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NINE
“Oltre l’Australia, c’è la luna”:
Maggio garfagnino and the Emigrant Experience
Linda Barwick

Introduction

When I first visited the Garfagnana region of north-western Tuscany in 1991 to investigate the local *Maggio* tradition of sung popular theatre, I felt strangely at home. On the train, I heard English spoken with a familiar Australian accent: the voices of my contemporaries, the children and grandchildren of post-World War II emigrants to Australia. At the first performances of *Maggio* I attended there a year later, in 1992, my cassette recorder and video camera were just two of many recording devices in evidence as relatives, returned emigrants and *appassionati* (enthusiasts) recorded the occasion for personal archives and absent family. Military jets screamed overhead en route to the developing conflict in Bosnia, while we heard ancient stories of chivalrous conflict between Christians and Muslims enacted by costumed singers taking their cues, line by line, from the bespectacled *capomaggio* (*Maggio* company leader) wearing slacks and short-sleeved shirt. This tradition, I was assured by functionaries from the provincial government, would be finished within five years. The singers were too old, the tourists weren’t interested, there were no young people to carry it on. Yet over the next five years of my increasing involvement in the tradition, I saw a growth in the numbers of performances, active performers and companies, and audience numbers.¹

This chapter will advance some thoughts as to why *Maggio* continued so strongly against the odds in its home region of the Garfagnana, while attempts to mount performances in Australia have (to my knowledge) so far failed, despite the considerable numbers of Garfagnini who emigrated there.² I will argue that the strength of the nexus between *paese* (home town) and performance practice in the Garfagnino *Maggio* stems from the Garfagnana’s long history of emigration, and that indeed various features of the *Maggio* genre appear to result from, or at least be intensified by, a “diaspora effect”, that is, the effect of expatriates

¹ I undertook fieldwork in the Garfagnana yearly from 1992–1998, with short visits in 1991, 2000, 2004 and 2007.

² The Garfagnini are people of the Garfagnana, whether resident there or elsewhere.

on their community of origin.³ I argue that to understand the themes, form, performance practice and survival of this most localised of traditions we need to take into account the transnationalism of many Garfagnini and the role of *campanilismo* (loyalty to one's home village) in sustaining emigrants abroad.

“Imparate le lingue e andate all'estero” (learn languages and go abroad) was the advice of Italian prime minister Alcide De Gaspari in 1948.⁴ Following a centuries-long experience of temporary migration, the many Italians who heeded De Gaspari's advice in the postwar period came predominantly from a peasant background, with close affiliation to their home village (*paese*) and steeped in traditional values, including *fortuna* (fatalism), *onore* (honour), *famiglia* (family) and *campanilismo* (loyalty to one's home village).⁵ Garfagnini, alongside members of many other regional peasant cultures, are now scattered in a world-wide diaspora that includes my home town of Sydney, Australia. Although what I have to say about the nature of these emigrants' continuing identification with the landscape and cultural traditions of the Garfagnana is necessarily complex and specific to these particular locations, I hope it will contribute to the investigation of what Edward Said has called the “overlapping territories” and “intertwined histories” of the world's musical cultures.⁶

The Garfagnana as a region and as diaspora

Over the centuries, the Garfagnana,⁷ the valley of the Serchio river tucked away between the Apuan Alps and the Tosco-Emilian Apennines, has been the site of innumerable leave-takings and home-comings as the poverty of its soil and the steepness of its slopes has forced its inhabitants to emigrate to find work. As the foremost Italian scholar of the Tuscan *Maggio*, Gastone Venturelli, has pointed out, the mountainous terrain has meant not only that road and rail

³ Martin Kilduff and Kevin G. Corley, “The Diaspora Effect: The Influence of Exiles on Their Cultures of Origin”, *Management* 2.1 (1999): 1–12.

⁴ Richard Bosworth, “Post-war Italian Immigration”, in *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*, ed. J. Jupp (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1988) 613.

⁵ Rudolph M. Bell, *Fate and Honor, Family and Village: Demographic and Cultural Change in Rural Italy since 1800* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993) 48.

⁷ During my fieldwork, I found some disagreement about the precise scope of the term “Garfagnana”. Some use it strictly to refer to the valley of the Serchio above the town of Turrite (where the river plain disappears), while others consider the term to cover the whole upper portion of the province of Lucca, which extends northwards for some kilometres beyond the catchment of the Serchio into the upper part of the Lunigiana valley. For the purposes of this paper I use the term “Garfagnana” to include contiguous parts of the Lunigiana valley, to the west of Piazza al Serchio as far as Codiponte (Province of Massa).



Figure 9.1: Location of the Garfagnana valley within Italy. The inset map shows the locations of performances by the two Tuscan *Maggio* companies active in 1992 (map prepared for the author).

networks were relatively late to be established in the region (as late as the 1960s in some areas), but also that large-scale agriculture or industry were precluded in the area.⁸ Small landholdings predominate, due to a combination of historical factors including partible inheritance (the legal practice of dividing property equally among all children).⁹ Over generations, family smallholdings were progressively subdivided until the parcels of land became too small to sustain a family, thus driving emigration (temporary or permanent) in order to reduce the number of mouths to feed and accumulate savings to increase landholdings.¹⁰ Today, permanent residents of the Garfagnana total approximately 30,000.¹¹ Until the twentieth century, the majority of emigrations were seasonal, as Garfagnini took flocks to winter in the more temperate climate of the coastal plains of the Maremma marshes of southern Tuscany, or hired themselves out as charcoal burners in Corsica, or as harvest workers in the richer country on the northern, Emilian side of the Apennines.¹² These emigrations progressively extended in duration and distance, as transport and circumstances allowed, first to Switzerland, France and northern Europe, and then to the Americas, and eventually to Australia (“America lunga”¹³—far America), the destination of some thousands of Garfagnini.¹⁴ The extreme geographical and cultural distance of

