider world have made to the national histories of receiving countries' and to Italy's own national history (Gabaccia, 2000: 9). By showing the heterogeneity of diasporas, and by explaining how diversity has been amalgamated into a bounded definition of '*Civiltá italiana'*, Gabaccia implicitly problematises the diasporic taxonomy and makes a major contribution to our understanding of diaspora in this Italian context. Crucially, she shows that *Civiltá italiana* developed out of the sedimenting layers of global diasporas.[42] Gabaccia's usage of diaspora is close to the notion of diaspora as a social condition, which entails looking at processes of moving and

[42] Interestingly, *Italy's many Diasporas* is part of the Routledge *Global Diasporas Series* which is edited by Robin Cohen. In the book's 'Forward', Cohen indirectly acknowledges the limitations of his earlier typology of diasporas, which had classified Italians as part of the labour/service diaspora (Cohen, 2000). He reiterates his original description of Italian migration as a voluntary labour diaspora, however he clarifies that 'the force of adverse economic circumstances should always qualify the term' 'voluntary' (Cohen, 2000 :x). If on the one hand the classic 'victim diaspora' does not suit Italian migrants, who mostly left Italy in pursuit of trade or work, Cohen also recognises that 'this is no particular bar to understanding them as members of a diaspora or several diasporas, as the victim tradition was too narrow a formula' (Cohen, 2000 :x). Thus, when Cohen introduces Gabaccia's 'rupture with the classic diasporic tradition' in his forward, in a sense he is also referring to a rupture in his typological approach to diaspora in favour of the usage of diaspora as a social condition that Gabaccia proposes.

relocating and at new localised cultural formations, ideas, collaborations and subjectivities. This approach also offers a 'more precise and simultaneously more humane way' of thinking about Italian migration (Gabaccia, 2000: 11).

It is this way of considering Italian diaspora that has helped unshackle Italian migration studies from celebratory and folkloristic approaches, while diasporic politics and diasporicity have simultaneously been challenging these hegemonic nationalist discourses. The inclusion of diasporic theories in mainstream Italian scholarship has not always been smooth, even though Italian scholars have called for the broadest possible perspective when studying Italian migrants, 'the world's quintessential globetrotters' (Pozzetta and Ramirez, 1992: ix-x). However, in recent years, debates about the Italian diaspora have been fruitful and growing (Tirabassi, 2005), and to assess their contents I have chosen to conduct interviews with two Italian diasporic scholars, Loretta Baldassar and Donna Gabaccia, whose personal accounts elucidate the intricacies of the concept 'diaspora'.

Loretta Baldassar, a social anthropologist from the University of Western Australia, recounts in an interview I recorded in Dublin, how in the 1990s as an Italo-Australian 'diasporic' scholar travelling back to Italy to conduct fieldwork on transnationalism, she was greeted by an Italian anthropologist with distinct surprise:

> 'Really, you have come to study the Italians?' he asks her. 'His implication being that the "other" was coming back to study "us", like the "savages" coming back to study the "civilised". Because of course anthropology is about going out to study the "other". So I represented the "other" from this marginal country called Australia, which is quite famous as a place anthropologists go to conduct research. At first I was sort of taken aback. I thought, "what is he talking about?" For me, it is a very legitimate enterprise to set out from Australia and study Italians in Italy, but I realised that actually what I was doing was, in fact, rather unusual' (Baldassar, personal communication, 2006).

Baldassar explains how this limitation might relate to the historical orientations of Italian anthropology; in part this was also linked to the fact that migration scholars in Italy were not interested in the transnational aspect, and it was mainly the post-colonial, post-modern and reflexive gaze of Italian 'diasporic scholars' that engaged with the transnational and diasporic implications of Italian emigration. Baldassar tells:

> My sense is that Italian scholars in Italy, when they turned their attention to migration from Italy, they focused on the departure, the sending away, from the village out, from the *paese* and from the nation. It was the Italianists abroad that turned their gaze back on Italy. Because Italy was mainly interested in the push and pull of migration; why did the migrants leave? What was life like for them abroad? Italianists abroad were interested in these questions as well but also in the migrant's relationship to homeland. So I guess it is understandable that the gaze back to Italy came from abroad (Baldassar, personal communication, 2006).

Initially, 'the gaze back on Italy' limited its focus to Italian migrants in their local context and ignored the 'elsewhere' and comparative elements of the experience of migration (Pesman, 1997). Diaspora provided a framework to connect different localities and trajectories together.

Donna Gabaccia, the most prominent Italian 'promoter' of the notion of diaspora, has experienced first hand this 'very passionate resistance [to diaspora] in Italy' (Gabaccia, personal communication, 2006). In an interview I conducted with her via email, she considers eight different intersecting points which create a 'distaste for the concept' (Gabaccia, personal communication 2006), reported with her permission here. Gabaccia recognises that part of the resistance to diaspora derives from how Italian nationalist projects impinged on Italian migration studies. Gabaccia makes the following points:

> 'Firstly, the resistance to diaspora is embraced by other academic traditions, such as the Dutch and German one, because of "interdisciplinary hostility"'. Historians have been especially reluctant to accept diaspora, because they are concerned that the field of migration studies is being "taken over by people in other disciplines".
>
> 'Secondly, Italian and European scholars seem troubled by the relationship with Jewish history and the Holocaust, and prefer to limit the use of the term diaspora to a Jewish scattering'.
>
> Thirdly, Italian scholars seem more prone to use the term '*Italiani all'estero*' [Italians abroad] which they hold as 'a perfectly good term of our own'. As Gabaccia explains, this 'is a term, of course, that emerges from the history of Italian nationalism and was widely used under fascism, and continues to be used widely today by nationalists. I don't like to use it precisely because of the nationalism embedded in it'.

In the fourth place, the fact that scholars both in Europe and the United States associate the use of the term diaspora with cultural studies is another element of resistance. 'The affiliation with cultural studies reinforces an understanding of diaspora as the vague, useless theorising by post-structuralist over the past decade'. In Gabaccia's words, 'they prefer to think of themselves (in the Italian case) as positivists or in the case of many German, Dutch, French colleagues as social scientists. People in this group tend to prefer the use of terms like "migration networks" or "migration systems" over "diaspora." They are very dismissive of most recent theoretical work in anthropology and cultural or literary studies'.

In the fifth place, Gabaccia considers that resistance to diaspora is linked to '"Italians" conflicted relationship with their own sense of nationalism', which has been very intense over the past 15 years. This is visible in the 're-kindling of regional tensions, in particular the north-Italian political party Legal Nerd and its secessionist movement; the changing policies toward the *Italiani all'estero*; and the Europanisation of culture and politics'.

In the sixth place, other Italian academic idiosyncrasies contributing to the devaluing of the notion of diaspora include a 'badly funded university system with stagnant employment opportunities or semi-employed positions, and few projects interested in life outside Europe. Thus scholars in Italy who write about migration are ten times less numerous than "outside" scholars writing about Italy's migrations. Moreover, Italian works are rarely translated into English, and Italian diasporic scholars do not necessarily have proficiency in Italian'. As a result, 'scholars working outside Italy seem not only relatively privileged (more secure and better paid positions, better research grants, better working conditions), but because we write in English, we also have access to a readership that is a hundred times as large as the one available to those writing in Italian. I too would feel resentful of English-language hegemony if I were an Italian scholar! We English-speakers are in many ways the "gate-keepers" to the wider scholarly world!'

In the seventh place, Gabaccia underlines that this resistance to the English language imperialism combines with the 'rising anti-Americanism in recent years... International geo-politics are, I suspect, influencing and exacerbating the long-standing scholarly and academic tensions I describe in point six". Gabaccia claims that "this is probably inevitable. Challenging diaspora becomes, in the small world of academic politics, a way of challenging not just the hegemony of the English language but of the U.S. empire'.

Lastly, Gabaccia argues that class represents another terrain of contention. 'The Italian intellectual and academic world is still constructed by and for middle-class and well-educated Italians, with their own particular forms of class-consciousness'. Italian diasporic

> scholars are often of 'working-class origins; [and] we speak in bad dialect if we speak Italian at all and we insist on writing about the "grubby proletarians" from whom most of us are descended"'. Moreover, Italianists today embrace the nationalist stereotypes of Italy "bringing civilization" (art, music, design, etc.) to the world. The proletarian mass migrations are not the focus of the nationalist history some might wish to write.

Gabaccia's account is most illuminating considering that she is one of the better established diasporic scholars outside and inside Italy, with a privileged position in both worlds. In relation to my analysis of the ideological pre-concepts guiding Italian migration studies, she highlights the presence of a fundamental nationalist and class bias which combines with positivistic approaches to prevent the diverse and subordinate voices of migrants from emerging. This has been a striking feature of Italian migration studies, which also explains why intersecting with a gender bias, this analytical model has tended to consider women as marginal subjects of migration.

Italian historiography is by and large still preoccupied with highlighting the 'civilising' mission of Italians abroad, and has been uninterested in including Italian migrants' voices, with their gendered, classed and often counter-hegemonic and destabilising experiences of belonging and affiliation. By rearticulating migrants' complex experiences as a new, practicable form of belonging, the notion of diaspora has clashed with the long-standing nationalistic and often negative assumptions about Italian emigrants. The resistance towards diaspora is therefore ultimately linked to the capacity of the notion of diaspora to de-stigmatise migrants, to empower them and to recognise their diversity.

It is not surprising then that scholars of the Italian diaspora are mostly Italian diasporic scholars, like Gabaccia and Baldassar (see for example Clo and Fiore, 2001; Parati, 1999; Verdicchio, 1997). Significantly, their works show the influence of the autobiographical experiences in directing academic diasporic analysis. Perhaps this is the very reason that allows diaspora to be a 'human centred' concept (Gabaccia, 2000).[43]

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[43] Gabaccia has actually been the most explicit scholar in acknowledging the role of diasporic biography in the construction of Italian diasporic epistemologies. Considering the work of an earlier scholar, she highlights that as 'the transformation of United States immigration experts into transnational historians was often a product of biography' (Gabaccia, 1999: 1119), so her diasporic biography transformed her into a diasporic historian. As a descendent of Italian migrants in the Unites States, her life in the 1970s and 1980s 'became that of an academic labor migrant reversing

So far, I have argued that one of the most explicit advantages of the 'humanist' approach of diaspora is in its deconstruction of the class and nationalist biases of Italian migration studies. However, Italian diaspora studies are also characterised by a gender bias. The existence of a nascent body of literature on the gendering of diaspora (Anthias, 2001a, 1998; Gray, 2000; Unterhalter, 2000; Brah, 1996) has not been applied to Italian migration. I now turn to the specificities of gender and diaspora, highlighting the intersection of gender, memory and narrative to construct a framework for theorising about migrant women's 'double diaspora' in the next chapters.

GENDERING DIASPORA: AN UNCOMFORTABLE ISSUE?

Diaspora provides us with an alternative framework of analysis which moves beyond traditional knowledge production on migration, belonging and settling down (Fortier, 2000). One of the heuristic advantages of diaspora is that it allows a constructive space for thinking about difference and about gender and women in particular. Not only of women as an independent category of analysis, but as social actors involved in wider social dynamics.

Before discussing the gendered heuristics of diaspora, it must also be acknowledged that for some, gender in diaspora constitutes an 'uncomfortable issue'. Several scholars have underlined how the etymological relationship of diaspora with *sperain*, and its male-associated *sperm* may contaminate the contemporary application of the concept with patriarchal meanings (Gilroy, 1997; Scheibinger, 1993; Helmereich, 1992). [44] It is not only in the etymological sense,

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in eerie fashion the peregrinations of my Italian, German, and Swiss grandparents' (Gabaccia, 1999: 1119). Because of her diasporic biography, and the need 'to accommodate both a personal interest in seeking roots (in Italy) and the studies of an Europeanist husband (in Germany)' her transnational professional and personal life alerted her to the complexities of migration. 'I stopped thinking of Italians as a primordial nation, and I began wondering how residents of Italy had become Italians. I ceased writing of immigrants and emigrants in order to take migrants' complex experiences more seriously' (Gabaccia, 1999: 1119). It is this sensitivity of the personal to the complexities of migration inscribed in diaspora that has allowed my entry to the study of Italian migration as a diaspora in Ireland, as I analyse in chapter six.

[44] Stefan Helmereich in particular, claims that in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic cosmology the idea of seeds inscribed in *dia-sperain*, functions as a metaphor for sperm in genealogical histories; system of kinship are reckoned through men, suggesting "the questions of legitimacy in paternity that patriarchy generates" (Helmereich, 1992).

that gender is an uncomfortable issue. Clifford (1994) and Helmereich (1992) criticise diasporic works such as Gilroy's (1987), for being soaked in androcentrism, suggesting that diaspora theories naturalise heterosexism and do not accord sufficient attention to cross-cutting sexualities constituting diasporic consciousness (Clifford, 1994: 266).

Helmereich, for example, points out Gilroy's 'latent androcentrism' in using a set of experiences historically inaccessible to women, such as 'the transatlantic experiences on ships (which) was available only to those politically and economically positioned in a male-dominated public sphere' (Helmereich, 1992: 245). Furthermore, Helmereich notices that in Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987), his celebration of predominantly male disc jockeys symbolically associates cultural 'consumption-as-production' with maleness, which he seems to value more highly than cultural 'consumption-as-reproduction' symbolically associated with femininity (Helmereich, 1992: 245). The criticism of the gendered dichotomy of production/reproduction has a parallel with another critical misrepresentation in migration studies, where women/reproducers are often associated with locality and 'settling down' whereas men/producers are perceived as more mobile and in a sense more 'migration-able' than women (Freeman, 2001). Although such false representations are still evident in the literature, Gilroy contributes directly to the debate by claiming that the concept of diaspora is not androcentric; the *sperein* of diaspora has a neutral value, because in the biological world spores are plant cells responsible for asexual reproduction (Gilroy, 1997: 333). Moreover:

> It seems unduly harsh to suggest that (diaspora) is more deeply committed to the toxins of male domination than other heuristic terms in the emergent vocabulary of transcultural theories. There is no reason why descent from the male line should be privileged over descent over what has been termed the "rhizomorphic principle" ' (Gilroy, 1997: 333).

Donna Gabaccia also maintains that there are different ways of 'toying with the idea' of diaspora; she refers to Robin Cohen's work which includes both 'masculine' and 'feminine' versions of a diaspora, and Liisa Malkki's more gender-neutral, 'or perhaps even feminine, arboreal metaphors into which she converted diaspora – like roots, soils, and family trees - which are intimately related to ideas of kinship and national identity' (Gabaccia, 2000: 177). Though important to ask

how and if androcentrism corrupts the use of diaspora as a concept, I agree with Gilroy and Gabaccia that these debates do not limit the analytical advantages of (gendered) diaspora, as I demonstrate in my work, and indeed 'we cannot afford to abandon it' (Stanford Friedman, 1998: 73). If there is any real uncomfortable issue about gendering the diaspora, it is perhaps the potential of diaspora to de-naturalise gender and criticise absolutist sensibilities (Gilroy, 1997: 333) .

A Diasporic Feminism: Implications Of A Gendered Diaspora

Although mainstream diasporic studies scholars haven't been particularly eager 'to give gender any special explanatory force' (Unterhalter, 2000: 111), feminist critics have picked up its potential reach, providing both theoretical suggestions and empirical data, linked to the approach of diaspora as an analytical tool to conceptualise the social condition of being in migration. A diasporic framework underlines the importance of gender in the construction of diasporic subjects and collectivities (Gray, 2000; Anthias, 1999; Gilroy, 1997; Brah, 1996; Clifford, 1994). It 'poses questions about the sexual politics entailed in the construction of diasporas, and highlights gendered inequalities' (Unterhalter, 2000: 108). By doing so, it advances the notion of diaspora from a notion of natural affiliation to one of structured power and inequity.

The gendering of diaspora shows that gendered belonging and affiliation is just one of many shifting sets of identitarian relationships and it can be constructed along with other identities (generational, class, etc) to support the formation of a stable and unified community (Fortier, 2000: 3; Unterhalter, 2000: 108). The 'tension between having been, being and becoming' inscribed in diaspora is ultimately 'negotiated, conjugated, or resolved' as it is 'lived through linear narratives of gender and sexuality' (Fortier, 2000: 159-170).

Such argumentation stresses how the 'forming and reforming of feminised identities' is understood as embedded 'in the process of diasporic counter-narration and shifting identities' (Unterhalter, 2000: 108). In other words, the gendered notion of diaspora entails a process of feminised identity formation, which is both fluid and shifting. But the question must be asked, how can fluidity and stability coexist?

Elaine Unterhalter proposes two different articulations of gender and diaspora. The first approach to diaspora (that follows the usage of diaspora as a typological

tool) has allowed feminist critics to highlight the gendered dimension of 'diasporic signifiers'. i.e. how womanhood and manhood function as diasporic *markers* of ethno-national boundaries and what kind of roles women have in constructing types of diaspora, such as labour diaspora, victim diaspora, etc (Unterhalter, 2000; Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989; Cohen, 1997). Within the other approach to diaspora as a social condition, the conceptual reach is further expanded to consider how diasporic conditions permit *destabilisation* and form 'transgressive versions of masculinity and femininity' (Unterhalter, 2000: 111). In other words, this approach shows how diaspora functions as a space of resistance, contestation and re-negotiation of dominant socialities and processes of identification, be it gendered, classed, sexualised or other.

Within this approach, Floya Anthias (1998) has been particularly influential in designing a paradigm of analysis for gendering the diaspora. She argues that a diasporic framework should explore 'to what extent ethnic cultures are constituted as syncretic cultures through rules about sex, difference, gender roles and sexism and the modalities to conform to gender stereotypes' (Anthias, 1998: 14-19). She highlights a decisive characteristic of diasporas as being fluid and syncretic *thanks* to, and not *despite*, essentialised notions of gender roles. Gender roles can be understood to embody both change and stability because the diasporic groups are subjected to layered socialities and multiple sets of gender relations from both the dominant society and the internal group (Anthias, 1998: 14-19).

Anthias proposes two levels of analysis. The first level refers to the way in which men and women are inserted into the social relations of the country of settlement, within their own diasporic communities and within transnational networks. This addresses the question of whether cultural shifts are more 'liberating and emancipatory' experiences for women, for example by entering the labour market (Anthias, 1998). This level of analysis focuses on 'the distinctive experiences of women as transnational actors' (Anthias, 2001b: 147).

At a second level of analysis the concept of diaspora seeks to explain how gender relations are constitutive of the positionalities of the groups themselves (Anthias, 1998). This means to focus on classed, sexualised, localised differences among members of the diaspora (Anthias, 2001b: 147). In particular, this level of analysis considers:

> The way in which gender relations will enable a group to occupy certain economic niches, for example, or to reproduce dynamically in a selective way the cultural, symbolic and material relations it lives within. Here gender lies at the very heart of the social order (Anthias, 1998: 16)

Thus articulated, a diasporic gendered approach enables us to see for example 'how women's labour market participation and their use as cheap or family labour within their own ethnic group may act to counter some of the exclusionary effects of racialised labour markets' (1998: 16). Women's labour means something for the social groups they are in, while it has other implications for the women themselves. In this sense, 'women enter nationalist projects as symbols of nation' which involves certain degrees of power for women, but women 'may be positioned in a particularly disadvantaged position in social relations as having limited rights of citizenship' (Anthias, 1998: 14, 19).

According to this analytical perspective, diasporic women and men are inserted in sets of relations and roles that acquire multiple functions, finalities and meanings for the diaspora, of which some are contradictory and divergent. This is related to inherent characteristics of the diaspora that I have considered in this chapter, what Brah defines as a 'diaspora space', that is a space where new forms of belonging are appropriated and contested while transmigration occurs across 'borders' of people, cultures, capital and commodities. Diaspora can be seen then as a mode of 'genealogical analysis', of different kinds of border crossings and configurations of power, charting the 'contours of a heterogeneous and differentiated site where cultural narratives of "difference" articulate specific formations of power' (Brah, 1996: 244). Anthias and Brah's suggestions are particularly relevant in my theorisation of gendered diasporas as two-tiered socialities manifesting as both marginal and dominant, in which women are implicated as the main agents of mediation and change. This notion is central to my articulation of women's double diaspora, and is dealt with in the following chapters. [45]

[45] Anthias returns in recent works (Anthias, 2003, 2001a) on the conceptualisation of gendered diaspora, and notes that the new form of transnational and global migration cannot be adequately theorised by deploying the notion of diaspora, since these forms are not confined to 'established settler communities denoted by this term' (Anthias, 2001b: 148). For Anthias the problem is to understand (as Brubaker has also stressed; 2005), to what extent diaspora reterritorialises and re-essentialises ethnic belonging. In other words, Anthias puts diaspora in an intersectionality

The analytical reach of a gendered diasporic framework highlights that diasporic women live an 'acute ambivalence' (Brah, 1996: 76). Diaspora time and distance separate the diasporic groups from a 'centre of sovereignty' and the 'sanctity of embodied difference' of womanhood and manhood becomes 'a sign of irresistible natural hierarchy at the centre of civic life' (Gilroy, 1997: 333; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Brah, 1996). Women's 'proper' behaviour and 'traditional' gendered roles have a central relevance, because identities and boundaries in diaspora are most fragile and vulnerable. Women are invested with the power to support the formation of a stable and unified 'community' (Fortier, 2000), 'an embattled communal response that recasts tradition as especially women's proper role and responsibility' (Koshy, 1994: 72). At the same time, crossing different borders, women find new spaces of emancipation and new enabling conditions in diaspora that create acute ambivalences because of societal expectations around women. In other words, in diaspora traditional gender roles and natural hierarchies often disempower migrant women, who however, experience also the remaking of female subjectivities as autonomous, independent and future orientated (Gray, 2003: 167-168).

This analytical approach enables us to acknowledge the differences internal to diasporas but also to women's groups. Warning against the construction of diasporic women as a 'monolithical disciplinary category' (which does not, however, discourage 'working across differences among women'), Brah clams that diasporic womanhood is 'constituted within and through historically specific configurations of gender relations' (Brah 1996: 193). In this way, the difference of diasporic women is acknowledged and gender is viewed as a local and situated product of different social relations.

The advantages of a gendered diasporic framework lie in its capacity to include different levels of analysis, both the enabling and disabling outcomes of migration. This analytical perspective fills the gap in the literature on gender and

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framework (including gender) and then critiques diaspora as essentialised ethnicity. Yet the real question, as Anthias had already pointed out in earlier work, is 'not so much that diaspora is an alternative to ethnicity, but rather that it requires a much clearer delineation of the latter's articulations' (Anthias. 1998: 14). I think the question Anthias raises is linked to the usage of diaspora as a typological tool, so that while Anthias tried to distinguish between diaspora and other transnational forms of migration, her argument seems lost in the unfruitful debate about taxonomies rather than referring to the analysis of the social conditions and societal process that form diaspora, with which her works had initially set out to engage. It is at this latter level of analysis, that her contribution remains most relevant and useful, at least in my case study

migration that I highlighted in the previous chapter, deriving from the tension between women's constraints and emancipation. This tension could be resolved by employing Giddens's structuration theory (1984), which links human agency and social structure. However, in most mainstream works on women and migration the structuration perspective has been largely applied to the context of labour migration but I think it could be fruitfully articulated with a gendered diaspora that focuses on the symbolic and cultural order, to consider other aspects of women's lives other than labour.[46] The combination of these theories acknowledges both the degree of constraints and the degree of resistance which characterise migrant women's experiences. This is a necessary theoretical step, because some migrant women are not all directly or formally involved in the labour economy and we need to look beyond this involvement in order to make sense of their complex lives.

Some examples of the possible application of this framework show how migrant women are carrier of traditions, while the ideologies behind these traditions 'often disguise and mitigate the actual changing' that takes place in women's lives and ultimately, the ideologies of migrant womanhood are part of an 'asserted and desired state not an actual cultural continuity' (Sangari and Vaid, 1990, in Koshy, 1994: 72). In this sense, the specific nature of women's roles (determined for example, through the daily rituals of caring, child-rearing, etc, as well as the culturally specific emotional kinwork of their families), which is always 'redone, necessary but *never complete*', allows a counter-discourse to emerge that refuses 'the equivalence of *belonging with stasis*' (Gedalof, 2003: 101; my emphasis). Pnina Werbner has conceptualised this stability-changing quality as the 'chaordic structure' of diasporas (Werbner, 2002a), referring to the simultaneously 'chaotic' and 'ordered' nature of diasporicity. Similarly Paul Gilroy proclaimed a 'changing same' nature of diaspora (Gilroy, 1997)

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[46] The 'structuration perspective' has been developed by authors like Phizacklea (1998; 2003b) and Morokovasic (1993), who emphasise women's agency in relation to the structural constraints in the labour economy, explaining 'how relatively powerless people like the domestic servants and sex workers among immigrant women carve out spaces for control and influence' (Phizacklea, 1998, in Page Moch, 2005: 102). Annie Phizacklea claims that migration is an expression of uneven economic development of a global scale, and women become a relative surplus more often than men; but she has also recognised that 'often it is very difficult to distinguish between what may be considered to be 'individual' choices governing migratory decisions and economic factors' (Phizacklea, 2001: 322).

To develop these theories further, and to make them directly applicable to the case of Italian migrants in Ireland, I want to focus in particular on how diaspora's changeable *and* stable nature can co-exist. I do this by looking into discursive practices, and especially into the fluid narrativisation of memories. There are many suggestions in the literature regarding the critical overlapping of narrativity, diaspora and gender, as I explain in chapter eight, which show how the diaspora narrative contains narrative threads of resistance and change. In my research I grappled with this idea, and it became obvious that the narrativisation of past and present memories is at the core of experiencing and 'imagining' single diasporas out of diverse and multiple journeys and that women in Italian culture have a special role in the narrative construction of diasporic cultural formation. Because the diaspora that these women tell, is already inherently a 'double diaspora'.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that diaspora is a useful concept but its usage must be specified in order to enable us to fruitfully deconstruct assumptions and complexities about belonging and affiliation. Diaspora as I understand it, is a heuristic device, not a descriptive concept, and as such, it compels us to consider the specific condition of dispersal and settlement that surround and shape the formation of identity (Fortier, 2000: 18). I have demonstrated the heuristic capacity of the term diaspora in the case of Italian migration studies, with its potential to destabilise nationalistic and class-based interpretation of migration.

Having dealt with the many problematics surrounding diaspora, I have proposed gendering the concept of diaspora in order to create a space to think about migrant women's complex experiences in migration. I have explained that a gendered diasporic framework accounts for multilayered socialities and discourses that correspond to the multiplicity of coexisting, and sometimes directly competing points of views and practices. This framework is fundamental to the construction of my notion of migrant women's double diaspora, with which I engage in the rest of this thesis.

Before doing so, I outline, in the next chapter, the case of Italian migration to Ireland and analyse what discourses have been produced about Italian women and men. Chapter five describes my methodological choices and finally chapters six,

seven and eight examine Italian migrant women *informative* and *performative* narratives of their double diaspora.

I want to conclude this chapter on the implications and advantages of gendering the diaspora, by arguing that a gendered diaspora framework ultimately fulfils the aspiration of a 'migratory feminism' (Stanford Friedman, 1998: 101) which I want to embrace in my research. A migratory feminism is a theoretical approach to migration that aspires to resemble as closely as possible, the border-crossing nature of migration, 'resisting the tendency of theory to fix, schematise, organise, taxonomise, and stabilise' the fragmentation and fluidity of thinking and living (Stanford Friedman, 1998: 101). A gendered 'creolised' (Brah, 1996) diaspora framework has the potential of representing a theory of 'transcendence and movement' (Stanford Friedman, 1998: 101), thanks to its capacity to recognise the 'changing same' (Gilroy, 1997) and the cultural and symbolic order in shaping migratory experiences.

Chapter Four

ITALIANS IN THE IRISH NATIONALISM AND IN THE DOUBLE DIASPORA

> I did anything I could to earn money. I washed dishes, cleaned windows, worked as an Italian waiter even though I wasn't Italian. I did anything I could just to keep the music going.
> (Dhafer Youssef, n.a.)

In the previous chapter I looked at the different meanings of diaspora and how diaspora, as the social condition of being in migration, must be understood as intrinsically gendered. These theories are relevant in my attempt to unearth the migratory trajectories of Italian women in Ireland. Before illustrating the methodology of my research project and focusing explicitly on the Italian women, I examine in this chapter the history of the Italian diaspora in Ireland. This will allow me to contextualise my discussions of Italian women in the next chapters. Diaspora in this chapter refers both to historically consolidated sets of structures and discourses that deterritorialise Italianness, and also to the condition of migration in which the gendered positions of women lead to what I describe as their 'double diaspora'.

I am personally implicated in my search on the Italian diaspora in Ireland. While looking for Italians around me, living outside Italy for the first time, I discovered the subtleties of 'feeling Italian'; I understood how being Italian can play out as a 'mutual mythmaking of the most intimate order' or as a 'name for the patterns of intelligent emotion and articulate gesture' (Ferrero, 2005: 204). I consider this condition, what Ferrero describes as the 'metaphysics of viscerality' (Ferrero, 2005: 204), and my own positionality as an Italian woman researching other Italian women in the next chapter. In this chapter, I map out the diasporic space of Italians in Ireland.

Italians migrated to and settled in Ireland at a time when few other migrant groups did (with the exception of Jewish migrants; see Keogh 1998), and when

Irish people left Ireland en masse to emigrate to all corners of the world. Italians have always been visible in Ireland, not least because of their colourful Italian-sounding shopfront signs, which have peppered Ireland's social and symbolic landscape. Italian migrants are often talked about, and their activities, especially in the catering sector, are continuously reported in the media. However, when I searched for data on Italian migration to Ireland I found a lack of articulated documentation of their history. It was very surprising to discover how invisible Italian migrants were in recent debates on multiculturalism and migration in Ireland. Italian migrant women were the most invisible subjects in this silenced history. This raised two central questions: How could Italian migrants be so visible and invisible at the same time? What could an analysis of the existing representations of Italians tell us of the roles of women?

In this chapter, I begin by outlining the trajectories of Italian migration to Ireland, looking at its demographic characteristics. I isolate three analytical groups: the *early waves of migration* (largely originating from a central Italian province, Frosinone); the *long-settled migrants*, who arrived after the 1960s, during an upsurge in Italian migration to Ireland; and the *recent migrants,* who arrived in the late 1980s and 1990s, becoming part of a new migration system that developed in Ireland with the advent of the 'Celtic Tiger' economic boom. After presenting the limited statistics on the Italian migrant population, I turn to a cultural analysis that is a more telling way of understanding this history of migration. In particular, I consider the organisations established by the different groups of migrants, both institutional and grassroots forces that produce the Italian diaspora in Ireland. I also consider the socio-cultural crossovers between these organisations.

In the second section, I turn to the existing representations of Italian migrants in the Irish media and literature. The analysis shows that Italian migrants reside in Ireland under a 'regime of representation' (Hall, 1996) that enhances specific characteristics of their Italianness and obscures others, ultimately silencing their actual voices. To deconstruct Italian migrants' invisibility, I look at the *othered* representations of Italianness and how these sustain the production of stronger collective 'Irish' boundaries. However, I also want to explore the agency of Italian migrants, asking how Italian migrants take advantage of the stereotypical representations produced in Ireland. I want to argue that Italian migrants are able to

achieve economic and social power drawing from a global commodification of Italianness. I focus in particular on food business activities to illustrate this case.

In the third section, I show how women have been absent from most of the accounts about Italian migrants, apart from those focusing on their 'beautiful bodies'. I posit women as living in a 'double diaspora', arguing that women are doubly absent from the hegemony, both in Ireland and in their migrant groups.

One implicit aim of this chapter is to deconstruct primordialist and essentialised conceptions of national identity, which often prevail in migration studies. Discussing migrant groups as national collectives, such as the term *'Italian migrants'*, involves a risk of essentialising national belonging. Therefore, while I decided to retain the term 'Italian', because the term has an historic validity and is used by the migrants themselves, my discussions bring out the diversity of its meanings. The heterogeneity of Italian migrants is especially evident in relation to class and gender.

A HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENCE OF ITALIAN MIGRANTS IN IRELAND

'One Hundreds Years Of Diaspora': Early-Waves Of Italian Immigration And Long Lasting Gender-Biased Views ('500-1960s)

Human migration is intrinsic to any country's history and Italian migration to Ireland is no exception in this respect. Early history reveals the presence of Christian religious orders from the Italian peninsula settled in Ireland in 431AD, with renowned figures such as Bishop Palladius, Saint Cathal and Saint Columbus (Farinella, 1998). In the late thirteenth century, bankers from Pisa and Florence settled in Ireland, organising financial services in the country. Italian traders and collectors of taxes for Italian kings and popes followed their arrival throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Farinella, 1988). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, more consistent groups of Italian migrants began to settle and work in Ireland as peddlers, crafts people of mosaics, stonemasonry, terrazzo work and plasterwork, musicians, and makers of specialised products such as looking glasses and barometers (Reynolds, 1993: 48; Farinella, 1998; Power, 1991; La Malfa, 2003; Bianconi, 1962). These diverse migrant groups have left an enduring

mark on Irish cultural history and the influence of Italian crafts people in Irish arts still has a durable heritage.[47]

Most of the Italians who left a mark on Irish-Italian history[48] are men, a significant fact that cannot simply be interpreted as an indicator of 'male dominated' migration to Ireland. The recollection of stories of older migrants, in my own ethnographic study, suggests a significant and consistent presence of women in the early flows of migration. These women came through family projects of migrations but also independently. It is beyond the scope of my project to reconstruct the historic presence of Italian women in the early waves of migration, but I want to suggest that insofar as recollection is possible, Italian women were always a consistent presence in the Italian migration to Ireland. This is why the stories women tell about other women are extremely valuable. Yet in hegemonic narratives, we are left almost exclusively with migrant men's stories. The stories of the men of the early waves of migration have become anecdotal and are reproduced and magnified in various contemporary discourses in Ireland.

Early migrants prepared a fertile symbolic terrain for receiving the chain migration from the Frosinone Province at the turn of the twenty-first century. Frosinone is a central province located between Naples and Rome, with an old history of emigration that gave rise to one of the most consistent Italian 'village based diasporas' (Gabaccia, 2000). The groups of Frosinone migrants started to settle in Ireland during the 1880s, importing, and literally colonising, the economic niche of 'fish and chips' and ice-cream shops that became the *par excellence* symbol of Italianness in Ireland. These specialities were sold by 'Italians' in

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[47] For example, Italians have been praised for the specialised skills they introduced to Ireland which have often been considered as artistic models (Craig, 1980).

[48] Among the early waves of migrants that gained high esteem in Irish cultural circles are Giovanni Battista Cipriani, who in 1771 designed the windows of the Trinity College Library, architects Galilei, Castrucci and Geminiani who decorated the town houses and country seats of Georgian magnates (such as Castletown and Áras an Uachtaráin) and were responsible for some of the finest plasterwork in Europe (Farinella, 1988). Other notable Italians living in Ireland at the turn of the nineteenth century were Charles Bianconi (known as 'Brian Cooney' in Tipperary where he settled), who in the 1850s built and organised the first Irish transport system; Luigi Fulgoni who created the once popular Shamrock Leaves perfume, and Giuseppe Nannetti who became Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1906 and has been mentioned in James Joyce's Ulysses (La Malfa, 2003; Ciarocchi, 2001: 17; Power, 1991).

'carriages, fitted with bells and brass' and in small shops opened in many Irish urban lower class areas (La Malfa, 2003: 24).[49]

The origins of the 'fish and chips' business and the level of involvement of Frosinone migrants is subject to speculation, because of the lack of any definitive references. It is possible to assume, however, that many Italian migrants arrived in Ireland through Britain, where earlier and consistent waves of migration from the Frosinone area were directed. In Britain, 'fish and chips' shops were already a flourishing business as Frosinone migrants started to settle down during the nineteenth century (De Tona, 2005).[50] Subsequent waves of Frosinone migration, at the turn of the twentieth century, moved from Britain to Ireland. They borrowed the 'fish and chips' business model from Britain and introduced it into Ireland. Arguably, the success of the *Italian* 'fish and chips' business in Ireland was possible, among other reasons that I illustrate below, because 'fish and chips' were already an inherently diasporic enterprise in Britain, developed by the 'willingness of waves of ... [Jewish] immigrants to add the core of the businesses to their own' (Rayner, 2003: 65).[51]

The history of the 'village based diaspora' from the Frosinone province to Ireland is undoubtedly linked to Britain, and in particular to Scotland and Northern Ireland (Bbc, 2003). As in the classical meaning of the term diaspora (Cohen, 1997), this history is characterised by dispersal and 'scattering', but also by

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[49] According to a widespread legend, in the 1880s the first 'chipper' was opened in Pearse Street (Reynolds, 1993: 46). The story relates how iuseppe Cervi arrived penniless in Dublinin the 1880s G, disembarking from an American ship, and started to work as a stonemason. In Dublin, 'he worked hard and saved enough money to buy a cart with coal-fired cooker: on this he would cook chips. Each evening he would take his cart and sell chips to passers-by' (La Malfa, 2003: 22; Power, 1991).

[50] The economic growth following the British industrial revolution fostered the flourishing of the 'Jewish 'fish and chips'' business (Walton, 1992). When Italians started to move from Britain to Ireland at the turn of the nineteenth century, the 'fish and chips' business was at its peak: in 1910 there were around 25,000 'fish and chips' shops in Britain and in 1927, the number rose to 35,000 (Walton, 1992 in Rayner, 2003). The 'fish and chips' trade had important social implications because it became a source of cheap and nutritious food among the British working classes. This food kept the working class away from starvation, and facilitated the social stability and political quiescence of the working class (Walton, 1992). In Ireland, the 'fish and chips' business model found a similar fertile terrain of working class conditions to prosper.

[51] Fried fish was introduced to Britain in the sixteenth century by Jewish refugees originating from Portugal; towards the end of the eighteenth century other Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe opened the first businesses in London, selling fried fish alongside chipped potatoes which, until then, had been found only in Irish potato shops (Roden 1997, in Rayner 2003). Apart from the London Jewish migrant tradition, there was a 'Lanchshire chips tradition' which grew out of a regional baked potatoes dish, onto which fried fish was introduced (Walton, 1992).

'sowing' and settling down in multiple interlinked spaces. Italian migrants in Northern Ireland were gradually pushed by the sectarian unrest to the south of the country. Moreover, for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was unrestricted movement between Britain and Ireland that favoured the internal migration of Italians. [52]

These political ties complicate the quantitative data and the census figures of Italian migrants in Ireland. The first independent Irish census was recorded in 1926, and in Italian official documents, Ireland is independently listed only from 1970 onwards (Reynolds, 1993). These limited census figures show that in 1912 there were approximately 300 Italians in Dublin; less than 300 in Belfast; 50 in Cork, and a further 100 spread in various other counties (Reynolds 1993: 48). In 1936 there were 325 Italian-born registered residents in Dublin. The World Wars put a virtual stop to Italian emigration in general but the 1960s saw a steady growth of Italian immigrants to Ireland, even though there was no organised recruitment of Italian labour to Ireland, unlike other European countries (Reynolds and Zontini, 2006; Colucci, 2001: 600).[53] These new flows of migrants followed the patterns of the older chain migrations, characterised by vigorous transnational networks.

Notably, the migration of Italians to Ireland continued simultaneously with the emigration of Irish people throughout the 1960s, which makes the figure of 689 Italian-born residents in Dublin in 1961 a relatively small but significant presence.

The Differences Of Italian Identity: Italian Migration From The 1960s To 1980s

The growth of Italian migration to Ireland has been continuous since the 1960s and in 1981 the number of Italian residents in Ireland was 1,351. The 1980s saw the

[52] The continuous movement of Italian migrants across the British Islands was favoured by the absence of immigration control, which was the norm for most of the period before the Irish Free State was established in 1922. The new Irish State and Britain signed a formal agreement in 1922 allowing aliens to move between the two states subject only to minimal registration requirements (Ryan, 2001: 856). This agreement was in place until the Second World War, when bilateral agreements between the two countries were suspended. In 1952 an immigration policy between Britain and Ireland was reached, constituting the legal base of the current 'common travel area' between the two states (Ryan, 2001: 858)

[53] Post-World War migration to Ireland was sustained by a general growth of Italian migration to Northern and Central Europe (France, Switzerland, Britain) which was in contrast to transoceanic destinations during the pre-war years (Colucci, 2001: 598). Post-World War Italian migration is also characterised by more southern Italians migrating than northern Italians, because of the 1960s economic boom in northern Italy, which absorbed part of the migration flows from the more impoverished south (Colucci, 2001: 598). My interviews show evidence that this tendency is also confirmed in Ireland, with the exception of chain migrations from the Frosinone province which remained constant and predominant before and after the two world wars.

arrival in Ireland of more Italian migrants and the intensification of economic exchanges between Ireland and Italy, with the setting up of Italian industries (Fiat-Lancia, Ferrero, Alfa Romeo and Jetmara).[54] Moreover, along with the continued flourishing of the 'fish and chips' business, the 1980s also saw the opening of new Italian restaurants, some of which have existed in Dublin for several decades.

The growth of migration flows has been steady since, and in 2002 the Irish Census figures recorded 3,634 Italian citizens resident in Ireland (2,083 male and 1,551 female; CSO, 2002), while the Italian Embassy listed 4,965 Italians residing in Ireland (although a more likely unofficial estimate was 7,000 Italians; De Tona, 2004, 2005). In 2006, the Irish Census figures showed 6,190 Italian migrants in Ireland (CSO, 2006). During the same year, in the wake of the first ever vote by Italian emigrants for elections in Italy (which required Italian citizens to be registered in the AIRE registry to vote, see chapter three), 10,767 Italian migrants registered in the embassy list as residents in Ireland, of whom 5,857 male and 4,910 female.

Even though there has been a clear growth of the Italian population in Ireland, these figures remain approximate. Like most of the post-Schengen population movement in the European Union, Italian migration to Ireland is often unrecorded. A vaguely defined right/duty sanctioned by the Italian juridical system requires Italian citizens who migrate with the intention of residing abroad for more than twelve months, to register in the Italian embassy's AIRE list. However, there is no specific law to enforce this right/duty. The AIRE registry is in part another of the many Italian diasporic institutions that shape 'the complex system of relations, misunderstandings, negotiations and conflicts' characterising the relationship of Italian emigration with Italian institutions (Colucci, 2001: 597).

In Ireland, the AIRE registry is now more systematically enforced [55] but there are still many gaps and lacunae in the data collected. In the Italian Consulate in Dublin, I was warned that the 2006 official data might have been 25 per cent lower than the actual population (bringing the estimate to 13,500). Many migrants do not register in the AIRE, and this is especially true for recent migrants, who are afraid

[54] Existing data show that in 1988, 400 million pounds worth of goods were exchanged between the two countries (Farinella, 1988: 19).

[55] For example, since 2006 the Italian Cultural Institute has begun requesting all Italian employees to register in the AIRE.

to lose welfare benefits by signing up, such as health insurance provided by the Italian government and not by the Irish state. Moreover, as my research participants revealed, registering in the AIRE generates a 'commitment fear' as an act that epitomises 'settling down' while the migration project is lived as deferred temporariness and precariousness.

In this sense, I want to suggest that diaspora applies to Italian migrants in Ireland both as a set of practices that institutionalise and deterritorialise Italianness, and as a condition of being 'on the move', disembedded and incomplete. This latter meaning of diaspora is reinforced by the analysis of data I collected about the country of birth of Italian citizens residing in Ireland. In 2002, official data show that only 52 per cent of the total population of Italians were born in Italy, while 36 per cent were born in Ireland, and the remainder in other countries (most predominantly Belgium, France, Australia, United States of America, and Germany). The 2006 Embassy data show a similar proportion, with 53 per cent of Italian migrants born in Italy (5,672, of whom 3,447 are men and 2,225 are women).

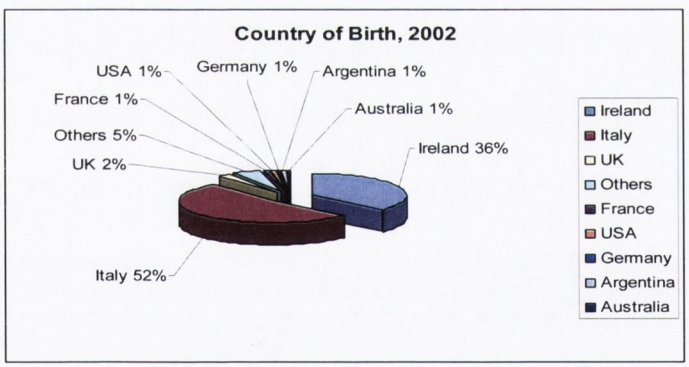

Figure 1. Source: Italian Embassy, 2002. Country of birth for population of Italian residents in Ireland

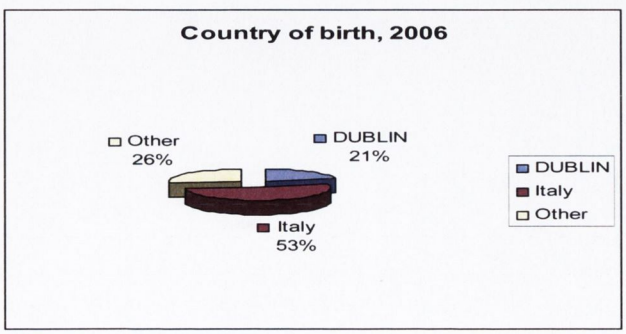

Figure 2. Source: Italian Embassy, 2006. Country of birth for population of Italian residents in Ireland

The 2002 data reveal a continuous trend of mobility, with 1/6 of Italian residents in Ireland subsequently registered as returning to Italy, and 1/5 having moved to other countries (De Tona, 2004). In 2006, no official data are available on the profile of the population born in Ireland, but data collected in 2002 show that at the time 2,249 Italian citizens were born in Dublin (21 per cent), with a higher proportion of females (1,194) than males (1,055). The data also show that Italian migrants reside in varied areas of Dublin while an age analysis reveals the presence of young groups in the population (28 per cent under 20 years of age and 50 per cent between 20 and 40 years).

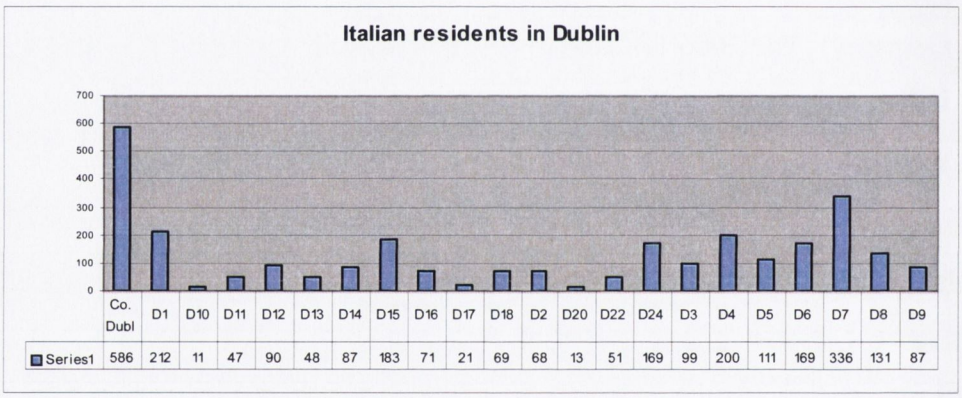

Figure 3. Source: Italian Embassy, 2002. Italians residents in Dublin Postal Codes Areas, based on the total of 2,859

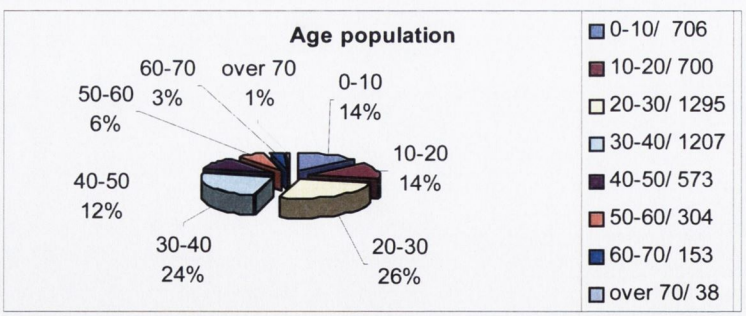

Figure 5. Source: Italian Embassy, 2002. Age of population of Italian residents in Ireland, based on the total of 4,976

These figures show a mobile and diverse population of Italian migrants in Ireland, but they are rather limited. Therefore, I have decided to combine

demographic analysis with a cultural analysis that reveals interesting characteristics of the Italian population in Ireland. This shows that there is a clear differentiation of Italian migration. One factor influencing this diversity is the cultural hybridisation of the old chain migrations from the Frosinone Province that have continued to migrate to Ireland, enriching the diasporic ties and identities of those long settled in Ireland.

Second and third generations of Italo-Irish migrants continue to work in the catering industry, which remains a predominantly family business (even though some 'fish and chips' shops are now being leased to Eastern European and Chinese migrants). Simultaneously, these groups of migrants have opened more upscale eating establishments and restaurants, or are now employed in other professional sectors, especially in the tile and textile industry (Zanna, 2005).

New independent migratory fluxes have brought diversity to the Italian migration in Ireland and have involved a dynamic rearticulation of Italian migrants' identitarian politics. This dynamism is linked to improved and cheaper communication and travelling technologies, favouring cultural hybridisation, transnationalism and diasporisation. Consequently, migrants' lifestyles have also changed, marking a shift between the experiences of early waves and newly arrived Italians in Ireland. My study shows, however, that these differences can also be eroded in the long term, due to specific identitarian and representational practices. Italianness functions as a symbolic terrain of identification that incorporates difference as well as sameness. Struggling to be recognised in their diversity, Italians create exclusivist self-referential identitarian boundaries, often along class and regional affiliations. Gender differences are seen as far less significant than class and regional differences, but gender has a primary role in embodying the boundaries, as I show in the next section.

One other factor adds to the shaping of the Italian cultural formations in Ireland. Certain cultural similarities between Italy and Ireland seem to have facilitated the accommodation of Italian migrants into Irish society. Italian and Irish cultures both rely strongly on Catholicism and the central role of the family, which acts as an intermediary between the individual and the state (Mac Éinrí, n.a.; Ginsborg, 2003). These cultural characteristics mark ritual time and socialisation of Italian and Irish people with similar events and practices (religious festivities, familism, women's domesticity, etc). However, my study demonstrates that cultural

closeness is often overshadowed by migrants' experiences of foreignness. The cultural similarities between Italy and Ireland are not as often remarked upon as the differences between the two countries. Simultaneously, while Italian migrants resist external categorisation (which I show at the end of this chapter in the discussion of othering practices), they often emphasise their internal differences.

Clearly, the heterogeneity of Italian migrants is a very important characteristic as the analysis in the next section of the diasporic organisations and media of two different migrants' groups demonstrates (the early waves of migrants and the newly arrived migrants). This analysis also illustrates the position that Italian women occupy within their migrant groups and the extent to which they are 'doubly silenced'.

'Through The Looking Glass Of Diasporic Organisations': Italian Migration In Ireland Since The 1990s

Since the 1990s and the 'Celtic Tiger' economic boom, Italian migrants have continued to migrate in ever growing numbers to Ireland. The dynamism of current migratory trends is mirrored by the reshaping of Italian migrants' organisations and in the development of new socialising practices. These new practices have accentuated the differences amongst Italian migrant groups, especially amongst the early waves and newly arrived migrants. The ageing of older migrants and the disaffection of second and third generations and recent migrants with the sort of Italianness promoted in the early-waves migrants' organisations is an important element influencing the creation of new organisations. However, crossovers among all organisations are also taking place.

Even though Italian migrant organisations are frequently talked about (in the media and in popular discourses), the women of these groups are hardly ever mentioned. Women's invisibility is further enhanced because, unlike other destination countries of the Italian migration, Italian migrant women in Ireland have never formed a women's section or organisation. However, both women and men from the early waves of migration have contributed to the foundation and consolidation of the *Club Italiano*, a recreational association set up in 1971, and of the *Italian mass,* a Catholic celebration held in Italian since the 1940s in an Oratory of the Pro-Cathedral in central Dublin. Both these two institutions were, at least until the late 1990s, important socialising centres for most Italian migrants.

