Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my account of my own research. Apart from acknowledged quotes and citations, the material of this work has not been previously submitted at any tertiary educational institution.

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Antonio Casella
Abstract

This PhD presentation comprises two pieces of work:

I
*The Italian Diaspora in Australia and Representations of Italy and Italians in Australian Narrative (Research thesis)*

II
*An Olive Branch for Sante (A novel)*

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In the *Introduction* of my research titled: *Diaspora: A Theoretical Review*, I look at the evolution of diasporic Studies and how the great movements of people that have occurred in the past one hundred and fifty years have altered our perception of what is undoubtedly a global phenomenon.

In Chapter One, which I have titled: *In Search of an Italian Diaspora in Australia*, I consider the kinds of socio-cultural nuclei that have evolved among the Italian population of Australia, out of the mass migration which occurred largely in the post war years. I discuss Italian migration as a whole, the historical and political conditions which brought about mass migration and the subsequent dispersion of Italian nationals, their regrouping into various clusters and how these fit into the patchwork that is the contemporary Australian society. Finally I review the conditions in the host
country which facilitated or hindered particular socio-cultural formations and how these may differ from those occurring in other countries

Chapter Two deals with, The Narrative of Non-Italian Writers. The chapter looks at the images and myths of Italy perpetrated in the literature written by English-speaking authors over the centuries. I begin with the legacy left by British writers such as E.M. Forster, then move on to Australian writers of non-Italian background, such as Judah Waten, Nino Culotta (John O'Grady) and Helen Garner. In Chapter Three: Italo-Australian Writers, I focus on two writers: Venero Armanno and Melina Marchetta, both born in Australia of Italian parents. This section ties in with the earlier discourse on the continuity of the Italian Diaspora in Australia, into the second and subsequent generations.

In Chapter Four, titled: Literature of Nostalgia: The Long Journey, I will reflect upon my own journey as a writer, beginning with my earlier work, including the short stories and the plays, and concluding with a close look at the present novel, which is a companion piece to the research.

The novel complements the research in that it deals with the eternal issues of migration: displacement, change and identity. The protagonists are two young people: Ira-Jane and Sante. The first is not a migrant, but she is touched by migration, insofar as an old Italian couple play grandparents to her, in the early years of her life. When they return to Sicily the child is left with her neglectful and unstable mother. At age twenty-four Ira-Jane goes to Sicily on an assignment, and there she tries to get in touch with her 'grandparents'. She meets up with eighteen-year-old Sante who turns out to be her half brother. The novel's structure juxtaposes two countries, two cultures, two way of looking at the world. It sets up a series of contrasts: the old society and the new, past and
present, tradition and innovation, stability and change, repression and freedom. The end of the novel proposes a symbolic bridging between two countries, which are similar in some ways, very different in others. It offers not a solution but a different approach to the eternal dilemma of people living in a diaspora, inhabiting an indefinite space between two countries and for whom home will always be somewhere else.
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Part II

An Olive Branch for Sante (A novel)
I wish to express my gratitude to Murdoch University for awarding me a Murdoch University Research Scholarship which has allowed me to work on both the novel and the research thesis, full time.

Grateful thanks to my academic supervisor, Prof. Vijay Mishra, for the invaluable guidance he has provided me, particularly with the theoretical aspects of the thesis.

Thank you to my wife, June Houston, for reading the novel and giving me some insightful feedback.

A chapter from the novel: An Olive Branch for Sante, has appeared in Western. My thanks to Delys Bird and Dennis Haskell, editors of Western.
An Olive Branch for Sante

By Antonio Casella