⁸ Gastone Venturelli, “Qualche precisazione sul teatro popolare di tradizione folclorica”, in *Rappresentazioni arcaiche della tradizione popolare: Atti del VI convegno di studio sul teatro medievale e rinascimentale, Viterbo 27-31 maggio 1981* (Viterbo: Torre d’Orfeo, 1981) 371–73; Gastone Venturelli, “Le aree del Maggio”, in *Il Maggio drammatico: una tradizione di teatro in musica*, ed. Tullia Magrini (Bologna: Edizioni Analisi, 1992) 58.

⁹ Sydel F. Silverman, “Agricultural Organization, Social Structure, and Values in Italy: Amoral Familism Reconsidered”, *American Anthropologist* 70.1 (1968): 1–20; Dino Cinel, *The National Integration of Italian Return Migration, 1870–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 166; David I. Kertzer and Caroline Brettell, “Advances in Italian and Iberian Family History”, *Journal of Family History* 12 (1987): 87–120.

¹⁰ Kertzer and Brettell, “Advances in Italian and Iberian Family History”; Silverman, “Agricultural Organization”; Cinel, *The National Integration*.

¹¹ Umberto Bertolini, “Demografia della Garfagnana dal 2001 al 2011”, Serchio.net, <http://lnx.serchio.net/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=12> (30 November 2011).

¹² Gastone Venturelli, “Incontro con il folclore garfagnino”, *La Provincia di Lucca* 16.3 (1976): 44–[85].

¹³ Adriano Boncompagni, *“The World Is Just Like a Village”: Globalization and Transnationalism of Italian Migrants from Tuscany in Western Australia* (Fucecchio: European Press Academic Publishing, 2001) 126.

¹⁴ Adriano Boncompagni, “L’emigrazione toscana”, *Archivio storico emigrazione italiana* 2 (2006), http://www.asei.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=34 (11 May 2011); Boncompagni, *The World*; Cinel, *The National Integration*.

Australia at the furthest point of the farflung Garfagnino diaspora is evoked by the expression “Oltre l’Australia, c’è la luna” (after Australia, there’s nothing till the moon), an expression frequently repeated to me when I first visited the Garfagnana in the early 1990s.

Most overseas emigrants left with the intention of returning. According to Stephanie Lindsay Thompson, 67.9 percent of Tuscan immigrants to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s returned within a few years.¹⁵ Even when emigrants chose to settle permanently abroad, their affiliation to their families and villages of origin did not cease,¹⁶ even when some villages were all but abandoned.¹⁷ In addition to the emigrants’ continuing attachment and personal obligations to support family members and lands left behind in the Garfagnana, *campanilismo* in these emigrants was further intensified by the practice of chain migration (fostered by Australian government policies as well as longstanding custom amongst emigrating Italians), whereby new immigrants were sponsored by *paesani* (fellow villagers) and family who had already established connections and work in the new country.¹⁸ In Australia, the regional clubs (such as the Associazione Toscana) became a visible manifestation of the importance of these local bonds in helping immigrants cope with the new milieu.¹⁹ Further indications of this continuing attachment to the *paese* can be gleaned from the high proportion of emigrants who make return visits to their home village.²⁰ Whether or not they have emigrated, all Garfagnini are expected to be fiercely attached to the Garfagnana itself, and even more to the particular village of their birth, a love of home lent added poignancy by the pervasive emigrant experience of lack of belonging.

Back in the Garfagnana, there is frequent public acknowledgement of the Garfagnino diaspora: for example, the regional newspaper *Corriere della Garfagnana*, which has many subscriptions from Garfagnini overseas, carries a regular column of news from emigrants, entitled “L’altra Garfagnana” (the other

¹⁵ Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy’s Many Diasporas*, 2nd ed. (London & New York: Routledge, 2003) 7; Stephanie Lindsay Thompson, *Australia through Italian Eyes: A Study of Settlers Returning from Australia to Italy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980) xix, 231; Cinel, *The National Integration*.

¹⁶ Loretta Baldassar, *Visits Home: Migration Experiences between Italy and Australia* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

¹⁷ Roland Sarti, “Long Live the Strong”: *A History of Rural Society in the Apennine Mountains* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1985); Bell, *Fate and Honor* 209.

¹⁸ John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald, “Italian Migration to Australia: Manifest Functions of Bureaucracy versus Latent Functions of Informal Networks”, *Journal of Social History* 3.3 (1969–1970): 249–75.

¹⁹ Gianfranco Cresciani, *The Italians in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 139. See also papers by Comin and Barwick, Sorce Keller and Garigliano in this volume.

²⁰ Boncompagni, *The World* 293.

Garfagnana). Returned emigrants may be given nicknames of their destination of emigration.²¹ Various scholars have commented on the cultural sophistication of these “cosmopolitan villagers” who had often seen more of the world than nearby city-dwellers whose history was less affected by emigration.²² For example, Boncompagni cites the proverb “Per gabbare un Garfagnino ci vuol tre lucchesi e un fiorentino” (to trick a Garfagnino you need three people from Lucca and one from Florence).²³ The complex historical processes of interaction with extra-Garfagnino communities have also enriched the popular culture of the Garfagnana—thus, Venturelli reports children chanting playground rhymes of Latin American origin, old women singing funeral laments that derive from Corsican burial practices, and extremely diversified repertoires of both narrative and lyrical song.²⁴ It is surely no accident that the most typically Garfagnino genre, the sung popular theatre termed *Maggio*, is centrally concerned with the problematics of cross-cultural interaction, in its plots describing battles and amorous intrigues between Christians and pagans, and its prominent themes of long-lost children and sexual jealousy between separated spouses.