The *Club Italiano* has been responsible for the organisation of some of the most visible events for Italian migrants in Ireland, often in partnership with Irish state agencies. The most popular of these events was the participation in the 1988 Dublin Millennium Celebrations. A small group of Frosinone migrants associated with the *Club Italiano* took part in the annual 1988 St. Patrick Parade, wearing traditional costumes, playing, dancing and singing songs from the folkloric traditions of the Lazio region (*Italia Stampa*, 1988). In the same year, a social ball with Venetian costumes and a photographic exhibition on Italian migrants in Ireland were also organised by the members of *Club Italiano*. Other members of the club also commissioned a book on Italian migrants, *Terra Straniera* (Power, 1991, eventually published both in English and Italian). Among other events, which involved the early waves of Italian migrants, were the parades in regional costumes during the St. Patrick's Day Festivals of 1992 and 1993 (*Italia Stampa*, 1992; 1993b), and in 2004 the photographic exhibition on Italian migration to Ireland, hosted in Dublin Castle (promoted by the Borza family, who are also associated with the *Club Italiano*).

The members of the *Club Italiano* are also involved in the organisation of the *Italian Mass* in Dublin, celebrated by Father Malony, the 'spiritual leader' of the Italian 'community' (*Italia Stampa*, 2001) for almost 50 years. The *Italian mass* has held a central role, beyond its religious utility, in cementing the affinities between the early waves of Italian migrants around religious feelings. As Sanfilippo argues, Roman Catholicism has generally functioned as a terrain of diasporic belonging for Italians across the world; while Church institutions have structured transnational practices of evangelisation and support for Italian migrants, they have also channelled attachment to the country of origin and sustained a continuity between diasporic locations (Sanfilippo, 2001b). Apart from providing religious support, Father Malony has also been a 'diasporic agent', reinforcing a sense of Italian belonging among the migrants, while visiting and celebrating mass in the towns of the Frosinone Province (Reynolds, 1996). Religious ceremonies have also allowed the second and third generations 'to deal with the guilt and fear that come with the changes in migrants' lives' (Ferrero, 2005: 184). This may explain why, even with a decline in the number attending religious services in Dublin, there is still great fervour and support for the Italian mass among most migrants of the early waves of migration.

Italian women have been very active in organising the Italian mass and other religious activities. As Ruthven suggests, religion often provides marginal subjects with 'a space and opportunity to exercise their gifts' (Ruthven, 2004: 106). I think it certainly did so in the case of Italian migrant women participating in my research, because it bestowed upon them more active and participatory roles. The priority given to their religious life enabled these women to deal with the contradictions they experienced in their groups, in which self-esteem is supposed to be achieved through work (see my discussion of the working ethos of Italian migrants in Ireland below). However, the work women do (caregivers, housekeepers, mothers, etc) is not valued and recognised as 'work' (Phizacklea, 2003a, 1998; Di Leonardo, 2001). Therefore, the roles of Italian migrant women in religious practices can be interpreted as an expression of gendered unresolved conflicts but also as acts of subversion and resistance. The women may have found in religion an alternative site of expression to transform marginality into internally dominant social practices, as I discuss in chapter eight. This model has a parallel in how on a larger scale, Italian migrants' organisation in Ireland function as sites to manifest Italian migrants' differences and identities, largely silenced and marginalised in Ireland.

Another important site of symbolic encounter for the Italians of the early waves of migration is *Italia Stampa*, a newsletter/magazine for Italian migrants, started by a Sicilian journalist, Concetto La Malfa, who moved to Ireland in the 1960s. *Italia Stampa* is the first Italian migrant newsletter published since 1982, sponsored at the beginning by the members of the *Club Italiano*. This has been an important informative and socialising tool, written both in English and Italian that details the chronicles of Italian migrants in Ireland for more than two decades, creating a space to reflect the content of Italian affiliations in Ireland.[56]

The organisations and media of the early-waves migrants have often encountered the indifference of the recent migrants, who arrived to Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s, belonging to different social, occupational, classed and regional backgrounds. Among these recent Italian migrants are large groups of professionals working in the information technology and financial sectors, service workers, food industry entrepreneurs, students and those who refer to themselves as *gente di passaggio* - literally people in transit, who migrate for the experience of migration

[56] In June 2004, it became available on-line, but articles are less frequent than in the paper edition (Italianstampa.info).

itself. These migrants have responded opportunistically to the success of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy in the 1990s, as well as to the continuing crisis of the Italian economy with its high rate of unemployment.[57] However, as I will demonstrate with the analysis of the interviews with my research participants, the economic motivation on its own does not provide a sufficient explanation of their migration projects.

The reasons behind recent waves of migration are multi-layered and often linked to 'lifestyle migration' projects, which compel migrants to 'weave together bits of what they need or demand in life from different places' and see migration as a strategy 'to think about belonging as the satisfaction of needs' (Knowles, 2003: 151). In this sense, migration is dictated by choice, not by necessity. This is confirmed by the narratives emerging from the websites dedicated to Italian migrants in Ireland that have flourished in the last few years. An on-line forum reveals Italian migration is lured both by Irish globalised cosmopolitanism (Forum *AltraIrlanda.it*, 2005a) and by the myth of a rural, traditional and a-temporal Ireland (Forum *AltraIrlanda.it* 2005b).

The Italian fascination with the 'green' and 'magical' Ireland is reflected by the rate of Italian tourists in Ireland, which, proportionally, is among the highest of all European countries.[58]. However, migration is also seen as an 'escape' (Forum *AltraIrlanda.it*, 2005b), a social resource to resist and bypass the many flaws of Italian society. In the online forum, these flaws are frequently identified as authoritarianism, nepotism, classism and conformism of Italian society. [59]

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[57] In 1995, the unemployment rate in Italy was 13.5 per cent and in 2006 it remained one of the highest in Europe at 7 per cent. Moreover, the unemployment rate is significantly higher for women; for example in 2005 for women it was at 10,1 per cent vis-à-vis 6,2 per cent for men (Amato, 2006; Istat, 2007).

[58] *Tourism Ireland* and Board Fáilte estimated that 128,000 Italians visited Ireland in 1998, providing a revenue of £54,000. Italians spend more per night per capita in Ireland than any other nationality (O'keeffe, 1999). The 2004 *Tourism Ireland* report documents that 191,000 Italian tourists visited Ireland in 2004, showing a growth of 3-4 per cent since 2000, with Italy forming the largest market group for *Tourism Ireland* in Europe, after Germany and France (*Tourism Ireland*, 2004)

[59] A forum user explains that he left to 'escape competition' in Italy, and that in Italy 'there is a high rate of impoliteness and rudeness, a climbing of one over each other, a continuous resentment for all and everyone, elbowing, elbowing over each other (sic) to win a temporary employment position, to be first in the queue, the first at the traffic lights, so much aggressiveness... and then Italy is the only country in the world where some fellow Italian citizen can make you feel a foreigner because of your southern accent' (Forum *AltraIrlanda.it*, 2004b). Another user states that the project of

Online forums illustrate also the new modes of sociality of Italian migrants. In the last few years several websites such as www.*AltraIrlanda.it* and *www.Irlandiani.com* have become very popular. *AltraIrlanda.it* has been online since 2003, and was started by the 'desire of some people who met on the web, to write about Ireland' and to 'avoid stereotypes and banalities' regarding Italians and Ireland (*AltraIralanda.com*). The site is quite popular and in April 2006 numbered almost 3,000 members and 120,000 hits. Members are generally between 18 and 25 years old.[60]

Irlandiani.com was launched in 2004 following the initiative of a young entrepreneur from the north of Italy, who moved to Ireland in 2002, and found the scope for an alternative to the earlier migrants' newsletter in the form of a website.[61] The emphasis is largely placed on the 'technical competence' and 'creative energy' of recently arrived Italian migrants, a characteristic that puts it in direct competition with *Italia Stampa* and the kind of less dynamic Italianness it represents. These statements narrate a rampant entrepreneurial mentality, which attempts to market Italian 'ethnicity' and its creative value in a globalised arena. Interestingly, they also express an important social function of this portal, which 'creates' a terrain of identification for Italian migrants in Ireland, rather than simply 'reporting' about it.

The websites presented here are two of the seventeen online websites for Italian migrants that I found in 2006. These sites reinvent a fluid diasporic culture,

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migration to Ireland is not an 'escape' but a 'personal odyssey in search of oneself' (Forum *AltraIrlanda.it*, 2004b).

[60] *AltraIrlanda.it* hosts online discussions, which deal with practical issues for prospective migrants (for example how to find a job, how to find accommodation, etc.) and for settled migrants (for example studying in Ireland, bringing non-EU fiancés into Ireland, moving inside Ireland, claiming tax relief etc). The forums also concern socialising practices especially for Italians meeting in Ireland, but also for those who returned or who live in Italy, often at Irish cultural events taking place throughout Italy. These forums are marked diasporic practices, which successfully foster cultural hybridisation and transnationalism.

[61] The editing team is composed of people 'who work in the five most important American multinationals in the field of web marketing, editing and programming with a highly technological profile' (*Irlandiani.com*, 2007). The editors highlight their intention to 'combine the passion for culture and editorial quality with market laws and the need to be aware of and anticipate changing patterns'. The website proposes a digital, updated window to 'create contents' of the Italo-Irish reality (*Irlandiani.com*, 2007; my emphasis). The news presented in Irlandiani.com concern both Italian and Irish current affairs, information for Italian migrants in Ireland (such as job offers, accommodation, health institutions, meetings and events for Italians), and often launches and publicises various political and economic enterprises. Irlandiani also has a version *Iralandiani News* published since June 2006 with a circulation of 3,500 copies

starting from the language itself.[62] The websites have been reshaping the communication and socialisation practices of Italian migrants in Ireland. By showing recently arrived, prospective, returned and potentially moving-again migrants where to meet and how to get organised, they allow Italians to meet as 'Italians', to promote and invest in distinct identitarian practices and politics. The websites and online forums become important channels of connectivity, through which Italian migrants can support each other, do politics, start businesses, communicate and exchange information, and so on. While doing so, they also reflect and construct their 'new Italian' affiliations and belongings that coexist with the ones inscribed in the old organisations of early-waves Italian migrants. Though not unprecedented, the new technologies of communication and transportation are accelerating the diasporisation of Italian migration in Ireland, contributing to a marked difference between the groups of the long settled migrants and those of the recently arrived migrants.

Criss-crossing the differences between new and old migrants' groups, and their organisations, are several institutions, of which the ordering ideology of class is the most important. The upper middle class and high class Italian migrants, both of the new and of the old groups, gather around the *Club di Dublino*, a charity organisation established in 2002, which has organised charity balls and receptions for Italian political representatives. The Dublin branch of the *Accademia della Cucina Italiana* (founded in 2003), and the Irish Italian Business Association (with its remarkable thirty years of activity), have also functioned as sites of encounter for high class Italians with different histories of migration. The Italian Embassy has been the earliest and most prominent marker of high class among Italian migrants, in particular with its formal events and receptions in the Ambassador's Residency in Lucan (as for example on the second of June to celebrate the Constitution of the Italian Republic), to which only a few selected members of the diasporic groups are invited.

Somewhere in between the organisations of the 'new' and 'old' groups of migrants are the most explicit diasporic institutions of the *Comites*, the Italian Culture Institute and the Italian Embassy. The *Comites* (Comitato Italiani

[62] Their names capture hybridity. Irlandiani is formed by the word Irlanda and Italiani and *AltraIrlanda.it* means the 'other Ireland' which resonates with AltraItalia [other Italy], which is the way Italian emigrants are often described.

all'Estero) of Ireland[63] (for a discussion of the *Comites* see chapter three) has existed since the 1990s. It has been struggling however to affirm its own autonomy from the *Comites* of Great Britain, with which it has often been associated, creating 'inadequate information' and obscuring the specific experiences of Italians in Ireland subsumed under the British ones (Cavallo, 1998). The *Istituto di Cultura Italiana*, and the Italian Embassy have also functioned as channels of diasporic practices and identities. Their activities have been influenced by programmes enforced by the Italian government to promote the so-called 'Sistema Paese' [Country System], a set of deterritorialised politics to connect Italian people and Italian culture across the world.

Gender has not been assumed as a formal organisational principle and as stated previously, no group of Italian migrant women has ever existed in Ireland, unlike other countries. However, gender has structured the divides internal to the organisations themselves, especially visible in the gender segregated practices of socialisation within the groups of the early waves of migration. I return to this issue with the analysis of representations about Italian women at the end of this chapter.

In summary, the data analysed in this section shows that the Italian presence in Ireland has not only been constant and growing, but has also been diversified. It has been an 'exceptional' presence in two distinct ways. Firstly, Italian migration to Ireland began to occur during a time when Irish people were emigrating en-masse. In this sense Italian migration was certainly going 'against the flow', proving that even a case of 'labour migration', as this one could be described within the current paradigms of migration studies, is only one side of a more complex picture. Why were Italians immigrating to Ireland 'to work', if Irish people were emigrating from Ireland because of unemployment and economic hardship? Migration is never solely an economic phenomenon and is influenced by different intersecting social factors. In the Italian case, migration has been the product of cumulative and collective experiences, influenced by the social networks of already settled Italian migrants who clearly favoured the arrival of other kith and kin. Other socio-cultural factors are considered in the next section (social emancipation, life-style migration,

[63] The activities of *Comites* largely depend on the work of its enthusiastic president, Raffaele Cavallo, a Sicilian architect and catering entrepreneur,, who has promoted Italian culture through exhibitions of painters and sculptors, often linked to his personal networks of friends. The *Comites* has advised the Italian Embassy in Ireland on matters concerning Italian citizens, but its potential has often been drained by bureaucracy and administrative burdens.

etc), but I want to anticipate that gender, even though often ignored, emerges as a fundamental force that sustains migration.

Italian migration to Ireland is also exceptional because Italian migrants have remained a substantial, isolated case of immigration in Ireland for over a century, until the 1990s and the socio-economic changes brought about by the 'Celtic Tiger'. The arrival of new and diverse groups of migrants in the last decades has not removed Italian migrants from the exceptional (symbolic and social) position they occupy. Italianness in Ireland seems to reside deep within the Irish social fabric, as something 'visibly' familiar and known (in relation to food, tourism and Catholic religious aspirations; in stories concerning Italians in the chronicles of life and history in Ireland).

However, as I want to argue, Italian migrants often remain 'invisible': they are usually absent in the intellectual discourses and debates on Irish multiculturalism, for example, and there are few accounts of their history, even in the academic context. Their invisibility manifests itself at the level of popular representations of Italianness, which rarely moves outside a 'banalised' version, centring mostly on Italian migrants' business activities in the 'fish and chips' shops. These representations reduce the manifestations of a plural and heterogeneous Italianness to 'invisible' spaces of expression, which are often self-referential, isolated and private. Italian migrant women, furthermore, remain the most 'hidden' subjects within these representations. The next section analyses existing accounts of Italians in Irish media and literature, and deconstructs the 'regime of representation' in which Italian migrants have been inscribed.

GLOBALISED AND COMMODIFIED: ITALIANNESS IN THE IRISH REGIME OF REPRESENTATION

The chain migrations of Italians from the impoverished Apennines areas of the Frosinone province who became involved in the 'fish and chips' business have certainly been an interesting aspect of the history of Italian migration to Ireland (Reynolds, 1993). However, they have been represented (in popular culture, Irish media, and Italian institutions) in a way that has often occluded the heterogeneity of

Italian migrants. The representations have constructed a notion of Italianness, which has acquired a particular 'Irish' meaning.

The analytical perspective adopted here resonates with postmodernist theories, which show that reality is implicated in processes of signification and representation. Representation is understood as more than merely a reproduction of that which is represented: it also contributes to the construction of its reality. Representation is intimately linked to identity, which can be interpreted as discursive construction placed upon imagination. Stuart Hall claims that representation 'is a complex business', as it involves complex feelings, attitudes and emotions, especially when dealing with 'the other' and the 'difference' of migrants (Hall, 1996). Hall suggests that migrants' difference is always 'already' marked by an accumulation of meanings across different con*texts* and discursive practices, and that migrant identity is constructed by juxtaposition. In this section, I explore discursive practises of Italians emerging in Irish media and literary texts, as readily available texts fixed in time and space. Through the analysis of these texts, I demonstrate that Italianness cannot be considered a set of fixed characteristics even though it is often articulated as such (in Ireland often as Catholic, hard-working, 'dolce vita', pizza and mafia, etc.), but rather a 'floating signifier' (Hall, 1996, an 'emptied' container to be 'filled' with situated and contextual meanings, which are, in turn, collectively produced and validated through regimes of representations.

Thus, Italianness in Ireland can be seen as inscribed in an Irish 'regime of representation' (Hall, 1996), that categorises and essentialises the meanings of Italianness, in turn helping to reinforce a homogenous meaning of Irishness. The Italian migrants in Ireland have also taken advantage of this regime of representation, and have 'used' and reinvented Italianness as an asset and a commodifiable 'ethnicised' (a category of ethnicity based on constructed stereotypical notions) product. Reinforced by a global regime of representation, which makes it a sellable product, Italianness has been used in Ireland to negotiate social and economic advancement. In the next section, I deconstruct some underlying meanings of the representations of Italianness in Ireland and of the global commodification of Italianness.

The 'Double Exile': Italianness In Irish Media And Literature

As often stated, 'Italians are well integrated in the Irish community' (Farinella, 1988). The visibility of Italians in Ireland seems to reflect a smooth and successful integration process. However, I would like to question what kind of integration Italian migrants have really achieved. Or have they been allowed to achieve? And what are the meanings of the representations of such achievements?

Many of the representations of Italian migrants focus on the activity of 'fish and chips' shops (even though more recently on restaurants and food shops), a business that, as I claimed above, they first introduced to Ireland and subsequently monopolised. For many people in Ireland, 'fish and chips' shops have been the symbol par excellence of Italian migrants and of Italianness in general. The Dublin poet of Italian descent, Vincent Caprani, recounts his childhood in Dublin during the 1940s when 'there were few points of reference – or links with an ancient homeland – for a third generation Italo-Irish schoolboy like [him]self, apart from the treat of an excellent shared "fish and chips2 takeaway after our weekly visit to the cinema' (Caprani, 2001). His association as an Italian with 'fish and chips', which is not an Italian culinary tradition per se, is a common experience for many Italians in Ireland.

When I first moved to Dublin in 1999, I was immediately confronted with this heritage, and, trying to understand why some Irish people asked me how we cooked 'fish and chips' in my place in Italy, I wondered whether their surprise at learning that we don't cook 'fish and chips' in Italy was as sincere as mine when hearing such a question. At times, I also wondered whether I was Italian enough: was there some place in Italy where 'fish and chips' were cooked as a traditional dish, and I simply did not know it? The experience of recognising oneself in an external categorisation can be quite puzzling, if one does not come to recognise that Italianness, as in any other identity, can indeed have different meanings and can depend on how one has learnt to see it. As a 'floating signifier', Italianness can imply different meanings, and sometimes even contradictory ones.

In Ireland, Italianness occupies a position of both 'visibility' and 'invisibility', a two-tiered reality which both enhances and obscures certain Italian cultural traits. Michael O'Loughlin has portrayed this ambiguous position of Italian migrants in a poem titled *Exiles* (O'Loughlin, 1988: 51). The poem tells of the 'double exile' of Italian migrants from Italy and within Ireland. 'You will find the Italian chippers in

all the dead ends of Dublin', the poem reveals, evoking reassuring feelings of shelter and warmth in the imagination of those who have known Irish dark and misty nights, especially in those years until the 1980s, when Italian ice cream parlours and 'fish and chips' shops represented the only places open after pub hours (Reynolds, 1993). Indeed, Italian-sounding shop signs, colourful and full of light, have certainly left an enduring impression on Irish collective memories. However, as the poem continues, 'fish and chips' shops remain '*abandoned forgotten consulates* of obscure Apennine villages', where the Italian owners (notably men) become 'visa dispensers' for Irish people who will never set off to see Italy, as 'somehow we [the Irish] never go'. The old Italian consuls have grown 'sardonic', waiting bored behind the counter, their 'eyes glint with vendetta'; 'sometimes without warning, they all begin to shout in Italian' (O'Loughlin, 1988: 51).

In the logic of O'Loughlin's poem, the Italian language surprises the Irish wanderer passing in front of the 'fish and chips' shop that s/he associates with Italy. Why is this? Italian migrant presence seems actually invisible, tiresome at times, yet almost visceral, and feeds on those 'dead ends of Dublin', the Irish popular collective imagination. Or is it the Irish popular imagination which is feeding it?

As in O'Loughlin's poem, several Irish literary works provide a good example of the power of the representational regime of Italianness and how it creates this 'invisible visibility' of Italian migrants. There are numerous examples of the inclusion of Italian migrant characters in stories set in Ireland, whose representations remain secondary to the grand plot and seem to be included as a backdrop. The representation of Italians is vague and generic; nothing seems to matter but their 'quite Italianate' profile and body 'frames' (Murphy, 1984: 11), which helps on the other hand to mark and enhance, by juxtaposition, the more clear-cut 'Irish' profile and identity of the characters on the stage.

An example is Peter Sheridan's novel, *44 A Dublin Memoir*, which portrays the life of a Dubliner family in the 1960s (Sheridan, 1999). The protagonist's 'Irish' father decides to dye his hair. The affair turns into a disaster, as 'Da' does not want too dark a dye. Without any earlier reference to Italians, when his daughter,

> Took the bottle of dye and the sachet out of the box.
> Da issued his instructions.
> Half of everything.
> That's not what it says on the bottle.

> *I'm not Italian, I'm Irish*. I don't want it too dark.
> (Sheridan, 1999: 251; my emphasis).

We can deduce from the symbolic order behind this narrative that the 'ethnicised' representation of Italians whose hair is too dark, involves some negativity. Italianness is a negative term of comparison. It is irrelevant that this stereotypical image is based on false or minor difference, as in fact, the hair colour is only half a shade of black away!

Dermont Bolger's book, *A Second Life*, is another example of identity politics inscribed in the representation of Italians. The novel tells the story of a photographer living in Dublin in search of his origins, after suffering as a consequence of a car accident the 'numbed, haunted sensation of not knowing who he is' (Bolger, 1994: 6). The man recalls his father's story of working for a company owned by an Italian man, Pezzani.

> Pezzani's van was tiny. There was a curtain dividing off the back where something heavy seemed to be stored. The steering wheel was almost between his knees. He drove with the window open. Shouting 'It's my road' at any motorist who refused to give way before him. 'Forty years ago I come to this country' he said as we sped towards Swords, 'all the postcards black and white. Trams, trams, trams. You think the whole Dublin one big tram. I work for a good Irishman, I gave him a good Italian grandson. When he finds out he gives me his daughter's hand. A bit late, I already have the rest of her. Now we partners I tell him. No more black and white. Colour, colour, colour. Because I have the secret of what the Irish love in their postcards. It is red and it no good in black and white. You like pictures boy? Today I show you the secret of great pictures (Bolger, 1994: 71; my emphasis).

This narrative is a picturesque metaphor of the way Italians occupied their space in Dublin (and in Irish culture), arrogantly, not asking for permission, just moving in and considering the 'way' theirs (for the mere reason of travelling on it). They brought colours, or perhaps, just a diverse way of looking at them. Their cultural heritage became so entwined with Irish culture that they felt able to express what Irish people like better than Irish people themselves. In general, Irish literary representations show a familiar, 'affectionate' portrayal of the 'arrogance' that the presence of Italian migrants' in Ireland evokes. Italian migrants' actual stories are irrelevant, and yet at the same time a strong idea of Italianness (and Irishness) is constructed and fixed.

In the Irish media, accounts of Italian migrants in Ireland convey a similar meaning. Newspaper articles often explore Italian migrants' activities in 'fish and chips' shops, restaurants, and in various activities related to the food business. There is a continuous fascination with Italian food in Ireland, and with the people who produce it. Since in the last decades, when 'more Irish have travelled and become knowledgeable about food' and when the 'influx of young Italian IT specialists has boosted local demand for "home food" ' (Field, 2001: 12), attention has shifted from 'fish and chips' to restaurants, and the '*authenticity*' (a recurrent theme in media discourses) of Italian food (White, 2002), but has not actually moved away from the Irish 'food affair' with Italianness. When the Irish developer and architect Mick Wallace (famous among the Italian population, for having designed the 'Italian quarter' in the north side of Dublin in 2004, which soon became very popular with southern European migrants and 'lovers of all things Italian') was asked for the secret of the new appeal of Italian food to Irish people, his answer was that Italian food is 'very simple and Italian restaurants are very friendly' (Doorley, 2006).

However, I want to suggest that there is something more complex here than mere friendliness. A recent newspaper article stated that the new 'Italian pizza and pasta joints' opening around Dublin are a manifestation of 'a new level of affluence in Ireland, but they also show a new level of confidence in the Italian emigrants' (Arnold, 2002). The article also affirmed that Italian migrants 'still don't have the confidence to be themselves' because 'what is being offered is mostly generic Italian, or even generic Irish-Italian' (Arnold, 2002). There is a contradiction here as Italians are presented both as having more confidence and as lacking confidence. Moreover, this remark comes just a few lines after the journalist quotes one Italian interviewee as claiming that with Italian restaurants 'as in the "fish and chips"' trade, it's a case of giving the Irish punters what they want!' (Arnold, 2002).

One doesn't need to read too carefully between the lines to find contradictions in this and similar accounts. Italians are represented as both lacking the confidence to express themselves and as confident business people, cunningly seizing opportunities in the Irish market. Notably, the contradictions are expressed (and dispersed) in discursive tropes, mostly because they ignore the point of view of Italian migrants themselves. Ultimately, these representations silence the Italian migrants' voice and once again construct Italianness as a unified concept.

In *Ireland of the Welcomes* (a bi-monthly publication of Bord Fáilte, the Irish Tourist Board 'portraying Ireland's history, culture and lifestyles') the history of the Italian 'quiet' migration to Ireland is portrayed through the stories of Italian men (sic) setting up various businesses over the years, which contributed to the social life of Ireland (Ciarocchi, 2001). The stories of these men have now become anecdotal and there are several pictures that refer to Italian migrant men and their business activities. However, there is one old photograph of a woman described as 'a somewhat formidable matron dating back to 1900' (Ciarocchi, 2001: 16). The face of an overweight woman with silent piercing eyes, her powerful, stark body covered by a black traditional dress, embodies significantly the solid and somehow ambiguous presence of Italianness in Ireland. It also embodies a female migrant subjectivity that remains doubly invisible and doubly ambiguous, as I discuss later in this chapter.

In 2003, the Irish women's magazine *Image* depicts the various employment categories of professional Italian migrants (restaurant owners, IT professionals, academics and researchers; *Image*, 2003). According to the article, Italians "veni, vidi, vici: they came, they saw, they conquered – it's a cliché but a true one. Italians have been making their mark on Irish society for a hundred years' (*Image*, 2003: 43). If it is true that Italian migrants have influenced Irish society, it is also true that this article ultimately reinforces a sense of distance between 'Irish' and 'Italian' people, setting up even starker boundaries between 'them' and 'us'. It also seems to express an unconscious fear of having others 'conquering' Ireland (which has perhaps a particular resonance, considering Ireland's traumatic history of colonial subjugation).

The fascination with Italian migrants' business qualities has an updated version in the representations of IT specialists, bankers and other professional figures (The Irish Times, 2003; Hamilton, 2004). These groups of professional people are seen as being a modernising factor in the 'Italian migrant community', founding for example the *Club di Dublino* discussed above. Members of this club ('one of ten such clubs all around the world') 'are mostly bankers, academics, or other professionals', and 'unlike Club Italiano, set up in the early 1970s by Italian take-away owners', their mission reflects 'the *changed role* of this community in Ireland' (Hamilton, 2004; my emphasis). These 'new migrants' are represented as raising 'the profile of the Italian community', on the basis of their 'business

presence in Ireland with the likes of Fiat, Ferrero and numerous banking institutions' (Hamilton, 2004). The article highlights how Italians 'raise money for local charities', 'organise various social events, such as a dinner to welcome the former Italian prime minister, Giuliano Amato, or former footballer Gianni Rivera and his wife' (Hamilton, 2004).

However, the activities of this group of 'new migrants' have much wider social implications and raise complex questions besides those presented in the Irish media. One important issue is how current Italian migration links to the problems of Italian economy. In particular, I think about the phenomenon of the Italian 'brain drain', product of an economically inactive public research sector affected by corrupt selection and promotion procedures, nepotism and authoritarianism, [64] which brought so many Italian researchers to Ireland. This issue is never raised in the Irish media.

The representations of Italian migrants in Ireland also obscure the strong class divide of Italian society, and how it is reproduced and reinforced through and in migration. Highly skilled migration is elite migration, which is mainly drawn from the higher strata of society. Elite lifestyle is assumed to be the blueprint of an 'Italian' way of life, which is maintained at the expenses of subaltern classes and excludes the lower classes from participating in a distribution of power and authority.

The regime of representation developed in Ireland obscures the heterogeneity of Italian people, and constructs an essential notion of Italianness and of an 'Italian community in Ireland', which does not really exist. My ethnographic work shows that different groups of Italian migrants remain distant from each other, and express complex feelings of belonging and communitarian attachments. Their clubs, activities, interests, and lifestyles do not meet, as much as Italian migrants themselves do not tend to meet together. My research participants expressed great

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[64] The brain drain is a growing phenomenon and is often undervalued. In 2003 a CNR (*Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche*) study showed that Italy is one of the four worst affected EU countries (CNR, 2005). Many Italians have been attracted to Ireland by its better funded research sector and by a relatively equalitarian academic system (Battiston, 2002; Palombini, 2001). The widespread level and gravity of the 'brain drain' phenomenon have recently been recognised by Italian institutions, and in Ireland the Italian Embassy promoted the production, in autumn 2006, of a list of Italian researchers in all Irish colleges and universities. In parallel with the Italian Embassy in Britain, there have also been talks to identify and support the needs of Italian researchers in Britain and Ireland, an initiative supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affair.

dissatisfaction with the limited representations of Italianness in Ireland, which ignore the diverse and multiform elements of Italian culture and history.

This regime of representation has structured the long romance of Ireland with Italians and has in turn facilitated the 'sensuous, provocative, demanding leap of identity across genealogical lines' (Ferrero, 2005: 204) that has influenced Sicilians, Tuscans, Lazio citizens, etc to recognise themselves as 'Italians'. Yet, among its many implications, I think that this regime of representation has ultimately prevented a full accommodation of Italian migrants into Irish society. Closed in with internal self-referential spaces of expression, Italian migrant groups and their organisations, have not sought active social and political inclusion in Irish state policies. Irish state policies, on the other hand, have tended to stress assimilation rather than accommodation of diversity, and have not promoted any dynamic and creative confrontation. As Mac Éinrí argues, this shows a lack of any real understanding in how to encourage social inclusion of groups of migrants, as well as any serious effort to respect cultural heritage (Mac Éinrí, 2002).

As a consequence of this, the accommodation of Italians into Irish society has never been organic, despite, and perhaps because of, the Irish representations of 'Italian integration in Ireland'. For example, in the early 1980s a state agency offered to collaborate with the *Club Italiano* (the oldest migrant organisation in Ireland) to open an Italian national school, but the offer was declined because the Club wanted to manage a language school on its own (my interview). There was never an Italian national school in Ireland (even though there are French and German national schools in Dublin).

Vincent Caprani portrays the effects of the limitations of the representational regime of Italianness during his school years. He writes that he 'grew bewildered and confused – an unwilling and juvenile ambassador from a country he'd never known to a curriculum he could not quite comprehend' (Caprani, 1993). Many stories like this remain invisible and silent in the often complacent and celebratory representations of 'othered' Italians. What happens to the 'invisible' Italian migrants who didn't comply with this image of 'Catholic hard-working Italian men'? How did other gendered, sexualised, classed groups of Italians experience their diasporic lives?

An Irish Own Migrant Other

Recent media discourses have started to more critically consider the meanings of the Italian migrant presence in Ireland. It has been recognised that along with the 'Irish love of everything Italian, and for the most part Italians, there is also a curious crossover that has occurred in the last few years. Would we have our growing band of artisan producers were it not for our exposure to the Italian way of doing things?' (Arnold, 2003). Media coverage emphasises the Irish fascination with Italy and how, for example, apart from being Ireland's sixth largest trading partner, Italy has always been one of the most popular destinations for honeymoons. But the representations of Italians are very limited, stereotyped, mellowed in the 'Irish love for everything Italian' (Hamilton, 2004). Alberto Schepisi, the 2001-2004 Italian ambassador to Ireland, stated that the Irish way of representing Italians shows 'a distorted and unreal image'.

> The Italian community in Ireland has grown strongly in the last decade and recent immigration includes a wide presence of professionals but when you talk to Irish people about Italy, you invariably hear about a relative's wedding in the Irish college in Rome, a favourite Italian 'fish and chips' shop in Dublin or Toto's Schillaci's goal that sent the republic of Ireland out of Italy '90' (Comiskey, 2003).

Schepisi underlines how these images are very far from the reality of modern Italy and 'this is a terrible pity as from my experience, there is an instinctive empathy and sympathy between the Irish and the Italians that is very rare'. The real question is in fact what this 'instinctive empathy' is made of. This empathy, I think, can be read as a façade obscuring the actual experiences of Italian migrants, and needs to be deconstructed.

The invisibility of Italian migrants in Ireland is another feature shared with Britain, where Fortier (2000) argues Italian migrants have also been invisible. However, there are some historic divergences. In Britain Italophobia pervaded public discourse during the 1939-45 war, compelling many to seek to hide their visible and audible Italianness (Fortier, 2000; 2001). While in UK Italian migrants were preoccupied with 'going unnoticed', being marked as invisible to escape racial surveillance (Fortier, 2000), Ireland's neutrality during World War II limited political Italophobia here. Rather, Irish Catholic national fervour promoted a widespread sympathy for Italians, often perceived as close to the Pope and the

Catholic spirituality he embodies. Another difference between Britain and Ireland is that in 1960s Britain, Italian immigration dropped and the Italian population diversified and gradually blended (Fortier, 2000: 23). By contrast, Ireland experienced a growth of Italian immigration after World War II, well into the 1980s and 1990s. The invisibility of Italians in Ireland must be explained therefore as a product of specific Irish contingencies. I believe that, given the limited immigration to Ireland during the entire time of Italian migrants' settlement, the reasons for Italian migrants' invisibility must be sought in the distribution of symbolic power and in particular in the functional representations of Italianness in Irish hegemonic discourses. These representational strategies were othering, ethnicising and ultimately making Italian migrants' experiences invisible.

According to Stuart Hall (1996), 'othering' refers to the strategic social practice through which (national, ethnic, etc.) identities are constructed by marking differences from the 'other', as any section of the population which is isolated on the basis of attributed phenotypical or cultural differences (this is true for example for southern vis-à-vis northern Italians). The 'other' serves as the opposite element of 'the "positive" meaning of any term – and thus its identity' (Hall, 1996: 4). The representation of the 'others' are implicated in the identitarian projects, as there is a dialectic between self and other, in which 'the attributed characteristic of Other refract contrasting characteristic of Self' (Miles, 1989: 11). [65]

Representation is a practice of signification, which functions as a mechanism for othering, that is for 'the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries and the production of frontier-effects' (Hall, 1996: 4-5). It produces otherness which is tolerated and accepted when it contributes to a self-confirming image (Papastergiadis, 2000: 210). Therefore, articulated through everyday common sense discourses, representations are often vehicles of disavowal and denial (Brah, 2000). Thus understood, the othered representations of Italian migrants in Ireland have a significant function in marking clearer boundaries of Irishness. Ronit Lentin observes that in the Irish context, when the argument of Irish identity (and Irish racism) is discussed in relation to the presence of 'migrant others' ('and its inherent hybridity'), 'diasporicity (the relation between the Irish and the other) is perhaps

[65] In particular, othering involves 'the production of representations' of the 'Other's images and beliefs which categorise people in terms of real or attributed differences, when compared with the 'Self' (Miles, 1989: 11).

not about dismantling national culture, but rather, through fear of the other, reinforcing it' (Lentin, 2002b: 235). Irish nationalism has portrayed the 'Irish' nation as culturally, religiously (or even racially) distinct and homogenised, by juxtaposing it against the other' (Lentin, 2002b: 235). Mac Éinrí similarly claims that constructed as 'a narrow, exclusionary we', Irish nationalistic 'instinct has been to expel, to corral or contain, or at least to insist that those who are different should know their place, that is, shut up' (Mac Éinrí, 2002: 1).

Italian migrants are implicated in the social history of Ireland from a very specific and exceptional position. They migrated to Ireland when very few other migrant groups did, and they did so when Irish people were leaving the country en masse. Even though Italian migrants are often ignored in the analyses of othering practices in Ireland and are rarely mentioned in the recent debates about Irish multiculturalism (with the exception of upper class professionals), I want to argue that there is scope to look at Italian migrants in the Irish 'regime of representations' (Hall, 1996) not just as 'others' but as an Irish 'own other' (Cohen, 1999) and a 'constitutive outside' (Hall, 1996: 4).

Different ethnicised/migrant groups, for example Traveller[66] and Jewish groups in Ireland, have embodied 'constitutive outsides' vis-à-vis specific discourses and structures of domination, such as the state's racial politics (Lentin and McVeigh, 2006). Using this othering concept to think about Italians leads me to conceptualise Italian migrants as embodying a specific Irish own migrant other. The experience of emigration was pervasive in Ireland, but immigration was quite limited and Italians represented an exceptional group of immigrants. Arguably, Italian migrants in Ireland have been perceived as the *others who had migrated*, or in other words, the pain of emigration that Italians manifested led to considering immigrants as new embodiments of past Irish emigrants (Lentin, 2002). Italians' migrant presence might have normalised and potentially reversed the long collective trauma that Irish emigration left on Irish society. This interpretation

[66] Travellers have been othered in relation to a specific history of British colonisation. Sinéad ní Shúinéar's notes how the English process of othering Irish people led to depicting the Irish as a homogeneous group of backward peasants, a vision which in the struggle for independence and post-colonial emancipation was maintained in the myth of internal class-less Irish homogeneity (ní Shúinéar , 2002: 181). For ní Shúinéar, 'English Othering of the Irish has never been confronted or refuted by the Irish themselves, but simply transferred to the Traveller population' to create 'a sense of fundamental unity overriding internal difference' (ní Shúinéar, 2002: 190).

seems a useful way of thinking about the invisibility of Italians. First of all, it is well founded on the inexorable link between emigration and immigration discourses. In countries with established histories of emigration (like Italy for example) this link is clearly manifested in current debates on immigration (even though not always preventing restrictive and discriminatory state immigration policies, as is visible both in Ireland and in Italy).

The othering function of the representations of Italians is validated historically by the findings of a behavioural survey on Dubliners' intergroup attitudes towards minority groups, conducted in the late 1970s. The survey showed that 'Italians and Spaniards were ranking low' in the scale of preferred foreign groups; this attitude was difficult to explain 'considering the closer religious and touristic affinities between them and the Irish, than in the case of the more favoured Germans and Sweden' (Mac Gréil, 1977: 240-256). Mac Gréil, the survey's author, sees the preference for Swedes and Germans against 'the principle of ethnic-religious propinquity', which he took as a possible indication of the assimilation of English ethnic preferences (Mac Gréil, 1977: 240-256). However, the assimilation of English cultural models is not sufficient to explain the findings, because as I stated above, there were considerable historic divergences in relation to Italians between Ireland and Britain. Clearly, there are other reasons at stake here.

Mac Gréil's survey showed that Dublin respondents preferred other European groups over Italians in relation to intermarrying or welcoming them as members of their families, (69.7 per cent respondents would have welcomed Germans, 67.8 per cent Swedes, 66.5 per cent Spaniards, 62.2 per cent Italians), but Dubliners seemed inclined to welcome more Italians as 'close friends' or 'next-door neighbours' than Swedes and Germans (13 per cent respondents would have welcomed as close friend Germans, 14.4 per cent Swedes, 15 per cent Spaniards, 17.1 per cent Italians; Mac Gréil, 1977: 229-233). This ambiguity could be explained through the notion of otherness. As Ireland's own migrant others, Italians were close to Irish society, they could be accepted as 'friends', but as *others* they had to remain 'outside' and they were not to be accepted into 'the Irish family'.

This way of toying with the notion of otherness seems not only viable but also useful to deconstruct the layered and ambiguous meanings of Italian

representations. [67] Italian migrants might now be well accepted in Irish society, as it is claimed, however, this is not just because they 'were not taking work away from the Irish. Their skills were needed ... and both ethnic groups shared the same religion, an instant, common link intensified because Italians came from the homeland of Catholicism' (Ciarocchi, 2001: 17). I want to argue that the 'Irish love for everything Italian' is functional for Irish society at different levels and not surprisingly, the representations of Italian migrants are often focused on their successful entrepreneurial and self-made qualities. Ireland's own 'entrepreneurial migrant others' bodes well with the successful image that Ireland promotes of itself in the 'Celtic Tiger' era.

The emphasis on the 'hard-working' and 'successful' Italians derives in part from the early Frosinone migrants, who came from impoverished and underdeveloped areas, bringing with them a strong working class ethos. They perpetuated the myth of self-realisation through hard work and economic achievements as a means of struggle for class emancipation. Many families of these early migrant groups still follow this model, despite the economic success that they have achieved. Italian parents still tend to transfer 'their aspirations for upward mobility to their children and always motivated them to work hard in school and acquire a good education' (Wessendorf, 2005:12). Younger generations are embedded in strong social networks with their families and friends that reinforce this class ethos. Drawing from this class ethos but also from the global commodification of Italianness, Italian migrants in Ireland have resisted and reinvented stereotypes produced in Irish hegemonic representations.

Food activities, which are also linked to gender hierarchies, are particularly useful to explore both how Italian migrants in Ireland have taken advantage of the global commodification of Italianness and how Italian migrants' presence has been extremely functional for Irish society, often filling gaps at the social, economic but also cultural and symbolic level. The next section deals with these issues and expose the diasporic nature of Irish and Italian foodways, that is the 'culinary landscape of tastes readily available for purchase', which are essential to modern societies (Appadurai, 1996).

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[67] Ireland is not a unique case in this othering practices; for example in Switzerland too, where Italians were largely discriminated against, with the arrival of new immigrant groups from other parts of the world in the 1980s, Italians have been perceived as 'less different', and have been more readily accepted as part of Swiss society (Wessendorf, 2005).

Foodways And The Irish Potato Culture: The Emergence Of Structures Of Ethnicised Hierarchies

According to the historian Hasia Diner, in Irish culture food represented 'a traumatic void' because of the 'potato culture', the harsh famines and the debilitating colonial exploitation of Irish productive resources, which ultimately traumatically removed the relationship with food (Diner, 2001). Food was never celebrated as a national icon either in Ireland or among its emigrants, and collective celebrations of Irishness have instead been accompanied by drinking practices (Diner, 2001).

The food void in Ireland was perfectly matched with the Italian migrants' predisposition to celebrate their Italianness through food. For Italian migrants the world over, food represented a primary means by which they socialised, worshiped, shopped and did business (Pennacchio, 2002). Around the set table of food practices, Italians from different regions and different backgrounds met, often for the first time, as Italians, inventing an essential Italian culture (Diner, 2001). Instead as Diner argues, the history of migrants' attitudes towards food 'goes far beyond an exploration of cooking and consumption. It amounts to a journey to the heart of its collective world' (Diner, 2001: 10).

In Ireland, Italian migrants came as Sicilians, Tuscans or Frosinone citizens, but in diaspora they become 'Italians' through retaining aspects of their old world culture, particularly their foodways and language. Differences have been erased and included under the signifier of Italianness. The foodways analysis is particularly revealing of the diasporic encounters of Italians and Irish people. While Italian culinary traditions were adapted to the Irish reality, they developed not only the Italian 'ethnic group identity' (Pennacchio, 2002: 100), but also a diasporic one. The food traditions that formed the social capital of Italian migrants in Ireland were not drawn from 'Italian' culture but from the cultural capital Italian migrants in Ireland acquired in their diasporic wandering in Britain. Thus, the intimate connection between alimentary, imaginary and national identity (Appadurai, 1996), in the case of Italians' ethnicised food business in Ireland, tells the story of an expanding diaspora.

When Italians started to settle down, few restaurants and food shops were present in Ireland. Irish culinary traditions had never developed to their fullest

potential. Italian migrants have influenced the Irish palate with their diasporic food practices. They introduced 'fish and chips' shops and ice-cream parlours using resources easily accessible in Ireland, such as potatoes, fish and milk, and transformed them into readily available, cheap and nutritious food for all Irish social classes. In Britain, at the turn of the nineteenth century, 'fish and chips' provided the working classes with a means of subsistence, which kept them away from hunger and social unrest (Walton, 1992). This was arguably true for Ireland too in the last century. However, in Ireland, 'fish and chips' also provided Irish people with an alternative to fill the 'traumatic' food gap from the outside. It is a bitter joke in the face of Irish colonial history, that Italians learnt how to prepare 'fish and chips' in their own diasporic migrancy in Britain.

Behind the apparent equilibrium of this diasporic osmosis, there is also a structural order of ethnicised/racialised domination. 'Fish and chips' (as the Chinese take-aways in Britain for example) are represented as a 'willing provision of everyday staples' celebrated with 'exoticised condescension, as an example of a dormant and pacified contribution to a successful multicultural society' (Parker, 2000: 73). The selection of signifiers and the everyday institutionalisation of the 'fish and chips' business is a product of a representational regime that consolidates 'the routine reproduction of cultural differences' (Parker, 2000: 74). While these representations seem to exemplify a peaceful, multicultural co-existence, in fact they embody a deep structure of ethnicised domination (Parker, 2000: 74). The selected cultural differences inscribed in the representations of 'fish and chips' businesses ultimately mark Italians as outsiders, a symbolic order that disempowers Italians at various levels. The most visible outcome of this social structure are possibly the racial abuses often screamed against those working in the 'fish and chips' shops, as my interviews disclose, especially during long night shifts in the most disadvantaged areas of the working class peripheries.

In the face of the emergence of a 'new multicultural' Ireland, the regime of representation of Italianness has assumed a new updated function. Most of the representations of Italian migrants in the media continue to show a celebratory interest in their culinary activities, albeit now concentrating on trendier 'Italian' restaurants. This interest in Italian food and in Italian people persists and occludes the rarely considered presence of more numerous European migrant groups who have also been settled for a long time in Ireland (such as German and Dutch

people), who are rarely considered by the Irish media, and attract much less attention than the Italian presence. Once again, the real question is whose culture these representations are really celebrating and representing.

Foodways are central to the celebration of contemporary Irish multiculturalism. Discourses on 'ethnic' and 'exotic' food take on a great significance, becoming markers of 'the postmodern penchant for pluralism, lack of hierarchies and cultural differences' (Banerjee 2000 in Goeller, 2005: 236). The representations of Italians inscribed in the Irish foodscape add to the self-celebratory practices of Irish modern, cosmopolitan, and 'multicultural' society, which is striving hard to keep at bay internal racist and discriminatory tendencies (Lentin, 2002b; Lentin and McVeigh, 2006). However, as I argued in this chapter, while helping to portray a clean folkloristic multicultural history of Ireland, conveying a feeling of social cohesion and of the 'reassuring generosity of Irish people' (Lentin, 2002b), the representations of Italian migrants obscure the actual meanings and qualities of migrants' experiences.

Migrants' Agency: Food As A Global Commodification Of Italianness

Like other stories of migration, the history of Italian migration to Ireland is not merely a case of subjugation and domination; even with the limitations and obligations of diaspora, Italian migrants found opportunities. In the context of food businesses, the diaspora as a set of transnational institutions and practices has allowed Italian migrants to draw social capital from global markets of consumption. Italians have adapted to the social and economic gaps of Irish society but have not simply created economic niches for themselves (as Reynolds claims, 1996). Rather, they have branded and commodified Italian culture, 'wrapping' it around a global cosmopolitanism fascinated with Italian things.

The global commodification of Italianness is not a new phenomenon. After the Second World War, a global optimistic emphasis on the reaffirmed joy of life assumed Italian dolce vita as a new hedonistic symbol (Tzanelli, 2004). Since then, the Italian cultural model of the dolce vita has in part ceased to be what it was then, but continues to be a 'valuable item in a chain of constant exchange', particularly adaptable in the current 'tourist age ... [which] rejects excitement in the form of transgression and marries pleasure with conventionality' (Tzanelli, 2004: 12). Italianness and its cultural products, of which food is the most obvious, have been

exoticised and packaged, becoming ready material for tourist and global consumption.

I agree with Ferrero (2005), that the readiness and simplicity of Italian food (as compared to the complexities of French cuisine) are part of its global success, and are helping to channel the global fascination with Italian food.[68] The Italian culture of food has also operated in the face of capitalist forces, and of 'the imperative of cross-cultural toleration, and the cult of anything-goes hybridity' (Ferrero, 2005: 182). Interestingly, however, Italian foodways also reaffirm, against globalisation, a slow food culture. It promotes a cohesive and ritual socialisation in food preparation with its 'orchestrating gastronomic titillation' (Ferrero, 2005: 186). Ferrero points out that:

> Italians have no monopoly on making a cult of good food but the Italians become piqued these days, in our rush to one-world gastronomic hodgepodge (pineapple pizza, cilantro instead of basil for pesto), because of the degree to which they believe in regional genius... Italians honour the natural interaction of food stuff, preparatory techniques, and consuming rites - climatically determined, historically perfected (Ferrero, 2005: 186).

Italian food is a commodified signifier of Italianness, which exceeds the actual foodscape of Italy. The arduous attempts of the *Accademia della Cucina Italiana* or the various associations of Italian restaurants in the world to certify 'authentic' Italian cuisine, are doomed to fail because there is nothing authentic in traditions, not even in those of Italian cuisine, as much as we would like to think so.

At the confluence of these global forces, Italian food continues to attract local attention in the Irish media. On the one hand, as I argued above, discourses about Italian food represent an ethnicised and othered image of Italianness in Ireland. Such discourses produce a brand of Italianness, even though, as emerged in my fieldwork, the owners, employees and even menus of 'Italian' restaurants in Ireland might actually be from other countries; indeed the employees in 'fish and chips' shops, as is often the case, might be Chinese or Eastern Europeans. Italians have literally become superfluous in the business of selling Italianness. It is enough to 'pass' as Italian to sell Italianness, as often Middle Eastern people and East

[68] As Ferrero notes, in many western countries Italian food has become the most beloved cuisine, because it is, as it 'would seem at first glance, ... a mixed blessing, given its adulteration in the frozen food section of the supermarket or in the latest bib-box restaurants in the mall' (Ferrero, 2005: 181).

Europeans do. Moreover, as I experienced while working as a waitress in a few 'Italian' restaurants in Dublin, Italianness must be performed in its gendered version. 'Italian' men have to be exuberant, Latin lovers, and adulators. Women have to be beautiful, agile and caring.

On the other hand, Italians on both ends of the class spectrum have been quick to take advantage of the stereotypes and of the titillating commodification of Italian culture. In the last few years, with Ireland at the forefront of global economic development, ethnicised Italian restaurants have opened at a fast pace all over Ireland and many new migrants have invented themselves as waitresses and chefs, even if they arrived in Ireland with other professional qualifications. Apart from the problematic notion of a unique Italian culinary tradition, which does not exist outside its regional variations, it is also interesting to note the gendered implications of this Irish-global love for Italians. Most accounts of Italian migrants and their food activities are enriched with silent Italian women appearing in the forefront (Victoria, 2002; Arnold, 2002; Field, 2001) and with a lot of comforting stories of 'grandmother's home cooking' even when the recipes come from 'the special collection of an uncle' as stated in one of such accounts (Field, 2001: 12). Are these representations essentialising, while commodifing both the idea of Italian food and Italian womanhood? This question leads to the analysis of Italian women on which I focus in the rest of this chapter.

WOMEN IN THE 'BACK KITCHEN': THE DOUBLE DIASPORA OF ITALIAN WOMEN IN IRELAND

One of my central arguments in this dissertation is that in the general invisibility of Italian migrants in Ireland, women have remained doubly invisible. In the accounts of Italian migrants, both in Irish hegemonic discourses and in Italian migrants' newsletter, we hear very little of women, and if we do, they are usually portrayed as silent followers of the men of their families. Otherwise, their experiences of migration are subsumed under men's experiences.