For example, the most famous Tuscan *Maggio*, *Pia de' Tolomei* (which circulates in multiple versions, all ultimately deriving from a brief episode in Dante's *Purgatorio*), concerns the travails of a wronged wife falsely accused of infidelity by her jealous soldier husband who returns after a prolonged absence.²⁵ Studies of the social effects of emigration have pointed out the rise in family breakdown and crimes of passion that stemmed from the temporary emigrations (sometimes called *campagne* “campaigns”) of young men.²⁶ The drama of *Pia de' Tolomei* also emphasises *campanilismo*, in internecine rivalry between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines (intercultural rivalry is an essential component of *Maggio* plots, enabling the stylised duels and battles that take place between the opposing sides). The parallels with returning emigrants are obvious in the

²¹ During my fieldwork in the 1990s, I shared a friendship and the nickname of “l’Australiana” with the Australian-born daughter of an emigrant, who had returned to the Garfagnana to marry, and was then settled near her parents’ village of origin.

²² Sarti, *Long Live the Strong* 119; Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* 82.

²³ Boncompagni, *The World* 113.

²⁴ Venturelli, “Incontro con il folclore garfagnino” 48–49.

²⁵ Linda Barwick, “‘An Ample and Very Poetical Narrative’: The Vicissitudes of ‘La Pia’ between the Literary and Oral Traditions”, in *Flinders Dante Conferences, 2002 & 2004*, ed. Margaret Baker, Flavia Coassin and Diana Glenn (Adelaide: Lythrum Press, 2005) 77–101.

²⁶ Dino Cinel, *From Italy to San Francisco: The Immigrant Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982) 170; Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* 84; Boncompagni, “L’emigrazione toscana”.

many other *Maggio* plots that turn on the discovery of a long-lost child who has been brought up in an alien culture (one example is the *Paladini di Francia*).²⁷

Nostalgia for the more or less distant past is another value that reinforces the links of emigrants with their place of origin. Although the earliest references to *Maggio* performances go back to the seventeenth century, it is significant that its popularity surged in the nineteenth century, during the period when mass emigration from the countryside began to be felt.²⁸ As suggested by the examples already cited, *Maggio* stories need to be set in the distant past in order to allow for the stylised swordfighting that is an essential component of the genre. Stories are drawn from chivalrous epics, classical antiquity or lives of the saints,²⁹ and the style of the singing, too, is self-consciously archaic.

The most prized performances are delivered with highly elaborate *gorgheggio* (literally, “warbling” or “trilling”), in which performers strive to elaborate the melodic line as much as humanly possible, adopting free rhythm, a scale with a microtonally raised fourth degree, and often using a rather husky tone of voice (as opposed to the open-throated *bella voce* that is prized in the Emilian *Maggio* tradition and in other repertoires of song performed in the Garfagnana).³⁰ As found by Tullia Magrini for the Emilian *Maggio*, while there are fixed cadence points within the metrical structure, there is considerable freedom of navigation between pitches within the segments.³¹ In the Garfagnana the melodic contour is supported by violin accompaniment proceeding heterophonically with the voice, with additional flourishes in the *ritornelli* (refrains) that separate one line from the next and that cover the spoken prompts of the next line.

²⁷ Linda Barwick and JoAnne Page, *Gestualità e musica di un Maggio garfagnino: “I Paladini di Francia” secondo l’interpretazione dei maggianti della Compagnia di Gorfigliano, 1988* [*Movement and Music of a Garfagnino Maggio, “I Paladini di Francia,” as Performed by the Players of the Gorfigliano Company, 1988*] (Lucca: Assessorato alla Cultura della Provincia di Lucca, 1994).

²⁸ Linda Barwick, “The Filipino *Komedya* and the Italian *Maggio*: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Related Genres of Popular Music Theatre”, in *Masks of Time: Drama and Its Contexts*, ed. Anthony M. Gibbs (Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1994) 71–108.

²⁹ Examples of the three genres performed during the period of my fieldwork were *Re Eronte* (performed by the Piazza al Serchio company in 1992), *Licia la schiava di Roma* (performed by the compagnia Gragnanella-Filicaia-Casatico in 1992) and *Sant’Uliva* (performed by the compagnia Acqua Bianca in 1995). All three were written by living authors.

³⁰ The deployment and significance of *gorgheggio* is discussed in Linda Barwick, “‘Scolpire le parole’ [Sculpting the Words]: Context Sensitivity in Vocal and Movement Performance Style of the Tuscan *Maggio*” (paper presented at the Colloquium of the European Society for Ethnomusicology, Oxford, UK, 1994), <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/7906> (22 November 2011).

³¹ Tullia Magrini, “La musica del *Maggio*”, in *Il Maggio drammatico: una tradizione di teatro in musica*, ed. Tullia Magrini (Bologna: Edizioni Analisi, 1992) 163.

The cultural landscape of the *Maggio* tradition in Garfagnana

Gastone Venturelli's work on stylistic variation in the *Maggio* tradition shows that the Garfagnana is one of three main areas in which the *Maggio* genre is performed today: it is also rarely performed further south in the Tuscan provinces of Lucca and Pisa (although the *bruscello* nowadays predominates there), and it is still flourishing in mountainous areas of Emilia, in the provinces of Reggio Emilia and Modena.³² On a large scale, stylistic differences between the three performance areas are quite clearcut. As Venturelli amply demonstrates, each of these areas can be readily differentiated by characteristic staging, costumes, patterns of swordplay, musical accompaniment, melodies used and singing style. Tullia Magrini has worked on musical aspects of the *Maggio* from the Emilian area.³³ The Garfagnino tradition is the most diverse, and during the time of my fieldwork involved many more performances than in the other two areas.

The *Maggio* tradition is now inscribed on the local landscape of the Garfagnana in quite different ways from in the past, when each town reportedly had its own amateur company of about a dozen performers and helpers.³⁴ Today the dwindling pool of performers has seen village-based companies coalesce into larger conglomerations, whose geographical scope changes somewhat from year to year depending on the number of active companies.³⁵ The very existence of the companies, as well as the geographical range of their performances, is dependent on modern transport infrastructure. Nevertheless, the consciousness of *paese* is still very strong: the companies bear geographical names of the main town of the *comune* (municipality) from which most performers are drawn (as is the case for the Piazza al Serchio and Gorfigliano companies), or perhaps more commonly, hyphenated names reflecting the home villages of performers within the company, as is the case of the Gragnanella-Filicaia-Casatico company, which draws members from *frazioni* (fractions, or hamlets) of two different *comuni* on the western bank of the Serchio.³⁶ Village affiliation is always the first detail mentioned in the performer biographies that occasionally occur in the booklets sold to accompany performances (published by the Centro Tradizioni Popolari della Provincia di Lucca).

These geographically affiliated companies tour their performances to other *paesi* within the Garfagnana and immediately contiguous areas, almost always within the community of *paesi* sharing a similar intensity of affiliation to their home village and the practice of the Garfagnino *Maggio* tradition. *Maggio* performances use little or no scenery or props, so that performances can take place

³² Venturelli, "Le aree".

³³ Magrini, "La musica del Maggio".

³⁴ Venturelli, "Incontro con il folclore garfagnino" 74.

³⁵ In the upper Garfagnana in the 1990s, the number of active companies was as high as four in 1996 and as few as one in 1992.

³⁶ Gragnanella is in the comune of Castelnuovo Garfagnana, Filicaia and Casatico are in the neighbouring comune of Camporgiano.

in almost any suitably shaded outdoor area. Performances are commissioned either by the Centro Tradizioni Popolari (which organises and promotes an annual *rassegna del Maggio* (*Maggio* performance programme) supported by provincial government funding), or *fuori rassegna* (outside the official programme) by village-based associations or *feste* (for example, the Piazza al Serchio company usually performs for the name-day of the village church saints Peter and Paul in late June). In 1992 the Piazza al Serchio company performed in twelve different locations mostly in the upper Garfagnana (see the inset map in Figure 1), all places that still have a sizeable pool of knowledgeable audience members, even if the *Maggio* is no longer actively performed there.

The vociferous participation of audiences in the performance is vital: performances take place in the round, and bring together the families of the visiting *maggianti* (*Maggio* performers) with members of the host village and surrounding areas, as well as a few tourists and academics (Figure 2).³⁷ *Maggio* performances establish interconnections and a sense of wider community between the various local venues. For example, at the end of each performance, it is customary for the *Maggio* performers to sing together the *arietta di congedo* (farewell arietta), addressed by name to the villagers hosting the performance and stressing the shared tradition.

O popolo d'Agliano
Gentili ascoltatori
Se abbiam commesso errori
Volete perdonar'

[O people of Agliano / kind listeners / if we have made mistakes / please forgive us]

It seemed that the most satisfactory performances required both Garfagnino performers and Garfagnino audiences. In the few performances I attended by Garfagnino companies outside their home region there was a notable lack of response from the audience, which in turn led to loss of confidence by the performers and consequently subdued performances. Conversely, when visiting Emilian *Maggio* companies came to perform in the Garfagnana, the Garfagnino audiences were comparatively disengaged and notably fewer in number than for Garfagnino *Maggio* companies, even though there are many commonalities in the performance conventions.

As the name suggests, *Maggio* performances were once part of May Day celebrations.³⁸ Nowadays they take place during the summer months of July

³⁷ For a detailed annotation of audience participation in a *Maggio* performance, see Gastone Venturelli, *Re Filippo d'Eggitto: Maggio epico garfagnino: A cura di Gastone Venturelli; Appendice di Daniela Menchelli* (Urbino: Università degli studi di Urbino, 1974).

³⁸ Paolo Toschi, *Le origini del teatro italiano* (1955; repr., Torino: Boringhieri, 1969); Alessandro D'Ancona, *Origini del teatro italiano* (Roma: Bardi, 1966).



Figure 9.2: Maggio performers (Piazza al Serchio company) and audience members at Varliano (LU), 4 August 1996 (photograph by Linda Barwick, 0888-16A).

and August, to take advantage of the larger audiences provided by emigrants returning for their summer holidays.³⁹ Indeed, in the 1990s, the lead woman in the Gorfigliano *Maggio* company actually worked and lived in France, but performed *Maggio* for her local company when she returned each year for holidays. In addition to returning emigrants and families of the performers and the commissioning groups, audiences also usually include a number of *appassionati*, often former *maggianti* (*Maggio* singers), who may travel considerable distances within the Garfagnana to attend performances. The *appassionati* may frequently be observed recording performances and entering into lively discussion about the relative merits of particular performers, who are judged particularly on their ability to perform the elaborately melismatic singing style and the stylised sword fighting that form an integral part of *Maggio* performance practice.