Some women of the earlier waves of migration told me that they associated their lives with the back kitchen of the 'fish and chips' shops. There, they used to sit long hours, usually alone with their children or in the company of other female

relatives, doing the tedious work of preparing food between the opening hours of the family shops. Men were at the counter dealing with the public, or at the markets buying the goods. In my analysis, the back kitchen became a metaphor to think of the constrained and limited ground of expression that Italian migrant women generally hold. However, these women's stories also reveal that in the back kitchen, women have been very active agents, attentively weaving the stories and the kin and care work that create the grounds of their 'double' diaspora.

The only representations which exist of Italian women resonate with the stories women tell of working 'in the back kitchen' of the 'fish and chips' shops. Women are seen as passive, often subjugated and reluctant to occupy public positions. Nonetheless, female bodies and beauty are continuously exposed to hegemonic male scrutiny. Women are often used to praise the worth of Italian migrant communities in Ireland, and by extension to assess and mark their boundaries.

Italian culture places a strong emphasis on appearance, which is an art in which both women and men are well trained. While masculinity has to appear solid and brusque, femininity must be nurturing and sexy at the same time (La Cecla, 2002). Among migrant families, men are encouraged 'to appear manly' and seek sexual experiences outside their Italian families. Women are expected not to be promiscuous and to marry within the Italian 'community'. They need to embody chastity and modesty, but ('in the back kitchen') they are also seen as objects of sexual desire. This ambiguous display of femininity is especially true for earlier migrants, but it is encoded in the mentality of the younger and more recent migrants as well, as emerged in my fieldwork. Women's sexuality is seen as representing the honour of the family, the community, and by extension Italianness. As I want to discuss in this section, the representations of female migrant bodies are instrumental in channelling and objectifying women's sexuality while portraying a reassuring notion of bounded and traditional community.

Migration is an inherently transgressive moment which threatens the very existence of gender roles and traditional gender models. The linear representation of gender and sexuality becomes a way of showing continuity while also reassessing belonging and marking boundaries. For Anne Marie Fortier 'the Italian identity project is steeped in the ideal of visibility that reveals the extent to which identity - including ethnic identity - is a matter of "telling" and "showing" that

which cannot be seen' (Fortier, 2000: 6). Italian migrant women become 'sites for the display of cultural identity' (Fortier, 2000: 6).

Women embody the ineffability and elusiveness of migratory experiences and identities. They embody a cultural diversity that is not recognised, often carrying the burden of representation of Italianness. They are the markers of the group boundaries, the symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and their proper behaviour and proper appearance are important emblems of their migrant groups (Fortier, 2000; Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1998; Brah, 1996).This act becomes particularly significant where Italians have been made invisible as in the case of Italian migrants in Ireland. The diversity of Italian migrants, unseen and untold in Irish hegemonic discourses, is expressed through the spectacle of women's bodies.

In direct contrast to the lack of any articulated accounts of Italian migrant women in Ireland, there are multiple stories in the media and in popular discourses, recounting women's beauty and bodies. These are ambiguous representations of hybridity and cross-overs which are painstakingly exposed to the failure of identitarian politics and the power of identitarian poetics. Many stories portray women with 'agreeable personalities and beautiful voices' (*Italia Stampa*, 1991) whose bodies and beauty mark many public events (*Italia Stampa*, 1998). Notable among the 'beautiful and charming' (Stampa, 1998) women of Italian migrant groups is Michelle Rocca, whose father came from the Frosinone province, married an Irish woman, and left for Canada and Britain before returning to Ireland. Michelle Rocca was born in Bristol, but she became Miss Ireland in the 1980s. She claims to 'feel Irish' (Power, 1991: 73; Farinella, 1988; Nolan, 2004) and yet she is also often considered as an icon of 'Italian beauty' and 'proud of having Italian blood' (*Italia Stampa*, 1988).

Tamara Gervasoni is often mentioned as another positive 'hybrid' of the Italo-Irish encounter. She is the daughter of an Irish woman and an Italian man, and grew up in Ireland. In 2002 she won the Rose of Tralee, an Irish beauty competition for women from all the different counties of Ireland, in which women of Irish origins resident in different countries participate, making this competition an Irish diasporic event. Gervasoni is described as 'an exotic hybrid of Longford, Galway and Milan' (Betson, 2003). Although she is reported as saying that she feels exactly like all the other girls of her age in Ireland, she has also been praised for being the first ever '*Italian rose* representing Italy' (Betson, 2003; my emphasis). These are

the contradictions of a gendered regime of representation: women become national icons or exotic hybrids, irrespectively of what they are. In light of this, I think therefore that it is significant that against the objectification of her body, Gervasoni seems to have embodied an ultimate anorexic protest (Betson, 2003).

Winners of beauty competitions, like Rocca and Gervasoni, have been invited as patrons of events, which concern Italian people in Ireland; for example Gervasoni was asked to participate in a welcoming reception for the crew of an Italian military ship harbouring in Dublin (*Italia Stampa*, 1999). Their beautiful bodies are framing pictures of events, signalling a boundary where Irishness ends and Italianness begins.

Rosa Marsella and Freda O'Brien are two other woman who have come to embody Italo-Irish 'cross-overs' in an explicit diasporic pageant competition, Miss Italia in the World (in 1991 and 1992), which runs parallel to Miss Italia and in which young women of Italian origins resident in various countries abroad can participate. We know very little about these 'proud' Irish representatives in *Miss Italia in the World*, but many pictures of their 'beautiful bodies' are exposed to the masculinised gaze of the Italian diaspora in Ireland (*Italia Stampa*, 1993a).

The emphasis on women's bodies and sexuality is also present in the media of the new Italian migrants. *Irlandiani.com* and *AltraIrlanda.it* are speckled with pictures of young women smiling at the camera, as for example during the celebrations of the victory of the Italian team in the world cup. It is not only their bodies but their sexuality (often overtly so) which is being scrutinised by men who compare Italian women to Irish women. The latter are seen as 'more open to casual sexual encounters' and see sex as 'free, joyful, and exciting, as it rarely is in Italy' (*Irlandiani.com*, November, 2006).

In the forum of *AltraIrlanda.it* female users are voicing their experiences and their counter-narratives, but here too a hierarchy of sexual and gender identities is being constructed through the beauty competition for women proposed in October 2006. Women are invited to send their photographs to compete for the Miss *AltraIrlanda.it* 2007; the forum's users, the majority of whom seem to be male, vote for the most beautiful and sexy women (*AltraIrlanda.it*.it, 2006b). Some women, after ten days of activities in the chatroom, complain about the chauvinism of the male users' commentaries; however, they continue to send their pictures and participate in the display of their bodies. Obviously women are gratified too by

participating in the competition. There is not enough data in the forum to extrapolate all the complex meanings of women's participation in beauty competitions, but it is clear that the 'sanctity of the body' (Gilroy, 1997) gratifies and reassures both men and women. The central question is how the display of women's beautiful bodies contribute to construct 'a sign of irresistible natural hierarchy and continuity' amidst the insecurities of migration (Gilroy, 1997), an issue which emerges also from the interviews with my research participants (see chapters six and seven).

Another area of interest in the accounts of Italian migrant women is women's business activities. This represents a minor scene where women's power in business activities is subjected and re-inscribed in a gendered hierarchy. Ultimately, women's value is reconfirmed as revolving around family, domesticity and 'community' (Ferrero, 2005: 145). This is especially visible for the women of the Frosinone migrations, who are generally seen as followers and dependents of their husbands. It is claimed that 'many Italian girls when ...[they] married ... [their] husband ... [they] also married *his* business; they work side by side in *his* shop' (*Italia Stampa*, 1987: 9; my emphasis). Family shops are considered the property of men and women are invisible in the accounts of these businesses, even though their flexible unpaid work is essential to the economy of the takeaway. I only found one account that deals directly with the experience of a woman who worked in the family's 'fish and chips' business, Giuliana Forte, which was published in 1993 in the Italian journal *Il Messaggero*. Forte arrived in Ireland with her husband in the 1960s, but her interview reveals that she had 'projects' of her own and she always wanted to learn English and emigrate (Panini Finotti, 1993). The gendered implications of migration clearly and strongly emerge in this narrative and show how powerful gender is in dictating this woman's migratory project.

In only a few cases, women are praised for setting up their own business, as for example Giuliana Cavalleri, who lived in Galway and 'had the brilliant idea of importing from Italy and marketing in Ireland radiator cabinets' (*Italia Stampa*, 1991). The main focus, however, remains the men with to whom women are inseparably linked, as in the case of Cavalleri's short article, which ends up discussing mostly her husband, once Lord Major of Barna. Among the women of the earlier waves of migration, women's entrepreneurial activities are mostly praised if they are linked to 'the jobs that women do', especially in fashion design

and more creative and artistic productions (*Irlandiani.com*, 2006b; *Image*, 2003; *Italia Stampa* 1991, 2006).

In October 2003, *Image*, published a special issue on 'all important Italian things in Ireland: fashion, football, art, places, restaurants' (*Image*, 2003), portraying the lives of 'exceptional' women like Corinna Salvadori Lonergan (associate professor of Italian in Trinity College Dublin), Maria di Mascio (the former president of the *Club Italiano*) and Antonia Perotti (an executive manger of an Italian company, who at 49 came alone to Ireland after years of working in London). The stories of these women are very telling and reveal many complexities in Italian women's experiences of migration. Salvadori Lonergan moved to Ireland in 1948 at a young age with her parents who worked in the RTE Symphony Orchestra. Migration was a shock for her family, which had deeply gendered consequences. There were no English courses for migrants and as a young girl she helped by translating for her mother. Maria di Mascio is one of the founders of the *Club Italiano*, a very active agent in promoting its activities. She was the first woman ever to be honoured as *Cavaliere* [a State honorary recognition] for her dedication to the Italian community through the *Club Italiano*. The stories of these 'exceptional' women provide a sketch where gender is indeed an important focus of analysis in understanding the 'ordinary' experiences of migration. Many interesting stories emerge, which I have set out to uncover in my study.

Conclusion

To conclude, the discussion about the history of Italian migration to Ireland reveals a tendency to homogenise and essentialise the questions of belonging and identity. Italian women are generally absent in these discourses, apart from a striking interest in their 'beautiful bodies' and their 'exceptional' stories of success and power. I was particularly struck by the continuous erasure of the presence and experiences of women in general and of 'ordinary' women in particular, those who would describe themselves as 'just sitting quietly in their house', as one of my participants put it. What about these women, who often dedicated their lives to the care of their families and their children, and seemed so invisible in almost all accounts? How did migration impact their lives? And how did their gender roles and relation affect their larger groups? Obviously, there is much more to Italian

women than their 'beautiful bodies' and as I demonstrate in this study, important stories need to be recounted about their lives in Ireland.

Before considering the women's stories, I look in the next chapter, at the methodological choices that brought me to conduct open-ended unstructured interviews with 29 Italian women in Ireland. After explaining the structure of my research, I analyse in chapters six, seven and eight, the women's narratives, arguing that they have a double function as both informative and performative.

Chapter Five

METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF MY STUDY: A SOCIOLOGICAL STORY OF ITALIAN WOMEN'S STORIES OF MIGRATION

The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular
(Haraway, 1998 :590)

Chapter two and chapter three presented and discussed the theoretical frameworks used in my study, both in relation to migration and diaspora theories in general, and to the Italian migration in particular. In order to contextualise my analysis, chapter four outlined the history of Italian migration to Ireland and analysed the texts and representations about Italians. Gender emerged as a fundamental ordering principle in migrants' lives yet this principle is rarely incorporated into migration discourses. Italian migrant women remain the most invisible subjects of the Italian diaspora in Ireland. The next chapters engage with the analysis of the Italian women migrants' narratives, but first, in this chapter, I present the methodology of my study. In particular, I touch on the issues of grounded theory, feminist research, standpoint and reflexivity. I consider how I accessed and contacted the research participants, conducted the interviews and the documentary analysis, interpreted the data, and finally I explain the field tactics and the field ethics that I employed. I also introduce the women who took part in this research and describe the settings of the individual and groups interviews with them.

To do so, I have isolated three different stages (as suggested by Birch, 1998) in my PhD journey towards understanding the lives of Italian migrant women: *going there*, my study of the relevant theories before commencing ethnographic work, *being there* my actual participation in the 'field', and lastly *being here*, the very construction of this text. Although I have chosen to present these phases as distinct phases for analytical clarity, the phases frequently overlapped, both geographically and conceptually, and have continuously fed on each other.

While presenting my methodological choices, I also aim to be reflexive about my role as a researcher, signposting the meanings of my PhD journey into the 'sociological world'. This is important not only because of my specific positionality, as an Italian migrant woman researching Italian migrant women, but because of my implication in yet another story: the sociological story of Italian women's stories of migration.

GOING THERE: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

This section highlights how before 'going there' several theoretical explorations took place that placed me as a researcher in a particular position, while entering, defining and gaining access into the field (Birch, 1998). My work with migrant Italian women started in 2000 with my master's dissertation, for which I interviewed twelve Italian women in Ireland (De Tona, 2000). The work of my PhD is theoretically and methodologically grounded in that research experience, which introduced me to the social theories I wanted to engage with. I was inspired by a sociology that works 'across the borders between one discipline and another' (Stanley, 2005: 2.4), using research methods 'as tools to do a job, not emblems of ideological partisanship' (Fuchs, 2001 :50). The sociology I wanted to do embraces 'fuzzy borders and intellectual border-trafficking' rather than erecting 'impermeable borders', a case that 'really would be a defensive move, an admission of loss of confidence' (Stanley, 2005: 3.6; see also Eisenstein, 2004; Brah, 1996). Avoiding counterproductive disciplinary divisions, I also believe in a sociology which is directed at restoring 'the lost link between objective affliction and subjective experience' (Bauman, 2005: 211), that is a sociology that can focus on the very dialectics between individual agency and societal structural forces.

Ultimately, I chose to work within a sociological framework that has the capacity to support 'critical questioning and analytical thinking about the world', which provides 'intellectual "open space"' and inculcates 'a feeling of excitement and energy around ideas': a sociology that is able to be subversive, not only in the social world, but also in our way of thinking about the discipline itself (Stanley, 2005: 3.1).

Grounded Theory

My PhD journey began with an exploration of the theories of diaspora and gendered migrations (see chapters two and three). This theoretical choice involved specific methodological approaches: first, given the invisibility of Italian migrant women and the gender blindness of migration studies, my research had to be a '*knowledge in the making*' (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998: 60; my emphasis) and had to develop into a grounded theory approach.[69] However, I do not support a classical 'objectivist or technical' application of grounded theory, because I believe, like Smith and Sparkes, that 'standardized coding' embedded in objectivist forms of grounded theory run into several problems (Smith and Sparkes, 2002: 147). Smith and Sparkes claim that:

> With their goal of extricating themes and other topics from the ground up, grounded theory virtually demands that the ways in which context mediates the construction of experience be ignored, and aspects of lived experience be decontexualized so that their meanings are frozen, outside of the lived circumstances in which meanings were encountered and created (Smith and Sparkes, 2002: 147).

My usage of a grounded theory approach called for close attention to the research context and the experiences and circumstances that influence the emergence and generation of new theories during the research process. Grounded theory required me to first observe how and why social contexts exist and work as they do, collect data and then proceed to generate theoretical propositions (May, 1997: 29). In particular, this methodological choice led me to engage with diasporic theories because they proved relevant to the analysis of the complex experiences of gendered migrations. As I discussed in chapter two, diaspora theories can construct a framework that could better account for the gendered experiences of Italian migrant women, irrespective from how Italian migrant women were represented in media, popular discourses and in the academic literature. These questions were formulated and refined 'in the field' while interacting and conversing with my research participants. Being inherently 'creolised' (Brah, 1996) and a more 'humane' way to understanding migration (Gabaccia, 2000), diaspora theories lend themselves to being adjusted in the research process, to accommodate the meanings emerging simultaneously out of the process of data collection and data analysis. Because of the dearth of information and the

[69] According to Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1997), grounded theory is a substantive theory that identifies occurring themes inductively, usually emerged from coding and content analysis. Theories are generated in the field while ethnographic work is being conducted.

limitations of gendered frameworks, the inclusive and holistic capacities of diasporic theories proved very useful in framing the analysis of Italian migrant women's experiences as a 'double diaspora'. I elaborate on the concept of 'double diaspora' in the next chapter.

Given my own positionality, as an Italian migrant woman researching Italian migrant women, specific research dynamics ensued between my data (Italian migrant women in Ireland), my analysis and how I interacted with it (both as a researcher and as a migrant subject in my own right). Standpoint and reflexive methodological approaches were an essential component of my research. These methods were inspired by feminist thinking, which has been the modus operandi of my research.

Feminist Research

Feminist thinking has been the guiding principle of my research because of my emphasis on Italian women migrants, my attempt to contribute towards correcting androcentric notions in mainstream migration studies, and my intention to be critical and reflexive in the research process. In particular, I refer to a plurality of *feminisms*, as a theoretical framework bringing together a multiple set of ideologies and methodologies that accept women's views and interpretations of their own lives. This feminist framework privileges women's lived experiences, especially through accepting 'women's own accounts of their lives as primary documents for interpreting their lives' (Lentin, 1997: 5). I engaged with a third wave feminism that allowed women from marginalised groups to rewrite essentialist and monolithic discourses about womanhood and 'fundamentally reorder the way "natural" is seen, spoken and lived' (Eisenstein, 2004: 182). This allowed me to theorise the Italian women's heterogeneity, constituted through the complex interaction between class, culture, religion and other ideological institutions (Mohanty, 1991: 63; Brah, 1996). It pointed to the systems of power attempting to harness women's agency, but also women's creativity and power to negotiate constraints (Lentin, 1997; Mohanty, 1991; Hooks, 1989).

Feminisms have been a necessity more than a choice in my research because of my imperative to do ethical research and to conduct a 'just and fair' research practice 'in the interests of not only the project... but also the participants in the research' (May, 1997: 54). The work of a number of feminist theorists have cautioned about the

implications of our research for the lives of those who participate in it, the asymmetrical power relations in the field, and the role of the researcher in the research process, asking the researcher to critically reflect upon her practices. While mainstream sociology usually grants the researcher the privilege to talk *for* their participants rather than *about* them (ultimately becoming the speaking subjects of their texts and erasing the voices of their participants), many feminist researchers, aware of the implications of subalternity and marginality, seek to construct a relational and dialogical research practice, in which the participants' voices are allowed equality and participation. To this end, feminist researchers have pointed to the importance of women's personal narratives (Lentin, 2000b; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Passerini, 1988). Many draw attention to the role of imagination, emotions and narratives in the shaping of social action, which, as I illustrate in the next sections, is a central argument in my thesis.

My choice to work within feminist paradigms resonated with my own experiences during the fieldwork, where women's personal narratives emerged as important informative tools. Bringing together a feminist world view and moving repeatedly in and out of theory and ethnography, I developed a narrative method of knowing and generating new theories that allowed, at least potentially, women's heterogeneous voices and experiences to emerge. Feminist thinking has guided me in choosing unstructured and in-depth interviewing, and conceptualising the interpretive task as one of *opening* rather than *closure*, and of 'understanding' rather than 'knowing' or 'controlling' (Geiger, 2004; Letherby, 2000; Grewal, 1994; Oakley, 1992, 1981).

Having highlighted the relevance of feminism in my research, I must also acknowledge that my methodological choices draw inspiration from other theoretical approaches, and especially from ethno-methodology, symbolic interactionalism[70], post-structuralism and post-modernism. The exposition of these approaches and their implications for research, are beyond the scope of this thesis (for a discussion see Denzin, 1994), but while 'going there', I have been indebted to these approaches

[70] Ethnomethodlogy and symbolic interactionism are branches of sociology that place a high value on the role of the imagination in the development of the concept of the self, shaped by our capacity to be aware of the way others see us and to engage with them in all sorts of communications and interactions. These theoretical approaches lead to an understanding of social interaction 'accomplished through the symbolic communication of shared meanings' (Elias, 1991: 53) that inspired me to think of diasporic identities as collections of annals of memories and narratives.

which created an awareness of how social phenomena are structured though imagination, self-reflexivity and communication. They have guided me in working critically *with* the contradictory accounts of life, and embrace a relativistic and situated stance on knowledge and research, in which the role of the researcher is contingent to the research itself (Denzin, 1994; Hooks, 1989). In my research, this relevance seemed even more obvious given my position as an Italian migrant woman researching Italian migrant women in Ireland.

Standpoint

Countless times, when asked about my PhD topic I have been made the subject of a joke, when I would typically reply that my research is 'about Italian migrant women' I would hear 'Oh it's about you! Then it's going to be easy'. However, while it has not been easy, or easier, carrying out this research as an Italian migrant researcher, (as I had anticipated) my positionality had important repercussions and in a sense, it was *also* about me and about *how* I chose to do research, as social research often is. Indeed, I was implicated in the life of the women who participated in my research.

Feminist epistemologies and standpoint theories illuminated the dynamics of how I have chosen to tell about my research participants' narratives; my analysis is inevitably, though not unequivocally, informed by my social position. My class, gender, age, educational background, sexuality, and national status, have influenced the multiple identities I brought into the field, which in turn shaped my social interactions with the research participants and the knowledge of their lives that I weave together here (Bettie, 2003; Stoeltzer and Anthias. 2002; Lentin, 2000; hooks, 1994; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Haraway, 1988).

Standpoint theories demonstrate that knowledge is always 'situated' (Haraway, 1988), 'grounded in specific and contextualised acts of knowing' (Stanley, 1997b: 15). As an epistemology, they challenge the positivist notion of objectivity and truth, uphold an understanding of knowledge as a subjective, positioned and interpretative product. Standpoint comes to represent 'the space from which we [as researchers] speak, the political, disciplinary and social inheritance we travel through, which leave traces and marks upon us, enabling us to see some things and be blind to others' (Skeggs, 2004: 45).

During the course of my research, especially during the second phase of data collection in 2002, I was aware of the influence of my own (diasporic) positionality in the research process. As I began to develop a sense of empathy with the stories I was collecting, I also experienced moments of discomfort and anguish. Moving in and out between a sense of belonging and closeness, I felt both an insider and an outsider to my research participants' groupings. [71] My implication in the research process touched 'intimate chords' (Brah, 2000: 273), but my positionalities were not experienced as fixed locations; they were layered and shifting. I realised that the key to understanding their dynamics was the notion of 'situated imagination' (Stoeltzer and Yuval-Davis, 2001) upon which situated knowledge is constructed.

Imagination is central to all human interaction and communication, and shaped the negotiations occurring in my ethnographic work: how I approached the participants, how I started analysing the data in the field and how I constructed this text. The particular meanings that the research participants and I constructed in the field were derived from a *situated imagination*: a shifting and dialogical capacity to fill the meanings of 'borders', 'home' and 'Italianness' with different contents. The notion of situated imagination highlights the complexities of identification and belonging, illustrating that situated knowledge is able to fix the boundaries and borders of belonging and *at the same time* is able to cross over between them to create new boundaries and new belongings contextually (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002: 324-327). This is a central argument in my work and in particular, for my discussion of women's double diaspora. In chapter eight, I explore in fact how situated imagination is expressed and performed through narratives and memories.

Reflexivity

Being reflexive about 'my' situated knowledge and 'my' situated imagination was a relevant methodological tool in my research. Being reflexive led me to recognise, examine, and understand how my own positionality and subjectivity

[71] It was useful for me to grapple theoretically with the distinction between positionality and standpoint. Following Stoeltzer and Yuval-Davis (2001), positionality implies a social location, a situatedness, which I may occupy in virtue of my biography, i.e. where I was born, what language I speak, when I travelled etc. Standpoint is a less automatic condition than what positionality presupposes. Standpoint is about social practices, agency, performativity, that I-the researcher engage in the research process, in order to gain access, negotiate commonalities, etc. For me, standpoint represents a specific act of locating myself reflexively in relation to my positionality.

influenced the research process (Hesse-Biber and Yaiser, 2004: 115). Reflexivity also allowed me to assess the interpretative validity of my analysis, which is an important legitimising exercise given the qualitative approach of my research.

There are two variations of reflexivity: a weaker variation in which reflexivity means a 'continued self awareness about the relationship between a researcher and informants' and a stronger variation by which reflexivity means 'the deconstruction of the authority of the author and/or of the power of difference in the field' (Wasserfall, 1997: 151). Both variations of reflexivity have been central to my work. During the research process I set out to continuously monitor and reflect on how I related to the women in my research. This allowed me to grasp the fluid nature of identitification and belonging (see chapters six and seven for further elaboration). The ethics of my research have been a priority for me, and through a reflexive practice, I have aimed to monitor and acknowledge my role in the construction of an academic discourse about Italian migrants in Ireland. This meant being as open and honest as possible about my authorship in the field of inquiry as well as allowing a participatory and equal research model to be constructed relationally with the women who took part in my research.

Although I recognise the potential of a reflexive research practice, I am conscious of the risks of reductionist formulae and I have been careful not to turn reflexivity into a mere act of self-narration. My privileged position and power as a researcher could not be negated by simply allowing *I-the researcher* to tell, confess and relate my involvement in the field. Direct self-narration seemed, in my specific case, a misleading practice. Therefore, I have opted to write about myself only when telling about me and my experiences added to the transparency and accountability of my interpretations. The narratives of the Italian migrant women have remained the main protagonists of this thesis.

In other words, reflexivity involved an act of vigilant self-awareness in how I accessed the field, how I negotiated the interactions with the women and constructed diasporicity with them, and how I interpreted knowledge in the research process. Reflexivity accounts for the practices of my fieldwork and my interpretation of women's stories while 'being there'. The reflexive awareness has also awakened me to the complexities of migrant women's social worlds and the dangers of essentialising, othering, objectifying, and speaking *for* rather than *about* the women who participated in my research.

BEING THERE: THE CONSTRUCTION AND REPRESENTATION OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC WORLD

In 2002, I began a new stage of my PhD journey, in which I engaged with the actual participation, involvement and relationships in the field (Birch, 1998). This phase has been the most critical, intense and challenging because the boundary between the field research world and the academic research world often collapsed. The material of my research has been in a sense the material of my life, and like most other first encounters with ethnographic work, it has been mostly 'a solo enterprise, with relatively unstructured observation, deep involvement in the setting, and a strong identification with the researched' (Punch, 1994: 84).

My fieldwork started in 2000, when I began collecting data for my master's dissertation. However, the fieldwork for this PhD was carried out between 2002 and 2006. This has been the most intense fieldwork experience I have ever engaged in. The work for the master's dissertation influenced the implementation and design of my PhD research, leading me to carry out open-ended unstructured interviews with women, participant observation in the social settings where Italians gathered (especially the Italian Mass in the Pro-Cathedral on Sundays) and document analysis of the representations of Italians in the Irish media and Irish literature (see chapter four). The first stage of fieldwork made me aware of the different meanings of Italianness and of the identitarian (as well as other relational) negotiations taking place during the interview process. I have also included data from my mater's dissertation in the PhD work.

In this section, I examine the ethnographic work which forms the foundation for the writing of this PhD. This work comprised of interviews, which have been my main source of knowledge, and participant observation and documentary analysis, which have functioned as a validation strategy. In my research, ethnography not only involves the collection of data, but is also an analytical tool depending on the familiarity with the data collected during the fieldwork that creates an empathic understanding of the social setting (May, 1997: 136). In this sense, 'being there' is already an analytical process, which I am aware can never be described in its totality because 'the "tales of the field" are themselves part of an ongoing social process that

in its minute-by-minute and day-to-day experience defies recapitulation' (Vidich and Lyman, 1994: 24).

The ethnographic work has required a 'demanding craft that involves both coping with multiple negotiations and continually dealing with ethical problems' (Punch, 1994: 85). During most of the 'being there' stage, I would have preferred being somewhere else. The expectations concerning my role as an 'Italian', the degree of performativity involved in the interview process and the awareness of my 'role-playing' conduct were a difficult experience for me. The fieldwork existed as a series of often unconnected and non-linear stages, in which every time I believed to have learnt some strategies to control the flow of experiences, something else turned out to gloss it over with new failures, new dilemmas, and new stresses. The fieldwork has been, however, a rewarding and enriching experience, especially because I feel I have been made a part of so many extraordinary stories of women's lives.

Accessing And Contacting The Women

Contacting participants has not been an easy task. At the beginning, when I didn't use snowball sampling technique, I was frequently refused not only an interview but also the time and space to explain my research project. In these cases, the women were suspicious about academic research and as they explained, didn't see any purpose in it. During two experiences, I was told that the women had already been contacted by researchers and were not happy about being contacted again. While introducing myself and requesting an interview, I realised that I was often role-playing, feeling obliged to perform a kind and reassuring self, a fact that bewildered me. In a sense, 'deception and role-playing' are part and parcel of ethnography (Riessman, 2005: 486), but I had not yet learnt to accept and recognise it at this stage.

Initial meetings with my research participants were also stressful experiences. When I was asked to go to their private homes, I often felt out of place and felt I was intruding. After a while, the emerging conversation generally broke the initial discomfort and allowed me to feel more welcome and at ease, but multilayered feelings coexisted and the sense of discomfort never really eased. The discomfort originated from different factors: in one case, it was a mouse that kept swaggering behind the woman I was interviewing in her living room (April, 2003). In another case, it was the sexual innuendos of a 55 year old unmarried early-wave migrant man,

whom I interviewed in his flat adjacent to his 'fish and chips' shop. He offered to tell me about Italian migrants in Ireland if I consented to meet him for a car drive, making it clear that 'you know, I give you something and you give me something in return' (Summer 2005). I felt particularly indignant and offended in this case and found some excuse to get out of his flat, but I still left thanking him: I was still role-playing and I could not easily step out of it.

In general, a prevailing sense of self-discomfort remained in most interviews because of the artificial set up, the constraints and the awareness of role-playing in the interview setting itself. In the cases where men were present, or joined us at a second stage (three interviews), I noticed that I felt more tense, defensive, alert, preoccupied in validating and articulating my research project as convincingly as possible. Alone with the women, I generally felt more at ease and I felt more comfortable meeting in public places, such as coffee shops, pubs, or in my office. The least difficult interviews were with participants with whom I had already built a relation of trust and friendship prior to the interview (six women).

The discomfort I experienced during the interviews was always accompanied by more or less subtle joys and pleasures. Apart for intellectual stimulation through my research, I felt very privileged to get to know many interesting women, and to have access to intimate aspects of their lives. I was aware that I was 'allowed' to ask questions that I would not have been allowed otherwise. The humanity I was sharing with such intensity and in such a concentrated time-space dimension sincerely touched me. I enriched my own self thanks to the women's wisdom, experiences and strength.

I must admit also felt enabled by the academic status I came to occupy during the fieldwork, even though it feels uncomfortable to 'confess' this, given my feminist research agenda. During my research years, in the interactions with my research participants and my colleagues, I became an 'academic subject'. This gave me status, prestige and respectability that was largely unknown to me before, because of my social class background and because of the structures of Italian academia (with its rigid social hierarchies) that kept me away from such prestige. This academic status enhanced my fieldwork experiences. Despite my ethical imperative to construct a fieldwork of equality and openness, a 'ground work for friendship, shared struggles and identity change' (Reinharz, 1992: 68, in Punch, 1994: 86; see also Geiger, 2004), *I* was the one who ultimately gained a privileged status. This is visible, for example, in

how *I* had access to the Italian institutional settings such as the Italian Embassy, *Comites*, *Italia Stampa* and so on, which were for the majority of the women in my research not easily accessible. On reflecting, I realise that friendship was not always reached, even though reciprocal respect with the women was always maintained. Our struggles often differed, and in fact most of the women were not interested in a forum on Italian migrant women issues (an ethical practice that I had proposed to the research participants, as I explain later in this chapter). I am not sure what changes this work will achieve in my participants' lives. I do not have easy answers for these 'uncomfortable' issues, but I can account for a research practice that at least created the potential for a realisation of relationship, recognising differences and respect among the research participants and myself.

The first interviewing phase (in 2000) was characterised by many failed attempts to contact Italian migrants. I tried to access participants through a telephone directory list, by visiting 'fish and chips' shops and asking people in my personal networks about their contacts with Italian migrants in Ireland. In this first phase, I generally encountered mistrust and annoyance especially when I contacted early-waves Italian migrants. In one particular case, in a phone call to a migrant woman, I was shouted at and informed that she was 'fed up' being contacted by 'researchers, students and journalists'. This call was terminated when she abruptly hung up.

In the early months of 2002, I decided to take a different approach. I sought ways to get Italian migrants interested in participating in my research to contact me directly, rather than vice versa. I put a notice in the *Italia Stampa*, a widely distributed newsletter that circulates mostly among early-waves Italian migrants and the Italian institutions and restaurants in Dublin. My notice informed readers about my research project and asked for potentially interested Italian migrants to contact me. I received no reply. Meanwhile I continued to attend the Italian mass on Sundays, as I had started to do for the fieldwork in 2000, and I befriended some women who regularly attended services. Through frequenting the Mass and visiting the Italian Institutions in Ireland (the Italian Embassy, the *Comites*, *Italia Stampa* and the *Italian Club*) I became acquainted with the collective structures, practices and histories of the Italian migrant groups in Ireland. Through my participation in these settings, and my personal networks with other Italians, I have built relations with key informants, who helped me to make contact with some Italian migrant women over several months. The

women were asked by their acquaintances to participate in my research and to contact me directly, if they wished to take part in my project.

From this point onwards, I decided to contact other participants only through a snowballing sampling. This required asking the initial group of women participants to put me in contact with their friends who were willing to participate and to be interviewed. This is how in the end, I accessed the majority of my research participants. The snowballing technique allowed me to construct an equal and participatory research setting, because the women were contacted by someone they knew and trusted and had more power to consent or refuse participation[72]. This method minimised the risk of reifying and essentialising the category of 'Italians' participating in my research. What parameters (individuals' citizenship, their ancestors' citizenship, return visits) could I have used to select who is Italian and who not? How could have I chosen a suitable sample? Through snowballing, research participants selected each other reciprocally, and the selection process resembled as closely as possible the actual networks of relationality and connectivity that structured the migrant groupings. Interestingly, in August 2003, I was introduced to the same woman who refused to talk to me on the phone in 2000. Because I was in contact with someone she knew, she was more willing to trust me, and agreed to participate in an interview.

The process of contacting women was slow and time-consuming, but it was definitely more fruitful, ethical and participatory than the methods I experimented with in the first phase of fieldwork in 2000. The main difference was that in the second phase of interviewing, I was able to cultivate longer and more trusting relationships with the women before interviewing them.

The Interviewees

The first stage of my fieldwork began in 2000 for my master dissertation (De Tona, 2000). I conducted eight (individual and group) interviews, of which three group interviews with early-waves migrant women were used for the analysis in this work. I decided to use this data because it proved extremely interesting, and given the

[72] Any other way proved however unviable, as for example the few cases in which I randomly approached Italian migrants I met in public settings. Even though an initial contact was established and telephone numbers were exchanged there were no follow-ups.

qualitative nature of my analysis, it could be re-read and re-interpreted without needing further probing or questioning.

The second phase of research began in 2002 and ended in 2006, when I stopped interviewing, as I had reached theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and felt there was no more relevant data emerging. Between 2002 and 2006, I conducted 34 open-ended and unstructured interviews, which have been recorded and transcribed. The interviews are predominantly with Italian women but six Italian men have also been interviewed. From the interviews conducted in this second phase, I have selected and analysed 18 interviews with women only, which turned out to be most meaningful and revealing for this research. Out of these 18 interviews, one was a group interview, in which two women took part. In all, I have selected a total of 21 interviews with 29 women. Three analytical categories emerged from confronting and juxtaposing the women's personal narratives. Some women have also explicitly pointed out the existence of these different groupings.[73]

The first group is comprised of six *recent migrant women* who migrated to Ireland in the last ten-fifteen years, between 1990 and 2006:

- Alessia[74], interviewed in November 2003, in the gardens of Trinity College, aged between 30 and 35;
- Francesca, interviewed in April 2002, in her house in Dublin, aged between 25 and 30;
- Monia, interviewed in June 2002, in a coffee shop in Dublin, aged between 25 and 30;
- Michela, interviewed in April 2005, in her office in Dublin, aged between 35 and 40;
- Federica, interviewed in April 2006, in the IIIS office, aged between 30 and 35;
- Nadia, interviewed in November 2005, in her office, aged between 30 and 35.

All of these interviews were conducted in Italian, with the exception of one that began in Italian but continued in English. Four women experienced onward migration projects (second or subsequent migration away from the original

[73] For example Emilia, a 60 year old first generation migrant, spoke about the recent and early-waves Italian migrant women who 'have studied', they go to 'the Italian cultural institute', 'they teach Italian', or 'they know well English and find better jobs'. She talked about the early-waves migrant women like herself, as a completely a different 'circle of people'.

[74] The women's names presented here are not real names; they have all been changed to maintain the confidentiality of the participants.

location) and with they exception of one, they were all prepared to move elsewhere but did not wish to return back to Italy.

The second group is comprised of seven *long-settled migrants*, who migrated to Ireland between 1960 and1980:

- Valeria, interviewed in October 2004, in the office of the department of Sociology, aged between 40 and 45;
- Luana, interviewed in November 2003, in her work place, aged between 50 and 55;
- Jenny, interviewed in July 2003, in her office, aged between 50 and 55;
- Rita, interviewed in August 2003, at her home in co. Dublin, aged between 50 and 55;
- Mafalda, interviewed in June 2005, in her daughter's house, usually resident in Italy, aged between 60 and 65;
- Agata, interviewed in June 2005, in her house, aged between 40 and 45 ;
- Marisa, interviewed in December 2003, in her house in co. Wexford, aged between 50 and 55.

Two of these interviews were conducted in English and the rest in Italian. Four women in this group are professionals. They left Italy through independent projects of migration, initially arriving in Ireland to study or improve their English. They remained in Ireland and married Irish men. The other participants in the groups are part of the continuing wave of the Frosinone chain migrations, sustained by strong transnational networks that supported women's choices to migrate to Ireland (De Tona, 2005).

The third group is comprised of 16 early-waves of migrants whose families arrived in Ireland between the turn of the 20th century and the 1950s. Five are first generation migrants:

- Maria, interviewed in December 2003, in a coffee shop, aged between 55 and 60;
- Pierina, interviewed in July 2000, in a coffee shop, usually resident in France, aged between 50 and 55;
- Emilia, interviewed in July 2000, in a coffee shop, aged between 50 and 55;
- Celestina, interviewed in July 2000, in her sister-in-law's house, aged between 40 and 45;
- Sisina, interviewed in June 2000, in a her house, aged between 45 and 50.

Two women are the so-called 'one and a half generation' [75] that is children who are born abroad but grew up in a new country of residence:

- Leda, interviewed in July 2003, in her office, moved to Dublin at the age of 14, aged between 60 and 65;
- Silvia, interviewed in July 2000, in a her friends' house, usually resident in Belgium, aged between 45 and 50

Seven women are second-generation migrants:

- Anna, interviewed in July 2000, in a coffee shop, aged between 60 and 65;
- Nunzia, interviewed in July 2000, in her house, aged between 50 and 55;
- Marianna, interviewed in June 2000, in a her mother's house, aged between 35 and 40;
- Angela, interviewed in June 2000, in a her family home, aged between 15 and 20;
- Franca, interviewed in August 2003, in a coffee shop, aged between 35 and 40;
- Assunta, interviewed in August 2004, in a her house, aged between 70 and 75;
- Carmela, interviewed in December 2004, in her flat in Edinburgh, aged between 30 and 35.

Finally, two women are third-generation migrants:

- Mary, interviewed in April 2003, in her house, aged between 50 and 55;
- Sonia, interviewed in June 2000, in her sister-in-law's house, aged between 50 and 55;

Except for one interview conducted in Italian, all of the interviews with the third group were conducted in English, frequently intermixed with a dialect of the Frosinone province. The women felt more comfortable with English and often spoke only an Italian dialect which I had difficulties understanding. With the exception of three women, all the women were associated with the Frosinone chain migrations. Three women of this group were officially residing at the time of the interviews in countries other than Ireland and Italy, but had been previously living in Ireland and often returned for visits (in many cases at least once a year).

The Group Interviews

I did not plan to conduct group interviews, and all the groups have been spontaneous outcomes of women's own practices of socialisation. Group interviews

[75] In 'Agony of Exile,' Rumbaut (1991) describes the experiences of those children who are born abroad but who are educated and come of age in the United States, that is, of the one and a half generation.

have been particularly useful in my analysis of narrative practices, because they have allowed me to focus on group dynamics. I have conducted four group interviews, all with early-waves migrant women, of different ages and generations.

The *first group interview* was conducted in the summer 2000, in Sisina's family home, adjacent to her 'fish and chips' shop. The individual interview with Sisina was arranged through a snowballing technique, but when I arrived in her house, Sisina's husband, her sister-in-law, Sonia, two of her daughters, Angela and Marianna, and one of her sons were also present. They took part in the interview at different times. Sisina was born in Italy, her husband and his sister in Scotland. The couple met and married in Italy. In the afternoon a couple, who were their relatives, visited Sisina and her husband. They also participated in the interview. The woman of this second couple, Silvia, was born in Belgium, of Italian parents; her husband was born in France, of Italian parents coming from the same Frosinone province. Although, I recorded for three hours, the conversation lasted over an entire afternoon.

The *second group interview* was also conducted in the summer 2000 and involved three women, Emilia, Anna and Pierina, even though I had originally arranged to meet only Emilia. Emilia was born in Italy and moved to Dublin to marry her husband. Another woman, Anna, was born in Ireland. The third woman, Pierina, was born in France of parents with Italian origins but coming from America. She met her husband, who was born in Ireland, in Italy; her children were all born in Ireland, where they still lived but Pierina moved with her husband to France. I had arranged to meet Emilia after a Sunday mass to interview her, but when I arrived she was already in the company of Anna and Francesca and they had already arranged to go for a coffee. I was asked to join them. The interview recording lasted two and half hours.

A *third group interview* who took place in the summer 2000, involved two women, Celestina and Nunzia, who are sisters-in-law. Nunzia was born in Ireland, while Celestina was born in Italy and moved with her family to Ireland afterwards. I had originally arranged to meet Nunzia, but when I arrived she was already there with Celestina who had come to visit her. This interview was conducted in the back room of their 'fish and chips' shop and lasted two hours.

The *last group interview* was conducted in the summer 2005, and again, I had arranged to meet only one woman, Mafalda, who had been introduced to me by another woman who had participated to my research. Mafalda lived in Ireland between

1975 and 1995, but returned subsequently to Italy. At the time of the interview, she was in Ireland on 'a temporary basis', as she came to visit her three daughters who still live here. Mafalda's daughter, Agata, took part in the interview, which was held in Agata's flat situated above a 'fish and chips' shop.

The women who participated in my research are aged between 15 and 70. The have different education levels (ranging from three years of compulsory school to third level education), and different regional backgrounds (north, south, centre). Three mother-daughter pairs were involved in the interviews. I have described the lives of the women who participated in the group interviews in order to show how diaspora and transnationalism characterise their lives, which are scattered between different countries and rooted in the very process of journeying.

The interviews maps out a collection of composite stories and illustrate the contents of Italians' diasporic location. I presented the women's stories in chapters six, seven and eight in a series of extracts, whose fragmentary nature is aimed at recreating the flow of narratives as they were experienced during the interviews: occasional, emotional, contradictory, and disorienting, but also human, touching and revealing, because life after all 'is just about stories' (Angela). The accounts presented are not meant to represent an 'exclusive' and comprehensive depiction of the reality of all Italian migrant women. Rather, they demonstrate the heterogeneity of women's identities and experiences, opening a window on the complex realities of Italian migrant women in Ireland.

Recorded Interviews- Transcribing – Translating

The interviews lasted between one and three hours, with an approximate average one hour of recording and were transcribed in full by myself. Transcribing was a very time-consuming process, but also one that gave me space to engage with the process of deconstruction and interpretation of the narratives that emerged from the interviews. I sat alone in front of a computer for hours, re-living the interviews, re-listening to the women's voices, re-imagining the contexts. This was an invaluable analytical phase. Going over the interview transcripts, I almost seemed to remember at times parts of the sentences by heart; I could hear the inflexion of the women's voices, the pauses, and the non-verbal communication that was left out of the transcriptions. Transcribing in fact left out much of what went on during the interviews: 'how the interview felt, the unspoken meanings shared through gesture, the relationship that developed

between myself and the interviewee' (Birch, 1998: 178). As such, I was left with a text that retained a pale shadow of the intensity of the lived experience. However, by transcribing each interview word by word, much of the non-verbal communication was impressed upon me.

One of the main issues was to decide the degree of intervention into the interview transcript that I needed to undertake for the final text of this thesis. Readability did impose a limit, as the unedited spoken word is not the same as a readable text. The unedited transcription of the interviews was at times repetitive and fragmentary, so I have often intervened at the level of editing the language to make the text readable.

I had initially planned a possible intervention by the research participants themselves, hoping they would read and edit their interview transcripts, but this turned out to be an unviable option. I had placed too much assumption that the interviewees would want to collaborate in the research process (Shields and Divan, 1993). Of the 29 women of my research, only two women agreed to read and edit the transcript I send them. These two women noted they felt ashamed about the grammatical mistakes in their transcripts and suggested ways of tidying up the language. Therefore, I decided that 'tiding up' the other women's transcripts was also a good idea, even though I did not intend to homogenise 'representations of women's voices' or comply with the academic establishment that negates everyday language (Standing, 1998: 191). I was not interested in discourse analysis per se and I did it also out of intellectual honesty: I saw the whole text of this thesis as the product of a continuous (often tedious) process of editing and re-editing. I edited the women's words as I edited my own. I agree with Standing's claim that:

> We do not speak in grammatically correct sentences. We speak in a flowing, haphazard way. But to put the women's voices in the written text in this way looked "wrong". It jarred against the complex sentence structure of my academic writing... to put the two, side by side, seemed to reinforce the unequal power relations between us (Standing, 1998: 190)

For these reasons, I also decided to standardise and adapt the translations from Italian and Italian dialects into English, without specifying when each language was used. Nonetheless, I have resisted completely polishing the transcripts and translations, because I find conversational registers expressive and effective. Perhaps, because of my own daily battles of expressing myself in a second language, I am

sensitive to how language is an 'invisible force that shapes oral texts' (Etters-Lewis, 1991: 44) and how certain conversational variations have an enriching function beyond strictly linguistic meanings.

The issues of language and its usages and variation are interesting but they lie outside the scope of my research. However, I can contribute here by noting how the migrant women in my research emphasised the relevance of 'speaking the language properly', both English and Italian, as a medium of transmitting a sense of belonging, status and affiliation. Closeness between the women and me was also negotiated on a common realisation that the Italian language had often become for us 'a territory known and felt and lived through from the inside and yet- since it also become remote- full of surprises and exiting discoveries' (Bauman, 2005: 205), as I explain in chapter eight. In the next section, I look at the participant observation and document analysis that informed the rest of my ethnographic work.

Ethnographic Work

Ethnography and observational research in general have been an important part of my research, even though they have presented several dilemmas. In the first fieldwork stage in 2000, as a recent migrant to Ireland with no strong connections and networks in Ireland, I thought that Italian institutions such as the Italian Embassy, *Club Italiano* and Italian restaurants might be a rich source of information. I worked as a waiter in a few Italian restaurants for several weeks. However, I could not find anything of the 'Italian' familiarity I was used to. The cooks in the kitchen were not Italian, and the waitress were mostly young immigrant men from Eastern European Countries, scarcely fluent in Italian, who enjoyed letting the customers believe that they were 'real Italians'. At the same time, being ascribed as an Italian in a setting where Italianness was consumed both as a food and as a cultural product, gave me a feeling of belonging and affiliation that reassured and protected me. In the same year, I was invited to an activity of the *Club Italiano*, a barbeque on the organisation's premises in Dublin's outskirts. At the time of my visit, the club had already lost the relevance it used to have in the 1970s and in the 1980s, because of the differentiation of the recent waves of Italian immigration to Ireland and the loss of interest by second and third generation migrants. During my visit to *Club Italiano*, despite the warm welcome I received, I was quite soon struck by a sense of discomfort in participating in a

different Italianness than the one I had imagined, made of habits and attitudes of which at times I felt even impatient.

In this first stage of fieldwork, I felt disoriented by contradictory feelings about *Italianness* and its meanings. I became aware that an understanding of my research participants' Italianness could not be achieved without considering where mine was submerged. Italianness was a problematic and contested notion, albeit one which had the power to define who I was. I had to rethink its meanings in my own life with all its wrong assumptions, and learn to adjust to a fluid and imperfect sense of belonging. This was, at a very personal level, an enriching but disturbing process.

During the second stage of field work, starting in 2002, I decided to continue to attend and monitor the social settings of Italian migrants in Ireland (religious ceremonies, public meetings, festivals), in order to understand the social worlds of the women I interviewed. I wanted to learn how they were engaged in experiencing, perceiving and acting as *Italian migrant women* in Ireland. But I gradually decided to be less proactive, obtrusive and insistent about meeting 'Italians' in their organisations and be part of their activities. This was first of all an ethical decision, starting from how I felt less exposed to personal discomfort and distress. Secondly, I didn't want to force Italianness 'to happen' around me. I believed that I was inserted far enough into the circles of Italians in Ireland, to let experiences flow and just follow where they were leading me (for example when I was invited to parties, ceremonies, events and so on).

I decided however, to continue to do observational research for two reasons. First, observational research allowed me to access data and information, enabling a reconstruction of the history of Italian migration to Ireland. Secondly, it helped me interpret the women's interviews. Participant observations were carried out in different settings. Between 2002 and 2006, I was in regular contact with the organisers of the Italian cultural scene in Ireland, especially the Italian journalists, Enzi Farinella and Concetto La Malfa, and a Dublin poet of Italian descent, Vincent Caprani. Meeting them regularly over several months gave me an insight into the activities and events of Italians in Ireland. Thanks to their connections, I was also put in contact with women in the Italian migrants' organisations.

Meanwhile, I continued to attend the Italian mass on Sundays in St Kevin's Oratory in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral. For the Italian migrant groups, this mass represents a notable event as different groupings cement their unity while participating in it. I had

initially started to go to the Italian mass during the first phase of fieldwork, and I was soon involved in a network of relationships with the women who regularly attended the mass. These relations continued during the second phase of fieldwork. Going to mass was guided by a mixture of motivations, which even at this point while 'I am here' writing this PhD text, I find difficult to disentangle. I started to go as a 'student' who wanted to learn about Italian migrants in Ireland, but I emerged as a 'migrant', experiencing familiarity and a sense of belonging beyond the religious practices of the mass. [76]

My status as an academic researcher gave me access to several other Italian institutions. I was well received in the Italian Embassy in Ireland and in the *Comites* (Comitato degli Italiani all'estero- Italian Committee of Italians Abroad), and because of these connections I have been invited to official celebrations of Italian culture in Ireland (*Festa Italiana*, June 2004; *Festa Italiana*, June 2005; *Pinocchio in Ireland*, October 2004). I talked with the organisers and founders of different Italian associations in Ireland (the Irish Italian Business Association, 2004; *Club di Dublino*, 2004; the *Accademia Italiana della Cucina*, 2005; the *Istituto di Cultura Italiana*, 2005; the president of *Irlandiani.com*, 2006). From spring 2004 to autumn 2005, I became professionally involved with the Comites, for which I did administrative work. From autumn 2004 to summer 2006 I worked for the Italian Cultural institute as an Italian teacher.

During my encounters in these institutions, my observations have remained unfocused and general in scope. I kept a diary with ethnographic and theoretical reflections. I recorded facts and dates of gatherings and events in which I participated. I also noted descriptions of the settings during the interviews. From my previous

[76] I do not share the belief systems of the Catholic mass and don't think ofmyself as Catholic, even though part of my family is Catholic and the life of the village in which I grew up is marked by Catholic practices. Because of this personal connection/rejection with Catholicism, I experienced great discomfort when attending the mass and I am still not sure how to disentangle the overlapping motivations that led me there. In part, going to the Italian mass was a useful empirical exercise that gave me a good insight into the experiences of Italian migrants, without necessarily breaching the privacy of their religious feelings. In part, I felt a sense of familiarity during the mass that reassured me at a very personal level. As for Fortier during her research on Italians in England, it seems as if my interest in the mass was 'partly motivated by the necessity to return to my past in my own process of becoming; a kind of "detour through the past"' (Fortier, 2000: 9). The mass became a spiritual refuge that I learnt to appreciate with time and with the consolidation of my migrant subjectivity. I recall one instance, in the winter of 2004, when I felt particularly homesick, and hearing a hymn that used to be sung in the church of my village in Italy brought back many memories of the past. I burst into tears, to the bewildered surprise of all the mass attendees. It was not the religion that touches me so deeply, but rather the meanings that religion acquired through my migratory experience.

experience with the master's dissertation, I anticipated that many significant elements in the interactions would not be included in the transcriptions, and I decided to keep a record of them in the field diary. Many of my recordings were reflexive observations of my own participation and involvement during the interviews and during several migrants' gatherings and activities.