³⁹ “Holiday translocalism” amongst Italian emigrants in Switzerland is discussed by Susanne Wessendorf, “State-Imposed Translocalism and the Dream of Returning: Italian Migrants in Switzerland”, in *Intimacy and Italian Migration: Gender and Domestic Lives in a Mobile World*, ed. Loretta Baldassar and Donna R. Gabaccia (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010) 158.

Stylistic variation as associated with place in the *Maggio* tradition

One point of reference for the discussions of the *appassionati* is the commonly held idea that performers should maintain the characteristic musical and movement stylistic traits of their own *paese*. For example, the *Maggio* performer and composer Giuliano Grandini was one of the many Garfagnini I spoke to who espoused this idea when he stated “da ogni paese c’è un modo leggermente diverso di cantare il Maggio... Ognuno lo terrebbe un pochettino quasi personale il modo di canto” (in every town there is a slightly different way of singing the *Maggio*. Each town has its own almost personal style of singing).⁴⁰ Similarly, the pre-eminent Garfagnino scholar of the *Maggio*, Gastone Venturelli, stated

A proposito del canto c’è da dire che, pur somigliandosi, ci sono sempre più o meno lievi differenze da un paese all’altro, quindi non solo da una compagnia all’altra, ma spesso nella stessa compagnia c’è differenza fra i vari maggianti, a seconda del paese di provenienza.

[With regard to singing style, it must be said that although substantially similar, there are always more or less minor differences from one village to the other, thus not only from one company to another, but often within a single company there are differences between the various performers, according to their village of origin.]⁴¹

When we come to examine particular examples of stylistic variation within the Garfagnana, however, the correlation between performance tradition and place is far from clear-cut. A strictly isomorphic relationship between musical and movement characteristics and a given *paese* no longer exists, if indeed it ever did. Within each company, which now comprises performers from a relatively extensive area, a number of different melodies or different patterns of swordplay are likely to be known.⁴² Because singing is usually monodic, with different performers alternating in the exposition of the narrative, the different musical styles can coexist within a performance, but for the rare examples of group performance of a stanza (such as in the previously mentioned *arietta di congedo*), or for any instances of swordplay in which people come from villages with incompatible sword-fighting practices, a compromise needs to be worked out.

We can illustrate this situation with regard to the Gragnanella-Filicaia-Casatico company’s singing of the *arietta* melody, one of three conventional melodies

⁴⁰ Personal communication, 25 August 1993 (Barwick field tape 93-18).

⁴¹ Venturelli, “Le aree” 70.

⁴² For example, Giuliano Grandini commented that “nella compagnia di Piazza al Serchio si sentono tre modi diversi di cantare, minimo minimo” (in the Piazza al Serchio company, you can hear at the very least three different singing styles). Giuliano Grandini, personal communication, 25 August 1993.

used in the course of a *Maggio* performance.⁴³ The *arietta* melody accompanies a stanza composed of four seven-syllable lines,⁴⁴ with lines two and three rhyming, and the last two lines repeated (ABBCBC), a verse form used at moments of particular emotional significance within the drama and for the *arietta di congedo* (when it is performed by the whole group). Within the Gragnanella-Filicaia-Casatico company, there are three variations in the melodic setting of the *arietta*, each associated with a different place.

Most performers from Gragnanella and Filicaia set the six lines of text to a repeating two-line melodic contour, cadencing on the raised fourth degree at the end of the first line and the tonic at the end of the second line: this contour is thus presented three times in the course of the stanza (form 121212). Example 9.1 (performed by Giacomo Donati from Filicaia in the role of Marco) presents one version of the *arietta*, with considerable *gorgheggio* which varies somewhat from one instance to another of the three presentations of the *arietta* melody (systems 1–2, 3–4 and 5–6).⁴⁵ This example gives some idea of the range of freedom in rhythm and ornamentation possible within the *Maggio* style, although there are other singers who sing even more elaborately.

In the same performance, another singer, Giuseppe D’Alberto, from the village of Casatico, performed an entirely different melodic line in lines 1 and 2

⁴³ The other two melodic contours are the *ottava* (for eleven-syllable, eight-line stanzas generally used for extremely dramatic moments), and the standard form of the *stanza a maggio* which is used for the vast majority of the text. In the Garfagnana the *stanza a maggio* can consist of either five or four eight-syllable lines (called *quintina* and *quartina* respectively). For further discussion see Barwick and Page, *Gestualità e musica di un Maggio garfagnino: “I Paladini di Francia” secondo l’interpretazione dei maggianti della Compagnia di Gorfigliano, 1988* [*Movement and Music of a Garfagnino maggio, “I Paladini di Francia,” as performed by the players of the Gorfigliano Company, 1988*]. A description of the musical setting of these metrical types as used in Emilia-Romagna is given in Magrini, “La musica del Maggio”.

⁴⁴ While the first three lines of the stanza are *piano* (‘plain’, with the stress on the second-last of the seven syllables) the last line is *tronco* (‘truncated’, with stress on the last of six syllables). In Italian metrics, which measures according to the normal *piano* stress pattern, this *tronco* line is classified, like the first three, as a *settenario* (seven-syllable line).

⁴⁵ The three musical examples are all transcribed from the 1992 performance of the *Maggio Licia la schiava di Roma* (Licia the Roman slave). In this performance various modifications to the original text by Giuliano Bertagni were made by the prompt and *capomaggio* Piergiorgio Lenzi (original stanza numbers are given in brackets). Giuliano Bertagni, *Licia la schiava di Roma: secondo il testo adottato dai maggianti di Gragnanella-Filicaia-Casatico, a cura di Piergiorgio Lenzi, Quaderno 102* (Lucca: Centro per la Raccolta, lo Studio e la Valorizzazione delle Tradizioni Popolari, Provincia di Lucca, 1986). Translation of the text of stanza 13 (modified version of original stanza 19): Courage, great queen / in our hour of grief / show the usurper / the great valour of the Thracians.

Co - rag - gio gran re - gi - na -
 nel - l'o - ra del - do - lo - re
 Mo - stra al l'u - sur - pa - to - re -
 dci - Tra - ci il gran - va - lor
 Mo - stra al l'u - sur - pa - to - re -
 dei - Tra - ci il gran - va - lor

Example 9.1: Giacomo Donati's version of the arietta melody, stanza 13 (19) of the *Maggio Licia la schiava di Roma* by Giuliano Bertagni, as performed with the Gragnanella-Filicaia-Casatico company at Gragnanella, 2 August 1992 (musical transcription by Jim Franklin and Linda Barwick).

Duration: 20.3 seconds

Fi - gli io - vi - bat - tez - zo
 nel - no - me del - si - gno - re

Example 9.2: Giuseppe D'Alberto's performance of lines 1 and 2 of stanza 81 (82) of the *Maggio Licia la schiava di Roma* by Giuliano Bertagni, as performed with the Gragnanella-Filicaia-Casatico company at Gragnanella, 2 August 1992 (musical transcription by Jim Franklin and Linda Barwick).

Duration: 27.8 seconds

La - tua - be - ne - di - zio - ne
 Ti - chie - do o - pa - dre - san - to

Example 9.3: Enrico Comparini's performance of lines 1 and 2 of stanza 98 (newly composed for the 1992 performance) of the *Maggio Licia la schiava di Roma* by Giuliano Bertagni, as performed with the Gragnanella-Filicaia-Casatico company at Gragnanella, 2 August 1992 (musical transcription by Jim Franklin and Linda Barwick).

of the *arietta* (Example 9.2), cadencing on the tonic and the lower fifth degree,⁴⁶ then continuing with the standard melody as performed by Donati for lines 3–4 (not transcribed here).⁴⁷ In effect, the *arietta* melody in this case consists of four different melodic lines, cadencing on the tonic, lower fifth, fourth and tonic respectively, with the last two lines repeated (form 123434).

The third version of the *arietta* melody was performed by an older singer, Enrico Comparini from Camporgiano, who performed lines 1 and 2 of the *arietta* (Example 9.3) with two different melodic phrases both cadencing on the tonic (in this case the *arietta* was continued by Giuseppe D’Alberto, who used the standard melodic form for the remainder of the stanza).⁴⁸

In the final group chorus for the *arietta di congedo* both D’Alberto and Comparini abandoned their idiosyncratic melodies to perform the standard version for lines 1 and 2, alongside the rest of the company. This is but one of many examples demonstrating that when necessary (but only when necessary) individual styles are abandoned in the interests of group synchrony. In discussing the various forms of the *arietta* with other members of the company, I was repeatedly assured that D’Alberto and Comparini were maintaining “lo stile arcaico” (the archaic style) of their respective villages (which are only separated by a few kilometres).

Indeed, I found that any consistent variation between singers, even when limited to different rates and shapes of ornamentation in their *gorgheggio*, tended to be attributed to *paese* rather than to individual choice, performance experience or vocal agility. I observed many instances in which there was evident difference in performance style between two people from the same village. One example was provided by two members of the Piazza al Serchio company, who, although cousins and neighbours in the town of Regnano (MS), sang different versions of the five-line *quintina* melody.⁴⁹ One of them, Andrea Pietrini, used

⁴⁶ Those interested in musical detail will note that the two lines of Example 2 each ornament the first, fourth and sixth syllables. Ornamentation on the first syllable is similar in both lines, but the fourth and sixth syllables differ. In the first line, the highly ornamented fourth syllable (“vi”) descends to briefly touch the tonic A before ascending with several turns to finish on the raised fourth degree (D), while the penultimate sixth syllable (“-tez-”) oscillates within the interval of a third above the tonic (C#–A). The fourth syllable of the second line (“del”) is similarly ornamented but emphasises the second degree above the tonic (B) before finishing on the seventh (G), while the sixth syllable (“-gno-”) emphasises the lower sixth and fifth degrees (F# and E).

⁴⁷ Translation of stanza 81 (numbered 82 in the original publication): Children, I baptise you / in the name of the Lord / may Divine Love / bring happiness.

⁴⁸ Translation of first two lines of stanza 98 (newly composed for the 1992 production): Your blessing / is all I ask oh sainted father.