Keeping the field diary was an important exercise. I was interested in recording how my own 'cultural equipment' allowed me to understand the migrants' 'experiences in action' and record the 'cultural universe' they occupy (May, 1997: 138). Even though I decided not to analyse in depth the notes about my observations, I re-read my notes about the interviews when interpreting the women's narratives. Similarly, when writing about particular issues, (such as the invisibility of women in the hegemonic representations of Italians, and the role of women in the migrants' organisations, see chapter four), I also looked at the relevant notes in the field diary. Re-reading the field diary, one main element emerged about my ethnographic work: the 'field' had been muddied. No neat boundaries existed between my participation in the field and my life outside it and events often took their course without notice. What was I often left with was chaotic and unbridled occurrences (like life itself).

Documentary Research: Media Clippings And Literature

Document analysis was another integral part of my research, which, as I have demonstrated in chapter four, allowed me to reconstruct the contemporary history of Italian migration to Ireland. Document analysis also allowed me to make comparisons between my interpretations of the women's interviews and the representations of Italian migration in Ireland.

In 2003 and 2005, I had access to the Italian Embassy lists, which record demographic data about the population of Italian citizens resident in Ireland. However, because of privacy regulations, it was possible to consult the lists only through the mediation of the Embassy's employees. I could gain knowledge only of limited demographic details of the listed population, given that the filing software in use did not allow cross-variable analysis. From 2002, I collected and maintained an archive of journals and press clippings that referred to Italian migrants in Ireland. I monitored on a regular basis the Italian migrant newsletter *Italia Stampa*, *The Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent*, mostly in their on-line versions. These articles have been ordered

chronologically and helped me to keep up to date with events. They have allowed me to consider the hegemonic representations of Italianness in the Irish discourses.

To validate my analysis of these representations, I have drawn from contemporary Irish literary sources and I have examined several novels and poems that include narratives about Italians. My choice of literary material is substantiated by a critical theory approach that proposes to read literary texts as social texts, that is as empirical materials that articulate and reveal complex arguments about various social categories in contemporary life (Denzin, 1994). The literary documents are relevant in terms of the cultural context they reveal, because they tell us a great deal about Irish society in which they have been written and read.

As I have demonstrated in chapter four, I have employed an 'illustrative method', as this data has been selected in relation to its ability to illustrate general themes that have emerged in my research and which supported the use of specific examples (May, 1997). I have examined the representations of Italian migrants in Ireland as specific discursive strategies to point out the 'area of negotiation between classification, positioning and experience and as the site of mediation, challenge and conflict' (Skeggs, 2004: 42). Representations show how the group's cultural capital can be converted into symbolic power through legitimisation (Skeggs, 2004).

Field Tactics

Despite the very human and personal involvement that shaped the interviews, fieldwork was far from being an innocent and apolitical process. 'Confessing' about these issues is for me part of transparent and ethical research. I often acted 'naïvely', in order to probe and extrapolate further meanings, stories, and openness from the women who participated in the research. Role-play was an important field strategy, performed in order to entice trust and confidence. It would imply a show of familiarity and understanding with the gender normativities disclosed, even though I would not fully ascribe to them myself. For me, this strategy was far from deceitful. Would I have ever been made part of such intimate meanings of their lives, had I not been doing this research? Was the research a good enough reason? Performing compliance was a way of showing gratitude and respect for the lives of the women, whose meanings I had come to occupy from 'nowhere' because of my research interest.

I found it easier to relate to the recent migrant women, whose age, history of migration, educational and occupational backgrounds more closely resembled my own, without having to role-play to the extent I felt I had to with the early-waves migrant women. However, with the recent and long settled migrant women too, I had to present myself in ways that could gain their trust and confidence. I often found that camouflaging the real research questions helped reduce the women's self-consciousness and perceived threat of my research (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998: 60). I generally started the interview by explaining my research interests, but I avoided going too deeply into the theories of diasporicity, deconstructing identities, etc, a strategy that failed during the early fieldwork experience. I realised that this practice was counterproductive as the women felt intimidated and threatened.

During the interviews, I encouraged research participants to formulate their topics, listening without interrupting, and probing for deeper contents. After having explained the confidentiality issue and the ethic parameters of my research (see below), I would ask the women to tell me freely about themselves, especially in relation to their lives in Ireland and their history of migration. During the first stage of the interview process, I never reacted and I kept probing and asking, 'What do you mean by that?' Towards the end of the interview however, I generally encouraged a bit more confrontation, especially in relation to the contradictions that arose from the women's narratives. The interviews were as participant-led as possible, in terms of taking directions from the women for probing the issues they raised in greater depth.

I was often asked by the women to give my opinion, and to speak about myself and my status. Even though at first I was reluctant to do so, in the course of the interviews, I contributed with my personal narratives towards the construction of our conversations. Narrative sharing was a means to achieve equality between my research participants and me, representing also a healthy exercise of self-criticism and of continual testing of my subjectivity in relation to that of the other person (Mernissi, 1984). When the women wanted to 'learn' about me, I opened up and started to tell about myself. At times I also felt that our roles were reversed and I was the one who was interviewed. In such moments, I felt both embarrassed and relieved.

One main guideline I followed during the interviewing process was to pay attention to cultivating relationships of equality and maintaining an atmosphere in which the personality of the person being interviewed could be freely expressed. With

time, I learned how to give up 'control' even at the cost engaging in discourses that produced a lot of irrelevant texts, details and notions that have been left out of this work. The majority of interviews took place in the women's own environments, either at home or in their working places. In a few cases, we met in coffee shops and only in two cases in my office. I let the women choose where they preferred to meet, to give them control of the setting as well as a choice what to say. Despite all my efforts, however, equality was not easily achieved, especially at this level where *I-the researcher* remain the author of this text.

Field Ethics

While 'being there' my main concern was the respect of my research participants and I designed a research model that ensured research participants' confidentiality and anonymity. I explained to each woman before the interviews that their names and their biographical details would be changed to maintain confidentiality. All the women agreed with this condition. I had to adjust the practice of 'informed consent', because the format of a written form to be signed was too alien to the cultural background of most of the women of my research and inspired apprehension and scepticism. I chose to work with a 'verbal' informed consent that involved that research participants' understanding of the general purpose of my research project before they agreed to take part in it.

Despite being aware of the 'messy world of empirical work' (Bettie, 2003), I aimed at controlling the outcomes of my research as best as I could. I was aware that at some levels however, I would not be able to do so. For example, through the very act of being asked, the women were exposed to a process of consciousness raising and emotional catharsis (Punch, 1994; Reinharz, 1992) that I could not control. Many of the women were surprised to be asked questions about themselves and about the 'ordinary' details of their lives.

I offered to send all the women a copy of their interview transcripts, so that they could delete or amend what they said before I started my analysis. I wanted the women to have the ultimate control over their interview texts. The women were not interested and did not see the need to re-read their interview transcripts because, as they put it, they 'trusted me', they had 'nothing to hide', or they were too busy. It became evident

that the women did not want to engage in participating reflexively in my research, because they wanted to remain uncommitted to the research.

Part of my original plan was to ask the women to participate in different follow-up sessions. I initially proposed to organise a forum or a focus group interview with a number of the women, to discuss the issues raised during the interviews. I had also envisaged sending a copy of my thesis to each of the participants, in order to organise a workshop to discuss the findings of my thesis. This I thought would allow the women a degree of participation in the outcomes of the research. However, the women manifested no interest in these activities, apart from three women who were also academics.

At the end of 2003, it was evident that my plans to do ethical research through participatory research could not be fully implemented as I had initially hoped (see Shields and Dervan, 1993). On reflection, I think it would have been more profitable to interview only the women who were willing to take part in the follow-up stages of the interview, but at that point it was too late for that. So I decided to rescale my plans and to create a space during the interview itself for the women to reflect on the interview practice and the issues which arose during our conversations. At the end of each interview, I asked the women about their opinion on the interview we had just conducted. In this way, the women could exercise some power and control over what they said and also over me and my practice. All the women were satisfied with their interview and explained that the process had helped them to develop new insights and understandings of their own experiences (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998: 98). They generally felt empowered during the process of being interviewed. For example, Carmela a second-generation 35 years old migrant woman explained that:

> When mum said to me, I got this friend who is interested in interviewing you, I was oh! Because I was never interviewed before, but this for me isn't like an interview, is a chat, isn't it? But I felt, why would anybody want to interview me? I don't have really anything interesting or exciting to say... And mum was, she is lovely and she just wants to chat, but then we were kind of talking, because when we started emailing I was in Africa, so we were talking a lot about Africa and stuff, and I said she can't be bad if she wants to talk about Africa (we laugh). But I feel fine having you here talking and I have talked about stuff, that I thought perhaps we weren't going to talk about... but it's fine.

I was able to construct a degree of confidence with Carmela, before interviewing her, because we have been involved in email correspondence where we discussed my research and ourselves. I think this reassured her about my intentions before I went to Edinburgh to interview her and allowed her to open up to deeper meanings about her experiences in Dublin. In another case, with a recent migrant, with whom I had already constructed a relation of friendship before the interview, I was able to assess my conduct during the interview.

> Nadia: What did I feel during the interview? I thought you would have asked me more questions. But I am happy you didn't; in this way, I said what I wanted to say.
> Carla: Is it different from our normal conversations?
> Nadia: Yes because I felt more self-conscious and more attentive. I thought, this is important, you are recording it. I tried to be serious and concentrated.
> Carla: Are you happy to participate in my research?
> Nadia: Yes, very much so. Because I have a chance to contribute by saying what I think. It is important to express one's own opinion, and it is important that someone listens to it... I thought I would have felt more uncomfortable if you would have asked more... specific personal questions, but essentially you let me say what I wanted. For example you didn't ask about my finances, what kind of relation I have with drinking here, or going to the pub or how much I earn.

In other cases, I was thanked for having 'given a voice' to the women to express their ideas and life stories (Michela, Monia). Because I was initially disappointed by the women's low level of interest in participating in a follow-up, these accounts helped me not only to support my work, but also to validate and legitimise the research itself.

To conclude, in general my fieldwork experience yielded much insight and development and was characterised by mixed feelings of satisfaction and discomfort, fear, worries but also sincere warm feelings of human connection. To guide myself through the messy world of empirical work, I found it very important to discuss my experiences with my supervisor and with my colleagues in the department. This allowed me a space not only to unwind my frustrations but also to put under scrutiny my practices and legitimise them within the field of expertise. Early during the fieldwork, I decided that one important rule for me would be to follow my instincts. As Anderson and Jack stated, I decided to trust my own 'hunches, feelings, responses' that arose not only through listening to others' but also through my personal discomfort as 'a personal alarm bell alerting [me] to a discrepancy between what is being said and what the woman is feeling' (Anderson and Jack, 1991: 24).

BEING HERE: THE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF DATA, OF FIELDWORK, AND OF MY REPRESENTATION OF IT

'Being here' is literally this moment of me and my computer, during the very act of creation of this text. Here, the practical research world is distanced, and the 'last process of analysis and writing up becomes located primarily within my own private working space. The stories that I have gathered from others in the field now become my own' (Birch, 1998: 173). I use this space of 'being here' to trace the meeting of theory, data and self in the various phases of the research.

'Here' is first of all a cathartic process: for many years the women of my research have been 'living inside my head' (Kleinmann and Copp, 1994: 8), talking to me, telling me their stories, making me think about what they said. Even when I was outside the field, I never moved away from the intense experience that is usually involved in fieldwork. The narratives the women have revealed to me have been in part my stories too. They have become mine during the six years of the research process, when I *became* a diasporic subject as well, *also* because of the stories of diaspora I was told. In a way, I have been the field, as I observed, scrutinised, dissected my emotions and my experiences of migration, in order to empathise, interpret and connect to the women of my research. Talking to the migrant women, learning about diaspora and their experiences, studying the theories that concern them, could but turn back to me, making me acutely aware of what I was feeling and going through in my *own* experience of migration. Had I not been involved in this research, I believe, I would have become a diasporic subject with not so intense, and often painful, lucidity.

Working on the final draft of this thesis, I experienced a liberating, albeit strenuous, sense that I finally let go of the women's voices inside my head (and of the continuous vivisection of my own feelings). 'Here', I finally transformed the women's voices into a text, in which I hope the women are now able to talk to whoever will read it. In this sense, writing this text enabled me to build a bridge between the fieldwork and my representation and embodiment of it.

'Being here' has been an isolating and intense process that is not independent of the moment of being 'there', as I claimed above. The processes of data collection and data analysis have interacted dynamically with each other throughout my research and

have been in constant correlation with my own migrant self. These processes have also influenced my theoretical directions, allowing me to re-adjust the notion of diaspora that proved analytically useful in the context of my research data (diaspora as the social condition of being in migration).

As a general guideline, I have been inspired during the whole interpretive stage by an attitude of *opening* rather than *closure*, that did not limit the process of analysis to rigid ideological frames set up while 'being there'. In this way, I was able to account for the incongruence and not-neatly-fitting course of real life experiences. Moreover, I believe in the role that emotions play in social behaviour, and thus in social research, that cannot be conducted without recognition of their influence (Kleinmann and Copp, 1994; Kirkwood. 1993). Analysing the way in which emotions have been shared, exchanged and disclosed during the fieldwork allowed me to recognise the modalities through which identification has been negotiated across the intersection of ethnicity, age, gender and class affiliation in determined contexts. Thus, I think of this phase of analysis as one of 'understanding' rather than 'knowing' or 'controlling'.

Insiderness

I set out my PhD journey keeping reflexive awareness of my involvement in the research process. One of the questions that interested me most was whether my social positioning as an Italian migrant woman among Italian migrant women provided a privileged access to these women's realities. My 'supposed' insider positionality has been the main motivator in the pursuit of this research. I entered the research field thinking of myself as 'one of them', believing that my position as an Italian migrant woman researcher would have validated and legitimised not only my authority, but ultimately the purpose of the research itself. I had misplaced expectations that by sharing a common experience of foreignness and a 'similar' cultural background with my participants, I could have bypassed the 'ambiguities and [deceptive] motives of those from the majority culture, who decide they want to write about ethnic minorities' (Goldstone, 2000: 380).

I expected that my supposed insiderness would have allowed more equality with my research participants, on the principle that participation is possible where there is 'least social distance' and where 'the interviewer and the interviewee share

membership of the same minority group' (Oakley, 1981: 55). But while being 'there', my expectations proved fundamentally wrong as discomfort and anguish emerged together with the sense of pleasure and familiarity that accompanied meeting Italian people and their stories in Ireland. Insiderness was not a sufficient condition for participation and equality, because it was based on wrong assumptions: social proximity can only work 'provided that the researcher subjectivity is a self-conscious and reflexive process' (Oakley, 1992: 344).

During the first stage of my fieldwork for my master's dissertation in 2000, and later during my fieldwork in 2002-2006, it became evident that even though it still mattered whether I was an 'insider' researcher, whether I was from an Italian, female, migrant background or not, this did not matter in an unproblematic, linear way. My positionality both as insider and outsider shaped my ethnography, my experiences and ultimately the writing of this text.

The researcher's insiderness and outsiderness are, like all identities, contested categories. They are not fixed or static positions, rather they manifest as ever-shifting and multiple social locations negotiated in particular everyday interactions (Naples, 2003, 1997; Stanfield, 1994). Different social categories intersect and create degrees of proximity and closeness. To an extent one can be an outsider and an insider of any group; what matters is how one can actively use his/her experiences to dialectically recognise, accept and construct our positionalities. Sharing experiences is a key issue in the discourse of insider positionality as a researcher, because as researchers:

> We derive different insights from our own experience, from being what you research. There are other insights to be derived and you are not excluding them, but they are different insights. ... Lots of people don't relate to their experience as migrants, because they don't need to locate the research in that. (Lentin in De Tona, 2006: 16)

Experiences are part of the social and cultural capital that *I-the researcher* brought to the field, product not of a social positioning *per se*, but of *social practices* (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002: 318; my emphasis), of negotiations, choices, performativity shaped around common past experiences but also common aspirations of the present. Anne-Marie Fortier showed, for example, how she could negotiate insiderness with Italian migrants in the UK on the basis of her experience as a migrant

from Canada. Irrespective of her nationality, she became an 'insider' and identified herself with the group she researched (Fortier, 2000).

I have negotiated closeness, degrees of acquaintanceship and trust *in the field* with my research participants in a similar way, not on the basis of an essential identity (Italianness) but rather because of layered and multiple experiences of migration (being foreign, in need of support and recognition, etc). My positionality did not provide a *privileged* access to a liberating insight, rather it allowed for a *different* insight (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis. 2002; 317 original emphasis), one that resonated with my own experiences as a migrant, a woman and an Italian subject in Ireland. My specific and *different* experiences were expressed at two levels.

At one level, I felt I could connect to my participants because of the relevance of our common experiences of diaspora, and the urgent, bewildering and exhilarating course migration took in our lives. As a migrant woman, I was well positioned 'to know, when and where universalising discourses' ignored us, turning us into blind spots, excluding or discriminating against us (Erel et al, 2003: 19). In this sense, the commonality of our diasporic experiences was constructed *in the very process* of researching it. This 'diasporic belonging' and the narratives I included in this text have made me not merely an insider, but a subaltern diasporic voice. As Brah puts it, my positionality was 'not merely an issue about my individual, personal sensitivities. It felt real, became part of my reality', precisely because its meanings reiterated a marginal collective subject through me (Brah, 1996: 1). This diasporic positionality was enhanced and intensified, because of the space I was given to reflect and express it while meeting the women of my research. If I had had fewer opportunities to think about diaspora, it is likely that I would have become less aware of its influence in my life. Thus, I became a 'collector of dislocation and relocation stories, easily able to turn both close and casual encounters into an opportunity to collect dramas of displacement and homemaking' (Knowles, 2003: 142).

At another level however, despite my feelings of connection, I was also aware of the many differences that distanced me from my research participants. For example, from time to time I felt anguish over the banality of what the women said, making me acutely aware of the differences in terms of education and class backgrounds.

However, the awareness of this discomfort was also source of knowledge[77]. It made me realise that Italianness is not an essential or homogenous identity and that the concept of insiderness needs to be deconstructed.

Because of the 'movement and change in the nature of the relationships' between the research participants and myself as a researcher (Riessman, 2005: 486), my positionality can be better conceptualised as a 'threshold of sameness and difference' (Fortier, 2000: 8). I could be simultaneously included as 'same' and excluded as 'different' because of my age, my background, and my history of migration. We interactively constructed diasporicity that exceeded Italianness understood as a compound of language, a way of eating and behaving, historical and geographical representationability of the Italian landscape. In diaspora, 'being Italian' was for 'us' an act of will and inclination in recognising, sharing and negotiating Italianness in all its diversity as our existential heritage. We used Italianness as a signifier and a *pre-text* made of many distinctive texts and narratives, which connected the different layers of our identities, such as gender, age and class background. Our Italianness was concocted upon feelings and imagination, upon an unconscious and un-expressed need to belong and to recognise each other as equal. Identification as Italians developed as a process, in the sense that we were creating Italianness in the very process of defining it. In trying to understand these different feelings of belonging, I had to reinvent and give new meanings to the elements that I had taken for granted in my *Italianness,* which I was not particularly aware of. I conceived of them as *diasporic Italianness*. While doing so I also became aware of the role of narratives in expressing and constructing fluid belonging.

Narratives Analysis

From the very beginning of my research, I was struck by the many stories which I was introduced to during the interviews. I was frequently puzzled by the women's narratives, and initially felt upset that they were not really answering my questions

[77] With time, I have learnt to recognise and accept these feelings but the differences between my research participants and me continued to have a weight not only on how we managed or didn't manage to connect, but also on how we experienced marginalisation as migrants and on how power relations were constructed in the field. Because of my affiliation to an academic institution, I had access to a range of institutional resources that were largely inaccessible to my participants. If as a migrant and as a woman, I have been close to the subaltern status of my research participants, I was also part of the hegemony, 'implicated in the circuits of symbolic violence' (Skeggs, 2004: 130). With my very presence, I also contributed to inflicting class injury (Bettie, 2003) on some of the women of my research (see chapter eight).

about issues of gender and migration (De Tona, 2004). The women narrated anecdotal accounts of their lives, for example the first washing machine brought to their house in the 1960s, or the way they used to wash children's nappies before that. I considered these stories colourful and entertaining but not revealing 'enough'. What were they telling me about the lives of migrant women? How was I meant to interpret these stories?

I began by questioning my own reaction to the women's narratives during the interview process. I realised that I often joined in the conversation, telling my own stories and memories in turn, for example, about the way my grandmother used to wash clothes by hand. I would add something to their stories, making myself part of them or simply showing I understood what they meant and represented. I was also aware of the contradictions expressed in the women's narratives and at times, I felt annoyed at finding so much incongruence and inconsistency. However, I soon realised that the act of narrating had a meaning of its own, beyond the contents of the narrative itself. Narrating was a means of connecting and at the same time the terrain of our connection.

I realised that I could present myself through my narratives, especially in relation to my gender role, in a way that I had rejected when I was in Italy, but that I was expected to present in the context of the interview. I quickly complied with the classed and gendered expectations, in what I conceived of as an act of respect. I felt in debt towards the generosity and helpfulness of my participants. Role-playing and showing some sort of similarity felt as a way of standing 'equally' beside them, rather than looming over them as a distant researcher 'who asks and judges'.

I cannot say that I did manage to erase the differences between the women I talked with and myself as a researcher. I certainly was not 'one of them', as I still remain the researcher who 'speaks about them'. I didn't ask them how they perceived the inclusion of my narratives, and cannot say what they thought of them. However, I believe that my narrative participation has allowed me to empathise with the women, and made me feel more capable of mediating my different positionalities of 'researcher' and 'Italian migrant woman' during the interview process. For example, I noticed that after telling about myself, the women spoke more openly and eagerly about their own lives.

The centrality of narratives and narrativity was directly considered by the women of my research. The women spoke about their story-telling practices, which are at the core of their social action and social capital. As I illustrate in the next chapters, the women's narratives collect annals of memories for their families, connect women together and construct fluid belonging, allowing them to forge new roles within their families. Grounded on my ethnographic observations, a narrative approach emerged as a useful analytical tool.

I drew from the work of a number of feminist theorists (Harding, 1998, 1987; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Personal Narratives Group, 1989) who argued that personal narratives reveal the dynamics of power relations and show the strategies that women perform to challenge hegemonic norms. Narratives are *informative* because they tell us about our experiences and about the social structures in which we are implicated, giving preference to those who make history, rather than those who have history imposed on them (Skeggs, 2004: 42). However, narratives are also *performative*, because they allow spaces for women's counter-agency, as women are usually positioned in socially and culturally marginalised roles (Jedlowski. 2000; Harding, 1998; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; see below and chapter eight).

Narratives are inherently implicated in the processes of formation of migrant identities and belongings and provide access to the complex and multilayered meanings of relocation and dislocation (Knowles, 2003). The analysis of migrants' narratives reveal the complexity of 'shifting and locally articulated identities' and of the 'contrasting meanings and interpretative complexity of migratory experiences' (Riessman, 2003: 23), as well as the complexity of the ongoing process of making choices that migrants face (Brettell, 2003).[78]

In the last two decades there has been a major shift in the social sciences that supported the emphasis on auto-biography and personal narratives, starting from the interpretation of the interview as a discursive and narrative accomplishment. According to Riessman, we can also talk about 'narrative interviewing', which involves the participant and the researcher engaging in an evolving conversation, where 'rules of everyday conversation apply and produce collaboratively narratives and meanings' in 'a story world' (Riessman, 2004: 709).

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[78] Classical theorists have already paved the way for narrative analysis. For example, Mills (in his work on the Sociological Imagination, 1959; in Stanley, 2005: 5.2) called for an exploration of the intersection of 'personal troubles' of a social milieu with 'public issues' at a structural level, by focusing on the intersection of biography, history and social structure.

I expose my data to a narrative analysis, by which I mean the exploration of 'the temporal and casual associations and meanings that connect several stories' (Riessman, 2004: 709). Following Smith and Sparkes (2002), narrative analysis also involves raising questions about why a story is told in certain ways (the *hows*), and about what the narratives' plots and contents convey (the *whats*). This perspective resonates with my own understanding of the double function of narratives: narratives that *inform* and *express* meanings, and narratives that *perform* and *create* meanings (about Italianness). In other words, I distinguish between two levels of narrative analysis: the *analysis of informative narratives* (what they say; see chapters six and seven), and the *analysis of performative narratives* (what the narrative does or how; chapter eight)

At the *informative* level, the data generated by the interviews can be analysed for the similarities and differences of the themes and contents contained in the narratives (Smith and Sparkes, 2002; Lieblich at al. 1998; Riessman, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988). The strength of this thematic analysis is that it develops general knowledge about the main themes recounted by the research participants. However, this approach may lead to an over-determination of the themes identified –which may involve a constant effort to erase the differences of the stories that are told and the contradictions and tensions contained within them (Smith and Sparkes, 2002).

At the performative level, narrative analysis can focus on the 'hows' of narratives (Sparkes, 1999: 21), or the '*narrative practices in action*' (Smith and Sparkes, 2002: 167; my emphasis), what I choose to call the *analysis of the performative/transformative narratives*. After Bourdieu (1985) and Butler (1997), performative implies that knowledge produces the effects it names and utterances are both productive and constitutive of action (see Skeggs, 2004: 45). The analytical focus at this second level of analysis is on the social role of the narratives in conveying coherence of experiences, constructing occasioned and circumstantially formed meanings, which are influenced by the cultural conventions of telling (Smith and Sparkes, 2002: 167). Adapting this analytical paradigm for my research, also allowed me to grasp the mechanisms by which migrant women support each other and connect transnationally (see chapter eight).

Validity And Coherence

Personal narratives are not fixed but, as I argue in the next chapters, changing and fluid, which can be dismantled and reassembled differently each time. This presented me with two questions: what kind of validity does narrative analysis produce? How can 'truth' be stated?

I agree with Birch, that sitting down 'here' at a clean desk, searching for coherence, I need to keep in mind that life is complex and disordered (Birch, 1998). As Tim May (1997) also claims, in the social sciences we deal with phenomena that people are already interpreting and filling with meanings and values, therefore researchers cannot simply follow the positivistic approaches of natural scientists. The values attached to the research being carried out must depend on the objectives of the research project and on the data collection and data analysis process. Like most qualitative research, I don't believe that there is only one 'version of the way things are' (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998 :53). Even though to some extent every life story contains a large proportion of factual data which can be verified (Riessman, 2002), there is not only one 'objective' truth that can be discovered through narrative analysis. Just as narratives can be re-told in different ways, I can re-tell this story of my analysis and interpretation of the women's experiences differently. The point is to account for how I chose to tell it the way I did.

The validity of my research methodology has been established because narrative analysis can uncover the 'objective' situated, contextual and interactive construction of meanings, and as in my study, it has revealed the complex nature of belonging and identity. Ultimately women's personal narratives 'and the knowledge they impart are as true as our lives: messy, complex, and often quite incredible' (Lentin, 2000b: 262). My study endorse Personal Narratives Group's disdain 'for reductionist approaches that would have us determine the "truth" of a woman's words solely in terms of their exact factual occurrence, the representativeness of social circumstances, or the reliability of her memory when it was tested against "objective" sources' (Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 14). The core of my argument lies in the very non-existence of a defined 'truth' in narrative acts. It is this quality of narratives as fluid, hermeneutic, adaptable tools, conditioned to a subjective reformulation, which allows individual and collective diasporic identities to be adaptive and fluid too (as I argue in chapter eight). We can also focus on what narratives 'do' at an emotional level as well

as at the level of actual social relations, where these emotions are lived, because their truth value does not reside in an objective truth, but on the communicability and credibility of the teller and the listener.

However, in order to triangulate and validate my research, and to do justice to both the 'complexity of [migrant women's] experiences and of the stories they tell' (Smith and Sparkes, 2002: 145), my research has incorporated multiple forms of analysis.[79] To this end, I have chosen to conduct observational research and documentary analysis and to position myself reflexively within the very research process. Showing my positioned interpretative work is part of an exercise of transparency and control of the research process that ensures traceability and coherence. The validity of my research is fundamentally grounded in the epistemological authority I have gained 'by virtue of my training experience, ethnographic labours and time' (Skeggs, 2004: 131). This epistemological authority does not contradict the moral equality that I aimed to reach in the field. I don't believe that equality can be achieved only by eschewing the researcher's authority as is often highlighted (Sparkes 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The researcher's authority can be validated through training and a research practice that 'understands the relations of production and is aware of the possibilities for appropriation' (Skeggs, 2004: 130). To this end, I also take responsibility for the 'enabling practices' of my research (Haraway, 1988: 576). While translating women's discourses into *this* specific academic discourse, I draw together particular ways of looking at and imagining an object - 'Italian migrant women', creating a category of knowledge enabling it to become known.

One last issue I want to address concerns the outcomes and the ethical use of the production of this text. The research process does not end with the fieldwork, and power relation continues in our writings and dissemination of our works. My initial plan to go back to my research participants with sections of this text to be discussed in a workshop or forum was unviable: the majority of the women had no interest in participating in it and I had placed too many expectations on my participants.

At this stage, I do not have any answers on how the power relations can be rebalanced or redistributed after the writing of this text is finished, but I believe that

[79] This perspective is inspired by qualitative researchers such as Coffey and Atkinson who recommend using a variety of analyses in order to understand the data in different ways (1996)

being honest about my intentions is one way forward: this is a text that I have written knowing it is more likely to gain me a PhD than change the material realities of the women I interviewed. However, through my research, I have challenged and contested 'dominant knowledges' on Italian migrant women in Ireland, and my main goal has been 'not losing the 'authenticity', emotion and vibrancy of their voices (Standing, 1998: 200-201). I hope to have succeeded thus far.

Conclusion

To conclude, my research has involved three stages, 'going there', 'being there' and 'being here' that have often overlapped and intersected allowing me to construct a framework to think about Italian migrant women in Ireland. In this chapter I have reflected on my methodological choices with a particular focus on my reflexive and participatory positionality as a researcher. I have illustrated the method of narrative analysis that I chose for my research and looked at the issues of validity and coherence that my methodological choices ensued. An important question arises from here: how can such narratives of everyday experiences provide so much theoretical insight despite the doubts of validity and objectivity that they raise? In addressing these questions in the next chapters, indirectly, I want to suggest that as Stanley and Wise claim (1993), if the theory doesn't match the practice, it is time to change the theory because we know far too little of the reality of Italian migrant women in Ireland.

Chapter Six

WOMEN'S 'INFORMATIVE' NARRATIVES: ITALIANNESS, GENDER AND INCOMPLETENESS

> So we're foreigners there, we're foreigners here, what the hell are we?
> (Celestina)

In chapter three, I introduced the concept of diaspora as the social condition of 'being away', which helps to construct a framework to reflect the gendered positions and the gendered roles of women in migration. Having highlighted the invisibility of Italian migrant women in the literature and having introduced the case of Italian migration to Ireland (chapters two and four) in the next three chapters I present an analysis of Italian migrant women's narratives as they emerged in my interviews. I held narratives as 'informative' tools of analysis and as 'performative' social practices, in order to explore the meanings of women's experiences, starting from how women perceive their own lives and articulate discourses about themselves.

Although narrative accounts are used in several disciplines and, as I suggested in chapter five, the last decade has seen a burgeoning literature on narrative identity, there is no clear definition of what constitutes a narrative. In my work, I propose to use 'narrative' as referring to the expression of 'an over-arching storyline that ties events together in a seamless explanatory framework' (Ochs and Capps, 2001). As a discourse, a narrative contains 'stylistic features, such as tropes which are set in cultural styles and can feed into our understandings of experiences' (Thompson, 2000 in Mand, 2006: 1058).

Narratives are 'structured accounts with a beginning, middle and end' and 'more generally they tell of events and people acting in them' (Gardner 2002: 30-31). They are comprised of stories but they are not stories. In linguistics and literary studies, a story is defined as a fabula, that is a cognitive scheme of events presented in a text (Onega et al., 1996: 8), while a narrative is a more inclusive semantic

structure constructing an 'over-arching' storyline that 'ties events together in a seamless explanatory framework' (Ochs and Capps 2001 :2). Narratives give stories a sense of wholeness, linking them in '*a temporal and causal way*' (Onega et al., 1996: 8; my emphasis). Narratives come with a desire and potential 'to capture the complexities of the events experienced, including haphazard details, uncertainties, and conflicting sensibilities' (Ochs and Capps 2001 :4).

In my work I specifically refer to the women's *conversational and personal narratives* as they emerged during group and individual interviews performed in conversation with me. However, working with Onega et al's (1986) and Capps and Ochs's (2001) definitions, my discussion of narratives may be extended to all the textual accounts of themselves that the women engaged or said they engaged with, such as 'commiserating, gossiping, philosophizing, exchanging advice, and other informal discourses' (Ochs and Capps, 2001). [80]

The narratives I work with are not necessarily 'true', objective or coherent accounts but they articulate stories as journeys through which we learn about ourselves, and as researchers, about societies (Gardner 1999:65). In this sense, narratives can be also 'performative', because the telling of stories creates the subjects of our experiences, they configure the 'self-that-I-might-be' and 'what I think might make me valued by others' (Riessman, 2003: 7).

I explore in chapter eight the performative nature of Italian migrant women's narratives, while in this chapter and in the next I want to focus on their informative narratives. This implies analysing the substance and context of the migrant women's narratives that tell us how the women perceive, enact and respond to the experiences in their lives. The informative analysis is possible because while the personal narrative may be seen as:

> The property of the individual – intrinsic to and defining of the individual, the plot that it follows and the themes that are woven through it may reflect and confirm to the cultural narratives to which one individual is exposed at any one time (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004: 228).

My research takes into consideration women's personal narratives as important heuristic tools that enable us to achieve a more informed account of

[80] More formal and institutionalized discourses such as lullabies, songs, and literary works, etc, also perform a similar function. My study makes some general claim for these texts too, but given their institutionalised nature, these deserve to be treated separately.

Italian migrant women's lives in Ireland. There are two main reasons behind the choice of this methodology. First, personal narratives, like oral histories, can move away from grand representations, offer a possibility of understanding processes at the micro level and incorporate a diversity of experiences (Riessman, 2004, 2003, 2002; Jedlowski, 2000; Thompson, 2000). This aspect of narratives and oral history has been highlighted by feminists who argue that narratives are an 'important corrective in addressing what is deemed significant, the mode of collecting and the interpretation and representation of knowledge' (Mand, 2006: 1058). As a feminist methodological tool, narrative analysis enables us to move beyond traditional knowledge production and adopt new forms of understanding 'that unshackle new meanings' (Ang-Lygate, 1996: 160). Significantly, diaspora theorists have also highlighted narratives and their role in the construction of identities, as I illustrate in chapter eight.

Second, I chose narrative analysis because of the nature of migration itself. As Pooley and White argue, migration events are so transitory that they are rarely recorded, and migration is also an aspect of human behaviour which 'to a much greater extent than other demographic factors can occur for a variety of interrelated reasons and which can have many complex and unpredictable outcomes' (Pooley and White, 1991:3). For Pooley and White, most information about migration arises from 'surrogate sources', for example through personal narratives, which act as relevant sources of information about the 'human' and complex experiences of migration (Pooley and White, 1991: 3). Moreover, narratives have a particular affinity with migration because they bring stories together in a logical order; like migrants, they move across time and place (Mand, 2006: 1057) and they can make 'life .... structurally more bendable' (Riessman, 2003: 21).

Following from this, this chapter discusses the informative nature of Italian migrant women's narratives, divided in three sections. The first section considers how women articulate discourses about Italianness, presenting narratives in which similarities and differences about Italianness emerge across different axes of articulation (Brah, 1996). This section shows the failure of essentialist notions and discourses about ethno-national belonging, an analysis that in its turn validates the notion of diaspora as a 'set of institutions' that I explored in chapter three. In the second section, I examine the gendered similarities of women's experiences and how women's gendered positions are used to mark identitarian boundaries (based

on diaspora as a tool of analysis). Third, I focus on narratives as reflecting a sense of incompleteness and in-betweenness which ultimately accompany women's experiences of diaspora and women's struggles to find a surrogate sense of home/belonging (based on diaspora as a social condition).

My analysis of migrant women's narratives is drawn from open-ended and unstructured interviews with 29 women, conducted between 2000 and 2006. The women who participated to my research are aged between 15 and 70, have different educational levels (ranging from three years of compulsory school to third level education), and different regional backgrounds (north, south, centre). I have however isolated three groups for analytical purposes, to which I refer as the early-waves migrant women, the long-settled migrant women and the recent migrants, as I have explained in the previous chapter. The selection of the three groups is dependent on the very narratives of the women, who suggested their existence. [81]

DISARTICULATIONS OF ITALIANNESS ACROSS (MANY) DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

Can absence mark a presence? Can migrancy be a terrain of belonging? These were the questions which echoed for me when I read the poetry of a young Sicilian woman, Chiara Sciarrino, who lived in Ireland in 2001. [82]

> *In these parts*
> 'Is she the one who isn't here?'/asked me an acquaintance/ when he came/ to the countryside/to visit my father./'I am passing by!'/I like to answer/ To those who / Cannot see/ The perfume of jasmine/ Of orange blossoms / Of the sea / In my eyes.[83]

Chiara's poetry evokes the paradox of migration: the migrant's presence is marked by 'absence' and is defined by the void left by departure and un-settlement.

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[81] For example, Maria claimed that 'there are different circles; there are the women who have studies. They are a separate circles of women, we are all different circles. [Some women] go to the cultural institute, they teach, o find a job, let's say, as shopkeepers, or if they know English well, they find other jobs. … Then [others] who are parte of the embassy, all another circle. We don't mix up. Then [there is] us [early waves of migrant women] (sic).

[82] The poem won a prize in the Italian category of the 2001 Féile Filíochta International Poetry Competition in Dún Laoghaire, Dublin (Féile Filíochta, 2001). The poem is included with the permission of the author. My translation from the Italian has also been approved by the author.

[83] Dalle Mie Parti ''Lei e' quella che non c'e'?'/mi ha domandato un conoscente/quando e' venuto/in campagna/a far visita a mio padre'/Di passaggio, sono!'/mi piace rispondere/a chi non/riesce a sentire/il profumo dei gelsomini,/della zagara/e del mare/nei miei occhi'. Published with permission of the author

As migration opens a void, the sense of belonging is complicated, and in the journeying, one is at best a 'passer by'. When I read Chiara's poem, I immediately felt how strongly it resonated with my own experiences and with the narratives emerging from my interviews with Italian migrant women in Ireland. As migrants, we live often in diaspora, and our lives are 'experienced as a "shifting" centre that does not stabilise, so that the centre finds itself wherever the migrant is not', resulting in what has been described as a 'generalised condition of homelessness' (Baldassar, 2001: 337). The 'absence materialising the migrant's presence' can also be understood as a metaphor for the reality of Italian women in Ireland: Italian women are invisible in most of the discourses about Italian migration. Their experiences clearly mean something but are largely absent in media and academic accounts. However, as I asked the women to talk about their migration experiences, a question they were seldom asked, women's personal narratives revealed complex and meaningful realities.

When talking about themselves, the women who participated in my research frequently resorted to the notion of *Italianness*. Some women recognised that their families are now 'Irish' (for example third generation migrant women), but their own self-identification is primarily Italianness. However, Italianness is inherently a contested category. It holds different meanings, especially in terms of class and educational affiliations and in relation to the time of the women's migration. One of the very first interviews I conducted (in 2000) was particularly revealing in this respect. In this interview, Silvia narrated that she felt 'a little bit Italian' because her father was Italian even though he wasn't born in Italy, 'but I feel more Belgian, because I was born in Bruxelles. Her family was scattered in three countries, and she did not know how to name herself.

> I do not know, I do not have anybody, Italian descent, because it was my father's grandfather who left Italy and that was before 1900, that goes back a long time. He went first to America, it goes back one hundred years ago, you know? That's the link (...) I've never lived in Italy so, a little, I suppose a little bit I feel Italian. I would be Belgian first, then Italian second. And Irish third!

The translation, interpretation and comprehension of identity juxtaposed with ethno-national categories of belonging unavoidably emerged as an ambiguous exercise. Analysing the interview transcripts, I realised that the clarity I was looking for during the interview with Silvia did not exist, because one single

meaning of Italianness does not exist. I was asking the wrong questions, looking for definite answers about identity: 'Are you Italian? Do you feel Italian?' Bewildered by the complex answers that emerged during the first interviews, I realised I had to rethink my *own* assumptions about Italianness and identities. As an Italian researcher, I had been initially blinded by the obvious and by the familiar (Bolak, 1997: 97), by what I thought it meant to be Italian. What I needed to ask the women were questions about differences in their Italianness and not about their similarities.

If during the interviews I did not manage to avoid essentialist assumptions about national belonging, during the analysis I could dismantle such pre-concepts and explore how women articulated or disarticulated in their narratives 'similarities and differences across the different axes of differentiation' (Brah, 1996: 209) of Italianness. Class, gender, regional and educational backgrounds, and time of migration are the main axes of differentiation underpinning women's narratives about their Italianness.

The interview with Alessia was exemplary. Alessia is a 30 year old professional woman, who left Italy at the age of thirteen to study in Australia and since then has lived in several countries. At the time of the interview, Alessia had been living in Dublin for eight years, together with her Irish boyfriend. During the interview we sat on a bench in Trinity College. It was April 2002 and I had lived in Ireland for three years. My experiences of migration had become more acute and compelling, a fact that influenced the questions I raised during our interview.[84] Alessia explained that:

> Yes I am Italian, it's great, but like what? I don't have anywhere to go in Italy, I can hardly speak my language, it makes you very insecure ... But it is more just about, so it is not only about 'oh I want to go back to my home town'. It is always been a weird experience, they would just want me to speak English [in Italy], 'oh say something! I just I don't want to, [I feel] like [an animal] at the zoo.

Asking about Alessia's 'Italian' biography was a pre-*text* I wove together in order to begin to try and know her. Made of texts, narratives, discursive strategies,

[84] The interview started in Italian, but changed after ten minutes into English, with visible relief on both our parts, struggling, as we were, to put Italian words together in a sufficiently formal manner that would be, appropriate to the circumstances of our first meeting. On reflection, it felt as though we were more accustomed to speaking English in formal settings and we both felt embarrassed to expose our uncertainties with Italian.

this act helped to create a point of connection to build our relation. This is a strategy of socialisation which resembles very closely my occasional encounters with other Italians in Ireland. In both cases, Italianness functions as a terrain of encounter, albeit one where identities are contested, and where belonging may also imply a place of discomfort and insecurity. In using Italianness as a pre-text and in constructing ourselves as the subjects of our own 'Italian' biographies, the ethno-national order through which our own lives are cast was created (Knowles, 2003: 47).

The narratives of the women who participated in my research highlight the fact that Italianness is not primordial or essential (Monia tells that she has 'this Buddhist belief, that even if you are born in one place, your soul lives in another place. So when I came to Ireland, I thought that maybe I grew up in Sicily but maybe my soul lives in Ireland') and that Italy and its history are multifaceted and diverse. The women emphasise the cultural and regional differences and recognise how Italy is socially, culturally and politically divided (as Michela puts it, there is an 'Italian political paradox: half of the nation is divided, has always been divided, made up of those who dream a different society from what we have today'). The women's narratives show the difficulty of translating and interpreting their sense of belonging, which ultimately relies on Italianness as a 'floating signifier' and a container of multiple and contested meanings.

For many of the women, Italianness is a 'feeling', the embodied experiences of memories, the longing and yearning for a bygone past. It is 'something that comes absolutely spontaneous', as Jenny a long-settled migrant explained and further elaborated:

> When I hear Italian on the TV, I, tack, automatically feel moved! It is a strange feeling... I must admit I never question it. I don't look for an explanation... it is an inborn feeling, I wake up in the morning I feel it, I go to sleep at night-time I feel it. Actually a private thing, a personal thing I bear inside.

In another interview, Italianness is metaphorised as 'a series of concentric circles which intersect with each other' and 'you can be a Buddhist, a gay, a physicist and these are all circles that intersect' and form your Italianness (Federica). As a newly arrived migrant to Ireland, Federica sees her identity in Italy as a certain 'subset of circles, and when I moved, it is like a star system: I move the centre, I am my centre, the stars will follow'. Other women highlighted the

connecting function of Italianness (as a signifier), which is described as knowing that 'if it is there, if it is functioning, it is the sign that we can act together' (Michela) or as a 'set of tools that you have and you pick which set you want to chose depending whom you are dealing with and depending on the occasion' (Alessia).

There are no fixed characteristics of Italianness, it is hard to describe and yet 'it exists'. It functions. It is continuously invoked, especially when one needs to set the boundaries of what one's difference is *vis-à-vis* the 'Irish other'. Assunta is a 70 year old second-generation migrant and explained her reaction to being called Irish:

> Just because she was born in Ireland. People say, ah, you were born here you have to be Irish, and I say, just a moment, Jesus Christ was born in the stable and is not a horse! Now because I was born here, doesn't make me Irish.

Similarly, Alessia, a newly arrived migrant, recalled that she feels different, when she feels 'swallowed up' by Irish families and friends, and:

> I was kind of going, wait a minute I am not one of you and I felt that this was a very small micro-scale, but really… I have my own thing going on as well.

For Assunta and Alessia, Italianness becomes the signifier of difference from the 'other Irish'. From the narratives of the early-waves migrants, it clearly transpires that the act of identification with Italianness also respond to the politics of Italian migrants' categorisation (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000) in Irish society, which has been particularly limited towards Italian migrants and Italianness (as I demonstrated in chapter four). 'Trapped' in a symbolic invisibility, Italian migrants evoke 'Italianness' as a bastion from which to assert their individual and collective need to be recognised as different. This identitarian struggle between Ireland and Italian migrants has a long history, as is mirrored in the women's narratives. An early-waves migrant woman, Maria, who arrived in Ireland in the 1960s, recounted a memory of one day she was sitting in St Stephen's Green park with her sister-in-law and their children and:

> Someone passed by and I think I understand very well at the time, and someone call us 'wasp'. 'Wasp' is a very bad word, I don't hear it now anymore, but she[the sister in law]went crazy, she chased him, she went mad (*sic*).

Carmela, a second-generation 30 year old woman, remembered when in the early 1980s as a growing child she was playing with other children in her street, and:

> They called me fat mafia, because I was fat and mafia is related to Italy. So, and I remember being very upset, and I told my parents but they just went, 'oh, well kids are kids. Whereas now, if my nieces or whoever came to me and they would say they call me this name, I would probably go to that child or the child's parents and say, listen, it is not really very nice … and I used to get really annoyed, pissed off, I used to say, how dare you call my cousin Potato? His name is Paolo!

The children's racist/stereotypical taunting that emerges from this narrative is echoed in the 'couple of comments' which have been directed at Carmela as an adult woman. In fact, one day Carmela was walking down on the street in Dublin and

> I bumped into somebody. It was my fault, but I turned around to say sorry, and he said 'go back to where you came from'! He said that to me, and I was like, that's rude. He said that nastily; go back to where you came from. I think that was at the time, that would have been 1999, so there would have been a lot of Eastern European coming into Ireland … But I wanted to follow him down the street, excuse me, I come from Fairview and I have lived here for 28 years, how dare you!

Other long-settled and recent migrants complained of similar constraining categorisation. They resented being 'put in a box, and categorised' (Valeria) or 'pigeon-holed' (Federica). Federica stressed that as an 'Italian' she feels expected to 'do this and that' but for her Italianness 'is deeper and intersects with much else' (Federica). Nadia also highlighted a need to 'defend her Italianness'; she narrated an occurrence when she was working in a public office in Tralee and a client refused to talk to her, because she wanted:

> Someone who speaks English. And I was speaking English! I didn't have all the tools to defend myself; I was still new to the whole experience. And the client continued, ah you all Romanians that come and steal jobs in the Irish office. I wasn't Romanian!

If on the one hand the women who participated in my research want to mark their differences 'as Italians', on the other hand they also use the signifier Italianness to mark the differences 'from other Italians'. Early-waves migrant women claim to be different *vis-à-vis* the newly arrived Italian migrants. Recent

and long-settled migrant women also distance themselves from the early waves of Italian *emigrants* in Ireland, even linguistically refusing to be called 'emigrants'. Emigration bears a negative connotation, generally understood as the product of a specific interpretation of the historic phase of Italian mass migration conditioned by economic restrictions (as I explained in chapter three). Instead, recent and long-settled migrant women inscribe their experiences in a 'lifestyle migration' (Knowles, 2003), often understood and recounted as a cosmopolitan adventure. As a consequence, recent migrant women refuse to identify themselves as emigrants because they are 'not pushed by necessity, but by choice' and 'the emigrant is someone who is forced to leave, who leaves with great sorrow' (Silvia). They do not consider themselves 'migrants in the conventional meaning of the word'; they would rather call themselves 'expatriates' (Michela) or 'adventurers' who want to 'discover new things, new people, love... the challenge to speak everyday a new language' (Nadia).

For the same reason, several recent migrant women who participated in my research claimed that they don't have any desire to cultivate their Italianness: they don't want to meet other Italian people, speak Italian, read Italian news, etc. They want to 'integrate' in Ireland (learn English, learn a new culture, etc) and are looking for experiences of difference ('I was curious to learn things of Ireland... and I also felt that others were curious about me, my different influence', Valeria).

Only one recent migrant criticised this attitude and refused to consider her case outside the long history of Italian emigration. She stated that:

> I hate that in Italy they inflect emigration in the past. Because it is an insult to the hundreds and thousands of young Italians like me who leave and they don't know when and if they come back (Federica, *sic*).

As Federica points out, Italian migration has in a sense now become globalised and cosmopolitan, and its representations have been sanitised and polished (it is much easier for Italian emigration to be associated with high status and professionalism, now, than it ever was previously), yet it still has to be demonstrated to what extent the social and economic structures that sustained Italian emigration in the past have now changed. Moreover, considering the narratives of the women of my research, my impression is that the experiences of migration now are qualitatively very close to what they used to be throughout the

twentieth century, in terms of nostalgia, homing desire, breakages, etc. Ultimately, the meanings that terms such as migrant, emigrant, etc, acquire over time are but a harbinger of the transformation that has occurred in politicisation of migration.

From the women's narratives, we evince that diaspora grows diachronically, and post-migration settlement brings new impulses to seek alliances and connections with those with whom one 'imagines' closer cultural. A common Italian language, the sense of humour and dialect of Italy were also mentioned by the women. The diasporic imagination regresses to the past and its mythic association with Italy. Recent and long-settled migrants told me that after a few years of migration they start to privilege relations with other Italians. A new sense of belonging and pride about their 'Italian background' is reinforced. The Italian 'elegance', 'energy of the sun', the 'dense history' of Italy are among the positive factors which are praised in the narratives of the women, and with which they want to be associated. Diasporic identities and practices become more institutionalised (in associations, formal meetings, etc, see chapter four), because 'it is also around the sense of loss or suffering that diaspora built strong feelings of connection among those sharing it' (Gabaccia, 2000: 6).

The fear of loss makes Italianness function as a cementing material, creating a terrain for identification, yet one which remains inherently imperfect. The more institutionalised the diaspora becomes (with more rigid and exclusionary practices and institutions), the clearer the differences among Italians re-emerge. Stronger boundaries among the different categories of migrants are re-established. Thus, migrants repeatedly stress their differences and migrants' associations become wary of, and defensive towards, each other. Arguably, this identitarian closure depends on the homogenising representations of Italianness in Ireland, to which early waves of migrants react by retreating into crystallised and bounded cultural ideals of Italianness (see chapter four).