⁴⁹ See note 42 for discussion of the metrical composition of the *quintina*.

far less *gorgheggio* than his cousin, and also adopted a less complex melodic contour. His cousin, Giuseppe Malaspina, was widely known and admired throughout the Garfagnana for the elaborateness and freedom of his *gorgheggio*, his knowledge of Emilian as well as Garfagnino *Maggio* melodies, the effectiveness of his gestures and his dexterity and flamboyance in swordplay.⁵⁰ Although he was acknowledged as having incorporated Emilian style gestures into his performance, he was frequently held up to me by other performers as embodying the true style of his *paese* (Regnano), while Pietrini's performance was said to have been affected by his previous residence in another village, Gorfigliano, and former membership of their *Maggio* company. Again we can observe the overriding orientation of musical style to *paese*, even when other explanations (such as individual talent or personal history) were available. The assumed equation of musical style with *paese* is also implicit in Venturelli's discussion of differences in singing style in two *Maggio* melodies he had recorded from two women of the same village, one born in 1908 and one in 1937. He marvels that

Fra le due esecuzioni però c'è una grande differenza. In soli trent'anni sono profondamente mutate le tecniche di decorazione, ... tanto che pare addirittura impossibile un così vistoso mutamento in una sola generazione.

[There is a great difference between the two performances. In only thirty years the techniques of decoration have profoundly changed ... to the extent that it appears almost impossible for such a prominent change to have happened within a single generation.]⁵¹

While there is ample evidence of considerable change over time in *Maggio* performance practice, and the main point of Venturelli's statement—to question the assumption of stability in transmission of musical practice over time—is a valid one, his expectation that the melody should remain the same simply because both singers were recorded in the same village shows that in academic discourse, just as in the discussions of the *maggianti* and the *appassionati*, we can discern the strength of the Garfagnino ethos relating performance style primarily to *paese*.⁵²

⁵⁰ Barwick, "Sculpting the Words".

⁵¹ Venturelli, "Qualche precisazione" 381.

⁵² It is interesting that the close association between *paese* and performance style that seems to be the norm in the Garfagnana is absent in the Emilian *maggio* tradition. Venturelli, "Le aree" 94; Magrini, "La musica del Maggio".

The *Maggio* in Australia (or not)

We will now examine some of the ways in which Italian immigrants, and especially Garfagnini, are integrated into Australian urban environments, and some of the implications for maintenance of public performance traditions like *Maggio*. Within Australia, the already-mentioned practice of chain migration, in which immigrants sponsored relatives and *paesani* (those from the same village), has led to geographically differentiated settlement patterns of Italians. Within each city, Italian immigrants tend to have clustered in particular neighbourhoods, often in the inner city. Within these suburbs there may be even more intensification by area of origin; some streets have a high concentration of Tuscans from the same family or village, others many Sicilians and so on.⁵³ The approximately 3,000–3,500 Garfagnini in Australia⁵⁴ are most concentrated in the cities of Perth, Melbourne and Sydney. The continuing identification of Australian Garfagnini with family and friends in their home village, in combination with their patterns of settlement and socialisation in Australia, means that their sense of affiliation with the Garfagnana is likely to be reinforced by everyday interaction with other Garfagnini in Australia.⁵⁵

Since Garfagnini emigrated to Australia in considerable numbers, reside close to each other and maintain links with the broader Garfagnino community through the Tuscany regional clubs (comprising about 80 percent of the membership), there seems little doubt that there were sufficient human resources to mount *Maggio* performances in Australia (bearing in mind that the present population of the Garfagnana is only ten times greater).⁵⁶ To my knowledge, such a performance has never happened. Even if Australian Garfagnini had previously performed the *Maggio* in their home villages in the Garfagnana, their affiliation with the *Maggio* tradition in Australia tends to be enacted only via listening to videos or tape recordings of *Maggio* performances taken by themselves or by relatives during return trips to the Garfagnana. In one Perth-based Garfagnino family of my acquaintance, the elderly grandmother would listen to *Maggio* recordings every night before sleep.

⁵³ For more information on Italians in Sydney see Burnley, “Italian Community Life in Sydney”. For general information on Italians in Australia see Stephen Castles et al., *Australia’s Italians: Culture and Community in a Changing Society* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1992). For discussion of Italian language in Australia see Camilla Bettoni, “Italian in Australia: Language Change or Language Shift?”, in *Australia, the Australians and Italian Migration*, ed. Gianfranco Cresciani (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1983).

⁵⁴ Extrapolating from Helen Ware’s suggestion that Garfagnini make up 80 percent of Tuscan immigrants. Helen Ware, *A Profile of the Italian Community in Australia* (Hawthorn: Citadel Press [AIMA & Co.As.It.], 1981) 27.

⁵⁵ Baldassar, *Visits Home*.

⁵⁶ As previously noted, the present population of the Garfagnana is something less than 30,000.

Perhaps part of the reason for the absence of *Maggio* in Australia lies in the lack of suitable performance times and spaces in Australia. The venues most commonly used by Italian community organisations tend to be huge brick buildings with sound-absorbent ceiling tiles designed for other functions such as bingo nights, dinner dances and sit-down dinners for 200, and are almost always unsuitable for live acoustic performances, although smaller musical ensembles often perform with amplification.⁵⁷ There is no agreed time of the week or of the year suitable for *Maggio* performances in Australia. The Australian summer is too hot for outdoor performances, and in any case the Australian summer occurs at Christmas, when there are other important family and community obligations. Organisation of time during the week, too, is very different in urban Australia from that in rural Italy, and it may be difficult for immigrants working long hours as shift-workers or running their own small businesses (often supporting family in Italy as well as in Australia) to find mutually convenient times for rehearsals and performances.