Given the strong emphasis on difference, my analysis of the emerging themes in the women's narratives had to start from this central issue. The interviews extracts above show the power with which migrant women manifest their need to mark their differences. In this way, their voices warn us to be careful not to homogenise their identities and experiences and insist that we look at the diverse and contextual experiences. The diversity exists also because of the nature of identities that must be understood both as 'identity as being' (which offers a sense

of unity and commonality) and 'identity as becoming' (or a process of identification, with various ruptures and discontinuities) (Hall, 1993). Here I found the concept of diaspora most useful, because it incorporates both being and becoming. Hall for example suggests that 'diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference' (Hall, 1993: 401). I return to this central question later in this chapter.

Despite the emphasis on differences of Italianness, I want to argue that women's narratives reveal a diasporic experience which is centred on the similarities of gender. As Fortier argues, gender embodies the moments when the movement of identity is arrested, 'when the compulsion to install an identity serves to foreclose the fields of possibilities and contain them in sexual and ethnic conventions' (Fortier, 2000: 165). I turn in the next section to analyse this question, with particular reference to the gendered strategies with which women replace a sense of home despite the diasporic ruptures and the capacity of diaspora to create gender emancipation.

NARRATIVES ABOUT THE GENDERED SIMILARITIES OF DIASPORA: LITTLE PRINCESSES AND *SIGNORINE*

As Fortier claims, gender is the central vehicle for the mobilisation of family and generations in the collective re-enactment and display of cultural continuity; it is the modality through which migrants participate in 'the communal expression of local particularity' (Fortier, 2000: 167). As 'the gender divide is always crystal clear' (Trinh, 1989: 106), it has the potential to reinstate, through prescribed specificities and normativities, the sense of continuity and belonging that is threatened by migration.

Though not explicit, gender is an underlying theme in all the narratives around the differences between types of Italianness. When Alessia, a newly arrived migrant, narrated her difference from the early waves of Italian migrants for whom she worked, she articulated a classed *and* gendered discourse:

> The first time that I started to think that after all, there are various categories of Italians, was when I started to work in an Italian restaurant, where the woman owner, the chef, and the daughter of the owner were working; they all came from the Roman maremma.

> And there was this strange thing that sometimes they talked in dialect to me and I couldn't understand it. They called me *little princess*, because for all they knew, I was well educated, I had bigger plans than maybe theirs. But in part it was also because I wasn't used to speak in a loud voice, or something like this.

Class and educational background mark Alessia's difference *vis-à-vis* early waves of Italian migrants. However, the class difference is contested and reinforced at the intersection with gender. Alessia is sarcastically labelled a 'princess', which she resents. Princess is an antiphrasis, a rhetorical device used to demote her and to feminise her status by stressing her vulnerability and her need for protection. Feminisation ascribes to women a negative status, as women are considered irrational, unworldly and unable to act (Enloe, 2007). Alessia's higher class status is feminised and thus repositioned and subordinated to the classed and masculinised hegemony of early-waves Italian migrants. This becomes possible also because the diaspora space creates an internal and self-referential order, where new territories of belonging can also reinforce old hegemonies (Brah, 1996; 2000).

Early-waves Italian migrant women are influenced by a similar class/gender nexus of subordination. Maria moved to Ireland in the 1960s, when she was 16 years old. She did not return home for almost ten years, after which she frequently travelled back and forth to Italy. However, the first time she returned to Italy, her accent had changed. She had started to speak standard Italian rather than her region's dialect, and she was ridiculed because:

> I went home and I spoke Italian, they used not [to like it]. Just say, 'do you understand that? *S'è fatta signorina*'! [She made herself a Miss now!] Something stupid you know? (*sic*)

Through migration, Maria's family has changed its cultural and class position, and her family who remained in Italy resents it. Their strategy is to win back symbolic power by belittling Maria not just as 'an outsider' but as a feminised and classed subject, a *signorina*. *Signorina* is equal here to *princess*, referring to a higher class, the status of which is neutralised by its feminisation. It is not just Maria who can be subordinated and belittled, but also the group of people she is made to represent: the migrants who left and who return for summer visits exhibiting economic and social success.

Women are frequently used to symbolise their collectivities, and this is visible where gender intersects not just with class but also with regional background. For

example, Franca, a second-generation migrant whose mother is from Northern Italy, emphasised that Italians from the north of Italy are more 'advanced' than Southern Italians. To articulate this discourse, Franca used women as a symbolic currency in her identitarian discourse. She observed that while northern Italians had travelled to many European countries and 'they were used to deal with people and kept their daughters with them and their daughters went to school', Italians from 'other backgrounds' kept 'the wives in Italy with the family and women were raised there until a certain age and then they came to Ireland to set up with their brothers and their fathers' (Franca).

Migrant women thus become indicators of the value of the group and embody its boundaries. They are 'charged with the reproduction of absolute ethnic difference and the continuance of blood line' so that the holy forces of nationalist bio-politics intersect on their bodies (Gilroy, 1997: 333). Moreover, migrant women are often chosen as the 'intergenerational transmitters of cultural traditions' (Yuval Davis, 1994: 196); they are expected to be the primary bearers of a distinctive 'home' culture, even though they also tend to be 'excluded from the public sphere, because of legal restrictions, a lack of work opportunities or linguistic inadequacies' (Yuval Davis, 1994: 197). Not surprisingly, 'stronger social control is likely to be exercised on girls than on boys, especially among the children of immigrants' (Yuval Davis, 1994: 197).

The narratives of the women who participated in my research reveal that women are aware of the burden of their gender roles in relation to their being Italian and in diaspora. Whenever they were asked to narrate about their selves, women resorted to categories such as mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives to describe themselves. There was a constant concern with fulfilling such roles and behaving 'properly', as good daughters, wives or 'Italian virgins'. Women are very careful not to deviate from the expectations of their gender roles, often related to their sexual behaviour, for fear of being 'labelled' and judged. This fear, however, does not prevent women from deviating from the norms when they want (while actually countering their self-identification as 'deviant' and subversive, as I argue in chapter eight).

The literature on Italian migrant women illustrates how women are socially controlled, because their 'proper' behaviour is paramount to the 'honour and shame' (Baldassar, 1999; Gabaccia, 1994) of their ethno-national collectivities. Yet

control is carried out not only by men but also by women, especially older women, who frequently act as strict regulators of other women's behaviour. The women in my research, regardless of which group of migrants they belong to, talked about Italianness in relation to 'honour'. Luana, a 50 year old, long-settled migrant raises the issue of 'honour' as the act of 'always portray[ing] an image of what Italy is, that's always positive, relevant to reality and not the caricature'. She observed that honour is especially relevant for women like her, who work in the 'Italian culture industry' (teaching Italian, working in Italian institutions, etc).

When asked about the meaning of honour, Luana explained that for her it means 'to live true to yourself and that you instil the same feelings in your children, that they should behave properly, that should be courteous, they shouldn't swear, shouldn't be rude'. Her emphasis on 'behaving properly' is in part linked to her role as a mother and the education she wants to pass on to her children. However, as she elaborated in the rest of her interview, for her 'behaving properly' also refers to a traditional 'submissive' model of femininity, which confirms the honour of the family and of the community. Luana explained in fact that her parents 'weren't happy when I went out and I stayed out late' and 'it was very important that I always behaved properly with dignity and I didn't do things'.

Honour, by being always tied to shame, can be Janus-faced. Shame in fact functions as a social control mechanism to limit women's behaviour and sexuality, perceived as dangerous, uncontrollable and capable of subverting the established order with its male privileges. As evinced by the narratives of Italian women from different groups of migration, shame pushes women to internalise rules of self-limitation and in diaspora it takes up a collective meaning of 'boundary control'. Male and female gender roles –regulated through sexuality- become instrumental to the affirmation and negotiation of migrants' identities.

In their group interview, sisters-in-law Celestina and Nunzia talked about the condition of Italian women and how their parents had 'drummed into their heads that, yes, the man son was a man, and the female daughter a female' (sic) which implies that if you are a 'son you could go out and do what you like but the girl don't you dare!'. Nunzia added that while 'it was just drummed into us, I mean, I was never allowed to go to my school friends', like birthday parties' there was 'another thing: Irish women, Irish girls before, they were looser. (...) So the Italians,

let's say young Italian men who came from Italy, would go out with Irish women only for sex, and to get married they had to find an Italian virgin!'.

Italian men are encouraged to be 'men', by proving their masculinity and sexually 'conquering' and 'consuming' the female Irish other. Arguably, through their sexual prowess, men can also 'feminise' Irish women and Irishness by extension, inscribing a 'masculinised' Italianness in a higher position of power. The honour of the Italian 'masculinised' community can be menaced by the sexuality of Irish women (who Nunzia and Celestina considered too 'loose') but it is still Italian women who have the responsibility of patrolling the honour of the Italian community, by limiting Italian men's sexuality and protecting their own 'virginity' against Irish men. For example, Assunta, a second generation migrant, spoke about the 'community' of Italians, which until recently had not seen 'scandals of separations, love affairs, and getting illegitimate children. We have heard more in the last eight-ten years than we have heard I would say in the last 40 years. The wives stayed with their husbands, they stuck together, they fought it out'. She added that 'now if the husband or the wife makes a mistake, it's not accepted, they are separated. They [women] go back to their parents and take their children'.

In Assunta's words, it is the women who are responsible for 'scandals', which do not refer to 'illegitimate relations' *per se,* but to cases of women resisting gender models and roles. Even though Assunta recognises that both men and women can make mistakes, 'scandals' happen when *women* 'break up' the family and leave their husbands. While women are held responsible for the cohesion of their families (and their sexuality is perceived as a threat to their families' honour), men transgressing the sexual, cultural and social boundaries of their groups do not seem to be accountable for collective 'shame'. It is women's sexuality which is targeted, controlled and instrumentalised. If Italian women leave their men or transgress the boundaries and 'mix' with Irish men, not only will they not be praised for their ability to 'conquer' the 'Irish other', they will rather be perceived as threatening the honour and the purity of the ethno-national collectivity: they will be called 'Italian bitches' as Nunzia puts it. [85] It is noteworthy that older women like Assunta, by enforcing traditional gender orders, become also the reproducers of patriarchal normativities and the agents of other women's limitations.

[85] Nunzia, a long settled migrant, narrates that when, in the past, rows developed relating to women meeting Irish men, men were called 'Irish bastards' and women were called 'Italian bitches'.

The narratives about women's shame and migrants' honour are often put in the past tense, and some of the women I have interviewed suggest that things have now changed. However, when talking about their daughters, women's narratives show how deep-rooted these gender models still are. For example, Celestina has three adult daughters born in Ireland, who have completed third level education and work in the family business. When asked about the differences between men and women, Celestina constructed a narrative of 'I am the boss' and 'if women put up with any [limitation], they are stupid'. She portrayed herself as a strong and emancipated woman. However, when I asked about her daughters, a different set of values emerged. She claimed that:

> Having three girls as well, I do not like they go out ... I want them to go out, but I do not like that they are out, and get wild ... Then they're going to be labelled, not only by the Italian community, but by their Irish friends... I do not want that.

In her view, her daughters' behaviour and sexuality must be controlled to ensure it will not pollute the honour of the family. Women's sexuality is almost never overtly and directly discussed, yet it underpins most of the women's narratives. Towards the end of the interviews, when the relationships between the women and myself became more intimate and open, some reflections, comments, stories about women's sexuality started emerging. It is evident how women internalise the mixed feelings about their sexuality, perceived as 'uncontrollable' and deviating, but also as a manifestation of their worth. This issue is best considered by looking at the narratives which speak about women's 'beautiful bodies', by which I mean those narratives revealing how women's bodies are sexualised and objectified by the masculine hegemony (Bourdieu, 2001). The outcome is a symbolic order which legitimises men's power over women.

The objectification of women's bodies is inscribed in traditional Italian culture, which persists through the generations. In many of the narratives, the women draw reference to their 'beautiful bodies'. Italian womanhood is associated with 'elegance' and 'passion' (Assunta). Women's 'black hair', their 'lipstick', their way of being 'glamorous now and then' (Franca) become the markers of their

Italianness. [86] In diaspora, women's 'beautiful bodies' are exoticised so that Italian women in Ireland 'are supposed to be more sexy because they are Latin, hot blooded, you know? I'd say that's about mostly an Irish man, what he thinks of an Italian woman' (Mary).

Italian women are socialised to display the 'spectacle' of their bodies. An early-waves migrant woman spoke with pride when she remembered how:

> Everybody knew us [her sisters and herself], from that lovely shop and the overalls. And we were pretty when we were young, you know? But they all called my father Hamlet, 'cause he was mad! If he saw us talking to boys he would [say], go away, leave my girls alone! You can't talk to my girls!

'Hamlet the avenger' is the other side of the story of a 'beautiful woman's body': the story of the men protecting it, praising it, and possessing it. Thus, women's bodies become a spectacle for the Italian masculinised 'community', one that seems to leave no space for any other aspects of women's lives. Accounts about women's activities, businesses, achievements etc are framed and limited by remarks about women's beauty, elegance, smiles, etc (*Italia Stampa* 1998, 2003, 2006).

New generations of Italian migrant women are invariably subjected to this gender model, and are aware of its limitations. Franca, a 38 year old second-generation migrant woman, whose father is Irish, grew up at the threshold of different Italian and Irish cultural normativities, taking 'the best from both'. She expressed her resentment of how Italian culture conceives women: '[Italians] have a low consideration, just one vision of women. ... And women all have to be beautiful and I think the women feel it too'. In 2000, Franca was asked to participate in *Miss Italia nel Mondo* (an Italian 'diasporic' beauty contest, whose participants are women of Italian 'origins' coming from different countries) to 'represent' Italian women in Ireland. [87] This contest denotes a 'specific instance where gender, ethnicity and nation, come together in the construction of a gendered nationhood. As national allegiance is masculinised... the nation is feminised' (Fortier, 2000: 96). The following extract describes Franca's experiences during the

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[86] 'My mother would never admit it, she wants, she would say she is Irish and that's it, but she is very Italian, oh my god, you know she is not Irish. Big black hair, you know, lipstick, she is glamorous now and then' (Franca).

[87] This is another example of how women are used to 'represent' the boundaries of their ethno-national groups (Yuval-Davis, 1997)

contest. I chose to present her narrative in full, because it powerfully captures the implications and limitations of embodying the 'Italian beautiful body'. It also reveals how gender and class are intersecting to both essentialise and debilitate identitarian politics.

> I saw [during the beauty contest] a part of Italy I absolutely despise. And I really was not happy. I got a reputation, because I was the only person who wouldn't wear certain things, who wouldn't behave in a certain way, because I am representing Ireland, I said, my grandmother didn't raise me to walk down the street in a swimsuit. .... And it was nice, because there were other Italian girls there ... but they were treated very badly. They had to be provocative and walk up and down. And because the girls from around the world were either daughters of ambassadors or diplomats, they couldn't do that. And it was a strange experience... I find the Italian men that would organise things like that very arrogant... Because when I first arrived, they wanted me to wear things that have Northern Ireland colours and flags, and I said no. I am not from Northern Ireland, I am from the Republic. ... They made a mistake, and they said, 'ah it doesn't matter'. And I went, 'it does matter!' Things like that I would find offending, whereas their attitude was, 'ah it's only a women's competition, just go up, just wear it, just look nice and go back!'. And that kind of thing I found it strange, the way they lacked consideration for people's sentiments or people's traditions. And I learnt a lot that week, on how women are treated in Italy and I didn't like it. ... I think about me without my makeup and I wouldn't make a big deal of it here [in Ireland], or I can glam up to the nines and make the effort, when we were in Rome, or cities like that, you almost feel the pressure, because people stare and I think of it is so bad. And I think, it's also because the women just don't believe in saying, to hell with you, I am doing what I like (*sic*).

Franca observed that women's intelligence, sensitivity, or abilities do not matter in Italian culture. Everything is subordinated to their 'beautiful bodies', which are praised and contemplated, ultimately casting them as stupid objects without agency. Franca's narrative also reveals the extent to which in diaspora (at the threshold between Italianness and Irishness) she has learnt to juggle different cultural sets. She can choose what normative set to adhere to, depending on the circumstances. In Italy, choosing not to identify herself as an Italian, she can liberate herself from the constraints of the 'beautiful body' model. I return to this issue in the next chapter, but I want to stress here how in Franca's narrative women are conscripted as emblems of the nation, 'but they are denied national agency' (Fortier, 2000: 95). Their participation in beauty contests is part of how 'communal

identities are inscribed in women's bodies' (Fortier, 2000: 95). As Bourdieu argues, women are thus constituted as 'symbolic objects whose being is being perceived' and this has the effect of keeping women in 'a permanent state of ...symbolic dependence... and masculine domination' (Bourdieu, 2001: 66).

My interviews with recent migrant women reveal a similar attention to 'beautiful bodies' practices. Michela, a 40 year old recent migrant, narrated her discomfort at finding herself trapped in an Italian model of womanhood, which implies that you are either 'beautiful and stupid' or you are 'intelligent and ugly'. She explained that in her work environment in Italy:

> I had these two possible roles: one was to captivate with my beauty... but then I was the dick-headed, ugly, and nasty woman, and everyone would say 'she is a professor because she can't be any better in her life'! There is this latent, maybe Mediterranean thing, that the woman can make it, either because she is very beautiful and then she is highly respected, and that's ok, but she has to be extremely *super partes*, or she is ugly, nasty, hysterical, and then they let her do a man's job!

If Michela resists complying with the 'beautiful body' model, she can either embody an 'honorary man' status (Rodgers, 1981), or become effectively the deviant hysterical woman. In both cases, hegemonic gender models limit her capacities and inclinations. Migration has allowed Michela not only to find better work opportunities but also to escape the constraining gender models which structure the labour sphere in Italy. I return to this issue in chapter eight when I look at the gender motifs and disadvantages underpinning the experiences of Italian migrant women in Ireland. In the next section I turn to another common theme in many of the narratives: the diasporic sense of incompleteness.

INCOMPLETENESS

So far, I have analysed two kinds of narratives which emerged during my interviews with Italian migrant women in Ireland: narratives about the self-ascriptions to Italianness and the *differences* across its axes of differentiation; and narratives about the *gender* similarities of women's experiences, with a particular focus on their role as the reproducers of collective boundaries.

In this last section, I analyse a third recurrent narrative thread emerging in migrant women's interviews: narratives about the ultimate *incompleteness* of the diasporic experiences and the struggle of women to surrogate a sense of home/belonging. This sense of incompleteness is linked to the living between cultures, the feeling 'permanently out of place and permanently different' (Eisenstein, 2004: 70), the diasporic dualities of here and there, homeland and new country of settlement, indigenousness and dispersal (Fortier, 2000; Cohen, 1997; Tölölyan, 1996; Gilroy, 1995). Incompleteness refers to the struggles to survive in the world of nomads, about which Bauman theorises, and the need 'to grow used to the state of continuous disorientation, to the travelling along roads of unknown direction and duration, seldom looking beyond the next turn of crossing' (Bauman, 2005: 209).

During the six years in which I collected and analysed Italian migrant women's narratives, I became increasingly aware of the relevance of the narratives of incompleteness. The more I read theories and women's stories of diaspora, the more I understood and articulated narratives of myself as a diasporic subject. Positioning myself as an 'experiencing researcher' (Stanley, 1993), I increasingly developed empathy towards the experiences of incompleteness felt by the migrant women I interviewed, because this incompleteness started to affect my own life during the last stage of the research with an urgency I had not known before. I became increasingly aware of incompleteness because of the research process itself. Had I not been conducting this research, I believe, I would have not been so affected by it (as I discussed in chapter four).

The women I interviewed often spoke about feeling 'out of place' anywhere they live, always 'outsiders' in the different worlds they inhabit. Whether women migrated 60 years ago or two years ago, or were second-generation migrants, all their narratives incorporate a feeling of incompleteness, experienced as a condition of 'being away', distant, isolated and different, a state which also relates to the 'in-betweenness' (Bhabha, 1990) and liminality of the diasporic experience.

This sense of incompleteness underpins narratives that speak about a life of disorienting and incessant movement: visiting family, returning 'home' for the summer, settling down somewhere else, etc. Even when migrant women permanently re-settle in Italy, their journeying does not end as they continue to cultivate attachments and connections elsewhere (for example visiting the families

who remained in Ireland, to help them with the business, with their children, etc). Ultimately, women's diasporicity involves a state of permanent unsettlement leaving women displaced, in transit and in-between socio-spatial locations. The extract below is from a group interview with sisters-in-law Celestina and Nunzia, who are both early-waves migrants. Nunzia is a 'one and a half generation' migrant who arrived in Ireland in the 1950s. During the regular summer visits to her 'home' village in Italy she befriended Celestina, who later married her brother and subsequently moved to Ireland (in the 1970s). Nunzia narrated her return visits when Celestina used to make fun of her because she was a 'foreigner'. However, during the weaving of the narrative below, Celestina realised that through her migration she had become a foreigner in her home village too.

> Nunzia: I remember when years ago in Italy, when we use to go back in the summer, like when [Celestina's family] were living there…
> Celestina: I have to say, when we go to Italy, I mean now, we [Celestina's family] are *the foreigner*[88]*s*!
> Nunzia: We still are, we still are the foreigners!
> Celestina: *The foreigners!*
> Carla: So you are foreigners now?
> Celestina: So we're foreigners there, we're foreigners here, what the hell are we? (…) But you know what, I don't care what they say, because I know, we worked hard, and from what we have we have worked hard and our parents have worked hard, and when we want to go on holidays we go on holidays and I don't care what they call us. (*sic*)

Celestina and Nunzia both inhabited a 'diasporic space' (Brah, 1996) independently of their location within it and their dialogue shows the transnational and fragmentary nature of women's lives: their experiences and memories are rooted in more than one country and in the movement between countries. Transnationalism decentres the national affiliations of migrant women and leaves them 'in between' locations. The interview's extract above shows the collective and interactive construction of narratives, which recreate –at least *a posteriori*- a continuity of lives and memories that happened simultaneously in different places.

Nevertheless, some narratives also fail to construct these diasporic events logically. The interview transcripts reveal many cases in which women have been unable to articulate coherent self-ascriptions about their identities and their

[88] In Italian in the text.

narratives are filled with ambivalence and contradictions.[89] In this instances, the women were 'searching for a vocabulary that would adequately define their modes of living, their senses of identity, and would not emphasise their marginality' (Fortier, 2000: 120) but often their expressions fail to do so.

The bewilderment and disorientation that accompany the Italian migrant women's realisation of being displaced in the diaspora are inscribed in the narratives about the impossibility of belonging *and* returning to Italy. For example, Jenny, a long-settled migrant married to an Irish man, explained that after 30 years in Ireland, she still feels 'Italian'. However, if she were to 'lose all that keeps me in Ireland' (her husband, her daughter, her job), she still wouldn't go back to Italy:

> I wouldn't manage to reintegrate myself, my colleagues here in the office take fun of me, they tell me that I am more Irish than the Irish themselves. No way! I feel Italian, hundred per cent Italian, and I will always feel Italian, as a citizen, as nationality, as a way of thinking, but I wouldn't manage to get reintegrated in Italy. It's too many years I am here, how would I manage? Start again, [getting used] to the system, I wouldn't manage. I don't have anybody [in Italy]. Really nobody. Ok some friends, but I see them once or twice. That's it. They have their own life too. This is really a big regret.

The diaspora constructs Jenny as an 'outsider' subject and leaves her outside and 'away' from both her worlds of reference, Italy and Ireland. For Valeria, a long-settled migrant who arrived in Ireland in the early 1980s, this condition of incompleteness is also present, deriving from the fact that 'after so many years you live in another country, you can learn to adapt', but you are 'always on the defensive' and you have 'always to make an effort to explain' yourself (Valeria). When I asked if this was a source of suffering, she replied that she had 'not really suffered, but it has been an effort. But an effort which has always stimulated me, kept me alert, intrigued me' (Valeria). Similarly, Nadia, a recent migrant, stressed the fact that 'when you are abroad and you go back [to Italy], you see things in a more objective way and with some detachment. Even though at the end you feel a little bit like a fish out of water' (Nadia).

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[89] For example Sisina tells that she wants 'to go back to Italy, when I can for holidays. I don't think of going back to remain in Italy, because I don't know, I am more comfortable here. The family is here. Not only, the family is here, the children are born here, family is here, that is, I feel more comfortable here actually, but I always want to go back to Italy, because there are many things there, there are parents, relatives, there are, then when I'm able I want to go back to Italy'.

'Away' and distant in diaspora, migrant women frequently experience a sense of isolation. This is particularly strong for the women of the early-waves migrant groups, constrained in their choices and in their domesticity (see chapter seven). However, this theme also emerged in the narratives of the recent and long-settled migrant women I interviewed. Recent migrant women like Alessia, observed that 'once you leave, really you are on your own'. You have 'always to care for yourself' and there are no other people who look after you. She put it as follows:

> You are upset on a Thursday night, you know, you just kind of sit there and go, 'right, things will get better!' You can't find a place to live, or, you know? The water is gone again, or the heater is not working, and that's just it. You are on your own, I mean, you find good friends or good flatmates, but it's kind of, you have to rely on yourself.

Intricately linked to the women's sense of isolation is the emotional cost of multiple separations and ruptures of relations which migration involves. Especially in Dublin (a global city which attracts a large population of young, professional and mobile European citizens) many recent and long-settled migrant women complain of having 'met a lot of people and too many people who have left' (Silvia). Silvia decided to return to Italy after two years in Dublin, because she 'needed stable points of reference. It is emotionally very hard to stay here' because as soon as you find 'friends, they leave. And you stay behind to miss them and you make so many efforts to stay in contact. Then you realise it is in vain. It all seems so superficial... Home is more stable'.

Another manifestation of the condition of incompleteness is contained in the narratives about what I call 'boxed diasporicity'. In their incessant journeying, many of the women spoke of their need to recreate a surrogate sense of home/belonging. The image of 'boxes' is a metaphor of diaspora *par excellence* and frequently migrant 'women articulate and give meaning to the spaces they inhabit through the objects they bring back and forth' (Salih, 2001: 667). A newly arrived migrant, Alessia explained that her mother had, at the time of the interview, just bought a house in the south of Italy, thus ending years of 'homelessness' and wandering:

> She is now putting together all the boxes that she has spread all around the world and you know, it was just a very emotional time for all of us, especially for her, because she is almost sixty and to think that she has been wandering for years, for the last ten years, is

> not easy at that age, or at any age, but even more so then. So it was just this idea that finally, I mean, if I wanted I actually could go back, because I couldn't really go back before.

Alessia observed that when her mother moves to a new country, she packs her favourite 'kitchen' utensils –the ultimate signifier of a home- in boxes and sends them to her new 'home'. These 'travelling' boxes of kitchen utensils recreate a sense of home/belonging for both Alessia and her mother, even though they live in different countries.

Many other narratives deal with, and reveal the importance of, how life memorabilia are selected and boxed. A professional recent migrant, Francesca, spoke about the discomfort to have to 'pack her life' when she moves and 'to have to choose what to pack', observing how 'hard it is to have so often to choose what to retain of your past. Clearly it cannot all fit in a few boxes'. Boxes are shuffled around or stored elsewhere, waiting for a return, which may never happen or may be deferred until it becomes an unrealisable projection of the imagination. Michela, recently arrived in Ireland, also narrated her 'boxed diasporicity'. At the time of the interview, she had 'lived in Ireland for three years', but only for a few months each year. Her family lived in Holland and she commuted regularly between these countries. When she left her 'home' town in Italy, almost twenty years earlier, she had planned to leave for a short while and she kept most of her personal belongings in a box in her parents' house:

> In fact I left with the idea that I put everything in a box, in the basement, pieces of my life in the box, because I was going to come back in a few years. But I never really went back. In fact that box is still in the basement; so the huge box of my stuff, of all my youth, is still in the basement. Besides, I have also lost the keys to its lock, I can't even open that box, if I want I would need to force it open.

Leaving as if one will return is a strategy which many women of the recent waves of migration enact, in order to deal with the insecurity of migration. Alessia believes that once you decide to migrate, you 'need to tell yourself, oh it's only for a while... that you will return' even if you 'instinctively' know that it is 'impossible': this is the 'safety valve' of diaspora. Similarly, Federica thinks of her stay in Dublin 'as temporary' so 'it is easier to appreciate what I have here, instead of missing all that is good in Italy. I just try to make things easier for myself'. Francesca also states that only because she 'wasn't always clear that I would have

gone back' she was able to function in Ireland and now that 'I know I will leave, I am a bit absentminded'.

Through these acts of 'deferring temporariness', migration gives birth to a diaspora; it unfolds in projects with uncertain outcomes, where there is neither a fixed nor durable arrival, nor a projectable return. The longer the migration experience lasts, the bigger the chance for it to develop into a diaspora. This involves complex decisions and often scenarios with irreconcilable choices. In diaspora, families are dispersed, relations become entangled and belonging rhizomic (Gilroy, 1997). This condition affects women's lives with more urgency and more intensity than men, because women in general retain stronger responsibilities and commitments towards immediate and extended family networks. Their connections tend to be strong and regular because of their roles as mothers (see chapter seven). Anna, an early-waves migrant explained how 'mothering the diaspora' complicated her life and created ruptures and splits, as relations had to be established with people living in different places:

> But your children were born here [in Ireland] as well, and your parents are in Italy. See it's a little bit of a problem, because your children... they are born here too, so they are part Irish. ... And then they begin to integrate, because they begin to marry into Irish families as well, you see. ... So the children are really half Italian and half Irish.

Motherhood is a harbinger of diaspora. It is as mothers that women begin to realise that the temporariness of their migration projects is an illusion. Jenny, a long-settled migrant, described how the advent of motherhood changed her conception of what it is to be 'away' (temporary migration) and 'really away' (diaspora). She initially moved to Ireland in the 1970s to improve her English and remained in Ireland to work for a large Italian company, where she now holds a managerial position. She remembered that when she started to work women were not legally covered by a pension plan. She had not planned to remain in Ireland, therefore she did not think it necessary to set up a pension scheme. She lived in Ireland as if she was always about to return 'home'. It was only when she had a child, ten years after she first started to work in Ireland that she realised that she had travelled far into her diaspora: she was to stay away. She realised that:

> I was still here. I said, hey hold on, I am still here. And at this point I won't return to Italy, I have a daughter, what do I do? Do I toss her

all around? Then I said, right I'd better start to paying pension contributions!

Even though at some point settling down becomes a necessity and a possibility, for the majority of the women in my research, there remains an unfinished aspiration. A sense of incompleteness underpins all their experiences of diaspora.

THE EMERGENCE OF A HOMING DESIRE

Having looked at the narratives of incompleteness (feeling a stranger in the place once known as 'home', isolation, boxed diasporicity, incessant journeying), I have shown that diaspora is a process of experiencing a slow –and usually painful- realisation that you are 'away' and that home is 'lost' and does not exist in any fixed place. This is an act of awareness which with time intensifies even further migrants' yearning and nostalgia for 'home', what Brah (1996) calls 'homing desires'. Home is both a material and symbolic quest. The women spoke in detail about their houses and their material and symbolic contents. The early-waves migrant families have spent a lot of their resources on buying houses, frequently in Italy, where they live only for a few months or weeks of the year, in particular during the summer season. Assunta explained that having a house in Italy gives migrants a 'sense of control', it gives 'them a feeling of something very solid' as if they could say 'at last we arrived'. The house incorporates the sense of belonging which is lost in the diaspora. It also signifies economic success, which functions as a justification for the hardship endured in migration. [90]

The women I interviewed of the early-waves migrant groups described large villas which they built in Italy (apparently so luxurious that some have started to talk about the hills in the Frosinone province as 'the Hollywood Hills'). Their families planned to return in Italy and live in these houses once they retired from their businesses in Ireland. However, the majority of the early-waves migrants never returned to live permanently in Italy and lived instead in Dublin in much more modest accommodation, usually over their shops. To quote Assunta, most

[90] 'Why moving at all', asked a man I met at the Italian mass in Dublin, 'if I had to be poor, I would have remained in Italy!' (Field Diary, December 2004).

have 'houses in Italy, or they may have a property in Spain. But as far as they are concerned they go down in the morning, and they open the shop door'. The ties they built over the years in Ireland complicate the possibility of their return 'home' and their large villas remain empty in the hills of Frosinone as a testimony of the paradoxes of diaspora.

This is why home can be understood as both the physical space migrant women and their families inhabit and as the symbolic conceptualisation of where one belongs (Salih, 2001: 666). Home in diaspora translates into 'motions of journeying between home, the motions of hailing ghosts from the past, the motion of leaving or staying put, of "moving on" or "going back", the motions of cutting or adding, the motions of continual reprocessing of what home is/was/might have been' (Fortier, 2003: 130-131).

Given the many stories about the 'impossible returns', 'home' in Italy can be theorised then as a projection of the imagination and a 'homing desire', as Avtar Brah suggests, which implies, 'the collective emotional and cultural pursuit of the mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of origin' (Brah, 1996: 192). 'Homing desires' are dynamic processes, involving the acts of imaging and re-imagining (Brah, 1996). [91]

For Valeria, a long-settled migrant married to an Irish man, 'home' is about 'where one was, where there are the objects, the landscape, the habits, with which I feel at ease'. Her homing desire is made of 'banal things which maybe didn't count that much in my life before. The food I eat, or the smells, perfumes, well all what is there, the context, the loved ones'. The homing desire emerges in the narratives of recent migrants too. Alessia explained that her home is a 'particularly distant place', because her family has also migrated to other countries. For her, it is not like other Italians, who are 'here this month and then are going home, or here until I finish this course or whatever'. She cannot go home, because there is no home in

[91] Evan Boland exemplifies the 'powerful impulse' to the imagination that migration involves in the 'slow and intense reconstruction of a childhood which has never happened (as the place of origin in the diaspora is always located elsewhere) triggered by a fragrance or a trick of light that create an inconvenient and unglamorous place' not marked on physical maps, whose 'exclusion must call the very act of cartography into question' (Boland, 1997: 22).

Italy to which she can return. Her surrogate home is linked to visiting her mother, who is also a migrant who frequently moves to different countries:

> I suppose it wasn't in Italy, but it was real closest to what I could get to, in the sense that my mum was there and we would eat Italian food, or not always, you know what I mean? She lived in Florida so there is all sort of great of things there to be experienced, but it was my mum, it was home

As Sara Ahmed highlights, home is not only about 'fantasies of belonging' but is also a sentimentalised space of belonging (Ahmed, 1999). It involves how you feel or might fail to feel in a diasporic location and it is linked to the affect and the relations built around that affect. These relations create a replacement of the sense of homing desire/belonging in the diaspora, as is evident in my research, even though this ultimately remains incomplete.

For each narrative about belonging that was articulated, another narrative of the failure of belonging followed. For example, Luana, a long-settled migrant, told me that she didn't feel the detachment from her family so strongly, because she knew that she would see her parents at least three times a year ('they would come here maybe for a holiday, or we certainly go down for a month every summer'). However, these visits were, as she stressed demoralised, 'what they are, a few months in between other visits... You do miss your parents'. Similarly, Valeria, also a long settled migrant, spoke about the strong support and encouragement from her family: 'because my mother at the beginning, either she came for long periods or in any case there was always willingness, I don't know to visit each other, and ... my mother would bring [my daughter] to Italy, in July. I would stay a week, and then I would come back to Ireland and work'. But at the end of the narrative, when she is at 'home in Italy', Valeria feels a 'sense of relaxation, which starts from when I open the door and I am at home where I was... which here I don't have'.

The emphasis on connectivity inscribed in the 'homing desire' is visible in many narratives and it implies that the pain and loss of home can be passed on to new generations of migrants. For example, Leda, a 66 years old 'one and a half migrant' woman, migrated at the age of twelve to Dublin, and explained how when she returns (for visits and work) to her town in Italy 'I have a feeling of home, that here [in Ireland] I don't have. Because it is my language, it is my people, even if don't know the road, it doesn't matter. It's where I was born'. Her son grew up in

Ireland internalising his mother's 'homelessness' and at the time of the interview, he had just bought her a flat in Italy. He 'was in tears' Leda tells, 'it was an important dream for him. Because he said, mamma see, you have to have something of yours, I don't want you go to your cousin, you have to have your own home'.

Conclusion

To conclude, the narratives about 'home' expose the limitations of the essentialist notion of belonging understood as a place rooted in space and time. They also demonstrate how, when considered as a work of imagination, 'home' is testament to the human capacity to go on making and remaking lives, a task in which women have a particularly relevant role. The next chapter addresses this issue further by looking at the gender specific ways in which diaspora affects women, creating specific struggles and resistance, enabling and disabling outcomes. While diaspora works simultaneously to constrain and emancipate women, the tensions between these two forces are often played out between women, particularly between mothers and daughters, as I discuss at the end of the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

WOMEN'S *STRUGGLES* AND ACTS OF *RESISTANCE*: MOTHERING THE DOUBLE DIASPORA

> My grandmother wanted to get out of that situation that she was in Italy. And she wanted to try something different. And I think she wanted that for her daughters too.
> (Franca)

Chapter six began a critical examination of the gendered migratory experiences of Italian women in Ireland. It looked at the personal narratives of women, which pointed to the 'quiveriness' (Fortier, 2000) of Italian identities, the gendered implications of belonging to an ethno-national collectivity, and the ultimate sense of incompleteness that characterises women's experiences in diaspora. This chapter continues the work of unearthing and excavating women's narratives about their struggles and resistances, their gains and their losses in migration. It takes into account 'the complex nature of women's positions' that does not permit us to see migration simply as either 'leading always to a loss, or always to a gain in social status' (Anthias, 2000: 36; my emphasis).

The analysis in this chapter engages with the notion of 'diaspora space' as a space where new forms of belonging and otherness are appropriated and contested (Brah, 1996: 244). As Brah stresses, the diasporic journeys and border crossing are not always 'mediated through the dominant culture(s)' and do not occur only 'across the dominant/dominated dichotomy, but equally there is a traffic within cultural formations of the subordinated groups' (Brah, 1996: 209). This diasporic social substratum allows women to articulate personal identities with the collective experiences of their families and groups, while their personal experiences 'etched in the daily minutiae of lived social relations' produce trajectories that do not simply mirror group experiences (Brah, 1996: 124). In my study, this translates into a notion of two-tiered sociality of women, who enact traditional gender roles

(involving gendered struggles) while they also perform emancipated gendered subjectivities (gendered acts of resistance). In this sense, it is possible to affirm that the women 'already recognize each other not by essentialist notions of diaspora identity, but by a shared circumstance that is still imperfectly articulated. [They] are the ones who try to keep on trying to unsay' (Ang-Lygate, 1996: 159). In particular, the main question I want to raise is about the coexistence of contradictory forces of migrant women's loss and gain in diaspora. How do conflicting and divergent social contexts coexist?

To answer this question, I introduce the notion of 'double diaspora'. Borrowing from Liz Stanley (1997a), I use the term double diaspora to describe the condition of Italian migrant women who are 'away' and distant from Italy but also 'away' and distant from the hegemonies and authority of Italian migrant groups in Ireland. Their not-belonging, or belonging to somewhere else, is a state they live within their diaspora (Stanley, 1997a: 13). The women are doubly marginal and different, both as ethnicised and as gendered subjects; they also inhabit two-tiered parallel spheres of sociality, in which they act as emancipated and powerful agents, while simultaneously maintaining traditional gender roles. This is what I theorise as a double diaspora and I explore in this chapter following four sections.

The first section outlines the gendered struggles and acts of resistance of Italian migrant women in Ireland. For the early-waves migrant groups, the analysis focuses in particular on women's subordination in their households (what I call the 'behind the counter' condition), the lack of education and self-confidence, and the issue of violence. In the narratives of recent and long-settled migrant women, other gendered struggles involve an internalisation of patriarchal rules and an extreme sense of isolation.

The second section explores the traditional constraints and structural disadvantages of women in migration, particularly by looking at women's stories about men that reveal a symbolic order of 'masculine domination' (Bourdieu, 2001). My interest here is to highlight the autonomy and persistence of structures that subordinate and exclude women; structures which have an 'historical weight and formidable inertia' (Winant et al. 1995 in Bettie, 2003: 192) despite the capacity of women and men to resist and negotiate them.

The third section develops the argument about the double diaspora of women, with reference to two distinct groups of early-waves migrant women as well as

recent and long-settled migrant women. Highlighting the micropoetics and micropolitics of women's agency and power, I analyse Italian migrant women's empowered agency and their gendered 'traditions of resistance, protest and cultural innovation' (Ifekwunigwe, 2003: 62). These questions reveal 'the effects of individual circumstances' in the migrants' lives, 'the growth of independence, the pleasure as well as the pain in the crossing of boundaries' (Buijs 1993: 3).

The last section of the chapter articulates the argument that although migration has the potential to be an emancipatory force for women, it can simultaneously work to constrain them. The tensions between these two forces of the double diaspora are often played out between women, particularly between mothers and daughters. The analysis of diasporic motherhood enables me to deconstruct existing assumptions about migrant women's roles.

My decision to present the gendered struggles and acts of resistance of migrant women in separate sections is dictated by an analytical imperative to highlight how both disabling and enabling social contexts coexist in migration. However, the dialectical interplay of these two qualities is of paramount importance to my analysis and I aim to highlight its tension when possible. It is this dialectical tension that constitutes the terrain upon which women's double diaspora is actualised and experienced.

GENDERED STRUGGLES OF MIGRATION

Early-waves migrant women: 'behind the counter', sacrifices and violence

The narratives of the early-waves Italian migrant women frequently recount their experiences working in 'fish and chips' shops. These experiences include filling the gaps in the long hours of opening, preparing food in 'the back kitchen' and serving 'at the counter' while at the same time managing the family chores and rearing children. The 'fish and chips' take-away business activity has deeply constrained the lives of both women and men, who have to work long hours late into the night. However, it especially impinged on women as it directly affected their traditional domesticity, which expanded into the back kitchens of the 'fish and chips' shops, usually located adjacent to the migrants' family homes. Anna, a 60

year old early-waves migrant woman explained that 'this type of business' required 'hard work' and:

> If you want to see that food is working out good, and well cooked, you have to, some of the family have to be there, and the women seem to be the ones for that.

Because of their traditional domesticity, women shared the burden of responsibility in their family's businesses. They constituted a primary source of flexible and cheap labour and produced fundamental services for the family. The important role that women played remains unacknowledged, not merely due to the qualities of domestic work but because of the tendency to devalue whatever work women do (Phizacklea 2003a, 2003b; Di Leonardo, 2001). Expectations to do domestic work represent such an encumbrance for women that they frequently complained of having been 'recruited' in Italy as 'staff' and 'slaves' by the men of their families, to work in shops, restaurants, and at home (Sonia). Sonia recounted that she came to Ireland 'already grown up' and her life has:

> Been *behind the counter*, and rearing the children. We didn't have anything else. Now is different. Before there was the counter of the 'fish and chips' and staying at home. Instead our children, those who are grown up now, they have a different life. They go out, they enjoy themselves more than we did. They go to the disco, to the nightclub, we never had anything of this' (*sic*).

In the families involved in the 'fish and chips' business, women lead lives of sacrifices. Assunta, a 70 year old first generation migrant, narrated that she:

> Left school at 12 years of age and immediately went behind the counter, I wasn't given a choice, it was the same for my sisters, we weren't given a choice; it was expected. You went in the family business, and we did that. I spent all my youth behind the counter, since when I was about seven years of age, behind the counter serving.

Assunta remarked that the strengthening of diasporicity (characterised by transnationalism and fast changes) reinforces women's constraints. She told how 'many Italian men now go back to Italy each year, and stay there, and the wives are still here *behind the counter*, still working hard'. Assunta also acknowledged how, despite the changes:

> Women are still *dominant* behind the counter. Any of the Italian restaurants the man would be out in the front, good evening,

> buonasera, but in the back kitchen it's the wives that must do the cooking of the best of restaurants (sic).

'Behind the counter' and 'in the back kitchen' are recurrent expressions in many early-wave migrant women's narratives. These expressions can be understood, rather than merely denoting actual working spaces, as metaphors of the condition of migrant women. They represent a symbolic space of subordination, where women are in fact, as Assunta clarifies, 'behind the men'. This condition has negatively affected women's lives, as women:

> Got into bad health, being in the kitchen all the time... working hard and long hours... the steam, having children, standing on their feet, varicose veins, moving problems, so many of [the women], it's true (Assunta).

'Behind the counter', Italian migrant women have been limited in relation to education, professional development, going out and meeting people outside the 'community' of Italians. Equally significant, this condition has also constrained women's self-confidence and spaces of expression, as I demonstrate below. But it must be also underlined how -in contrast with the constraints which women spoke about - the language women use is often one of a 'dominant' and powerful agency, as in Assunta's case above, and not just of victimhood and subordination. The doubleness of this discursive practice runs, as a *fil rouge,* throughout women's narratives, constructing the very condition of the 'double diaspora' that I explore in this chapter.

There are no definite figures about the demographic profile of the Italian migrant population in Ireland[92], but we know from the narratives of the women who participated in my research that the lack of education is one of the main disadvantages women face. All of the five first generation women and one of the two 'one and a half' generation migrant women associated with the early waves of

[92] Data I collected in 2003 from the registry of the Italian Embassy in Dublin showed that out of a population of 1113 men and 833 women, proportionally, women had less academic qualifications than men. However, no specification of age and time of immigration of the population was available.

No school qualifications: Men (93) – Women (100)
Primary school: Men (141) – Women (214)
Intermediary School (Scuola Media): Men (356) – Women (147)
Secondary School: : Men (523) – Women (372)
University Degree: : Men (359) – Women (268)

migration arrived in Ireland without having completed compulsory school (usually till they are 15) and with poor or no English. Six older migrant women (aged between 55 and 75) of the second and third generation also told of how they had limited education in Ireland, with their level of English proficiency remaining low or very low.

Traditionally in the impoverished rural areas of the Frosinone Province where these women came from, families were governed by a working class ethos and a patriarchal culture that valued the investment in the education of male children to the detriment of female children. Even though younger women of the second and third generation have been supported and encouraged to pursue secondary education, they were generally expected to return to work in the family business soon after having finished school.

Women are aware of these disadvantages and spoke resentfully about their menfolk (husbands, brothers, etc) who finished compulsory school while they had not been allowed to do so, often against their strong aspirations (Maria, Nunzia, Celestina). One of the debilitating consequences of the lack of education is the low self-esteem many women exhibited when talking about themselves. Maria, a first generation 60 year old migrant woman, affirmed:

> I don't like women's liberation, well maybe because I am not educated enough, you know? I feel like I wouldn't be able to do a work that a man does, you know? And I don't mean just digging roads, all kind of works that men do. I prefer to depend on a man. That's my [limitation], not depend, that's again because I don't have enough school, is that right? You are very strong minded, I am uneducated, and you can do as well more than a man, is that the real [question]?

Maria explained that her daughter, who is my age and a college graduate as well, had already confronted her on the issue of women's liberation.[93] In the extract above, she anticipated a possible similar objection from me and expressed insecurity about herself because, as she put it, she had not 'enough school'. She explained that her lack of education always pushed her 'to step back a bit' and she felt limited in what she could do. She also narrated that:

> When I got my kids in school, I did a full course of flower arrangements. I did full course in furniture restoration, you know oh

[93] Her daughter, like myself, had also moved to another country and in the course of the interview, Maria and I both came to recognise many similarities of our mothering/daughtering the diaspora and had extensive discussions about it.

> I did something, yeah, but one thing I regret. I should have learnt more English! Go to school! Learn how to write in English, but no! Now I feel so stupid, because my kids have been to college... I feel stupid! And maybe that's why the majority of women here you know, you feel silly, you know, you really do.

Because of my personal biography, growing up in a family where half of the women I loved had no chance of pursuing their education as per their inclination, I was extremely sensitive to Maria's finding herself limited in her personal development. I was also aware of how women like Maria, having made many personal sacrifices to give their children an education that they were denied, frequently found in their children the reminders of their own limitations. Therefore, the Italian migrant women of my study live very close to the 'class injury' (Bettie, 2003: 21) which generally follows the acquisition of social and economic capital by second-generation migrants. Class injury increases Italian migrant women's insecurity and sense of failure, arguably more strongly than men's because women are more disadvantaged in their educational and professional development. The issue of class injury inflicted by second-generation daughters highlighted the ambivalence I felt about my position as a researcher. Given my positionality as a classed Italian subject, with a specific educational background, I found myself far from being neutral and 'one of them', a point of painful comparison and confrontation (as I discussed in chapter five).

Lacking qualifications and confidence, 'behind the counter' women are heavily burdened: they are confined in domesticity and within the family, yet they rarely own the family business. Their identities are represented and articulated as deeply family based, and this is even more constraining in the Italian cultural context where family is central and 'teleological' to the collective projects of belonging and affiliation (Fortier, 2000). In this sense, family functions as 'the point of departure and the end point, fatalistically inscribing, and inscribed within, the Italian modus vivendi' (Fortier, 2000: 127). Women are key agents of the family and of the culture of relations that it involves, and as Di Leonardo puts it, they do the main share of kin work – the actual acts of cultivating relations and ties (Di Leonardo, 2001; see also next chapter). The role of keeping connections alive with family members involves strong constraints and assigns many responsibilities to women, a position which has a higher relevance in migration when family values and locations sustain the growth of the Italian 'community'.

Franca's narrative serves as a good example. Franca told of her aunt, Teresa, a 75 year old second-generation migrant to Ireland. Since Teresa was the eldest daughter, it was assumed that she would never marry, 'that her role would be to take care of the two elderly parents. And she did'. To fulfil her caring role, Teresa undergoes the ultimate female sacrifice: the sacrifice of her motherhood, and regrettably so, because as Franca noted, she 'would have been a fantastic mother, because she was a mother to all of us'. The story is told with great emphasis, and I could clearly sense the pain created in Teresa's life by the gender assumptions and impositions. Despite the ultimate sacrifice, Teresa was left with no inheritance from her father. Everything went to the only son of the family and Franca explained that:

> When [the grandfather] died, she [aunt Teresa] just went along with it, because she was the eldest and she felt that's the thing you do, you don't criticize your father. And then my nonna passed away and my aunt still lived in the house and I said to her, why couldn't you [claim the house for yourself by Irish law]... and she goes 'oh that's the way it is'.

Traditional patriarchal family norms still limit the freedom of young women of the second generation. Carmela, a 30 year old professional second-generation migrant woman, observed how she was still held responsible for the family chores. For example, when Carmela and her brother were visiting their 'mum's house', she recounted, her brother would leave his 'plate on the counter' and her father would leave it on the table. She was expected to clear the table and tidy up. Even though she generally fulfilled the task without complaining, she discussed how she would have wanted to confront her brother (not her father, however) and ask:

> Why don't you rinse the plate and put it in the dishwasher like the rest of us?' But I don't know, maybe *I have been conditioned to just accept the fact that's ok*, he is the boy in the family, he can just leave the plate there knowing that somebody else, i.e. one of the sisters or the mum, is going to clean up after him.

Notably, domesticity traps women in a sphere of limited and subordinated power, but the house signifies also women's power domain (notably, Carmela talks about 'my mum's house' when referring to the family house). Interestingly, the narrative above shows also that it is not just men who subordinate women like Carmela, but older relative women as well, who, by controlling and scrutinising younger women, extract power and authority for themselves. Women's key roles in

their families and communities are invisible. Equally invisible is the (not only symbolic) violence from which they suffer. The issue of violence emerges from women's narratives only sporadically, even though they refer to it explicitly, when it is mentioned. The interview with Marisa was particularly revealing. Marisa migrated to Ireland some 30 year ago to join her sister who was working in a 'fish and chips' shop in Dublin. At the time of the interview, she had lived for 23 years in a small town in the Irish countryside, having married an Italian migrant man who was also born in Italy. Marisa told harrowing stories of abuse perpetrated by her husband. She spoke of how she had:

> Gone off abuses every time. Even when I was expecting the baby, the children, he still hit me and everything and all the times, I had black eyes and everything... I worked till the nine month. ... I really am, honest to god, I mean I am fed up, you know, I try to be happy, to be good and everything, but it's not easy, it hasn't been easy, not for me anyway (*sic*).

A few months before I met Marisa for the interview, her husband had abandoned her leaving her with their two children and a shop to take care of. One of her sons was in prison. Her daughter was refusing to talk to her. Among the many difficulties she mentioned, the diasporic tyranny of distance and time seemed the harshest problems, because of the drastic choices it involved. For example, recounting the story of her estrangement from her daughter, Marisa constructed a narrative that focused particularly on the reasons why she had to leave Ireland for a few months - to go to Italy to take care of her ailing mother. Having missed the chance to attend her father's funeral a few years earlier, she hastened to go back to her mother, and left her children in her husband's care. When she returned to Ireland her daughter had left home and hadn't spoken to her since then, and Marisa did not know why.

Marisa was the only woman among my interviewees who spoke directly about domestic violence. And I felt utterly unprepared to hear it.[94] It was not simply that I could not see Marisa as a victim of domestic violence, it was also that I had not realised about domestic violence being an issue for the women I was interviewing,

[94] I took notes about how I resented having naively asked her why she had not left her husband and why she stayed so many years with him even though he was abusing her. I worried about how much power and responsibility I had in my position as researcher, feeling that Marisa had entrusted me with her story and 'in me she might have found yet another person who could not fully understand her pain' (Personal Notes).

because they had not allowed me to enter the 'territory of their silence' (Lentin, 2000a, 2000b) during the interview process. I had to re-read the interview transcriptions to realise that violence was indeed an 'untold story', yet one that was written between the lines of women's personal narratives[95], or more to the point, behind the façade of their double diaspora, as I explain below.

In the interviews following Marisa's, I could probe other early-wave migrant women about what they knew of domestic violence against women. Their answers would typically be contradictory, and showed that issues indeed existed but were not discussed upfront. For example, when asked if she had ever heard of any case of violence against women, Assunta replied that there were 'no scandals involved' in the 'Italian community' but she also added that recently, she had 'heard of stories' which 'were not told' in the past. [96] There is an inherent contradiction in this presentation (again, the *fil rouge* of the double diaspora), which uses the terms 'scandal' as euphemism for violent and dysfunctional families. At one level, the narrative claims that violence does not exist, but at another, it also asserts that violence does indeed affect women's lives.

The 'untold stories' of violence mark a territory of silence fenced by a feeling of shame that victims may experience but also by the collective *omertá* [code of silence] shrouding the germinal presence of violence in some Italian migrant groups. In another case, a 60 year old returnee migrant woman, Mafalda, recounted, without giving much emphasis on it, how her husband used to hit her, and even prohibited her from appearing unaccompanied in public. For a few years, she was not allowed to leave her house alone, apart from accompanying their children to school. It seems that the collective *omertá* is ultimately enforced by the uncontested acceptance of violence as part of the 'order of things' and of 'the way men and women are', (Carmela), as a second generation migrant women put it. Carmela, a 30 year old second generation migrant, recounted:

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[95] This attitude may not merely be confined to Italian migrants. In a recent report commissioned by the Ministero per le pari opportunita [Ministy for Equal Opportunity], it emerged that physical, sexual and psychological violence is still very high in Italy. On a sample of 25,000 women aged between 10 and 70, 31.9% claimed to have suffered from domestic violence, with only 18.2 considered that domestic violence is a crime. For the majority it remains 'just something that happens'. (*La Repubblica*, 20 Luglio 2007)

[96] Maria tells in particular that 'because each of us knew, each of us was very close, there wasn't scandals involved. If anybody heard that, now over the years I have heard stories about some of the husbands having a girlfriend... but in those days we wouldn't have heard about it' (Assunta). This narrative is inherently contradictory.

> I don't actually know why I am saying this, but I remember one time, coming home from school and the lady in question... was in our house, and she was crying and she had a black eye, because basically her husband had hit her and so she came to my mum, she came, because her mother was in Italy ... I don't know how this looks, very posh, very bad on my dad's part but, ehm ... she was bruised, so obviously [she was attacked]. But, ehm, I remember my dad didn't tell her to go home, but basically he said that 'well, she is his wife and she has to go home'. What he was saying is that *this is just the way it is and that's the way men are and that's the way women are, and you'll accept that.* And that was my dad, my dad said that.

In this text, Carmela expressed her perplexity about her father complying with the violence, but she also justified him, by referring to the value system in which both her father and herself are implicated.[97] Marisa, Assunta, Mafalda and Carmela are women of different ages (respectively 45, 70, 60 and 30) and have different histories of migration (first generation and second generation). However, they are all affected by a similar cultural model, in which violence against women is barely acknowledged, let alone contested. Because of my methodological choice, having chosen an open-ended unstructured interview model, I was not able to pose direct questions on this issue. Therefore, my analysis here can only suggest the direction for future research on an 'uncharted territory of silence'. However, the emergence of these narratives about violence reinforces the argument I put forth in this section about women living within the (not only symbolic) structures of subordination, invisibility and constraints. These limitations, apart from impinging on women's education, ownership, domestic violence, etc, also limit the less material aspects of women's lives, like their capacity to express their subjectivities and their sense of confidence.

Recent And Long-settled Migrants: 'I Didn't Have A Choice'

When looking at the narratives of recent and long-settled migrants, a similar picture of many gendered struggles emerges. Even though many of the stories about women's disadvantages in migration are constructed in the past tense, ('women were treated so differently', Franca), limitations did not only happen in the past. Rather, they still affect migrant women, including the second/third generations and

[97] Emerging in this narrative is also the issue of 'fictive motherhood' ('she came to my mum, she came, because her mother was in Italy'), to which I return at the end of this chapter.

long-settled/recent migrant women, albeit differently. The more recent groups of migrant women grew up in a less blatantly patriarchal culture and generally arrived in Ireland with higher levels of education, frequently to pursue professional careers. Nonetheless, their narratives tell of many structures of gender subordination often enhanced or generated anew by the migration process.

Being conditioned to 'accept' limiting gender rules is an issue that recent migrant women hailing from Italy often emphasised These women complained of being subjugated and subordinated both in their families and in larger social contexts. For example, Monia, a 30 year old Sicilian migrant woman who had lived four years in Ireland at the time of the interview, stated that in Sicily she had no choice and no future: she 'had to leave'. She was moving away not just from the depressed Sicilian economy and labour market, but also from a 'controlling' father, who prevented her from going out at night for 'fear of what the neighbours would think'. The collective patriarchal pressure to keep her 'at place', also pushed Monia to move away.

She arrived in Ireland at the end of the 1990s, at the height of the economic boom of the Irish 'Celtic Tiger', but what she praised was not the ease of finding jobs *per se*, as much as the confidence as a woman that economic emancipation gave her. With a renewed migratory sense of self-awareness and authority, Monia felt 'free and independent' as a gendered subject, being able 'to go to a pub till late, and meet men'. For many migrant women like Monia, migration is a social strategy of escaping gender constraints, in situations where changing the constraining social structures in which women are embedded seems an insurmountable task.

Another gendered struggle that recent migrant women talked about during interviews arose from the severing of their relations and ties with family and friends. This involved either a sense of solitude and lack of support or a strong pressure to 'return home' and perform assigned gender roles. This condition was heightened by Italian women's positions and responsibilities as mothers, that is as key agents of the culture of connectivity within the 'teleology' of the family (Fortier, 2000: 127). This is the social context that surrounds the negotiations of the recent migrant women with the families they are leaving behind. For example, Federica, who moved to Dublin three years ago, revealed that her family continued

to give her 'a hard time asking me continuously, when do I go back? ... We had many tensions because of the reciprocal dependency existing in my family'.

Federica recognised that in migration, she had loosened the dependency and the reciprocity of her family ties, but she has also lost the stability offered by these strong ties. On the one hand she felt isolated, but on the other hand the knowledge that she could return to the strong ties of 'her home' if she wished, was something that allowed Federica to travel further into her diasporicity and explore new territories of belonging. Ultimately, this freedom involved both new acts of resistance and new struggles. Federica recounted that:

> When I arrived here [Ireland] it was tough. I didn't know anybody. Really nobody. And it was horrible... It was hard to prepare myself to start anew... but there are also no expectations ... here I could go back to Italy whenever I wanted and know I would have been received with open arms.

Running through the narratives of recent migrants like Federica is the deep sense of solitude and isolation, which women experience in the different phases of migration. Despite frequent contacts and trips 'back home', made possible by improved technologies of communication and transportation (low-cost airline companies were often hailed as makers of transnational belonging), most migrant women - both recent and long-settled - affirmed that they were saddened by the weakening of their ties with family and friends in Italy. A subtle sense of desperation and urgency weaved throughout women's narratives of distance and return.

Nadia regretted that in her nine years 'stay' in Ireland, she had not been able 'to keep in touch with my friends in Italy'. After so many years, she still regarded her migration as a temporary project and was thinking of returning 'home' soon, yet she worried about not having enough friends in Italy. Jenny, a 55 year old long-settled migrant woman also lamented her lost contacts with friends in Italy because 'everyone is busy, they have their own lives. It is difficult to maintain the friendships of youth'.

Another 50 year old long-settled migrant, Rita, explained that as an only child, whose parents had passed away, losing such friendships involves 'disconnecting' from 'one's own Italianness', being 'thrown out nowhere'. When she returns to Italy, she does not visit her 'home town' in the north of Italy, but she goes to 'a foreign' city in the south of Italy, where some of her relatives live. Rita was

embittered by the fact that this is not 'the same town where I lived before, where I have all my memories' .

In one case, 'cutting links and cutting ties' with Italy was 'partly voluntarily' (Alessia). Alessia, a recent migrant who has lived in Ireland for eight years, explained that she wanted to distance herself from the dysfunctional family she left in Italy, from the 'bad memories, and the bad years' she associated with Italy. Apart from the significant association of home with memories, an issue to which I return in the next chapter, these narratives reveal the extent to which migrant women experience a piercing sense of solitude deriving from 'being away'. The diasporic impermanence and vulnerability fetters and enhances women's struggles to find a surrogate sense of belonging.

Many of the recent migrant women lament a specific fatigue, as Nadia does, 'being tired to be on the move'. She explained that:

> Also from a practical point of view, I can't get organised. Every time I manage to get organised, to reach some organisational stability somehow, I still have to put things in boxes. Leave them with some friends. Go look for a place to stay, for a new job.

The fatigue of being 'on the move' and having to endure distances and ruptures impel women to search for gendered strategies of stability. Marriage frequently becomes a gendered refuge and anchorage in the diasporic 'global space of pain' (Cohen, 1997). Consider Luana, who has moved every few years with her families in different countries, until she started college in Ireland. Married to an Irish man for almost twenty years, she confided to me that:

> It had become hard to travel back and forth... so I was quite happy, to put down proper roots, because I constantly was moving around the world, all throughout my life. So when I was married, I was twenty-five at the time, I thought, finally I can settle somewhere.

Marriage can also represent an act of gendered resistance against the constraining structures of the family, back 'home' in Italy. Jenny explained that having moved away from Italy, among other reasons, to escape the control of her father, once she decided to settle down and marry an Irish man, she felt liberated. This was why she was worried about telling her father that 'I am not coming back because I decided to get married'. The reaction of her father was 'evident disappointment... almost a tragedy, because he had always controlled my life before'. As in this interview with Jenny, many of these women's stories are about

men. I analyse these narratives about men in the next section, such analysis particularly serves to highlight other structures of subordination that affect women's lives.

WOMEN'S STORIES ABOUT MEN: 'BRUSQUE' AND SILENT HEROES OF THE DIASPORA

I propose to look at women's structural disadvantages in migration by looking at women's stories about men, because, like Yuval-Davis, I believe that 'talking about women without talking about men, is like clapping hands with one hand only' (1997). However, I propose to hear of men's stories as they are told by women, because the focus of my analysis is women's voices and women's own interpretations of their lives. I am interested in unearthing women's situated understanding of *their* views on men in order to grasp the larger social context in which women are implicated from women's point of view. Women's narratives about men highlight the autonomy and persistence of social structures which subordinate and exclude women, as well as revealing the lack of opportunities and internalised limitations that inform women's lives, while simultaneously recording women's rebellion against these limitations. This is again the two-tiered sociality of migrant women – the double diaspora that is ubiquitous in their narratives.

One important strand of women's narratives about men portrays men as heroic and mythic characters vis-à-vis humbler representations of women. Men embody the heroic figures of the nation, the guardians and the creators of Italian national history. In one case, Marianna, a 35 year old second-generation migrant, exposed the contents of this masculinised Italian history by referring to her school years in Ireland. While learning about the history of Italy and World War II, she could recall stories about:

> Our granddad, who was in such and such place, when the Germans bombed Montecassino [south of Italy]. You already had those stories in the back of your mind, so when you learnt them at school for example, you probably thought that you were in touch with this [history of Italy].

Setting aside, for the moment, the issue of women's role in storytelling[98] Marianna's narrative shows how 'heroic' men protect and fight for the Italian nation, by virtue of which alliances within the nation become masculinised (Fortier, 2000). The masculinisation of national alliances goes hand in hand with the feminisation of the nation and the vulnerability of women's beautiful bodies: when women are represented as in need of protection, they are also inscribed within structures of symbolic subordination (this is a form of symbolic domination that I have analysed in the previous chapter).

When men do not fight for the honour of the nation, they become *silent heroes* of the diaspora. They are portrayed as 'terse and brusque' subjects, socialised to a traditional masculinity that 'refuses the exchange of personal experiences' and knows that 'to be friends among men, they must say nothing' (La Cecla, 2000: 134). This masculine stereotype often emerged in the narratives of women. For example, Franca recalled her uncle who used to visit her grandparents' house:

> Once every six to eight weeks to say hello. He would talk to my nonno, or maybe he wouldn't. They would sit in another room and my nonno would smoke the pipe, and my uncle Jo would have a smoke, and a coffee and that would be it.

Men's socialisations involve lesser degrees of narrative exchange of intimacies, with the women's narratives highlighting the division - that while women meet and *talk*, men meet and *do*. Early-waves migrant women tell in fact of men who used to meet together outside the household, to play cards in special clubs, 'after the shops closed. At three or four in the night. They would go to sleep at five or six' (Agata). Another woman remembered that men 'used to go out on a Monday night, about ten or fifteen of the men used to play bocce [balls]' (Assunta).

In the stories women tell of their husbands, fathers and brothers, men are described as less involved in the family care and kinwork, while women talk about themselves as the key agents of their family's connectivities. Because of these gender roles, women construct collective and transnational chains of care, while men seem less capable of sustaining cross-familial and transnational ties. This division of gender roles allows women to occupy a privileged position as the

[98] The story of Maria's grandfather is significantly told to Maria by her grandmother; see next section.

collectors of annals of memories and narratives of the diaspora, as I further explore in chapter eight.

One significant element in women's narratives of men is that while women also relate stories of dominant and 'strong women', without necessarily setting them next to narratives of 'weak men', the narratives about 'strong men' are always accompanied by stories of 'submissive women'. The emerging symbolic order reveals mark of a specific dimension of 'masculine domination', exerted 'through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition, recognition or even feeling' (Bourdieu, 2001: 2-3). In other words, this symbolic order of domination is visible in how manhood is used by women as a default term of comparison and how the comparison often portrays women as lesser subjects.

Early-waves migrant women praise men as being more outspoken, better able to speak English, more successful, etc. When I asked Assunta about her family's history, she immediately broke into the story of her 'incredible' grandfather:

> I mean it is like thinking of the Titanic when I think of my grandfather, but it was his way…he was so forward looking, he kept thinking what was going to happen, what was going to be there, you know? And everything had to be exceptionally right, he was incredible. Now, he could speak some English, he learnt to speak some English, my grandmother didn't. She, by the time they came to Ireland, my grandmother spoke no English, very very little. My grandfather had learnt to speak English, and he spoke it well.

The narratives of recent and long-settled migrant women also show how manhood functions as a general default term of comparison. For example, Michela, a recent migrant to Ireland, referred to her achievements as an intellectual against the backdrop of her father's biography and his circle of male friends. Men set the standards against which she assessed her fulfilled and unfulfilled aspirations. A variation of this hierarchical model is when women compare themselves not just with Italian men but also with Irish men. For example, Alessia expressed her discomfort at being looked upon as a *migrant woman* in Ireland. [99] She claimed that because she is a 'girl', she felt in Ireland as if she 'was not supposed to be able to be away. Or to find it appropriate'. In order to justify and validate her migration project, Alessia compared her history of migration to the story told of Irish male

[99] Alessandra recounted the many times she was asked 'why she had moved', and claimed that it was a great relief that having lived in Ireland for eight years 'I don't really get that as often, people have already asked me these questions, so they are not going to ask them again' (Alessandra).

migration. She claimed that the bias against migrant women in Ireland stemmed from 'gender stereotypes', which imply that while women are still not supposed to move away:

> An [Irish] man is expected to go out and do the wild wilderness of the Irish diaspora, and play GAA with Australian mates, become a real man and come back, you know, and set a pole (sic).

The above is an interesting text because, among other things, it reveals the extent to which migration is still associated with a gender order that sees men as 'mobile, modern, cosmopolitan, formal, and production oriented' while female migration remains anchored to 'the local, static, traditional, homebound, informal, and consumption oriented' (Freeman, 2001: 1026).

Another strand of narratives about men, which also reveals the mark of women's gender exclusion and subordination, deals with men 'served' by women and 'always coming first' (Franca). Franca, a second-generation Irish-Italian woman, expressed how 'even as a child' she could see the discrepancies in how men and women in her Italian family were treated. She remembered that:

> When my uncle would come in, my auntie Mary would have coffee straight away. Panettone at Christmas would be first for him, and my nonna would say, is Jo ok, is Jo ok? And I always felt terrible, because my mother was in my grandparents' house everyday, every single day she went down to their home, and my uncle might came in once every six-eight weeks to say hallo.

Carmela, a second-generation migrant, similarly described how her father:

> Was brought up... surrounded by women, who would do everything for him, his mother, aunties would do everything for him.

The gender assumptions behind these narratives are also present in the recent migrants' interviews, even though their cases exhibit more variations in terms of class, regional and educational articulations. Consider Monia, a 30 year old Sicilian woman, whose family is from an upper middle-class background (her mother is a secondary school teacher and her father an engineer). She underlined how:

> Men in the Sicilian reality have always had more freedom. Men can do whatever they want, but women just because they are women, sometimes cannot. For example, even the fact of going out and coming back late at night, my father would say, what would the neighbours think? But if I were a man, it wouldn't have been a problem.

Monia confided in me that during her school years, her father used to 'order' her never to sit besides boys, and this still affected her relationships with men, which are:

> Unhealthy relations ... so that for example if I go to a pub or disco now [in Ireland], I see Irish women who are very open with men, they are relaxed. I wouldn't be able to do so.

Like Monia, many women complained about their fathers and many expressed that their migration projects were pursued against the presence of intrusive and authoritarian men. These parallel similar narratives express women's strategies of migration to get away from 'imposing and tyrant mothers'. Both kinds of narratives reveal the existence of masculine hegemonies that empowers both men and women to maintain a traditional gender order that ultimately disempowers women. Narratives about men are in a sense more explicit about this societal function. Francesca, a recent migrant hailing from Sicily, stated for example that her father:

> Has been the reason of all my escapes. My mother has always supported me because she knew my father. She knew my need to set free from him.

Similarly, Jenny, a long-settled migrant woman, spoke about her authoritarian father, a man with 'a strong personality' who 'subjugated' her mother, and induced Jenny not only to move away, but also to remain in migration. She recollected how he overpowered her in many circumstances [100] and lastly confided in me that her father was:

> One of the reasons, I decided not to come (*sic*) [101] back [to Italy], because I felt, well not a prisoner, but really I didn't have the freedom of expression with my father ... yes I am hundred per cent sure about this. Now I can admit it, now that I am a bit more mature, I can admit that this has been one of the main reasons that I remained in Dublin.

Jenny's way of equating maturity with her capacity to recognise the gender motivation of migration suggests a default disposition to neglect or discard the gendered factor in migration. Notably, in most of the interviews with the women who participated in my research, the gendered reasons of migration were rarely expressed as a direct explanation of their decisions to migrate/remain in migration

[100] For example, Jenny tells that her father put her 'in a boarding school... 10 minutes from home. He said I was a bit [reckless]'.
[101] Note the use of the verb to come, as if Jackie still positions herself as living in taly.

(see chapter six). However, when probed during the interview, the interviewees - especially the younger generations of migrant women showed themselves to be aware of the gendered outcomes. For example Carmela, a 30 year old second generation migrant, considered how:

> Essentially my mum went away to work, *and that's not really why she went away*. But in fact, sure there were plenty of other reasons why my mum went away, she wanted a better life, she wanted to see more than her provincial town, so yeah, it's not something I have thought about, but it is something I think about now.

Similarly, Franca, talking about her grandmother who migrated to Ireland, expressed how:

> My grandmother wanted to get out of that situation that she was in Italy. And she wanted to try something different. And I think she wanted that for her daughters too.

To sum up, the stories about men are more public and heroic than the familial and private ones about women. Men are 'Titanic' characters - war heroes and legendary businessmen but they are also contested heroes, portrayed as spoiled, overpowering and despotic, particularly fathers. In both cases, men's representations feed into a masculinised national/diasporic hegemonic order that construct a 'shibboleth of patriarchal values', operating from, and emphasising, gendered differentiations (Fortier, 2000: 93). Gender differentiations are quintessential to the articulations of migrant belongings and affiliations, marking the boundaries of belonging while, at the same time, structuring the symbolic order that forms the basis of women's disadvantages in migration. Invisible in the general accounts of Italian migration, 'black holes' of the nationalist teleology (Lentin, 2000a), subordinated and disempowered in their households and through masculine symbolic domination, women also tell about themselves as powerful and strong agents. Their narratives, as I suggest in the next section, reveal the condition of double diaspora.

STRONG AND DOMINANT WOMEN: AGENTS OF THE DOUBLE DIASPORA

First, a necessary clarification. In talking about women's *double diaspora*, I do not mean to suggest that women have double identities (Irish and Italian). Rather, I

argue against the notion that identities are bounded; being contextual and situational, they are also multiple and shifting (see chapter two), even though they are often perceived as permanent and natural. However, following Liz Stanley's suggestion (1997a, 1997b), I use the notion of 'double diaspora' to theorise about the existence of a two-tiered sociality that characterise women's lives. First, Italian migrant women in Ireland feel distant from Italy and from their migrant hegemonies. They are doubly marginal and different, as migrants and as women. Second, the coexistence of constraints and emancipations create tensions and contradictions for migrant women. In order to defuse the tensions, migrant women actualise strategically parallel socialities, revealing how they can achieve their personal goals without jeopardising the masculinised hegemonic order of their ethno-national groups. A double-bottomed reality emerges, where women think of themselves, act and interact in a separate sphere of meanings and sociality, which coexists in parallel with the male hegemony, without disrupting the foundation of either.

On one hand, these women can perform traditional roles in their families and comply with the constraining structures of hegemonic gender order. On the other, they can simultaneously perform more emancipated and empowered roles, often without disclosing the nature of these roles to the men of their collectivities or, in other cases, simply moving away from the constraining environments. In all these cases, women do not directly contest and disrupt the stability and continuity of their cultural formations, while at the same time their cultural practices shift and change. As I argue in more depth in the next chapter, this is the terrain upon which diasporas formation can be both *regressive and progressive*, both *fluid and stable*.

In this section, I propose, firstly, to unpack the agency and resistance of women in migration, highlighting women's powerful roles and practices in migration. I examine women's power in dialectical relation with the structural gender constraints that I considered at the beginning of this chapter. Secondly, I focus on the tensions deriving from the coexistence of emancipation and constraints in migrant women's lives. This is the very foundation and substance of women's double diaspora.

There is, of course, a multiplicity of aspects and experiences in women's lives, with class and age differences being particularly relevant. I chose to look at women narratives in relation to their history of migration, as this has emerged as the most

significant category in the course of my analysis. The first part of this section focuses on early-waves migrant women and the second on recent and long-settled migrants. Both groups show similar patterns of socialisation to a double diaspora, even though the early-waves and the long-settled migrant women have more consolidated practices than recent migrants.

'When Your Daddy Go To Sleep': The Double Diaspora Of Early-Waves Migrant Women

When women talk about themselves, stories of very powerful women emerge: women who are outspoken, politically engaged and dominant. For example, Franca narrated about her grandmother's friend, a woman whom her grandfather didn't like because 'she was a very political outspoken woman and very independent'. Her grandmother would invite 'her friend over to her house and they would talk about everything'. Her friend 'would create hell, and my nonna loved that. She loved to see my grandfather in a corner and in trouble' (Franca).

I was struck by the intensity and passion with which women like Franca cherished the memories and narratives of these strong women. Oftentimes, early-waves migrant women referred to themselves as the 'boss' of their families. Mary, a 60 year old second-generation migrant, explained that her 'grandmother was a sort of a boss... that type of woman a bit domineering. You had to do, what she told you to do... she was always the one giving out, telling [her family] what to do'.

Assunta spoke in similar terms about her grandmother, her mother and herself. Despite her grandfather being the 'handsome, outgoing man' (performing Italianness with Irish people at the counter of the 'fish and chips' shop), she claimed that her 'mother was the boss, [and] I am the boss, believe me, even though my husband is older, I am the boss'. She also talked about her mother-in-law and described her as:

> The tyrant... Nobody, even her husband, would say boo to her. I was the first that stepped in there and said boo to her. And said, lay off, you know, *these boys are men*, stop telling them what to do. I couldn't believe she was so domineering, she was a tough bird. I liked her, she liked me, because I wouldn't take any nonsense from her either.

To a large extent, this text captures the intricacies of women's power and authority. In fact, Assunta gained power over her mother-in-law by authorising men

to be 'men' and redefining and reifying masculine privileges. At a symbolic level, reverting to the order by which men protect women and being the one that protect men, Assunta gained power not just over other women but also over men.

This symbolic order in which the masculine dominates holds because by 'masculinising men', Assunta reconfirms a traditional patriarchal order that tend to subordinate women. Thus, a two-tiered system of power and authority comes into place: one systemic tier in which women are the 'boss' and another one in which men have more authority. In the next chapter, I examine more how these parallel systems of power can coexist and what are their points of suture (largely dependent on narrative and discursive strategies, as I demonstrate). Here, I want to focus instead on the ubiquity of this two-tiered system of power, and on its meanings and implications in the lives of the women who participated in my research. This is the foundation of the condition that I describe as a 'double diaspora'.

A central aspect of migrant women's resistance and power in migration emerges when early-waves migrant women describe themselves as heads of their families, prevalently by virtue of their positions as 'managers' of the cultural capital and 'emotional connections' (Walter, 2001: 314) of the family. However, these roles are seen as limited to the 'private' domestic sphere, and as the 'private' and 'domestic' are disavowed, women are also disempowered. To a large extent, migrant women's roles in the family become the blueprint of women's involvement in the organisation of Italian migrants' activities and events in Ireland. As women do kin and care work and are directly responsible for childrearing, they also manage collective intra-familial spaces of socialisation. From this positionality 'women have absolutely ruled the roost of Italian community here in Ireland' (Assunta).

Even though there has never been a club dedicated to women, Italian migrant women have regularly met each other through informal networks and have been behind the organisation of many activities of the early-waves migrant groups. They have sustained the key functions of the Italian Club (balls, barbeques, etc), and of the religious or religion-related events revolving around Italian mass. Women have mobilised collective resources; they spoke about their major role in supporting the Italian Migrant Newsletter, *Italia Stampa* and the needs of the 'spiritual leader of

the community', Father Malony (Assunta). [102] Women were also active in organising language schools for migrants' children and, as they often highlighted (Assunta, Rita, Leda, Nunzia, Sonia), they were concerned *as mothers* to construct communal 'Italian' spaces of socialisation. These powerful roles fore women have been associated with familial and domestic domains; consequently, they have been taken for granted and made 'invisible', feeding from within the double diaspora of women.

Women are largely aware of their 'double diaspora' and of the invisibility that surrounds their roles. Among the women who spoke about this is Assunta who observed how:

> Women never played a visible role among the older generation, but they were there. They hide behind every business. It was the women who looked after the money, they looked after the family, looked after the running of business.

It is in this context of invisibility that women manifest and construct the double diaspora. Women's parallel and hidden agency is kept invisible for strategic reasons and it is, almost exclusively, shared among women only. I was made part of their 'hidden' double diaspora, by virtue of my specific positionality as an Italian, a migrant and a female subject. But my positionality was not a given, rather the outcome of a process that constructed degrees of acquaintance and trust. For example, after having met Emilia, a 50 year old first generation migrant, several times and having started to attend the Italian mass in Dublin that she helped organise, I reached an acceptable degree of acquaintanceship with her and I was asked to join her and her three female friends for a coffee. These women were part of a larger group of migrant women attending the Italian mass, who would regularly meet afterwards, 'for a coffee and a chat'. Notably, their husbands would not go 'as [the women] would talk about baby, cooking... and men don't want to hear all that' (Anna)

Women's double-diasporic realities were revealed during this interview, when, for example, Emilia explained the reasons why she moved to Ireland. The inceptive 'official' version of the story was that she lived in the Frosinone Province in Italy,

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[102] Assunta explained that a groups of her friends, all Italian migrant women, organised the money collection from the various migrant families to 'buy the first computer' for the journalist of the *Italia Stampa* and a car for Father Malony, so that he could follow closely the 'community's religious affairs'

when her future husband returned for a summer visit in the early 1960s, with the intention to 'look for a wife'. Her husband's cousin 'knew a relative of Emilia, and the two men arranged a date' for them. This side of the story tells of the power of men to travel, to exchange women, to arrange marriages etc. However, as Emilia continued (two hours after she had first started to talk about this) another side of this story was disclosed. Emilia narrated that as a young woman she used to work in the registry office of a small municipality in the Frosinone Province, where she met many prospective migrants getting their documents ready before their departure. Having explained this, she also revealed that:

> I agreed to marry, but I had already decided to get married. In my head I had always had that fixed idea to go away, to move abroad. I didn't want to stay anymore in (a small town). I was tired of it, I do not know why, but I always wanted to go away. Then I met my husband and I said this is the right time.

Layers of meanings interweave in this narrative that ultimately reveal a different sphere of agency and signification that reassesses Emilia's decisive power, as a woman who can take advantage of migration to move away from an unsatisfactory life. The 'official' story contains another 'gendered' story, and listening to it, I felt quite strongly that had I not been a woman and had Emilia's female friends not been there with us, I would never have been allowed to hear it. I also thought during the long rainy Sunday afternoon of the interview, that even though I had been made part of it, this gendered story remained 'hidden' in a parallel world of meanings, in the double diaspora of women that I was introduced to.

Women's double diaspora is filled with meanings constructed and shared almost exclusively by women that narrate a condition of being away from 'home' and away from the male hegemony of migrant collectivities. Nunzia, a 55 year old second generation migrant, narrated that her grandfather forbade her mother to meet the man she loved, but when 'she went to wash the clothes in the well outside the village', she arranged to meet him nonetheless. Her grandmother used to cover her mother's secretive meetings with this man, who eventually became her husband, saying, 'when your daddy go to sleep, you go out' (*sic*). The story is inserted into a complex narrative, which develops over a long part of the interview and is made of several, overlapping stories. Nunzia ultimately wanted to stress that she was more

emancipated than her mother was as a young woman in Italy, but she also proved that her mother was not fully subjugated either. Nor was her grandmother. Similarly, Celestina, a 45 year old first generation migrant, told of how her husband was a migrant in France and they met during one of his family visits to Ireland. Even though their families were originating from the same village in Italy, 'my daddy and my granny weren't happy that I went out with my husband. Because he lived in France, and they would say: É francese! He was more open, more modern, compared the way they were thinking'. Celestina's mother used to encourage her to go out and meet the 'Italian man from France', when her father was away or busy in the house.

The narratives presented in this section indicate how women see themselves as strong and powerful agents. They reveal not only that two-tiered levels of meanings and socialities exist in which women are *both* subjugated *and* powerful, but also that there is a continuity in the strategy of women to negotiate gender rules in a hidden and parallel sphere of sociality. Notably, these stories are told 'in private' among women, passed from woman to woman. Men are generally kept unaware of their existence because the double diaspora is constructed as a shield against a masculinised social order that empowers men over women. Hence, women's parallel world of meanings and agency keeps expanding and consolidating, influencing women's practices and experiences of the double diaspora.

One factor that contributes to the maintenance of women's double diaspora is the positionality of migrant women who generally stand between differing sets of gender norms, both of the ethno-national collectivity and of the host society. Migrant women find themselves in the liminal spaces of faltering gender normativities, where they gain new freedom, resources and power to support their struggles and resistance. At the same time, they do not directly contest the established normativities, they just stand at the threshold. For example, Rita, a long-settled migrant, explained that having been married to an Irish man and being settled in Ireland since 1963, she found she 'had more freedom' in Ireland, because in Italy she 'would have been more tied to the house'. Yet, it is not just as a woman but as a *migrant woman* that she has gained freedom in Ireland, because, as Rita emphasised, at the time of her settling down in Ireland, 'Irish women didn't work. They were at home. Because there wasn't work... and they left it to the men'. In

Ireland, Rita found more freedom 'to go out' and work[103], and this gave her 'a sense of independence' she had not known in Italy.

Whether Ireland is more emancipated than Ireland, or vice versa, is not as important as the condition of being a *migrant,* i.e. being 'away' from the collective structures of gender constrain and surveillance. Mary, a 50 year old third generation migrant woman whose family hailed from the Tuscany region, compared her grandmother, who was a first generation migrant to Ireland, to the Italian women she met during her visits to Italy. For Mary, return visits have not been frequent and she had been in Italy only twice at the time of the interview. This was enough for her to assess that Italian women in Ireland were less subjugated than Italian women in Italy, where men seemed to her 'more important than everything'. She believed that in Ireland Italian women had 'gained a position of power' (Mary). Similarly, Assunta, a 70 year old second generation migrant, saw herself as less constrained than her female relatives in Italy. During one of her return visits to Italy, she found herself asking her father:

> Pa, what's going on? They [women] are not allowed to walk out on their own, they have to be chaperoned! And I found that so strange, 'cause I had lived here [Dublin]. Yes it was very strict, but not to that extreme. We didn't have to be chaperoned, but our parents had to know who we were with, where we were, and they made a choice of friends for us, you know they were very strict about that.

Whether Assunta, Mary and Rita's views are well-founded and gender relations were more emancipated in Italy or Ireland doesn't matter as much as the fact that they believed this to be the case. Because it is not the difference between Italy and Ireland *per se* that counts, but how these migrant women saw themselves vis-à-vis *other* women, both Italian and Irish. The same act of comparing where they came from to where they arrived, provided these Italian migrant women a space to observe and distance themselves from the constraints of both Irish and Italian female normativities.

At the threshold of diaspora, having developed new strategies of resistance and emancipation, migrant women also experience the insurgence of new gendered struggles. I have already introduced at the beginning of this chapter the

[103] Rita found a suitable labour niche in the 'Italian cultural industry', teaching Italian at school level.

disadvantages and constraints that the early-waves migrant women who participated in my research spoke about (isolation, lack of confidence, violence), but I want to reiterate here how for each successful act of resistance, the migrant women found a new struggle that they had to face. The case of Mafalda, a 60 year old returnee migrant, is exemplary of the specific disadvantages ensuing from the simultaneously liberating condition of living in-between spatio-cultural locations that the diaspora occupy. Mafalda recounted spending the last 40 years of her life travelling through different countries (Canada, Belgium, Ireland, Italy). She moved to Canada as soon as she married, later returned to Italy, and then subsequently moved to Ireland in the 1970s.

As she put it, in the early 1990s, she 'permanently' returned to Italy with her family, but in the meanwhile her three daughters have moved back again to Ireland. Mafalda has continued to travel back and forth between Italy and Ireland, in order to help her daughters during their pregnancies and care for their children and their family businesses. Mafalda was involved in practices of transnational caring, through which she fulfilled a traditional mothering role across often insurmountable spatio-temporal barriers. Enduring the weight of many distances and departures, Mafalda has managed her life in order to function in her role as a mother, a role that is soaked in the many ambiguities of diaspora.

Mafalda does not speak English and has little proficiency in standard Italian, but she proudly emphasised that she can 'understand some words' of English, which she learnt while helping her children with their homework. She also revealed that she gets 'angry' at herself when she meets other women and she cannot communicate with them. I was deeply struck by Mafalda's curiosity, intelligence and strength that clashed with the constraints she experienced and the feeling she conveyed of being trapped 'nowhere'. As she put it:

> It's not that I like or don't like it... between Italy and here [Ireland], I am always in the house. I can't say that the place where I am, I don't like it. But I stay there.

Mafalda is doubly removed and distant from both Italy and the male hegemony of 'Italian' migrant groups. At the same time, her vitality and her social and cultural capital are channelled towards the construction of a parallel sphere of sociality in which she is strong and empowered. This is particularly visible in

Mafalda's powerful female networks, which allow her to dismantle the boundaries of her domesticity and her isolation (see chapter eight).

Having analysed the cases that allowed me to interpret early-waves migrant women's experiences as a 'double diaspora', I proceed in the next section to explore how recent and long-settled migrant women experience a similar condition.

'Because I Am Italian I Get Away With It': Recent And Long-Settled Migrant Women's Double Diaspora

As I mentioned above, the gender motif of migration is generally concealed in early-waves migrant women's narratives that explain their reasons for migration. Similarly, recent and long-settled migrant women frequently cite labour and economic opportunities (or more utilitarian and practical reasons such as learning English and studying) as the main reasons for migration, but in fact their decisions to migrate are complex and multilayered.

Different reasons overlap, and depending on what questions are asked, one reason may be taken as most meaningful than others (labour, career, family, etc). Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish a guiding gender thread in all of the women's narratives. This is not to say that the economic, professional or other reasons for migration are not relevant, rather that these reasons must be seen in constant dialectics with gender as a privileged ontological and social category of being. To make this point more clearly, Michela's narrative serves as a good example.

Michela, a recent migrant and an academic, affirmed in her interview that she left Italy looking for better professional opportunities. She explained, however, that in the Italian academic system she was heavily burdened by the 'sexy and dull' femininity model (for a scholarly analysis see Sala, n.a.). As a feminised subject, she felt, on one hand, pressured into being a perennial 'flunkey' for her male colleagues, and in addition, incapacitated by the tension with her female colleagues who were 'very attached to their image' as feminised subjects and with whom she developed 'this pattern of the daughter who wants to emancipate'. Michela affirmed, in the end, that she has left Italy to look for 'alternatives' and 'better opportunities'. Since it was a *gendered subject* that she was limited in her

professional developed, it is as a *gendered subject* that she responded opportunistically to the labour advantages offered by migration.

The gendered motif of migration runs deep in most of these women's narratives about their rationale for migration. Their need for 'freedom', to improve the 'lives of their children', or to escape an 'ageist/sexist' culture are ultimately linked to their feminised status. The following analysis of their narratives demonstrates this.

Three women of the long-settled migrant group, who are linked to the early-waves chain migration from the Frosinone province, observed that women frequently migrate due to the responsibility they have as *mothers*, specifically to ensure better futures for their children. Marisa for example spoke about her niece, who had three children and decided to join her aunt, a first generation migrant in Ireland, because:

> She thought if I don't move away with my husband, who is a cook, when [the children] will grow up, what will I let them do? (*sic*). [104]

Like Marisa's niece, Agata too decided to move with her family to Ireland (where she had lived as a teenager, before her parents returned to Italy) for her children's sake. Given her experience both in Dublin and in the Frosinone province, she thought that in Ireland her children would benefit, from an 'educational and formative point of view'.

In another case, Francesca, a 30 year old recent migrant, revealed that having found some degree of economic security in Ireland, she felt able to help her mother. Francesca's mother was a housewife dependent on her husband, and Francesca had started to send her 'some little money to get by with her own things'. She kept this secret from her father, to allow her mother some autonomy and independence. Even though this was not the main and 'official' reason why Francesca had migrated, it was among the reasons that kept her in Ireland.

There is now a substantial literature showing that female migration is frequently linked to larger family strategies (see for example Baldassar, 2007; Hochschild and Ehrenreich, 2003). Italian migrant women in Ireland are no exception to these analyses. The concerns of Italian women about the future of their

[104] Marisa also highlighted the class divide which affects labour market opportunities in Italy, recounting that 'there [in Italy] either you study and everyone wants a job, which you can't find, or you have to be very rich, and do nothing'.

children and their families frequently dictate their decisions to move away or remain in migration. However, as I argued above, the reasons for migration are always multilayered, and it is important to keep in mind the cases where family migrations have been combined with women's independent aspirations (as in Emilia's example above). Italian migrant women may want to achieve personal goals, while at the same time improve their families' quality of life and also respond to constraining practices in Italy.

In the case of the four long-settled migrant women interviewed, who are professional women, their 'official' reason for having moved to /remained in Ireland was to marry Irish men. However, in the course of their interviews, these women also revealed that they did not consider their projects of migration as 'dependent' on men (as the scholarship has largely viewed female migration in the past, see chapter two), but maintained to have 'chosen' migration as part of wider personal aspirations. As Valeria put it, in Ireland she was 'attracted first of all by the prospect of having a life with [the man she loved], but this was a *choice*'. Even though she had been offered a job elsewhere, she thought of herself as 'more adaptable' than her husband and in Ireland she could find 'a position which would have allowed [her] to be flexible' (Valeria became an 'ethnic entrepreneur' in the Italian food industry). Valeria also specified that migration was an 'instinct [she] had from the beginning', to challenge herself and discover a different country.

Likewise, five out of the six recent migrants I interviewed claimed that their decision to move away was dictated by personal aspirations and not just by economic or labour-related factors. Michela noted that women's migration frequently has 'sentimental reasons', because women give emphasis to their feelings, passions, desires, in terms of 'falling in love' not only with people but also with places. Her point was that Italian women are concerned about the sentimental side of their existence and they cultivate it through migration.

This interpretation is confirmed in the light of what Nadia revealed in her interview. She described her decision to come to Ireland to live with her boyfriend as an act of giving 'a chance to [her] dreams'. She was looking for personal freedom and affirmation. After nine years in Ireland, she found that migration had enriched her because she became aware of the limiting and

> Unspoken rules of our [Italian] culture ... When you are abroad and you go back [to Italy], you see things in a more objective way and with some detachment.

The nature of the disembeddedness of which Nadia spoke is gendered, because it is primarily as *a migrant woman* that she felt liberated. Explaining the nature of the advantages and disadvantages of migration, she explicitly talked about the position of women and observed that:

> The position of the women in the Italian culture is of less freedom than the women in Ireland. Especially from the point of view of sexual behaviour, of independence from the husband... in Italy the woman is much more dependent on the family, on the care of children, on the domestic life.

In her case, the sexist limitation of Italian culture was heightened by the intersection with ageism. As a 30 year old unmarried and childless woman hailing from a provincial city in central Italy, Nadia explained that she was:

> Considered in Italy as a kind of failure, from the emotional point of view... like there is something wrong with you, and nobody wants to stay with you.

Nadia showed that she was aware of the restrictions placed on her sexuality, and complained that in Italy she was more limited than in Ireland 'to go out and meet men'. [105] This theme - limitations on women's sexuality - is recurrent in narratives and is often juxtaposed with the potential of migration to create gender emancipation. For example, Federica spoke about her newly gained freedom to express herself as a sexualised subject in Ireland, because as a lesbian, in Italy she found herself trapped in limiting sexual stereotypes. As a foreigner, she felt freer to express herself. She was favourably surprised to be able to go out at night in Dublin and find that 'people you normally would be more careful of, as a woman, would just mind their own businesses'. Arguably, Federica's narrative truth lies in her contextualised experience of Ireland, not in the hegemonic gender relations characterising Irish society *per se*. In fact, she observed that feeling less sexualised than in Italy, she was not menaced by male presence and the male gaze in public

[105] In relation to the freedom to go out, Nadia said that in her 'village there is a *circolo*, and to this *circolo* only men go. They go to play cards, to have a liquor or coffee, but if a woman goes and she is some 40 years old, then she is looked upon... there are fewer recreational places for a single woman in Italy'.

places, and 'this is a feeling I had as soon as I arrived in Ireland, and I am gay, I am quite sensitive to this'.

Nadia and Federica's narratives demonstrate the degree of sexual liberation attached to women's status as 'migrants/outsiders'. As outsiders, standing between different sets of gender normativities, which only partially manage to target them, they claimed to have felt more freedom to express their sexual identities and subjectivities. At the same time, however, some migrant women experienced more rigid surveillance of their sexuality and others related the existence of a controlling 'exotic gaze' (Mary, see above). These migration outcomes coexist, and once again reinforce the women's double diasporic conditions.

The freedom gained as 'foreigners' is derived from different aspects of women's lives. For example, Monia, who lived in a small town in the Irish countryside, described her experience of empowerment as 'a strange thing'. She observed that people in Ireland were curious about her and 'they could learn something from her'. Federica also spoke about how migration functions as a 'safety net' and social resource, supporting women's struggles to express their gendered subjectivities (as I argued with reference to early-waves migrant women in the previous section). Federica remarked on how she felt 'more independent' in Dublin and able to 'come out' as a lesbian, not only because Dublin is 'gay-friendly' but because as a 'stranger' she felt less controlled. She said that:

> At the end, it is also a question of independence. To know that I can count on myself. At the end, [migration] is almost like a safety net. Sometimes where you are from, you are afraid to change, to make new moves… Here it has been a bit easier because there are fewer expectations… coming out as lesbian is never easy; neither in Italy nor here. But here I was pushed because I needed to socialise and I was more easily welcomed.

Federica further observed that living abroad gives you this 'vague notion, that if everything is lost, *you can go back*. You can start all over again where you came from', and where your social life is already consolidated. Inscribed in the project of migration is an emancipatory potential, which gave Federica courage and an inebriating 'strange feeling: it is like being a teenager again!'[106].

[106] Finding new grounds of self-identification has its drawbacks however as Federica claimed that she cannot 'go back empty-handed. I would have been the first one to suffer of it', thus expressing pressures regarding socio-economic achievements.

The empowering feeling that migration involves depend on *going back*, understood as an opportunity to recover the stable public persona held prior to migration. It implies also a diasporic *start all over again* status that compels a new social persona to be developed, validated and, in the process, allows subjects to express their own inclination and will (Simmel's notion of the stranger is relevant; see Simmel 1997). Bauman writes usefully about the stranger's vantage point (Bauman, 1997), and the narratives examined here clearly point to the process of diasporic locating oneself that ultimately create 'strangers' and liberation. For example, Alessia claimed that as a 'foreigner' she learned to mediate between different worlds of meanings, cultures and social practices. She observed that:

> On so many levels, you can be in or you can be out, and I suppose, you get used to the idea. You can be out when you want to, but you have to be able to be different.

In the words of another migrant woman, learning to be different implies being able to 'look at things from a different angle' (Michela) and perform cultural mediation) which would be difficult to carry out in Italy. Along this line, Valeria spoke about her proficiency in pluri-cultural mediation, and about how she learnt to 'play a little bit on the *mysterious thing'* and how she could:

> Let people believe whatever they want, and then, because I am Italian I get away with it. It becomes a second habit... it is like doing personality tricks... so I am used to adapting my personality, depending on which client I am talking to.

Valeria referred specifically to her business in the Italian food industry and emphasised the advantages in this context. However, considering all the narratives presented in this section (narratives about personal freedom, sexuality, emotional choices), it is evident how women's *diasporic second habit* may also be used to perform gender emancipation.

This emancipatory capacity of migration has a far-reaching impact on women, as women are generally disempowered by the traditional gender structures of Italian culture. As in the case of early-waves migrant women, the narratives of recent and long-settled migrants serve to reveal the parallel sphere of sociality where women enact their diasporic second habit. Their parallel world of meanings and practices is

centred on women's' self-referential alterity, which remains largely invisible in the hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987) of migrant groups and the host society.

To sum up, so far I have demonstrated that migration leads women away from the constraints of Italy, but also 'away' from the secure order in which their femininity is recognised and validated, simultaneously working as an emancipatory and constraining force for women. Suspended in the vacuum of an incipient yet undefined feminine migratory space, the Italian migrant women who took part in my research experience and perform a double diaspora. The tensions of the contradictory forces of the double diaspora are often played out between women, particularly between mothers and daughters, as I analyse in the next section.

THROUGH THE MAGNIFYING GLASS: MOTHERHOOD AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF THE DOUBLE DIASPORA

In this chapter, I presented narratives about Italian women's struggles and acts of resistance in the diaspora. Together with narratives about incompleteness and in-betweenness discussed in the previous chapter, the picture emerging is one of a double diaspora, where women inhabit parallel worlds of meanings, actions and interaction. Enabling diasporic conditions coexist with disabling ones, disadvantages coexist with advantages. This is in accordance with feminist scholarship which highlights how gender norms can become more rigid for migrant women, while at the same time new spaces can be found to circumvent gender constraints and express diverse gendered subjectivities (see chapter two). However, this critical interpretation implies a substantive incongruity which is often left unexplored and unproblematised.

For example, Gina Buijs, among many others (see for example Decimo, 2005; Anthias, 2001a; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994) argues that migrant women generally increase their self-confidence and domestic *authority*, while they experience a *stiffening* of norms which regulate their behaviour as a mechanism of maintaining group distinctiveness and separateness (Buijs, 1993: 1-6; my emphasis). However, Buijs does not question how these divergent and conflicting forces can coexist, how they play out and what contradictions they involve.

To explore this critical question about the double diaspora and its contradictions, and in a sense to access the very heart of the diaspora (Anthias, 1996), this section analyses narratives about motherhood, which emerged recurrently during the interviews. The analysis of women's roles as mothers highlights, as through a magnifying glass, the complex nature of the double diaspora and the multilayered articulations of women's power. In the first part of this section, after having reviewed the literature on Italian migrant women and motherhood, I raise questions on what kind of contradictions diasporic motherhood may involve. In the second part, I analyse women's narratives in light of the notion of double diaspora.

The Narratives: Mother's Struggles And Resistance

Motherhood seems universally a key identity for women, unlike the way fatherhood is for men (Earle and Letherby, 2003: 3). Most contemporary cultures conflate femininity and maternity, so as to 'idealize and denigrate both' (Ernst, 1997: 80). [107] There is a popular and much cherished stereotype of *Italiani mammoni*, which tells of a heroic and self-sacrificing mother embodying the Italian nation, its ethos, its children, its culture and its symbolic boundaries[108]. Subjected and objectified as an ideological battlefield, motherhood has turned Italian women into 'silent and powerless *mamme sacrificali* (sacrificial mothers), who 'revenge [their] social censure taking possession of their children' (Boneschi, 1998: 40). Italian migrant women experience a variation on this theme of motherhood. Given the primacy of women's roles as mothers, the disruption of social relations caused by migration is intimately woven into this role (Mand, 2006). Myths about motherhood probably have a deeper resonance and a stronger resilience in migrants' lives due to their desire to belong to and identify with Italian national

[107] The myths of motherhood are at the centre of interest of powerful institutions, including ecclesiastic hierarchies, state governments, scientists and jurists. Women's bodies have been used as an ideological battlefield to impose often diverging demographic politics and institutionalised representations of motherhood (D'Amelia, 1997; 2005; Fiume, 1995; Boneschi, 1998). Feminist analyses are replete with, at time, ambivalent recognition of the primacy of the mothering role in the social rather than biological reproduction of gendered identities (Ifekwungwe 1999: 171; Rich, 1986; Chodorow 1978).

[108] The nationalist agenda of motherhood has been particularly explicit in Italy during the fascist regime with its 'fascist maternalism' (D'Amelia, 2005: 331), when women as mothers were hailed as the biological and cultural reproducers of the nation, and their primary responsibility was to forward this important 'national requirement' (Boneschi, 1998: 130).

culture. Feminist historiography has done some justice to the important roles of women in the Italian diaspora, showing how migrant women often have had the monopoly of carework and kinwork in their families and have managed the micropolitics and the micropoetics of everyday life (Reynolds and Zontini, 2006; Gabaccia and Iacovetta, 2002; Pesman, 2002, 1992; Tirabassi, 2002; Baldassar, 2001; Di Leonardo, 2001; Fortier, 2000; Iacovetta, 1993; Vasta, 1993). [109]

I am particularly interested in how Italian migrant women/mothers have been socialised to sacrifice themselves to become full-time, omnipresent, devoted and loving mothers - to the detriment of the development of other social personae. [110] What emerged in my research however, was that women are not simply victims but also agents, and may also be agents of domination, given that 'we all have the capacity to act in ways that oppress, dominate, wound (whether or not the power [to do so] is institutionalised)' (Hooks, 1989: 21). Motherhood may function as a tool of oppression and an institutionalised source of power for women, and in fact, children are often treated as Italian mothers' private property, and remain dependent on mothers for the longest possible time (Boneschi, 1998).

In my analysis of Italian migrant women's narratives, motherhood emerges as the most relevant of all female social personae - something which pervades women's lives, independent of their actual biological status as mothers.

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[109] There has been, however, little effort to deconstruct the everyday intimate positionality of women *as mothers*. I think this is linked to a theoretical gap which holds the 'private role' of women in the family as 'private' and thus uninteresting (Phizacklea, 2003a, 2003b). Therefore, the literature has ultimately contributed to hindering rather than deconstructing the actual complexities of the social intimacies of motherhood, often conflating motherhood with womanhood. On the other hand, it has pointed out how women in migration balance a myriad of duties as wives, workers, political activists, and do so ultimately as mothers (see for further references Gabaccia and Iacovetta, 2002; Coser et al, 1999; Vasta, 1993; Friedman-Kasaba, 1996; Merithew, 2002). The literature shows there is even something heroic and powerful in the capacity of migrant mothers to act against their constraints. Italian women - as mothers - have had a great impact on their children's decisions to migrate to other countries (Coser et al, 1999: 81). As mothers, they have propagated the patriarchal value of honour and virginity, to enact their passive resistance against hegemonic discourses of womanhood in their new countries of settlement (Vasta, 1993). As mothers, they allowed the continuation of traditional Italian ways of life, or destabilized such continuation, forming 'Italian mother Club's (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996 112-115). Italian migrant women have even enacted an 'anarchist motherhood' (Merithew, 2002: 218), as they fought for the cause of anarchist political movements, teaching 'their children how to subvert the system's repressive institutions and thereby create a better world for future generations' (Merithew, 2002: 218).

[110] This question is not unique to Italian culture and in fact there is also an 'Irish mother' stereotype that represents Irish women as rulers of their families, being the unquestioning transmitter of Church (patriarchal) authority, which by its veneration of the Virgin Mary, reflects the Irish view of women as strong but obedient to male domination. Irish women have always featured prominently in myths of mother/wife, goddess/hag, and queen/warrior (Kennedy, 2004).

'I wasn't allowed to go out until further mother' [until further mother, an expression that equates motherhood with maturity and independence], Anna, a 60 year old second-generation migrant woman, recounted. Notably, Anna also revealed she was childless, a condition that makes her statement even more striking. Anna talked extensively about Italian women in Ireland in relation to their motherhood, which is clearly conflated with womanhood. She claimed that for Italian women:

> The first thing is their children. Not that the Irish aren't, oh they are very good, but maybe the Italians, have their own way... they spoil their children, spoil the babies... What else? How can I say, I don't know, I have no children my own, so I don't know.

Anna's association of womanhood with motherhood is common among Italian women, signifying the pivotal function of motherhood in women's lives to mark selfhood and independence, especially from parental protection. Widowed and with no close relatives in Italy, Anna also explained that she spent her days caring for her sister's grandchildren and there was a strong element of pride and compensation in her stories about this role of a 'shared-mother' (Moon, 2003: 856).

When recalling stories of abuse and violence, Marisa claimed that her husband used to hit her 'when I was expecting the children... and I worked till the ninth month!' (Marisa). It seems that only motherhood can validate Marisa's selfhood, as if she mattered only because of the sanctity of her pregnant body.

The primary and powerful role of motherhood is present in the narratives of both recent and long-settled migrant women too. Consider Valeria for example, a recent migrant who married an Irish man and became an ethnic entrepreneur, when she told that her life changed once she became a mother. She recalled that:

> [When my children were born] a new course of life started. Everything became more solid. It became more solid due to the initial instinct I had, that the most important adventure for me was to build a life in which both my children and I, and after all [my husband] as well. We all could have found, created a bridge between two cultures [Italy and Ireland], between two lives. ... in one way all I did afterwards was directed towards this end.

In another case, Luana, a long-settled migrant, spoke about the powerful role of women as mothers that fills the gaps of migrants' belongings and transmits the 'origins and roots' of the ethno-national group. She observed that:

> Because it is the woman who is going to bear the child, and your child is born in a country that is not your own, that's away from your own country, that your sense of origin is much stronger... But I think women are more sensitive to that things, men are more practical. [Men think] we are going to live in a foreign land and set up our own lives, and I will work, I will look after the family. We will make this move and then the children are born, in the new country and go to school locally and I think the mother is the one that perhaps has had more time, traditionally, I suppose, to spend more time with the children.

Given the strong emphasis on motherhood in women's lives, it is not surprising that in migration its resonance entails specific gendered struggles. Several women spoke about a strong sense of guilt about being 'too busy' (Valeria, Celestina, Nunzia) and unable to 'care full-time' (Leda, Jenny) for their children. For example, Celestina regretted that she had no time to help her children with their homework. Other women felt remorse for having to 'send their children home' to Italy alone for a few months or a few years (Maria, Nunzia).

As this last case suggests, these narratives reveal the existence of a global chain of care that involves almost exclusively female relatives. As the main carers of the family, women actualise a form of 'shared motherhood' (Moon, 2003: 856) transnationally, following the blueprint of the diaspora. Children are sent 'home' to Italy (but occasionally to other relatives in other European countries) to be cared for by female relatives, while in other cases, female relatives travel to Ireland to care for migrants' children (see the case of Mafalda above). Notably, men are almost never mentioned in these chains of care, which confirms the 'Italic couldn't-care-less attitude of fathers' (Boneschi, 1998: 152).

These mothering practices entail both new gendered struggles and new forms of gendered resistance. On one hand, *transnational shared motherhood* can allow migrant women to find 'possibilities for escaping oppressive social codes and a basis for solidarity with other women' (Anthias, 2000: 38). For example, shared mothers' transnational networks allow gendered resources and social capital to flow and be shared among women (see next chapter). On the other hand, however, a transnational motherhood model reveals the continued presence, 'albeit in a transformed way, of gendered social relations that serves to subordinate women' (Anthias, 2000: 38). Transnational motherhood may in fact add to migrant women's isolation and limitations (especially in provincial Irish towns with small groups of

Italians settled sparsely). As women are often confined in domesticity, they spend a lot of time with their children and often have little space for socialising outside the context of these relations.

Consequently, as I have frequently noticed, women compare themselves with their children. Their children's achievements can be a source of pride (significant in relation to the working class ethos which characterises many of the early-waves migrant groups), but most commonly they inflict class injury (Bettie, 2003) on women, reminding them of their limitations (as demonstrated above). When comparing themselves to their daughters, some women manifested a sense of resignation and lack of self-esteem (Maria, Mafalda, Mary), and others spoke resentfully about the power they hold over their daughters (Celestina, Nunzia). For example, Celestina explained that she does not like her two adult daughters:

> To go too wild, maybe it's because, they are girls, you know? ... I think I am a little bit old fashioned with that ... they go to college, they get what they need, whatever, but they have to work, they have to help me. Because they have to see where all this [the economic success] came from as well... and I am stricter than my husband.

Women like Celestina gain power from their position of control of their children - especially daughters, and can use it as a form of compensation for the social invisibility inflicted on them. This explains the many narratives about the power of women/mothers as for example Franca's, who observed that there is a lot of 'pressure on Italian women to be serving like their mothers, and Italian mothers can be really tough'. Mothers' authoritarian attitude is a product of society's investment (and empowerment) in women's key roles as educators, which also disempowers and subordinates women in other ways. Several early-waves migrant women spoke about the strong collective pressures to be strict educators, especially of their daughters. Women's 'beautiful bodies' and proper behaviour mark the boundaries of the migrant collectivities. Their corruption represents a threat to the idealised and bounded notion of Italianness. Mothers, as well as daughters who complain frequently about their mothers being 'stricter' than their fathers (Marianna, Carmela), are aware of these responsibilities.

During a group interview, I recorded Marianna, a second-generation young woman, talking about this with her aunt, Silvia, who was living in France at the time of the interview.

> Marianna: If we wanted to go out we always asked daddy, if we asked mummy she always said no. [According to mum] girls have to stay in the house so we always asked daddy. Daddy would always say yeah, yeah, yeah.
>
> Silvia: ... I know, but if something happened to you, whose responsibility is it? Of your mum! Then you understand why she does it, 'cause I am sure that father has said to mother sometimes, be careful, don't let anything happen to her [your daughter]! Don't let anything happen to her, otherwise it's your fault! My mother once told me this, after my father had died. ... Then of course, women have more responsibilities for their daughters (*sic*).

Daughters of all ages remain under strict social surveillance, which is mostly carried out by powerful mothers and older women. These women/mothers are instructed by society to 'be responsible' for their daughters and they are assigned authority to do so. Women/mothers can use this power to different ends, sometimes also to empower younger women. This adds deeper layers of complexities to the already complex role of motherhood.

To sum up, the narratives of the migrant women who participated in my research convey a general impression that women/mothers succeed in controlling their daughters and prevent them from deviating from traditional female normativity. Thus, at this level of sociality, migrant women construct a reassuring sense of continuity and comply with the masculinised hegemony of the ethno-national groups. However, at another level, women can also use their authority to empower themselves and empower other women. This empowerment is achieved in secrecy from men and authoritarian fathers. As I demonstrated in the previous section, mothers and grandmothers frequently spoke about protecting their daughters and allowing them to 'go out when your daddy go to sleep' (Nunzia, *sic*). In this way, women/mothers actualise a parallel gendered world of meanings and practices, helping each other to achieve their goals unbeknown to their husbands/fathers and without disrupting *the surface* of the male hegemony.

Recent migrant women are also implicated in the ambiguities of motherhood. For diasporic daughters, the Italian mamma is an indispensable '*guardian of tradition*', keeper of home and bearer of language (Min-ha, 1994: 15; my emphasis). At the same time this model of the mother represents and actualises a reality from which diasporic daughters wish to distance themselves. As I examined in this chapter, migration is also a gendered project of emancipation, a choice that

inevitably ends up clashing against the role of the mother as a guardian of a masculinised hegemonic tradition. Monia, a 30 year old Sicilian woman who moved to Ireland four years ago, elucidated the complexities of this case.

> It was always my mother who has always something to say or complain about. Now my father is happy that I moved to Ireland, he is very proud that I work for IBM. My mother still sometimes tries to ask me, when do you come back? When do you come back? ... But when I go back, I am always her little daughter for her. I must stand under the house rules, if I go out I must go back home early and all that. This has left such a mark inside me, because I am a bit unsure, I am not someone with a lot of self confidence … I always try to be more confident, to trust myself, but then I arrive there, and my mother, in one day, two days, destroys it all! From a psychological point of view, I prefer not to go back to Italy. I prefer to talk to her on the phone, even if on the phone, it's a different story than being there.

In the case of recent migrant women like Monia, migration represents the minimal distance she needs to place between herself and her possessive mother. Yet, the distance is endowed with a sense of loss and guilt, an urgency to return for visits or to keep in touch by phone. Mothers are loved but also feared and sometimes, they must be confronted in order to break away from the gender constraints they perform. If the loss of daughters to mothers and the loss of mothers to daughters is the essential female tragedy (Rich, 1986), then this loss is particularly tragic in the diasporic impossibility of returning and belonging. In the condition of fluidity and uncertainty that diaspora involves, the tragedy is that the daughter who loses 'the mother', loses also a model for the continuity of the past and a keeper of home.

Conclusion

As I demonstrated in the first section of this chapter, in diaspora gender norms have become more rigid for Italian women in Ireland, while at the same time new spaces have been created to circumvent gendered constraints and to express diverse gendered subjectivities. Diasporic negotiations often cause dramatic contradictions in women's lives because these adjustments are not immediately manifested and because they cannot be easily resolved.

While Italian migrant women spoke about the disadvantages, violence, constraints and the invisible nature of their experiences, they also saw themselves

as powerful and strong agents in their lives and their families' destinies. The women enact a two-tiered sociality consisting of separate spheres of social relations, social meanings and normative sets that coexist without disrupting their respective foundations. This is what I refer to as a double diaspora, as Italian migrant women have learnt to make 'a home', to feel safe and empowered, both in their new country and within their own migrant groups. At one level, 'at home' in the diaspora, they maintain a reassuring, traditional sense of 'Italian' identity. They seem to comply with the gender expectations of their groups. At another level, 'at home' among themselves, or in other social contexts, such as the workplace, or in female networks, they learn to circumnavigate gender constraints, achieve their personal goals and change gender norms. These emancipations remain mostly 'invisible' because the Italian migrant women do not directly contest and disrupt the hegemonies of the host society and of their diasporic groups but they instead construct a separate sphere of agency and sociality.

The contrasting forces of the double diaspora create tensions that are often played out between women, particularly between mothers and daughters. *Motherhood* emerges as a central theme in migrant women's lives, one that is complicated by negotiations with the diaspora. Maternal love can be seen both as a source of subjugation and 'as a powerful force that challenges and resists domination' (Hooks, 1989: 26). Collectively validated, maternal love is transformed into maternal power. Thus, on the one hand, motherhood requires a devoted and totalitarian model, one that assures the maintenance of a traditional Italian culture in migrant groups, constraining migrant women to a position of subordination and keeping them under strict surveillance. On the other hand, in the diaspora space female emancipation also occurs and migrant women resist the patriarchal ideology inscribed in traditional motherhood. While they do not withhold the maternal power they have been granted, they may use it to satisfy their emancipatory ambitions and to encourage their daughters to escape gender constraints.

Ultimately, a two-tiered power system enhances women's capacity to function in parallel contexts of sociality. I call this condition double diaspora, whereby migrant women as 'vectors of transition' mark out 'the thresholds of identity and difference'; yet, as Fortier stresses, women are not 'simply stationary border

figures' (Fortier, 2000: 49). Moving on from Fortier's considerations and from my interviews, I look in the next chapter at how migrant women's double diaspora moves through and produces the threshold of diasporic belonging. In particular, I want to argue that narratives and memories (as gendered practices that sustain the women's double diaspora) embody the teleology of the diasporic *continuity of becoming*. In other words, I want to explore how narratives and memories are performative and transformative tools that function, in women's hands, as strategies to create space for expression of counter-identities and agency. The question I raise is whether and how the fluid nature of diaspora is reflected in, and constructed by, women's fluid capacity to narrativise the 'traditions' (memories) and identities (stories of the self) of their double diaspora.

Chapter Eight

PERFORMATIVE NARRATIVES: ITALIAN WOMEN IN IRELAND TELLING THE DIASPORA

> Eh, I didn't go back to Italy until I was married. And when I went up in the village I said oh Jesus, it's so different! I remembered the places but I thought the places were bigger. And when I'd go into the rooms... gosh they were very small! Everything seemed so different.
> (Nunzia)

In the previous chapters, I suggested that the condition of Italian migrant women in Ireland be considered as that of being in a *double diaspora*: the Italian migrant women in Ireland are 'away', distant and marginal even when they are at 'home' in their diaspora in Ireland. The women live also a diasporic second habit that replicates the general condition of marginal diasporic groups, a case that involves an apparent incapacity to change hegemonic norms, even though the norms of the dominant group are actually changed. This is actualised in the Italian migrant women's lives vis-à-vis the gender norms of their migrant groups. At one level, 'at home' in the Italian diaspora, the women maintain a reassuring, traditional sense of 'Italian' identity and they seem to comply with the gender expectations of their groups, without openly contesting the normative roles assigned to them. At another level, 'at home' among themselves, they learn to circumnavigate gender constraints, achieve their personal goals, transform gender norms, and manifest and articulate empowered counter-subjectivities, while functioning within the roles that they have been traditionally assigned.

The circumstances related to this two-tiered system of sociality and the 'hidden' agency of women's double diaspora remain mostly invisible because women tend not to directly contest and disrupt the (male and classed) hegemonies of either the new country of settlement or of their diasporic groups. I have also suggested that this involves irreconcilable contradictions in women's lives which I have illustrated through the analysis of Italian migrant women's roles as mothers. Chapter seven ended with an open question regarding how the women reconcile the contradictions

of living in a double diaspora, and whether their strategies of constructing different layers of sociality explains how their diaspora can be represented as both fluid and stable.

As I brought out in chapter three and chapter four, the Italian diaspora in Ireland is the product of multiple forces and different journeys (economic, political, psychological) that is both lived and imagined. At one level the Italian diaspora is the compound formation of *stable* institutions, histories, organisations and so on. At another level, the diaspora is a condition of becoming and transformation. In this sense, diaspora implies belonging to a cultural formation that is imagined as single and bounded, but is in reality formed by multiple and shifting experiences, stories and memories (Brah, 1996; Cohen, 1999).

The key question in this chapter focuses on this very coexistence of stability and fluidity in the Italian diaspora in Ireland, juxtaposed to women's double diaspora, and the capacity of narratives to *perform* a mediation between opposing diasporic forces. I want to argue that gender is doubly important in this cultural exercise.

First, diasporic groups rely on the sanctity of the women's gender roles to project a sense of continuation and boundedness of their identities. This is by and large actualised through representations and discursive practices (as I discussed in chapter four with the narratives of Italian female 'beautiful bodies'). Second, the narratives that shape the content of diasporic identities are products of social practices strongly influenced by gender norms and gender roles. Gender dictates who tells stories and how the stories are told. For the Italian migrant women of my research telling stories is a strategy to subvert hegemonies and to negotiate the contradictions of the double diaspora. Dialectically constructed, narratives give focus to the women's fragmented lives while also connecting them to each other.

There is a general consensus on the relevance of narrativity and migration, because migration is not just the 'experience of shifting from place to place' but is also linked to our ability to imagine an alternative (Papastergiadis, 2000: 10), to share knowledges, to maintain connections between places. Journeying across generations and cultures, narratives excel in their 'powers of adaptation and germination. While with exile and migration, travelling expands in time and space, becomes dizzyingly complex in its recursive effects, ... tale-telling brings the impossible within reach' (Minh-ha, 1994 :4). In this sense, as Trinh Minh-ha evocatively suggests, every journey is the unfolding of a poetic (Minh-ha, 1994: 21).

The gendered implication of the poetics of migration is the key issue I want to explore in this chapter. Pushing the narrative analysis I have proposed in the previous chapters further, I want to demonstrate that narratives are not only a rich source of information about the women's lives, but they are also *performative and transformative*: the stories women tell 'do something' and effect change in women's lives and in the migrants' group. More to the point, I want to ask what role does the Italian migrant women's capacity to narrativise the traditions (memories) and identities (stories of the self) of their groups play in the construction of the fluid and stable essence of the Italian diaspora in Ireland.

To develop these arguments, this chapter is structured into six sections. In the first section, I examine theories and notions of narrativity and memory, and ask how they enhance each other's fluidity. Because of the centrality of memory to narrating the diaspora, the second section focuses on the question of memory and reviews the existing diasporic literature that suggests an inherent link between narrativity and memory in the diaspora. The third section examines the performative character of narratives in women's experiences of migration and reflects on the production of narratives as gendered practises. In section four, I shift the focus of my analysis to Italian migrant women in Ireland and examine what their narratives 'do'. Through positioning myself reflexively within the analysis of the women's narrative acts, I examine how the narratives perform both *Italianness* and diasporicity, exploring how Italianness is constructed during the very process of the interview. This section argues that narrativity and memory allow the women to emancipate themselves from gender constraints and provide a cushioning against the shifting ontological cracks of the diaspora. To illustrate the versatile influence of narrative performativity in the women's lives, the final section analyses the women's transnational networks and their *kin* and *care work*. I argue that the women's narrative acts are at the basis of their transnational practices of familial care and connectivity that structure migrants' transnationalism and diasporicity.

NARRATIVE TELEOLOGY OF THE CONTINUTY OF BECOMING

To narrate is a 'central proclivity of humankind' (Ochs and Capps 2001: 2), through which human experience is made meaningful. As Giddens notes 'we are, not

what we are, but what we make of ourselves' (Giddens, 1991 in Skeggs, 2004: 54), and narratives are the best tools in the making of our selves. As I have suggested in chapter five, narratives are *about us*, about our experiences, our social relations, and our subjective and collective identities (Brah, 1996); but they are also *us*, they shape and give meaning to what we are and how we see ourselves.[111] The powerful creativity of narrativity became particularly clear to me as I sat listening to the Italian migrant women's interviews during the years of my research. Trying to make sense of their experiences of migration I became particularly aware of, and amazed by, how identities were parcelled and bound in narratives and stories.

As I suggested in chapter six, in the last two decades, the social sciences (and many practicing professions) have witnessed a 'narrative turn'. Riessman (2002) lists a wide range of disciplines and professions involved in this, including history, anthropology and sociology. The narrative turn is part of a wider intellectual movement that aims at destabilising 'the significance of structural forms of determination' (Skeggs, 2004: 54) linked to social constructionist and postmodernist theories. Within this paradigmatic shift, narratives and discourses are held as social practices of signification that construct knowledge and meanings and thus as privileged tools of analysis of social identities and social relations.

However, despite the increase in relevant literature on narratives, there still is considerable variation in how the concept of narratives is employed in sociology (Riessman, 2002). There is disagreement about 'what constitutes a narrative, the relationship between narrative and life, narrative and subjectivity, narrative and culture, and narrative and fiction or truth' (Sparkes, 1999: 20). The confusion leads to statements that often endorse a misrepresentation of narrative analysis 'either as vulgar realism or as a romanticized view of the self' (Sparkes, 2002: 20). These criticisms, however, miss the very nature of the argument put forth by authors like Sparkes and Riessman. Narratives are not accounted for as transparent monologues of the inner private self; rather the self is understood as embedded in the social and the inter-subjective relations that constitute narratives. Individuals draw from a cultural repertoire of stories that they then synthesise into personal narratives (Riessman, 2004; Sparkes, 1999: 20). In this sense narratives don't merely reflect the

[111] The powerful role of narratives often passes unnoticed in the hubbub of everyday life. Only occasionally, finding ourselves listening distractedly to a fragment of conversation on a train or in the street, we might realise how crafty, witty, inventive ordinary everyday telling is.

subjective, but contribute towards expressing and articulating it (see chapter six for a theoretical discussion).

I have already demonstrated how narratives are important informative tools in the case of Italian migrant women in Ireland, lending themselves to a content analysis of the women's struggles and acts of resistance (chapters six and seven). In this chapter, I want to explore further how narratives do more than inform us: they are performative and often transformative; they are *acts of resistance* in their own right. To put it simply, narratives don't just 'tell', they 'do'. They construct meanings, they make sense of otherwise fragmented lives, and not least, they connect people together. In so doing, narratives constitute a substantial terrain for the articulation and construction of identities and belongings (Riessman 2003; Hinchman and Hinchman 2001; Myerhoff, 1992).

In his analysis of nationalism and 'imagined communities', Benedict Anderson has explicitly proposed the notion of '*narrative identities*' (Anderson, 1991: 35; my emphasis) to highlight the continuity of collective identities as constructed through the linear nature of narratives and stories. But it is feminist scholars who have made a real contribution in the advancement of narrative theories, shedding light on the micropoetics and micropolitics of women's lives and showing how personal narratives and oral histories are implicated with our identities (Cavarero, 1997; Sizoo, 1997; Leydesdorff, et al. 1996; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992; Gluck, 1991; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). As Lentin puts it, narratives tell us who we are, interpret our experiences and make meanings explicit (Lentin, 2000b: 101). To be fully experienced the self must be narrativised, told and shared (Stanford Friedman, 1998), and to define ourselves we must 'narratively grapple with our own and others' ambiguous emotions and events' (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 209).

While unpacking the underlying meanings of narrativity and identities, it is essential to focus again on the capacity of narrative to achieve casual progression by structural and rhetorical means. By harmonising and creating causal and temporal order of the past, narratives bring order to the chaos, ambiguity and fragmentation of life and shape our individual and collective identities and sense of belonging. Indeed, 'ontological grounds of identity' as Fortier claims, 'are deeply reliant on *teleological narratives* that secure and connect different and pre-determined states into a continuous line of "becoming"' (Fortier, 2000: 128; my emphasis).

One way through which narratives create coherence and order in our sense of self and belonging is by deploying *ritualised language practices* that recount unexpected turns and incidents. In fact, to be 'worth' telling, a story must be about 'an implicit canonical script [that] has been breached, violated, or deviated from' in a manner that does 'violence to its legitimacy' (Herman, 2003: 3). Narratives exist because of this very condition of disequilibrium that needs to be repaired, and this is often done by including narrative turning points (Ochs and Capps, 2001), that is textual accounts that are open to multiple interpretations and can change the meaning of past experiences. Because of these turning points, events can be cast in a '*double light*' (Ochs and Capps, 2001; my emphasis), viewed from 'both poles of the affect continuum, that is *as both positive and negative* occurrences' (Smith and Sparks, 2002: 144, original emphasis).

Narratives of the self are complex, layered, and evolving cognitive structures, and like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, are multi-cornered, oddly shaped and unevenly-edged. Narratives interlock with other loosely edged narratives, which will remain partial and unfinished so that meanings will also be differently articulated, and interpreted, at each stage. Personal narratives change with time and with the conditions of telling. Each time they are told, narratives can emphasise different elements, and create different meanings. They can be adjusted to changing situations and in turn, adjust or connect one situation to another. As I explain below, memory plays a fundamental role in this process.

Another point of connection between narratives and identities is grounded in the inter-subjective character of narratives. Narratives belong to the social; they construct meanings and identities collectively. The inter-subjective act of telling and retelling, which has to do with the very nature of memory (which is also a narrative construction), inscribes the personal on the collective. Stories are narrated by someone, and there is someone who listens to them. Therefore, 'they are between us. Or better, they constitute the *us*: *us*, connected in the act of narration, *us*, who will know the story' (Jedlowski, 2000: 96; original emphasis). Because of this, Jedlowski suggests that 'to tell stories has something of an attitude of love' (Jedlowski, 2000: 96).

Certainly, narratives are not always innocent and Lentin notes how they may also be 'laced with power relations' (Lentin, 2000b: 260), but in this context 'love' implies specifically acts of intimacy, openness, and sharing. This collective function

of narratives is central to my analysis of Italian migrant women's roles in the narrativisation of diasporic identities. Identities are constructed through inter-subjective and discursive interactions, 'collaboratively inscribing turn by turn one or more narrative texts' (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 3). The outcome is a 'conversational involvement' which works as a 'communicative glue' that establishes and maintains relationships. Ultimately, narratives 'interlace lives and *build common ways* of acting, thinking, feeling, and otherwise being in the world' (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 8; my emphasis).

Their fluid and collective nature allows narratives to be not only informative tools but also performative practices that construct belonging and identities. As I explained in chapter five, performative implies that knowledge produces the effects it names and that utterances can be constitutive of action, because they affect and shape our experiences and identities (Skeggs, 2004; Butler, 1997; Bourdieu, 1995). By repetitions and reiteration, narrative acts produce the imaginary belonging that they regulate, stabilising and essentialising (movable) cultural identity (Fortier, 2000; Butler, 1997). Personal narratives do not reveal 'an essential self', as Riessman highlights, 'as much as the preferred one, selected from the multiplicity of selves or persona that we all switch between as we go about our lives' (Riessman, 2003: 8). We recognise 'our constitution as "ourselves" within the fragments that we process as knowledge' "hailing" and being "hailed" within the discourses that produce us and the narratives we spin' (Brah, 2000: 273).

The very act of choosing which stories people want to be known and how the narratives are developed collaboratively (as it emerged in the very context of my interviews) performs and constructs agency. This also enables identities to be dynamic, movable and adaptable (Riessman, 2003; Fortier, 2000; Ahmed, 1999; Myerhoff, 1992). Narratives can be also transformative, because they often construct counter-narrating selves that can bring about a transformation of society (Lentin, 2000b). While we present ourselves as the central characters of our personal narratives, we bring to the fore 'associations, asides, actions' that are otherwise on the margin, forging a space 'to introduce and expand upon particular topics' (Riessman, 2003: 23). Therefore, personal narratives can be subversive and, as I consider in the rest of this chapter, migrant women are often doubly empowered by this counter-narrating potential.

Indeed, as Lentin and others caution, we need to acknowledge that beyond 'words' and 'discourses' a 'real' world and 'real' lives exist (Riessman, 2005, 2004, 2003; Lentin, 2000a; Sparkes, 1999; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). The world is not all a stage, not all narratives serve performative purposes and not all communication is through spoken language alone (Riessman, 2004, 2002). The continuous and limiting effects of existing social structures of inequality do remind us of 'the real world' (as I have elucidated by introducing the narratives of the women's struggles and disadvantages in migration in the previous chapters).

However, positing the performative nature of narratives does not necessarily belittle the existence of structural constraints. Rather, it seems to me, focusing on the performative/transformative nature of narratives has the capacity to grasp the complexities of where and how *social structures meet individual agency* and how and when negotiations occur. Attentively interpreted, narratives reveal 'both the logic of individual courses of action and the effects of system-level constraints within which those courses evolve' (Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 6). This seems a key methodological tool in advancing the analysis of structures/agency interplay, which, as I highlighted in chapter two, represents one of the main theoretical gaps in migration studies.

Before looking at the interviews with Italian migrant women, in the next section I want to explore further the intimate relations between narrativity, memory and diasporicity. I want to explore how the diasporic identities that women weave together through their narratives are based on fluid and gendered memory practices. I want to argue that the malleable interplay of memory and narratives allows the women of my study to sustain the two-tiered sociality of their double diaspora. I first introduce some theoretical considerations about memory and then review the diasporic literature that highlights the links between narratives and memories in the diaspora.

BETWEEN THE WRINKLES OF DIASPORA: THE 'ROUTES AND ROOTS' OF MEMORIES AND NARRATIVES

Memories are deeply connected to the narratives of self and belonging, as it is through acts of memory and reflexivity that the self comes into being (Stanford

Friedman, 1998). The self we say we are is connected to the lives we say we have lived and thus to its memories (Eakin, 1999 in Smith and Sparkes, 2002: 147). Unlike narratives, memories do not have plots and stylistic features (Mand, 2006: 1060), but like narratives, they require engagement and communication with others. My understanding of memory is indebted to Hirsch and Smith's feminist work (2002) on *cultural memory,* which they interpret as an act of transfer:

> By which individuals and groups constitute their identities by recalling a shared past on the basis of *common*, and therefore often *contested*, norms, conventions, and practices (Hirsch and Smith, 2002: 5; my emphasis).

Cultural memory contains the germs of the bounded/fluid Janus-faced nature of diasporic belongings; memory functions as the instrument through which the fragments of the past can be amalgamated and negotiated with a fluid diasporic present. It is easy to recognise that memory epitomises the 'inventiveness of the past' (Soysal, 2000: 2), but the question is, as Breda Gray puts it, 'how is memory carried forward in a diaspora that is transnational and multicultural?' (Gray, 2003: 171). Put another way, how can memory encompass the fragmentary and incomplete nature of the diaspora, both its stability and fluidity?

The nature of memory function has been under study for decades but it has still not been fully understood (Montesperelli, 2003; Jedlowski, 2002, 2000). It is clear however, that memory is a selective and fluid human capacity and contrary to common belief, it is not about a fixed past. Memory is selective and inaccurate and in a sense it involves the impossibility to maintain stable and solid referents of the past. [112] Only recently have the social sciences begun dealing with the study of memory, greatly enriching our understanding of the social embeddedness of memory. Maurice Halbwachs – probably the most influential sociologist of social memory - has argued that individual 'memory needs continuous feeding from collective sources and is sustained by social and moral props' (Halbwachs, 1992 in Coser, 1992: 34). Society confirms the symbolic and cultural legitimisation of memories, providing frames of validation and fixation of individual memories

[112] In biological and neurological terms, memory defines the ability of acquiring and recalling information about the environment (Jedlowski, 2002). Philosophers and psychologists have produced fascinating works on the complexities of this human function, showing that memory is selective, fluid and inaccurate, based on emotive and involuntary processes. Paradoxically, memory is about erasure, managing the processes of erasure of an otherwise overwhelming amount of information, defining retroactively what has to be retained, updated and modified –what Freud defined as *Nachträglichkeit* (see Montesperelli, 2003).

(Halbwachs, 1992), but in their turn, memories function as 'frameworks' that legitimise collective and socially specific acts of memory recollection (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004; Montesperelli, 2003; Jedlowski, 2002; Corcoran, 2000).

In this sense, even in our most intimate memories, we are not alone (Jedlowski, 2002: 51): society creeps in and engraves our intimate relation with memory. Lentin theorises 'co-memoration' (Lentin, 2007), as a collaborative, active and inventive act of remembrance that creates meaning while engaging with the past. Co-memory is made up of ceremonial acts of remembrance but also of more intimate, everyday, familial practices of sharing and telling memories. These practices create a common past, marking it with events, dates and meanings that ultimately *construct* a common history. [113] Because of this, Ahmed claims that 'memory is a collective act which *produces* its object (*the we*), rather than reflects on it' (Ahmed, 1999: 343; my emphasis).

Memories are also narrative constructions. As social practices, they are enacted through narrative acts; they are signifiers that have been constituted linguistically (Jedlowski, 2002: 59). To be made effective, memories have to be told and communicated, they have to become stories and they have to be shared. In fact, to possess a memory is not sufficient. Memory must be sharable, and to be sharable it must be narratable. [114]

The role of memory is perhaps most meaningful and most visible in the diaspora. Diasporic memories are more fragile and more vulnerable to 'censorship and silencing' (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004: 229), because migrants are often asked to adapt to a new country of settlement by forgetting or relegating the past, so that 'the memory of what is here and now – and thus identification with the present - becomes dominant' (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004: 229). Furthermore, diaspora disturbs fixed notions of belonging, complicated by the distance from its source of spatio-symbolic foundation. In the movement, ruptures

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[113] In other words, memory does not just preserve the traces of the past; rather it recognises, organises and confirms such traces, transforming and adapting the past to enrich the meaning of the present (Montesperelli, 2000: 121). The link of the individual to the collectivity legitimises co-memory, but it is the latter that gives back cohesion and power to the group. 'Representing a communal past, memory confirms a common identity, depicting a homogeneous time' (Jedlowski 2002: 51).

[114] As Namer demonstrates regarding memories of survivors of concentration camps, the fact that survivors have lived similar experiences at the same time does not make their memories 'narratable', because collective remembrance is not made out of common memories but of a common discourse through which they can be told and transmitted (Namer, 1987 in Jedwloski, 2002: 61).

and fragmentations of the diaspora, memory becomes an essential tool of individual and collective rootedness and belonging. Le Goff, who reflects on the Jewish diaspora, maintains that diasporic people are the people of memory par excellence, and that 'to be diasporic means to remember' (Le Goff, 1977 in Montesperelli, 2003: 46).

There is clear emphasis in the literature on the inherent link between narrativity, memory and diaspora and on their ultimate role in the creation of a diasporic belonging that is both fluid and stable (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004; Knowles, 2003; Fortier, 2000; Gilroy, 1997; Anthias, 1996; Brah, 1996; Tötölyan, 1996). It is often remarked that diasporic lives are characterised by frequent changes, departures, and displacements and diasporic subjects have to adjust to the variable cultural norms of the different social and cultural worlds that they come to inhabit (as I demonstrated for the case of Italian migrants in Ireland in chapter four). 'The movement of selves' between the places of the diaspora that come to be inhabited as homes involves 'discontinuities of biographies and wrinkles in the skin' (Ahmed, 1999: 343).

In these circumstances, the individual and collective sense of self is not guaranteed (as it used to be in traditional societies) by external confirmation, where individual identity is reified through the daily interaction in a stable and continuous environment, with people met constantly 'whose memories allowed confirming one's own, repeating a definition of identity guaranteed by *collective witnessing*' (Jedlowski, 2002: 81; my emphasis). In diasporic conditions, collective witnessing must be stretched through distances; diasporic identities must be imagined, constructed and legitimised through narratives and memories (Jedlowski, 2002: 81).

In this sense, diaspora exists as part of a 'broader scheme to insert continuity and coherence into life stories that are presumably broken under the conditions of migrancy and exile' (Soysal, 2000: 2). The diaspora unfolds in the 'poetics of dislocation' that deals with 'broken narrative threads', linking 'dispersed destinies back to a single defining national or ethnic site of origin' (Cohen, 1999: 7). The poetics of dislocation grants power to the discursive and narrative construction of diaspora, understood as 'a particular way of mapping territories of meanings… a strategy of remembrance entailed in a long-term principle of hope' (Cohen, 1999: 7). Cohen's argument draws attention to the ways in which diaspora exists as both a *distinct* and *dispersed* cultural project (a recurrent theme in the literature), kept

together through collective acts of co-memory and telling. Similarly, Brah (1996) theorises diasporas as cultural formations constituted at the confluence of multiple narratives, highlighting the role of everyday, intimate, narrative practices. Brah explains that the multiple journeys of diaspora:

> May configure into one journey, via a confluence of narratives as [diaspora] is lived and re-lived, produced, reproduced and transformed through individual as well as collective memory and re-memory. It is within this confluence of narrativity that a 'diasporic community' is differently imagined under different historical circumstances (Brah, 1996: 183).

Brah notes how *disparate* narratives form the collections of individual and collective annals of memories and narratives that contribute to the shaping of a *distinctive* diasporic sense of belonging (Brah, 1996). Narratives, and especially the narrativisation of past memories, construct the diasporic identity as 'trans-temporal, trans-spatial and reliant on diverse narratives of cultural belonging' (Gray, 2003: 163).

The significance of Cohen's, Brah's and Gray's arguments lies not only in postulating the co-existence of a *unique* and yet *multiple* articulation of diaspora, but also in their emphasis on *imagination, narrativity and memory* as central factors in the construction of a sense of belonging that is also moving and fluid. Far from being fixed or pre-given, diasporic belonging is understood as 'constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life, in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively' (Brah, 1996: 183).[115]

To sum up, the theoretical suggestions analysed above about narrativity, memory and diaspora posit narratives as performative in the diaspora, in respect of three distinct issues. First, narrativising and adapting memories of 'dislocation helps to relocate: it gives a shape, a contour, a skin to the past itself' (Ahmed, 1999: 343). Second, as inter-generational acts of story-telling about prior histories of movement and dislocation, narrativised memories constitute a 'language of heritage', with

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[115] As actors in a 'drama of belonging' (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff, 2004: 227), diasporic subjects take advantage of narrativity and memory to perform and enact a continuous and stable sense of belonging with an urgency that equates no other. It is of little surprise therefore that the degree of creativity, imagination and inventiveness that diasporicity entails has conditioned generations of writers and artists who have found in the diaspora 'inspiration and meaning, pleasure and pain' (Chamberlain and Leydesdorf, 2004: 227). As Cohen puts it, 'here the invented traditions of diaspora take on their full weight, as the story of an epic journey from eternity to here (and maybe hell) and back again' (Cohen , 1999: 7).

which it becomes possible to inherit a collective past 'by sharing the lack of home rather than sharing a home' (Ahmed, 1999: 337). Memories and narratives arrest 'the movement of identity', fixing the 'compulsion to have an identity' in 'sexual and ethnic conventions' (Fortier, 2000: 165).

The third aspect, which is of particular interest to me, concerns the link between narratives and memories that reciprocally enhance fluid, adaptive, moving meanings of the diaspora. In diaspora, belonging is complicated by a sense of incompleteness and in-betweenness (as I demonstrated in chapter seven). Memory and narrativity fill the gaps of the diaspora, creating a sense of continuity and stability out of layered and shifting experiences. In other words, there is a tension between the multiplicity and uniqueness of diaspora, between its fluidity and its boundedness. This tension is reconciled through the very shifting nature of memories and narratives that translate migrants' capacity to shift homes, terrains of belonging, social normativities. As I want to argue in the next section, this capacity has a gendered quality. Gender tells and remembers through women's different experiences, and the outcomes are often subversive and counter-hegemonic (Lentin, 2006: 470-471). At the same time, memory and narration are also 'gendered through the collective's investment in women's symbolic representation' (Lentin, 2006: 471). How can the two contrasting forces be reconciled?

ITALIAN WOMEN'S NARRATIVES: COUNTER-NARRATING GENDER

Gender dictates the modalities and finalities of narrative acts: it regulates who is telling what stories, to whom, and how. Notably, for women, narratives are not only a social practice but also a social strategy of emancipation. My argument resonates very closely with the notion that women's agentic development is facilitated by a narrative act of locating oneself in the world. Through this narrative enactment women become cognisant of their unique personal histories and of their struggles as a reflection of broader social relations (Moch and Gates, 2000; Myerhoff, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1990; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Because of female subordination in a masculine order of domination, women's personal narratives function inherently as 'counter-narratives'. In the very act of conveying women's self-definition and self-understanding of their own lives, narratives allow women a

space to renegotiate the limitations of gender norms (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). In this sense, Liz Stanley and Sue Wise argue that women appeal to verbal and interactive resources in order to 'fight back', to express their agency within social constraints (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 22).

In diaspora, gender norms often become more rigid, especially for women, because the diaspora builds its expectations for keeping traditions and identities intact through women's gender roles as biological and cultural reproducers of the collectivity (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989). On the other hand, women may also acquire more freedom through the diasporic experience, but not simply because the cultural norms of the new countries of settlement are more liberating. Even when these norms are rigid, migrant women can negotiate freedom from gender constraints as *outsiders* standing at the threshold of differing sets of norms, where normative systems falter and what is left can be manoeuvred and engineered to achieve gender emancipation.

For Janice Haaken, this capacity to mediate between conflicting normativities derives directly from women's gendered socialisation, at least in the western world, to stand at the threshold between private and public life and to live divided between constraining 'internalised structures that constitute the [female] social ego and the [liberating] insurgent internal forces opposing it' (Haaken, 1998: 271). Experiencing this condition and struggling to emerge out of the suffocating constraints of domesticity, female subjects search for new modes of self-expression, what Haaken (1998) described as memory search.

This understanding resonates with the feminist thinking that acknowledges the legitimacy of women's 'unconventional work' and the capacity of traditional female domains to become creative and self-expressive sites for women's emancipation (be it through domestic chores, gardening, cooking, etc; see Goeller, 2005: 236; Jedlowski, 2000; Walker, 1996). Women have traditionally looked for counter-hegemonic sites of expression, because they had limited access to male dominated public fora. [116] Goeller argues also that women's struggles for self-identity and creativity have often been combined with story-telling (Goeller, 2005: 236).

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[116] Alice Walker powerfully recognized how her mother's genius was expressed in her garden. She writes that 'I remember people coming to my mother's yard to be given cuttings from her flowers; I hear again the praise showered on her because whatever rocky soil she landed on, she turned into a garden' (Walker, 1996 in Goeller, 2005: 236).

This thinking resonates very closely also with my own ethnographic findings. During my interviews with Italian migrant women it was evident that narrativity functioned as a resource and a strategy for the women to find new spaces to express their subjectivities, and to recuperate a sense of continuity among shifting gender boundaries. There are other specific configurations of Italian culture that contribute to intensifying the narrative proclivity of Italian migrant women.

According to Cavarero, Italian women are socialised to master the art of story-telling, which 'has been inspired by a wise rejection of the universal abstract and follows a daily practice where narration is existence, relationship, and attention' (Cavarero, 1997: 73). In the kitchen, in trains, in school corridors, between a pizza and a glass of wine, women above all symptomatically tell life stories (Cavarero, 1997: 73). Expressing and shaping their selves through narrative acts is a part of the social make-up of female subjectivities.

Italian women have usually been denied a 'space for action where the self could mirror itself' differently from men, who have had greater influence in the social, political and professional spheres. In these spheres, men are able to affirm who they are and shape their identities (Jedlowski, 2000: 100-102). Women have traditionally used narration for the reality of a subjectivity otherwise denied (Jedlowski, 2000). According to Jedlowski, among the historic processes that have generated this gender divide is the separation between factory and house work, and between fatherhood and motherhood ideologies (Jedlowski, 2000: 103). The emerging gender order assigns to men a 'reserved and melancholic' inability to tell stories of the self, to communicate well, whereas women have a more sophisticated and powerful ability to tell about their selves, 'to find a story to narrate behind the veil of ordinary everyday life, and to transform [through narration] daily life into experience' (Jedlowski, 2000: 103).

This is a generalised understanding of gender normativities, which I want to test against the different classed, aged, sexualised backgrounds of Italian women migrants in Ireland. More specifically, by analysing women's performative narratives and memories, I want to raise questions on how women's narrative strategies correspond to, influence or intersect with the narrative strategy of the diasporic groups. Is there any overlapping between women's narrative strategy (of mediating shifting gender boundaries) and the narrative construction of diaspora

(which also mediates shifting identitarian boundaries)? Can this dialectical analysis explain how diasporic identities are both *shifting* and *continuous*?

Performing Italianness And Diasporicity

In chapter five, I have discussed my awareness of the power of narrativity during the interviews with Italian migrant women. Narrating was a means of connection and at the same time the terrain of my encounter with the women who participated in my research. Our need to connect was developed as a narrative encounter.

In this section, I explore these issues based on the women's own stories about themselves as they emerged during the interviews. However, I must highlight some issues that need to be taken into consideration through such analysis. Narratives are diachronic processes of signification that flow through time, through imagination and through embodied participation and they can hardly be contained in short interview extracts. In a sense, the extracts fix and interrupt the flow of the interview conversation, performed and experienced as a dynamic and interactive process. Therefore, different layers of communication and signification (non-verbal communication, time, emotions, etc) are excluded by the static format of the interview extracts. In translating the women's narratives into this academic text, I aim to show where possible the contexts and layers of the narratives presented in the interview extracts (which include the reflexive understanding of how I took part in it). Many cross-references are left out of the interview extracts but my interpretations are validated by the extent to which *I* know them *because I was there* and I have engaged with the women during the interview process: I was there listening, telling and imagining the contents of the narratives.

For example, during a group interview conducted on a Sunday afternoon after the Italian mass, Anna, a 60 year old second generation early-waves migrant woman, explained to me that she preferred to speak in English because she didn't feel comfortable with her Italian. Not to be able to speak Italian well had always been a source of shame and embarrassment for her. Comparing herself with me, she then remarked that my English was better than she expected. A few minutes into the conversation, I added my own stories about my experiences of speaking in a foreign language. Why did we construct such a narrative? What were its underlying meanings?

I liked Anna, her warmth and kindness immediately touched me, but I still felt tense and anxious about the interview. This was one of the first interviews I conducted, and I was yet to learn to recognise how overwhelmed, amazed and touched I felt by being made a part of the women's innermost thoughts and lives. It was as an experiencing 'bewildered' researcher, that soon after Anna expressed her difficulties with the Italian language, I communicated my own discomfort about speaking English. My own narrative surprised me when I listened to the recorded interview again, because it was something I hadn't really thought about or expressed until the moment of the interview – even though it was to become a familiar theme for me. I can interpret this narrative act, because I embody its layered meanings: Anna and I met each other; we recognised each other as migrants, as women, and notably, as Italians, even though for her this involved the anxiety of speaking in broken Italian and for me speaking in broken English.

Similarly, the women's personal narratives often (even though by no means always) represented for me moments of touching revelations. I was moved by the sharing of intense and sincere feelings, and I believe it was this very feeling (the all-human need 'to be recognised and recognise someone in a story', Jedlowski, 2000: 23) that allowed us to be connected. Implicated in what Ferrero describes as the 'metaphysics of viscerality', we performed a 'mutual mythmaking of the most intimate order' and we named as Italian, the patterns of our 'intelligent emotions' (Ferrero, 2005: 204). 'Italianness' became the ground of our connectivity, while we acknowledged the affinities that supposedly a shared 'Italian' cultural background gave us. But between 'us', Italianness was not a fixed list of shared cultural traits (pizza, pasta, sun, etc); we all had very different conceptions about what it means to be Italian. Rather Italianness was a 'floating signifier' (Hall, 1996) used as a pre-*text* (that is a narrative construction placed upon imagination), which corresponded to our desire to be connected to each other. Constructed at the intersection of different categories (gender, class, etc), Italianness was made durable because we named and narrated it as 'Italianness'. This was achieved not through fixed topics, but through shared and affirmed ways of speaking and knowing those topics.

For example, when Nunzia, an early-waves migrant woman, told me about the way 'things used to be in Italy' before she left (no washing machine, no television, etc), I claimed to know the meanings of her stories, because my grandmother also used to tell me about those times. Nunzia's memories were not *my memories*, but

they became *my stories* as I created a connection by virtue of specific gendered worlds of meanings and experiences that we were familiar with. Through these narrative acts we reified Italianness and enacted our diasporicity. In Anna's interview, it also emerged how her map of belonging, Italy, was constructed through stories and discourses. Consider how she talked about her sense of belonging when I asked her about being an Italian migrant in Ireland. Her reply revealed how she translated and actualised space and identity through narratives.

> Then, mummy always spoke of Italy, always, I knew Italy in my mind before I went to Italy, I knew all about the country, Casalattico, and Montattico, all the little towns around! (...) She told me how hard it was when she was growing up, how hard it was to work the land, and, things weren't just, you know, as easy, and we grew up knowing a lot about the Italian way of life, but of the sort that, you do not worry too much about it, you know? But then I loved to go over to mummy; I remember all she said, the different places.
> Carla: Italy was the way you imagined it?
> Anna: Ah yes, it was, it was. I liked it

I think Anna's narrative is interesting because it reveals that just as a sense of belonging was performed between 'us', it was also performed between Anna and her mother through narratives. This act created Italianness as a narrative construction. Anna's interview extract also illuminates significantly to the primary role women have in the narrative practices of the family, as I consider below.

In another case, Agata, a long settled migrant woman, who had moved to Ireland at the end of the 1980s, spoke about her eldest daughter who was ten at the time of their migration. Agata emphasised with pride that her daughter 'still remembers all about Italy. All. You can bet she can tell you everything... because we always speak about it... it's good this way'.

For Agata and Anna, stories about Italy (told by mothers to daughters) can legitimise identification with Italianness and allow Italianness to exist as a discrete and bounded entity. Notably, the women/mothers emerge as the custodians and transmitters of familial memories and narratives, and in so doing they contribute to setting the identitarian boundaries between the *us* of the diasporic group, the Italians in Italy and the *Irish other*. Through their narrative acts, Italian migrant women referentially substantiate the very existence of boundaries and set the parameters for group membership. The Italian diasporic *history* is actualised through transmitted family *stories*. Marianna, a 35 year old second generation migrant woman, explained

how her grandmother's narratives about World War II affected her. When studying history in school, she said:

> You kind of knew what was going on, we could follow that much easier, because we had our stories of granddad who was in such and such a place' [a town in the Frosinone province] when the Germans bombed. You already had those stories in the back of your mind, so when you learnt them at school, for example, you probably thought that you were in touch with this, whereas for my [Irish] friends in the class, it was something completely new, it was something they couldn't understand because they had no knowledge of this.

Her 15 year old sister, Angela, added excitedly to Marianna's narrative, 'reflexively' and 'reflectively' (Myerhoff, 1992) expressing her view that indeed familial annals of memories had an impact on her identification with a collective *us*, subsumed under the signifier of Italianness.

> Just like for *us*, when they [the Irish students] learnt about the Irish history, when Ireland was tied to England, it's not new to *them*, 'cause they have heard the histories of their grandfathers. But it's new to *us*, 'cause we haven't heard any stories about when Ireland was tied with England. But it's just stories.

The extract above exemplifies how narration sets boundaries and creates markers of identity in the very intimate space of familial inter-generational telling. Narratives build symbolic boundaries and contents that are reinforced in the 'Irish classroom', a metaphor for the exclusivist categorisations of Irish hegemonic discourses. In their minority condition, Angela and Marianna do not see themselves as part of the Irish *history*; their family *stories* form instead the continuous, systematic story-line of their belonging that relates to their diasporic group as a particular people, country, period, etc. Similarly, other women of my research spoke about the impossibility of completely identifying with Irish history, because of 'the abyss of ignorance between us and them' (Leda). Italian migrants have often suffered isolation and marginalisation in Ireland, and Leda, a one-and-half generation migrant, tells how 'when [we] arrived here, we all cried, even my parents. And we children, we cried because we were afraid to see our parents unsure about themselves, in the sense that they were isolated'.

In these circumstances, Italian migrants in Ireland have mainly relied on inter-familial informal support. As the women tell, the connectivity between Italian migrants' families has often involved sharing narratives, 'chatting, gossiping, talking

about relatives and friends' (Anna), and so on. These narrative acts have been mostly performed by women, and have constructed a parallel *Italian diasporic history,* or as I want to propose here, *her-stories*, because the story-line is especially constructed by the women's narrative proclivity and gendered memories, and because it is layered and multiple. The way that the women and I imagined ourselves as part of the same diasporic Italian group at the very moment of the interview, feeds this same construction of *diasporic her-stories*.

Women's intimate narratives of the past, as well as codified oral stories such as lullabies, songs, or fairytales become vectors of identity and 'co-memories' (Lentin, 2007) that mark Italian migrants' sense of belonging, virtually manufacturing 'members' who fit in (Fortier, 2000: 165). I am particularly concerned about how gender normativities play an essential role in these processes of identification. On the one hand, gender representations reify Italianness (as I demonstrated in the previous chapter through the narratives of women's beautiful bodies and *principesse*, and of men's heroic actions). On the other, gender influences how, why and by whom the stories about Italianness and diaspora are told. The women of my research spoke about being the main agents responsible for the collection and intergenerational transmission of stories and memories of their families. They are the main narrators of the *her-stories* of the diaspora.

When telling each other about their experiences, the women create space to express themselves and manifest new emancipated gender roles that remain largely invisible outside their families. The privileged female connection is influenced by the strong bond between mothers and daughters, which often invest non-kin women in 'fictive motherhood' roles (see chapter seven). Apart from what the migrants told me about this bond, I could observe its course and effects during the group interviews, which were all fortuitous products of the women's tendency to stay together. In each group interview, I had arranged to meet one woman, but some relatives and friends always casually joined us, or were already there when I arrived to meet the woman. In all cases, the presence of other women created a conducive environment for the women's narrative sharing, due to their familiarity with each other but also to their reciprocal contact, which enhanced their narrative inclination. In the group interviews, I often felt that the women were talking more to each other than to me.

Moreover, in one group interview, where men were present, I observed that when the men moved spontaneously to another room to play cards, the women

started to share their personal narratives and their memories more freely. While in that other room, the silence of the contemplative players was broken only by occasional shouts and cheers, the room where I was with the women was soon filled with their voices and their stories.

Several factors condition the expectations in the Italian culture that women be the receptacles of familial chronicles and stories. First of all, narratives are steeped in emotional significance, with which the Italian women tend to have privileged affinity, as argued by Cavarero (1997) and Jedlowski (2000). Italian women are socialised to be what Haaken described as the 'receptacles and bearers of emotionally laden cultural knowledge' (Haaken, 1998: 9).

Secondly, Italian migrant women are the main care givers in their families and are embedded in the strong ethos of motherhood (see previous chapter). They spend more time than men with their children and are the first acculturating agents of their progeny. Sharing narratives with their children is a common practice among the women that allows them to shape and assess their personal views, biographies and accounts (or as Luana puts it, to 'share exactly the same sort of exposure to the same sort of family traditions'). Both the earlier generations of migrant women and the recent migrants claim to often tell stories to their children. Jenny, a long settled migrant, explained how her mother, who lived in Italy and came regularly to Ireland for visits, had:

> Automatically already installed [memories of Italy] in her [daughter]. She told her [daughter], 'see, your mamma [Jenny] when she was young used to do so and so. When she was young she used to eat so and so. ... I brought her here and there'. So, it has always been a natural thing after all [to share and pass on memories].

For the older generations of early-waves migrant women, who are often isolated and confined in domestic spheres, telling their children about themselves is a means of manifesting and confirming their otherwise limited subjectivities and authority. Memories are voraciously dug out of the past, with the energy of a survival enterprise, passed on to their progeny as a sign of love for their children and for themselves. Given the isolation and lack of means of some of the women of early-waves migrant groups (as Maria put it, 'sitting quietly' in their houses and 'doing nothing'), narrating seems also a powerful act of courage and resistance, an act of agentic affirmation. Narratives shape women's selves, construct and validate

their authority, and respond to their compulsion to manifest their differences and marginalities in Ireland.

I witnessed the energy and intensity of gendered telling of narratives and memories during the interviews, when women became very excited and agitated in recollecting the often 'publicly' glossed over and unspoken details of their 'private' domestic environments – their housekeeping routines, their family care duties, and so. In the group interviews, they kept interrupting each other to add other stories and memories. But the women also spoke about the relevance of inter-generational narration about these aspects of their lives and about the time and energy invested in it.

Some of the women's accounts pointed directly to the importance of narratives and memories in the shaping of diasporic subjectivities and identities. Trying to put the threads of her migrant biography together, Mafalda, for example, spoke about her incapacity to 'say it all, all that I remember, word by word, because it is a long, long *story*. But it stays with me' (*sic*). Likewise, Assunta said that 'it takes so long to try to remember everything, and yet *it's all there* in the back of the mind', and Francesca, a recent migrant to Ireland, spoke about the weight of narrativity in her life, metaphorising narrating as an act of *experiencing*. When speaking about her fatigue as a migrant and her desire for 'sedentariness', Francesca claimed that: 'I think I have already seen enough of the world. I want to *tell* my life perhaps in a different way'. Similarly, when Franca spoke about the stories of her aunt, a second generation Italian migrant, who was not allowed to marry so that she could care for her ageing parents, she explained that 'my aunt Mary, never really spoke of their things, because she was embarrassed... But the lesson was found very good, because *it is a great story'* (sic).

In all these cases, women showed awareness of how stories translate, articulate and construct individual and collective identities and I demonstrate here that in doing so they enact (gendered) normative systems. The potency of narrativity is acknowledged together with its subaltern nature, as the women spoke about stories being 'taken for granted', located 'there on your doorstep, but you don't think about it' (Carmela), or lingering in the 'back of your mind' (Marianna). Through their narrative acts, women/mothers perform the inter-generational acculturation of their families, but as they claim, this is the 'sort that you do not worry too much about' (Anna); it is unconsciously absorbed, sweet as a lullaby, a fairytale, or childhood

memories. It is by virtue of this 'soft', private, and counter-hegemonic nature of narrative practices that women's parallel sphere of sociality lies underground and parallel, cushioned below the surface of hegemonic structures.

Her-Stories And The Narrative Shade

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated the existence of a female separate sphere of sociality and articulation of power, vis-à-vis the male hegemony and the dominant Irish society. Having discussed at the beginning of this chapter that Italianness as a narrative construction is performed mainly by Italian migrant women, I now want to theorise the role narrativity plays in sustaining the parallel socialities that characterise the women's experiences in Ireland. My argument is that through *fluid* narrative practices, women can find their own place in their diasporic destinations by supporting each other and forging new emancipated roles.

Through their narratives, the women's parallel world of meanings becomes self-referentially and internally hegemonic, and female truths - hidden from their husbands, brothers, fathers, and from older women and relatives - are validated and legitimated (see previous chapters for women's stories of secretly meeting their lovers, keeping distant from authoritative mothers, etc). The women who participated in my research, regardless of their age, class affiliation and history of migration, demonstrated a relentless tenacity in pursuing their emancipated agency. They did so by moving *away* from the sources and structures of their constraints, but without directly contesting the legitimacy and power of such structures, even though at another level they actually did. At the level of their double-diaspora, the women legitimatise their 'hidden' agency and emancipated identities by sharing narratives and reflecting on them with those who are not involved in the structures of their subjugation.

The women's narratives of 'invisible' and 'hidden' struggles and acts of resistance, passed on from woman to woman, from mother to daughter, fulfil an important function: they have the power to suggest 'hidden' agency as a model of gendered behaviour and to re-appropriate and re-work women's differences and marginalities in a positive light (Ifekwunigwe, 1999: 192). The narratives of the women's 'hidden' agency also demonstrate how doing something forbidden is agentic only if a (counter)narrative enactment exists that allows the action to be known, affirmed, and legitimated among the women. In this sense, as Myerhoff

notes, the narrative is not just a text but an *event*, because 'its effect on the listener is profound, and the latter is more than a mere passive receiver or validator. The listener is changed' (Myerhoff, 1992: 245).

To shed further light on the workings of narrative self-transformations, I now look at how the Italian migrant women's counter-narratives construct precedents that empower the participants of their narrative act, while reflecting themselves in it. These stories also bring out the structures of gender limitations and the women's visions of a present free from such limitations, for both the teller and the listener. Consider Franca for example, a 40 year old second generation migrant, whose mother is Italian and whose father is Irish. She explained that the migratory stories and memories of her female relatives were very important to her because they provided her with an empowering model of female counter-normativity. While she spoke about her female relatives, we both seemed to enjoy the comforting moment of revelation that the past had carried its bearings onwards in Franca's life (and in part in my life too). Franca recounted with passion that after a painful marital break-up, she found that:

> Starting over is easy in my family, because my sisters had to do it too, and I think this comes from my grandmother, from my nonna. Because she had to make a few decisions, to start over or not [when she moved away from Italy]. And my grandfather's sisters. The sister, aunt Giulia, left to live in France, because she fell in love with a married man. They didn't do that in Italy, then. My other aunt Gina, got pregnant with an Italian man, and it was unlucky he was married, that was back in Italy and she left. My aunt Silvia moved to Australia with her husband, and she was pregnant at the time and they were married at that stage. ... She was my nonna's sister. She went from Italy on a boat on her own, while she was pregnant. And in those days, that was in the 1930s.

In this narrative, Franca is translating the migratory stories of her female relatives into 'typifications' of strong women. Typifications are cultural categorisations ready at hand to project a framework for interpreting future action (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 224). Usually, the teller recounts of a typification in relation to a turning-point experience, which helps the teller to cast herself in transition from one life stage to the other (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 224). The typification of strong migrant women in Franca's family makes it possible for her to talk about her own break up. In this manner, self-revelation and progression is achieved through the very act of story telling.

Women can draw lessons from each other's stories and can find terms of comparison to empower themselves in taking decisions and express counter-hegemonic subjectivities. Narratives and memories are highly complex and their referential claims frequently exist so as 'to repair what is actually an awareness of ontological complexities and fragmentation' (Stanley, 1993: 206). Like in the case of Franca, Italian migrant women spoke about their experiences of ontological fragmentation especially in relation to their gendered and migratory positions (in terms of education, self-confidence, isolation, etc; see chapter six and seven). While the women succeed in bypassing the constraints and in manifesting their counter-agency, ambiguous life patterns often develop. Narrative practices allow the women to repair this ambiguity because narratives can articulate a sense of continuity and create space for an empowered representation of the self (not just as a victim of events).

A good example of how narratives may 'repair' the complexities of diaspora by constructing an inclusive referential frame, is provided by Maria, a first generation 60 year old migrant, who had no educational qualifications and worked in the home and in the family's shop most of her life. Maria recounted that she would have liked to learn to use a computer, but she claimed that she did not have time. She faced greater difficulties in taking a computer course than her husband, in terms of work, time and other expectations. At this point of the narrative, Maria's non verbal communication expressed her hurt pride and her reluctance in accepting the constraints or the lack of confidence to do the course. She then used a ritualised language practice of turning-point, casting the event in a double light and adding a new piece to the narrative. She maintained that actually it was her choice not to take the course. In the end, she said, 'it's me, I do not want to'. This linguistic practice gives the narrative a complex structure, that offers itself to multiple interpretations but Maria's non verbal communication at the end was unequivocal: she smiled glamorously and sat up straight in chair. She wanted to affirm her power and her agency, and she did so, even though her agency coexisted with her constraints and with the contradictory and messy unfolding of everyday life.

I must say here that I often felt frustrated by these ambiguities and contradictions of the women's discourses. I came to understand however, that it is this very capacity of narrative to be open and without fixed boundaries that creates progression. Thus, narratives cast events in a double light that allows 'protagonists

[of the narrative] to imagine possibilities, weigh alternatives, shift mindsets' (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 6). The uneven-edged boundaries of the narrative are central to the very coherence of the narrative and invest the narrative 'with a sense of engagement and concern for *what lies ahead* in the life course' (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 157; my emphasis). At the same time, the occurrence of one event gives rise to another so that past events become less remote and more intimate when people talk about them.

The capacity to link past and future of narrative and memory is particularly relevant when considering how Italian migrant women experience fractures and contradictions in the gendered, classed and intergenerational transitions (see chapter six and seven). In the group interview with Celestina and Nunzia, a past divided between many journeys and different homes, where memories did not fit the reality of their late recollections, was powerfully sewn together in a narrative reconstruction. I present at length some parts of Celestina and Nunzia's interview, which serves as a good example of the very complex and multi-layered structures that narratives develop.

Nunzia and Celestina are sisters-in-law. Their families came from the same village in Italy. Yet Nunzia was 'born and raised' in Dublin, while Celestina only moved to Dublin when she was nineteen. In the interview, Celestina told how she remembered her past life in Italy, when Nunzia used to visit her village and 'any time one of these [Nunzia's family] came back over, I mean the people from England[117] came over, they [were the] foreigners'. Celestina and other children of the village would eagerly anticipate such visits, because the 'foreigners' would bring back chocolates and other rich goods that filled their imagination during the intervals between their visits, as much as the stories of their 'strange' lives elsewhere. Later, Celestina also moved to Ireland and became a 'foreigner'. As Celestina recollected her past, she asked Nunzia to confirm her memories. Both women became very agitated, and interrupted each other's narration often. I was caught in the vortex and energy of memory recollection too and I couldn't stop feeling amazed by it. Celestina and Nunzia wanted to see how their memories matched.

> Nunzia: I remember when years ago in Italy, when we use to go back in the summer, like when they were living there…
> Celestina: And any time any of these came back over or the people from England came over…
> Nunzia: *We were the foreigners then (in Italian).*

[117] England here represents both people from UK and Ireland

> Celestina: Yes, there was about twenty kids waiting for them to arrive in the village, 'cause , you know, I like the chocolate and sweets (...) and we'd be waiting for them and we'd haunt them, we'd been their friends (...) so we'd get the chocolate.
> Nunzia: And there was only one TV in the village.
> Celestina: Yes, yes!
> Nunzia: And they killed each other to go up and see it!

In these moments of memory recollections, Celestina and Nunzia eagerly emphasised the similarities of their stories, asking each other to confirm or add something to it, exclaiming 'do you remember it?', 'What do you think?', 'Ti ricordi?', 'Ah this happened to me too!'. These interlocutions were acts of 'probing and contextualising women's own, shifting notion of themselves' (Grewal, 1994: 240) in the midst of diasporic change. The two women were often surprised by their own memories and stories, and in the epiphanic moments of their narrativisations, they suddenly seemed to have to face and resolve the complexities of their lives.

The recollection of diasporic memories has an exquisite gendered character as memories are stirred in women's experiential spheres. Domesticity and traditional female roles play an important part in the lives of the women I have interviewed, but these contents are rarely represented and interpreted in the hegemonic accounts about Italian migrants in Ireland. As Hirsch and Smith (2002) put it, cultural memory is inescapably intertwined with differential gendered power relations, and that what a culture remembers and what it chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony, and thus with gender. Nonetheless, even though the memories of women's gendered worlds (as in the example below, sinks, beds, etc) are not represented in the hegemonic accounts of their migrants' groups, women manage to create a space of their own to reflectively and reflexively interpret and represent them. Let's consider Celestina and Nunzia's interview further.

> Celestina: But you see, when I go home to Italy, I remember all these little bits and pieces. Eh, I didn't go back to Italy until I was married. And when I went up in the village I said oh Jesus, it's so different. I remembered the places but I thought the places were bigger. And when I'd go into the rooms... gosh they were very small! Everything seemed so different.
> Nunzia: Yeah! You know what? That happened to me too! My grandmother's house, ok? A la piazza, there was one room, the kitchen, and there was one bedroom upstairs, and the toilet, you had to go outside, near the houses. This bedroom was a kitchen and we had a double bed behind the door as well and there was the table. And a cooker and the presses and this sink with the taps. We eventually

> had taps and water, before mummy and daddy built their house where we used to go back all the six of us, and we'd have granny and grandpa (...) and we all stayed in there, and I was in that house about three years ago, I said oh my God! How did we all fit in here!

Celestina and Nunzia create a linear, coherent narrative, with a plot structure that conveys a temporal and causal order to the 'bits and pieces' of their gendered memories, moving towards 'an ending that provides a sense of psychological closure' (Ochs and Capps, 2000: 5). Their narratives construct a shifting referential frame in which the scattered parts of their gendered biographies can fit together and acquire new meanings.

The rest of the narrative tells about Celestina's brother, who now lives in Italy. He makes fun of her when, in summertime, she returns for visits and they sit together in the piazza under the shade of the tree, because she is now the 'new foreigner', who once used to wait for the 'foreigners' to bring the chocolates back to the village. At the end of the long narrative exchanges, Celestina, quite overwhelmed asked, rhetorically 'we are foreigners here, we are foreigners there, what the hell are we?' Fragmentary memories were reconstructed in a dialogical interaction, which helped validate the 'lives-in-the-making' of Celestina and Nunzia but ultimately 'jeopardize the authenticity of the unique experience' (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 201) and reify the diasporic impossibility of belonging.

Analysing this interview, I started to think of and literally picture the women's narrative acts like the shade of the tree in the piazza, under which it becomes possible to find rest from the summer heat: they procure a momentary refuge from the chaos of experience, unifying dispersed destinies. Yet, like the shade of the tree with the movement of the sun the narration too does not stay still; it too moves with the changing of other conditions, its borders stressed in other directions, for its shape to include the next recollection of memories.

The transient and comforting shade of narrativity and memory embraces not only the movement of migrants across countries and cultures, but also their intergenerational passage of memories. When migrant women remark upon their memories, often they mention how these have been passed on to them from their parents and grandparents, and how they pass them on to their children. Memories are in this sense always 'second hand memory'. This is how Luana, a long settled migrant put it:

> I was four years old and nonna Marianna was rocking me, when we had a wooden working cot that she had and she had her foot on the rocking cot and she would be knitting and making up balls of wool and rocking the cot while I was there, singing the ninna nanna, the cantilena, the stories, and this was a wonderful image that created a great sense of warmth of belonging, and happiness. So as long as they [my children] have that sense of memory, even if it is a second hand memory if you want, because it is my memory, it is not theirs, it has created an image for them, something for them to relate to.

Luana was probably too young to remember her grandmother at the age of four and it is plausible that her memories were also 'second hand', constructed and interpreted for her by her parents as she now claims to do for her children. In these intergenerational acts, women act as the main collectors of narratives and memories. I also argued that these narrative and memory acts are essentially products of a situational, functional and partial positioning that allows the diaspora to be constructed during the very process of recollection. This is well exemplified by the case of Leda. Leda is a one and a half generation migrant, who arrived in Dublin in the 1950s at the age of 12. Her family came from Emilia Romagna and had no connection with the chain migrations of the Frosinone Province. Leda observed that her sense of affiliation to the 'other Italian migrants' was shaped by her positioned memories as a girl coming of age in Dublin. Her sense of isolation at the time of settling down was broken up by what she remembers as 'a girl can remember'. She recounted:

> Well, I remember going to Mr Cervi... and I actually always remember like a child can remember, that he would give us ice-creams, ice-creams we always dreamt of. And this was my happiness to go and meet all these people.

Leda's memories are partial and situational, while articulating her belonging as an Italian among other Italians and constituting 'the place where the redemptive project begins' (Fortier, 2000: 129).

WOMEN'S NARRATIVE NETWORKS: PERFORMING KINSHIP

Having theorised women's narratives as performative strategies, I want to illustrate now the heuristic reach of narrative analysis by looking at the specific case of women's networks and how they are sustained by women's narrative practices. I have argued that dialectically constructed, narratives give focus to the women's

fragmented lives while also connecting them to each other. I want to explore in this section how women's connectivity and networks are enhanced by and through narrative practices (which I call narrative networks). To do so, firstly, I deconstruct the notion of Italian familism and of the biological essentialism of kinship, and I show how migrant women actively construct independent female networks. Secondly, I argue that by virtue of their gendered positions, women are expected to do kin and care work, which in diaspora is highly reliant on narrative practices. Thus, positioned within complex and flexible structures of connectivity, I wish to suggest that female kin networks are ultimately built on the blueprint of women's narrative practices, which have the capacity to construct, consolidate, activate or disconnect the ties of women's networks. In other words, narratives, migrants' familism and transnational networks overlap and are deeply affected by gendered roles.

Family Networks

Family is central to any discourse about Italian identity and affiliation. The existing literature however seems divided in interpreting Italian familism in migration either positively, as 'the basic units from which wider relations of cooperation and solidarity are built', or negatively, as 'the limit of associative life and integration' of Italian migrants (Reynolds and Zontini 2006: 7). [118] Recent accounts on Italian women migrants have placed emphasis on the important role of women within their transnational families (Baldassar, 2007; Reynolds and Zontini, 2006; Baldassar et al. 2006; Zontini, 2004) but the 1980s feminist revisionism of Italian migration studies had already produced relevant work in this direction. The American anthropologist, Michaela Di Leonardo highlighted the 'non-market activities' of Italian women in their households (understood 'as loci of political struggle') and in their kin networks. Di Leonardo described women's networks as:

> Products of conscious strategies crucial to the functioning of kinship systems; as sources of women's autonomous power; ... and at times as the vehicles for ... political resistance (Di Leonardo, 2001: 379-380).

[118] Recent accounts have called into question the negative view of the Italian migrant family as exclusivist (first advanced by Banfield in 1967 with his notion of 'amoral familism'; for a discussion see Zontini 2004; Lever-Tracy and Holton 2001), but the implications of intergenerational kin ties in sustaining migrants' transnationalism remains to be explored.

Deconstructing biologistic and essentialist assumptions of kinship, Di Leonardo shows how, embedded in hierarchies of power, female networks can be activated as vectors of gender emancipation. Di Leonardo argues that women in Italian culture perform the majority of 'kin work' along with housework and childcare. According to her definition, kin work refers to the very act of *doing kinship*, through:

> The conception, maintenance and ritual celebration of cross-household kin ties, including visits, letters, telephone calls, presents and cards to kin; the Organisation of holiday gatherings; the creation and maintenance of quasi-kin relations; decisions to neglect or to intensify particular ties; the mental work of reflection about all these activities; and the creation and communication of altering images of family and kin vis-à-vis the images of the others, both folk and mass media (Di Leonardo 2001: 380).

Starting from this important acknowledgement that family and kinship are social constructions, recent works are now re-addressing the question of migrant women's role in doing kinship. Zontini (2004) and Baldassar (2007) for example highlight that women transnationally perform their gender roles, a task which requires special skills and resources and further expands migrant women's social and cultural capital. The emergent notion in feminist studies of 'transnational chain of care' (Hochschild 2003; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003) is integrated into Italian migration studies and helps to unpack the gendered definition of labour and migration, which in the Italian case is often implicit, because of the prescribed nature of Italian families (Reynolds and Zontini 2006: 26).

Italian Women In Ireland: Narratives Of Kin Work And Care

The literature on transnational familism, networks and care work proves very useful in my analysis of Italian migrant women in Ireland and I think it intersects in interesting ways with the performative narrative analysis that I proposed in this chapter. The interviews with the women who participated in my research reveal that despite the strong family ties, Italian migrant women and men have different networks. Men and women entertain all sorts of relationships with each other and by linking to each other in marriage, they powerfully link families together. However, the migrant women's most meaningful relations, those that allow them to express their subjectivities to their fullest extent and that are thought of as most useful for them, seem to be the ones with other women.

Italian migrant women travel extensively across borders and boundaries in order to perform their kinship roles (motherhood, fictive or real) and the care giving and care receiving practices that these roles involve. 'The mobility of care' (Baldassar, 2007) is a phenomenon that equally influences Italian women with different histories of migration, different class, educational and generational backgrounds, including the older waves of migration, often represented as less active and mobile. Italian women travel to and from Ireland to care for their daughters during pregnancy, to help look after grandchildren, or return to Italy to care for ailing parents, and so on. Other instances of migration when second generation migrants are involved, like moving to another country to study or learn a language or seek employment, show that the migration of women and their children is mainly directed towards households where other women reside and can provide care. Men are rarely mentioned in these transnational chains of care. Moreover, the Italian migrant women I spoke with are expected to stay at home and do the majority of the family chores, while they care for their children, their ailing relatives and elderly parents. Even when women are professionals and work outside the house, these expectations still hold true. Distance impacts but doesn't disrupt care-giving and care-receiving, and the kin work practices remain primarily women's obligation and responsibility (Baldassar, 2007).[119]

In diaspora in Ireland, Italian women perform gendered roles across countries and manage to keep their kin ties active at a trans-familial and transnational level. However, Italian migrant women are not just *caring for*, involving concrete and material care giving, but also *caring about*, involving contact and emotional support, comfort, sociability, advice and self validation (Fisher and Tronto 1990 in Reynolds and Zontini 2006: 5). In migration, the *caring about* becomes imperative because migration, with its tyrannies of distance and time, complicates and limits their capacity to *care for*.

For example, Carmela, a 30 year old second generation migrant, spoke about a gendered world of a transnational exchange of kin work and kin care from which men seem excluded.

> I remember my mum talking on the phone to my auntie Antonietta, but not to her mum, my granny, who died when I was 14. But then

[119] This is interesting vis-à-vis the high percentage of Italian women working in Italy and employing domestic help, which is a help performed usually by other migrant women (Andall, 2000).

> nonna Silvana, she couldn't really speak towards the end of her life, she couldn't really talk, so I don't think my mum would have talked to her on the phone, she would have spoken to my auntie, and my auntie would have told my mum how my grandmother was.

Many Italian migrant women like the ones in Carmela's family claim to interact regularly by phone, showing their concern and care, giving advice or *simply talking* to their parents and their relatives. Telling can be interpreted then as a supreme form of caring about: the 'daily exchange of intimacies' (Baldassar, 2007) involved in the caring about and carried out through letters, telephone calls, emails, etc, is ultimately made up of personal narratives that travel across countries and generations. Telling shows concern, affection, attention and creates closeness (as mothers know when they sooth their babies' cries with stories and fairytales).

Leda's personal narrative provides another good example of how telling *is* care, how it is sustained *transnationally*, and how women are primary agents of transnational *networks of support*. Leda recounted that she felt marginalised and isolated in the 1950s Dublin, where societal structures seemed unable to receive her difference (she was assigned to a junior class in school, devalued for her initial linguist difficulties, etc). She used to spend a lot of time in the house with her mother but she often felt bored. Her mother advised her to write a letter to her grandmother in Italy:

> To tell her what we were doing. We didn't have money to send mail every day of course, but I wrote a little letter diary every day; then every week or ten days my mother would send them to my grandmother.

While she told about this daily practice of keeping in touch with her grandmother, Leda also recollected how her grandmother in Milan returned the correspondence, sending back not only letters with news and stories about the family but also contraceptives. She explained that:

> We didn't have contraceptives in Ireland. Absolutely not in those days, so my grandmother, I only understood this later, was sending my mum a newspaper with contraceptives inside, and at a certain point this newspaper didn't arrive any longer.

Leda further narrated that contraceptives started to be confiscated by the Irish customs authorities (and soon after that an unplanned pregnancy brought much stress

to Leda's family). But female kin ties did not stop at the national borders. They stretched across borders and across time and space.

Leda's story shows how, among other things, women's networks have the power to be subversive and counter-hegemonic. I am interested here in highlighting that it is this almost banal, everyday exchange of intimacies and *care about* performed by women that sustain 'transnationalism from below' (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998) in the case of Italian migrant families in Ireland. Men are involved in kin and care work too, but their practices have different collective implications that tend to provide more practical-oriented, more public and material support. Leda spoke about, for example, how her father would instrumentally develop his contacts with his relatives in Italy. [120] She told of a particular instance in which her father wanted to grow a herb in their garden and he wrote to his brother and said, 'look there's this herb plant here, could you send me a book so that I can learn to grow it?' (Leda).

Women's narrative networks are impregnated with the same fluid and double essence of the narrative practices that I have elucidated in the rest of this chapter. While telling and narrating, women maintain and ritually celebrate familial and intra-familial relations. They decide which ties (and which stories) to neglect and intensify and they do the mental work of reflection about these activities. But in so doing, they also create and communicate altering images of themselves and of their families to fit their gender emancipation, while at the same time assuring continuity and tradition.

The Italian migrant women in my research showed how in their networks, they share stories of gendered emancipation that became 'events', 'experiences', conscious strategies of alliance, sources of autonomous power, and vehicles for resistance. The enabling outcomes of women's narrative networks and care about provide migrant women and their families with all sorts of material and symbolic support. For example, Assunta spoke about her aunt who first left her hometown in Italy and subsequently encouraged Assunta to move to Dublin. Assunta kept in

[120] Many narratives of the women I spoke with demonstrate, like in Leda's case, that men are expected to deal with more practical, urgent and less personally engaging forms of communication, while women are generally assumed to engage in daily, personal and reflexive communication practices with their kin (see chapter eight). Socialised to a brusque and silent masculinity (La Cecla, 2000; Jedlowski, 2000), Italian migrant men tend to be less capable of sustaining transnational ties, which women with their caring about and their exchange of intimacies keep active and flowing.

contact with her aunt and developed a relationship that was at some point 'turned on' to support her migration project, bypassing the powerful mother-daughter link. Assunta recounted that:

> The reason [my aunt] came was that they were quite well off, well not well off, but you know they got a barn, you know after the war it was bad for everybody. She was 24 and she thought she was going to be left *zitella* [single]. She won't get anybody to marry her. So she came here with some people she knew, so she said, you grow up and come over, there is a nice family here and you know, you like it and you'll be much better than you are [in Italy]. And so I came, my father didn't want, my mother didn't say much but let me go.

Even though kin networks are structured on traditional gender roles that constrain and limit women's choices and possibilities, they can simultaneously function as sources of support and validation for women. Both the early-waves migrant women, the recent and long settled migrants are preoccupied with the negative disruption of their networks due to migration. Even though reciprocity remains high in the transnational networks with strong kin ties, the everyday and immediate support they provide is limited.

Consider the case of Valeria, who migrated to Ireland in the 1980s. She is married to an Irish man and has two young children. She explained that being a migrant:

> Was tiring of course. For me, I missed all the family support, in the sense that I have two young children, I work, etc, I *always* had to manage alone here.

To make up for the reduced support, some of the women claimed to count on local relations and networks with non-kin. Transnational kin networks coexist with these local networks, constructed across ethno-national and class affiliations. However, even though initially they provide a great support, these local non-kin networks seem too ephemeral and transitory to last and exacerbate, in the long term, the women's sense of isolation, their reliance on and commitment to transnational kin networks.

One factor that reinforces the relevance and maintenance of transnational kin networks is linked to the diasporic tension between 'returning home' and belonging in Ireland, which persists in many cases despite many years of settlement in Ireland and is enhanced by the gendered emancipation of the women in migration that often

turns 'home' into a site of contestation. Torn between multiple affiliations, relationships with kin reinforce the continuity of an 'Italian' sense of belonging across heterotopic pasts and futures. Kin networks transfer 'cultural remittances', utilising emotional attachments and family links to maintain cultural connections to the place of origin (Reynolds and Zontini, 2006).

Consider for example, the case of Monia, a 30 year old Sicilian woman, who moved to Ireland in the 1990s. Migration functions for her as an emergency distance from imposing gender restrictions, yet the distance is lived with a sense of loss and guilt, and an urgency to return for visits or to keep the connection alive at least by phone:

> I always try to be more confident, to trust myself, but then I arrive there [*at home*], and my mother, in one day or two, destroys all! From a psychological point of view, I prefer not to go. I prefer to talk to her on the phone, even if on the phone that's all another story.

Monia is compelled to do 'kin work', to keep in contact with her mother, because her sense of belonging and identity is under threat with the migration experience and her relations with her family function as 'cultural remittances'. She said in fact that this 'is very important for me. She makes me feel part of the life that I left behind, when she tells me about such and such person, and such and such things'.

Conclusion

My emphasis in this chapter has been on the adaptable and gendered nature of narrativity and memory and its role in the construction of the Italian diaspora in Ireland. The theoretical considerations about narratives and memories at the beginning of the chapter proved useful in framing the discourse about women's narratives as performative, that is as producing 'experience' rather than 'belief' (Myerhoff, 1992: 234). Through narrativity and memory, the women's 'invisible world is made manifest' but also 'the performed order is explicit, realised and we are *within* it, not left merely to endlessly wonder or talk about it' (Myerhoff, 1992: 234). In this sense, Italian migrant women are engaged in narrative acts that allow them to find a space to re-appropriate their differences and marginalities, to validate their 'hidden' agency and to construct the parallel sociality of the double diaspora that I started to analyse in the previous chapter.

In virtue of their gendered positions, the women are socialised to be the intergenerational tellers of the diaspora. They become the receptacles of collective annals of memories that are simultaneously and ineluctably interwoven with their personal stories of 'hidden' agency (which, when told among women have the capacity to legitimise their power and agency). The story they tell of the diaspora is inherently a subversive counter-story, a moving and contested construction of belonging and tradition. The double diaspora allows different configurations of power and border crossings within the women's diasporic formations. This processes challenges the marginalising impulses of the Irish hegemony, so that while the women tell their double diaspora, they also create space for the counter-hegemony of their diaspora at large.

The point I wish to stress is that the diaspora can become dominant thanks to the women's narrative practices, which have a major role in creating a common past out of different stories and experiences, marking it with events, dates and meanings that ultimately construct a stable diasporic continuity albeit a moving and changing one. In this sense, Italian migrant women in Ireland can be seen as 'moving figures' in the process of telling and remembering shared belonging (Fortier, 2000: 173). Therefore, I argued that the often taken for granted and devalued story-telling practices of Italian migrant women have a powerful role in sustaining diasporicity and in rooting it not in a fixed and bounded essence but in the 'routes', transformations and changes that accompany migration experiences. Finally, I illustrated the heuristic reach of the performative narrative analysis, through the analysis of female transnational kin networks and mobility of care that are an example of how narratives practices can sustain the moving practices of the diaspora. I argued that Italian women of my research are the main agents of the family's *care about*, cultivate kinship and kin ties, support each other and transfer cultural remittances (De Tona, 2007; De Tona and Lentin, 2007). These tasks are carried out transnationally and are sustained by women's everyday story-telling practices that have collective implications, much beyond the 'private' sphere of the family. Women's narrative acts become collective identity markers and allow the women to find a place in their diasporic destination by supporting their migration projects, providing them company and containing their isolation.

Chapter Nine

ENDING JOURNEYS: NARRATIVES, GENDER AND DOUBLE DIASPORA

There are only truths: relative, changing, emergent – as new light is shed on familiar circumstances.
And silences too are a matter of degree.
(Linden, 1993: 3)

In this study, 29 Italian migrant women have contributed to unearthing the gendered meanings of living in diaspora. These women have either a personal or family history of migration to Ireland, and they are first, second or third-generation migrants. They are of different ages and have a variety of class backgrounds and educational and professional profiles. Their collective stories, however, highlight the structuring force of gender in influencing the women's decisions to leave or to stay in migration, and the struggles and acts of resistance informing their lives thereafter. The women's narratives open a window on the complex structures of diaspora, where women's gendered roles have a decisive weight in the construction of a collective sense of belonging and affiliation. In this conclusion I briefly re-visit my central theoretical and methodological arguments and conclude by re-asserting the centrality of gender to highlighting the meaningful experiences of Italian migrant women.

Gender And Migration

To create a space to think about the gendered meanings emerging from the women's narratives, I had to engage critically with existing migration theories. Migration studies have in fact been largely gender-blind, representing women as somewhat lesser migrants, whose experiences have been defined vis-à-vis male models. As I have demonstrated, the predominance of analytic paradigms chiefly concerned with the economic and political outcomes of the geographical movement and settlement of migrants has contributed to even further simplification of the complex realities of women in migration. These paradigms exclude a whole set of

social and cultural dynamics profoundly affected by migrancy, in which women are implicated in often contradictory ways.

The work of feminist critics in the last two decades has allowed us to unpack the gendered meanings of migration, contributing significantly to our understanding of phenomena such as the feminisation of migration and survival (Sassen, 2003b); the global chain of care performed by migrant women and their contributions to local labour markets (Phizacklea, 2003a, 2003b); and the gendered implications of migration policies and citizenship issues (Calavita, 2004). However, these theories did not prove strictly relevant in the case of Italian migrant women in Ireland. The most meaningful experiences of the early-wave, long-settled and recent Italian migrant women exceeded the analytic scope of these theoretical frameworks and demanded novel approaches to social theory.

Suggestions put forth by culturalist theories of gender and migration (such as theories of identities, networks and everyday practices; Al-Ali, 2002; Anthias, 1998) proved more relevant to my study. In particular, I was inspired by how these paradigms allowed for a focus both on migrants as 'people out of place', whether elsewhere or 'back home' (Baldassar, 2001), and on their connections beyond time and space that translate their 'homing' desires (Brah, 1996) into new sense of belonging and new affiliations. I drew from these theories to uncover how Italian women's experiences of migration are meaningful in gendered ways, and shape complex social realities. Ultimately, the questions I asked in my study concerned the 'human side' of migration (Gabaccia, 2000), the lived experiences of being migrants. How is the decision to leave one's homeland taken? When does the penny drop and one realises that she is a migrant? How is migration justified and maintained? These questions were the most interesting for me because they allowed me to interpret in more meaningful ways the lives of Italian women in Ireland and their specific gendered intimations.

Diaspora

Of all the analytic paradigms of migration studies, 'on the ground' diaspora proved to be the most relevant tool for creating a space to think about the complex social contexts in which migrations occur. Diaspora provided me with an alternative framework of analysis that moved beyond traditional knowledge production on migration, belonging and settling down. Diaspora is, however, an

overused term and its usage needs to be clarified in order to render the concept useful 'to think with'. I argue that as a tool of the social sciences, diaspora can either denote taxonomies of complex migratory histories or focus on the societal processes and social condition of being in migration, what I have also referred to as diasporicity. I found this latter usage to be a less problematic and more useful heuristic tool that allowed me to look at the politics of 'accidental and structural constraints' and at the poetics of 'human resistance and creativity in migration' (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994: 5). Diaspora also functioned in my study as a trope for the positive 'rehabilitation' of migrancy and for a re-humanisation of migratory experiences, a capacity that is proved in the Italian case, in the ways the term is often resisted in nationalist discourses about emigration.

The Concept Of Diaspora In Italian Migration Studies

Despite a long history of Italian emigration, Italian studies have often ignored and devalued the experiences of Italian migrants in general and Italian migrant women in particular. Italian historiography has been largely characterised by a utilitarian and nationalistic ideology, preoccupied with portraying a glorified and unified image of the Italian nation, a historically young, and contested entity. However, while the concept of diaspora has only rarely been used in Italy to refer to Italian migrants, in the last decade Italian diasporic scholars have frequently employed it to conceptualise the experiences of Italians living abroad (alongside an intensification of Italian diasporic politics and practices worldwide). Diaspora discourses have proved useful in re-articulating the presence of emigrants in the Italian scene as powerful social and political actors, as was visible in the April 2006 Italian elections.

Italians In Ireland

Diaspora has affected the experiences of Italian migrants in Ireland. I demonstrated the existence of diasporic discourses and practices that have influenced the development of organisations and media for Italian migrants in Ireland that inform their connectivity and resource-sharing practices. Here, too, diaspora can be seen as a trope for the rehabilitation of Italian migrants, who have often been othered and silenced in Irish representations. In particular, I demonstrated that while Italian migrants are seen as successful and attractive

subjects of their history of migration, they are also perceived as having a limited capacity for expressing their cultural diversity. I suggested that this ambiguity is not directly linked to the qualities of Italian migrants, but rather derives from the 'ethnicised' and 'othered' representations of Italians. These representations do not take into consideration the lived experiences of Italian migrants, but render invisible their realities, particularly those of Italian women. While highlighting the complex symbolic meanings inscribed in the existing representations of Italianness, my analysis showed that a diasporic self-referential and internally dominant sociality has developed among the Italian groups in Ireland. Owing to this, Italian migrants have been able to take advantage of the representational regime in which they are implicated (alongside a global commodification of Italianness), creating space for economic and social empowerment.

Gender and diaspora

In this study, I have put diaspora in dialogue with gender to make the term diaspora accountable to the lives of Italian migrant women. This involved considering the gendered dimensions of diasporic signifiers and locations and pointing to the role of gender in the cultural production of diasporas, especially in the narrative production of diasporic belonging. This required engaging with two level of analysis. First, I looked at how men's and women's gender roles are 'used' and controlled to define the ethno-national boundaries of the 'community'. Second, I examined different sets of social relations (of the country of settlement, within their own diasporic communities and within transnational networks) and drew attention to the coexistence of contested and shifting normativities. This condition creates space for women's empowerment and involves mechanisms of 'forming and reforming of feminised identities in the process of diasporic counter-narration' (Unterhalter, 2000: 108).

I became particularly interested in how gendering the diaspora offered a framework to think of the role of narrativity, not only in changing feminised identities but also in the production of a stable and continuous sense of belonging amidst the changes of diaspora. Diasporas are the legacy of multiple historic contingencies and different journeys (economic, political, psychological); however, as cultural formations, they can be imagined as single and bounded. Both lived and imagined, diasporas are constructed at the confluence of narrativity, a phenomenon

that has sometimes been suggested in the literature but never fully addressed. This became a central theme in my thesis, which I developed looking at the fundamental role of Italian migrant women in the telling of the double diaspora.

Italian Migrant Women In Ireland

Italian migrant women in Ireland are in diaspora, in the sense that they have now made multiple journeys between Ireland and Italy and elsewhere; they have reared their families, adjusted their sense of belonging, and developed their personal aspirations in the midst of this travelling. In diaspora they have acquired complex and multiple identities and have learnt to negotiate and shift between them in different contexts. These diasporic conditions contribute to the formation of the 'plural, fragile, and debated' Italian nation (Gabaccia, 2000: 175), but also to the formation of a diaspora that is just as fragile and plural, as my study revealed. Though a relatively small group, the 29 women of my study have heterogeneous experiences and histories of migration, which I divided in three groups for analytical purposes: the early-waves migrant women (those who migrated from the beginning of the twenty-first century to the 1950s, second- and third-generation migrants), long-settled migrants (those who migrated between 1960 and the 1980s) and recent migrant (those who arrived in the 1990s). Even among the relatively small sample, the differences among the women are relevant and I have made these differences explicit, especially in relation to class and age.

The experience of being 'Italian' living abroad has been decisive for all the women. At the same time, Italianness and Italy did not manifest as a univocal meaning. Rather Italy represented a semantic container for different memories and stories that could be re-imagined and re-narrated to produce new and updated meanings of belonging and connectedness. I could observe the performativity of Italianness during the very process of interviewing, when the research participants and I jointly constructed the ground of 'our' connectedness on the memories and stories of Italy that we shared. We concocted diaspora as 'our' possibility of belonging in Ireland as 'different'. In these respects, my choice to conduct a reflexive and positioned analysis proved to be of fundamental relevance.

The case of the women of the early waves of migration was particularly interesting because these women are widely regarded as traditional and passive subjects. However, I demonstrated that these representations do not reflect to the

women's own way of experiencing and interpreting their lives. In the diaspora space, these women have succeeded in taking decisions concerning their lives as well as their children's and families' futures. Moreover, both the early-wave migrant women and the long-settled and recent migrant women (who are also largely dismissed and made invisible) perform important roles for their collectivities. Among these are creating transnational networks of support, containing isolation, helping to forge new gender roles. I became most interested in how women construct from the taken-for-granted practices of everyday, intimate caring about and story-telling, the very essence of the 'diaspora space' (Brah, 1996) that makes it possible for new meanings, belongings and political projects to ensure. I argued that women's narrative practices are immediately responsible for the practices that sustain the diasporic 'living memory of the changing same' (Gilroy, 1993: 198). Because in diaspora, women are both empowered and disempowered. Positioned right in the middle of these structural contradictions, the women construct 'hidden' parallel worlds of meanings and agency, which they share and shape narratively. This condition, to which I referred to as a 'double diaspora', is a two-tiered model of sociality that is at the heart of the diaspora itself.

Double Diaspora and Narrative Journeys

For Stanley, diaspora is a 'transit camp' for displaced people, a belonging somewhere else, 'often what has passed or has never been', but although women are supposed to be at home in the diaspora, they feel little of this (Stanley, 1997a: 13). Women's not belonging, or belonging to somewhere else, is a state they live internally within their groups: they are in a double diaspora. They have to learn to make 'a home', to feel safe and empowered also within their own diaspora. At one level, at home in 'their diaspora', Italian migrant women maintain a reassuring traditional sense of 'Italian' identity. They seem to comply with the gender expectations of their groups (I demonstrated this, for example, in relation to domesticity, 'beautiful bodies' and motherhood). At another level, however, at home among themselves, they feel 'away' and distant even in their diaspora and they learn to circumnavigate gender constraints, achieve their goals, change gender norms, and manifest and articulate emancipated and often 'invisible' subjectivities.

The tensions ensuing from the contradictory forces of the double diaspora are often played out between women, particularly between mothers and daughters. To

resolve these tensions the women actualise two-tiered socialities and construct parallel spheres of meaning, a condition that is largely sustained by the strategic use of narrative practices. I demonstrated that this capacity is linked to the inherent characteristics of narrativity, which involves a self-enforced linearity, privileging the creation of a culturally and autobiographically coherent, recognisable organisation of events over plunging into fragmentary and inchoate details (Ochs and Capps, 2001). At the same time, there is no defined, ultimate truth in narratives; rather, narratives are fluid, adaptable hermeneutic tools conditioned to a subjective reformulation. These characteristics have specific collective outcomes in the women's diasporic lives.

First, through fluid narrative practices, women construct an accepting and intimate forum for themselves, in which they make themselves heard and validated, despite the constraints and limitations that they might encounter in their families and in other social spheres. As Brah recognises, there are always 'alternative discourses and practices, no matter how marginalized they may appear at that moment, which can provide resources of hope' (Brah, 2002: 39). Second, socially constructed, shared and legitimised, narratives make space for change in the women's lives, creating a self-referential site of expression for the women's counter-subjectivities. These counter-subjectivities are often kept invisible from their husbands and older relatives, who do not participate in women's intentions. In this sense, the 'invisibility' with which these women are often marked is also a strategy to which they contribute in order to renegotiate gender burdens and limitations. It is a mistake to misunderstand this invisibility as a sign of subjugation and passivity.

Third, the essential privacy and doubleness of women's narratives can sustain the women's two-tiered sociality because women's narratives can be counter-hegemonic and contribute to women's emancipation without manifestly disrupting the continuation of their groups' tradition and hegemony, doing so at an underground subaltern level. The strenuous everyday work of narrative infabulation weaves together the fragments of the women's personal and familial histories. The contradictions can be contained and, if not resolved, at least kept together and released in the narrative flow. Inscribed in these processes there is much courage, defiance, love and understanding on behalf of the women, as well as a 'willingness

to transform their lives in sometimes radical or painful ways' (Goeller, 2005: 245), all of which often pass unnoticed.

The women's strategic use of narrativity has further collective implications. Women's narratives are important performative tools in the making of diaspora. As a cultural formation, the Italian diaspora in Ireland can be lived and imagined as both stable and changing, thanks to everyday narrative practices. Women are assigned a central role in the collection and sharing of emotion-laden familial narratives, and this overlaps with their strategic use of narrativity, steeped in the effort of reconciling contrasting realities. In their narratives of the double diaspora (of how they did what they wanted while keeping a reassuring sense of continuity and tradition), the migrant women reconstruct not only their lives, but also their groups' destinies, through new immanent and adaptable meanings. Narrating a traditional and continuous story-line of the Italian diaspora, women's narratives also create a space for legitimising subaltern agency and the migrant groups' moving and empowered socialities.

In this sense, Italian migrant women's practices of the double diaspora are reproduced as a societal process for the larger migrant groups. While changing the boundaries of their diasporic belonging, the women allow the same diaspora to be transformed and adapted, starting from the very nature of its gender roles. This capacity is extremely important in diaspora because it cushions against its breakages and its fragmentary nature. Diasporic belongings are multiple and adaptable, constructed against the irreversible condition of being away, being divided and being marginal, by a fierce inclination of a will 'to feel at home' in a place, to feel safe and empowered within its space. Diasporic narratives have a central role in cultivating terrains of new belonging and new identities, while maintaining a sense of stable and continuous belonging.

Moulded as a gendered strategy of emancipation, collective narrativity shifts the centre of normativity and legitimises diasporic counter-hegemonic socialities. In the case of Italian migrant groups in Ireland, it is primarily through women's patient, intimate, daily and attentive narrative acts that diasporic marginality and difference can be transformed into a dominant and enabling condition, and that the diaspora can be lived and imagined both as fluid and stable, marginal and dominant, emancipatory and constraining (characteristics that in the literature are often associated with diaspora but are not sufficiently unpacked and explained).

Ultimately, it is the women's narrative practices that move the diasporic story further on.

In light of what I have argued, the question of how the diasporic identitarian boundary shift has to be reformulated, asking not how do borders shift, but more precisely, 'who shifts the borders?' (Smyth, 1997: 166). In the case of the diasporic group of Italians I have described, it is the women who shift the borders through their everyday experiences of caring about, telling and narrativising their double diasporas. Women's narrative strategies to sustain their double diaspora overlap with the narrative construction of diasporic belonging.

This is not always an empowering and liberating practice, inasmuch as women who shift boundaries are 'sometimes even more narrowly marking the borders, more savagely punishing infringements, with the fervour of converts and the anxiety of those admitted under license' (Stanley, 1997b: 183). They can become perpetrators of their own limitations, passing them on to their own children, as is discussed in relation to the tensions between mothers and daughters. Yet, ultimately, in their collective narrative acts women still create spaces for the changing of diaspora to be acknowledged, and in so doing they also create possibilities of further change for future generations of the diaspora. Women are the main agents in the construction of the teleology of continuity and becoming.

Narratives allow the shifting to take place within the continuity of stories of 'there' and 'here', of past and present. Among the simmering pots, 'the heat on the face' of the kitchen stoves, during occasional and informal gatherings, through chatting about relatives and cooking, about 'the way it used to be back home,' women manage not only to express their subjectivities, find a place in their diasporic destinations, forge new gender roles and build networks of support but also to produce the changing same of the diaspora. The annals of memories and stories collected by women in the double diaspora serve as a reflective and reflexive ground of expression of a classed, gendered diasporic Italianness in Ireland, which otherwise has limited occasions to express itself. These annals represent a 'reflexive' ground (Myerhoof, 1992: 234), which helps to show the consciousness of these groups of Italians and how they see themselves, and displays a parallel representation of diasporic Italianness that forms an alternative to (Irish or Italian) hegemonic discourses. They also function as a 'reflective' ground for these migrant groups, showing 'themselves to themselves' (Myerhoof,

1992: 234) by creating a space for the emergence of counter-narration and thus diversity among the multiple realities of Italians. Women's narrative acts represent the malleable and adaptive material upon which diasporic identities' boundaries become 'differential points on a sliding scale'; their meanings are never fixed but keep changing in accordance with the 'necessary and temporary break in the infinite semiosis of language' (Hall, 1990: 54).

At the end of the journey

This study demonstrates that gendered mediations are indispensable to diaspora. Gender emerges not only as a structuring principle in women's lives but also as a force at the heart of the Italian diaspora in Ireland in two main ways. First, the diasporic groups are constituted as syncretic and bounded through rules about gender and sex. Second, gender roles and relations are reproduced dynamically and in a selective way to perform groups' strategies of adaptation (Anthias. 1998: 16). In this study the gendered diasporic framework revealed a two-tiered sociality enacted by Italian migrant women that has a striking parallel with the strategies of socialisation of diasporic groups at large. The Italian diaspora occupies a marginal position in Ireland but Italian migrant groups (while being subjected to multiple sets of social relations) have achieved economic and social success. Moreover, as in the case of the women discussed, Italian diasporic groups live divided between different and parallel worlds of meanings, where 'invisibility' is also assumed as a strategy of adaptation. Between Ireland, Italy, or elsewhere, diasporic Italians negotiate their belonging while strategically manifesting different sides of their identities. My argument, therefore, is that we can think of gender roles as constitutive of the positionality of the Italian groups themselves.

Using women's narratives as a method of collecting data among migrants enabled me to unpack the complex realities of Italian women but also of the relationship between gender and migration. Through narratives I gained an important insight into the emblematic experiences of women, who resist the generalising tendencies of representations of Italianness that contain, exclude and silence them.

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