Another important reason lies in the considerable disincentives for public performances of non-English-speaking cultures in Australia. Until the 1970s, the prevailing attitude of Anglo-Australians to Italian language and culture was one of incomprehension if not downright hostility. During World War II, it was even illegal to speak Italian on the telephone.⁵⁸ Accordingly, many public performance traditions, especially those that required coordination of relatively large groups, have not been maintained in Australia (the exception is religious events, sponsored by the Catholic Church and regional associations).⁵⁹ By the time that Australian government policies of multiculturalism took effect in the 1980s, the expectation from Anglophone mainstream was the expression of an Italian national identity, to be placed in relationship to the many other national identities present in Australia, with little expectation or comprehension of the cultural diversity within any one of those nations.⁶⁰

Parallel situations have been observed in Italian communities in the United States. In their study of Italian American folklore traditions, Malpezzi and Clement state:

On the folk-cultural level, the “performance genres” that the Italian immigrants brought from their home villages took only precarious root in the New World.

⁵⁷ For example, as discussed in Comin and Barwick’s chapter in this volume, the Italian Folk Ensemble frequently performed in Adelaide’s regional clubs.

⁵⁸ Ilma Martinuzzi-O’Brien, *Australia’s Italians 1788–1988* trans. Laura Mecca (Carlton, Vic.: Italian Historical Society, Co.As.It. and State Library of Victoria, 1989) 57.

⁵⁹ See Garigliano’s chapter in this volume for discussion of Sicilian religious festivals in Sydney.

⁶⁰ See further discussion of this point in Barwick’s chapter in this volume on “Italian Traditional Music in Adelaide in the 1970s and 1980s”.

Dependent as they were on specific language traditions and upon the peasant way of life, drama, music and dance fared more poorly than other forms of Italian-American folklore that were more adaptable to the American context.⁶¹

Malpezzi and Clements go on to suggest that because of the local and regional specificity of orally-transmitted performance traditions that Italian Americans brought with them to the New World, these traditions only survived as long as the public venues and spaces maintained a regional focus (as in the social clubs and religious *feste* for town saints).⁶²

In late 1992 I visited the Sydney Tuscany Association to present videos of the various *Maggio* groups I had recorded in Garfagnana earlier that year. Confirming the lack of interest in *Maggio* by extra-Garfagnini that I had already noted in Italy, many of the non-Garfagnino Tuscans present made it very clear that they didn't like the *Maggio*, and couldn't understand what the Garfagnini saw in it (though it must be admitted that many Garfagnini, both in Italy and Australia also dislike *Maggio*). The Garfagnini present reacted to the video much as they would to a live performance (applauding after a particularly well-sung stanza, for example). It was clear that they were still familiar with how to be a *Maggio* audience (perhaps through recent holiday visits) even if they did not actively perform the tradition themselves in Australia. The association with a particular *paese* was also very noticeable: particular members of the audience reacted much more strongly to performers who came from their own village. "That's the real *Maggio*!" one man exclaimed, when someone from his *paese* started singing on the video. As with the Italian Garfagnino audiences, discussions ensued about the relative merits of different singers and the extent to which they conformed to the different performance styles expected from their village. At least one audience member wept openly; another, who had left the Garfagnana as a boy and never returned, suddenly remembered that he knew how to sing *Maggio*, and it was clear that despite their varying years of absence from the Garfagnana most audience members continued to feel passionately attached to the *Maggio*. Nevertheless, the suggestion of bringing a Tuscan *Maggio* group to Australia received only lukewarm support, some fearing the ridicule of Australian audiences.

At this point we need to return to the earlier discussion about the transnational nature of the Garfagnino diaspora. Even if some of the Garfagnini I met on this occasion didn't return often to Italy, others in their family probably did, often bringing back recordings or photographs of *Maggio*. Many Garfagnini who have settled in Australia for the sake of their children and grandchildren make the effort to maintain relationships with their *paese* through return holidays in

⁶¹ Frances M. Malpezzi and William M. Clements, *Italian-American Folklore*, ed. W.K. McNeil, *The American Folklore Series* (Little Rock: August House Publishers, 1992) 200.

⁶² Malpezzi and Clements, *Italian-American Folklore*. See Garigliano's chapter in this volume for an account of shifting local and regional focus of religious festivals in Australia.

which they introduce the family to their home village and the traditional way of life. Indeed, Garfagnini in Australia have no need to perform *Maggio* in Australia: since they have access to it by return visits or recordings brought back. And since one of the functions of *Maggio* in the Garfagnana seems to be to assert and cement individual affiliation to *paese* through its performance to audiences from other *paesi*, it is only in the social and physical environment of the *paesi* of the Garfagnana that this can take full effect. It is impossible to appreciate the history and current practice of *Maggio* in the Garfagnana or in Australia without taking into account the transnationalism of its populace.

Conclusions

Let me finish by summarising the aspects of *Maggio* performance practice that I see as manifestations of a “diaspora effect”, that is, the influence of exiles or emigrants on the community of origin. I have argued that the ongoing history of emigration from the Garfagnana has meant that the *Maggio*’s themes of intercultural conflict, sexual jealousy and long-lost children remain relevant in the lived experiences not only of the emigrants who have learnt languages and travelled to distant lands, but also for parents, children and spouses left behind in the Garfagnana. The orientation and attachment to *paese* that is evident in the efforts of performers and audiences to maintain and discern minor differences in performance style is not only relevant to everyday life in the Garfagnana: these are the bonds that have also enabled the chains of emigration that have sustained Garfagnini abroad, as well as encouraging them to keep sending the remittances that maintained the families and properties back home. Finally, while acknowledging the importance of locally originated efforts towards *recupero della cultura contadina* (revival of peasant culture) in Italy,⁶³ I believe it is significant that the reestablishment and spectacular flowering of the *Maggio* tradition in the Garfagnana began in the early 1970s, when the advent of the jumbo jet meant that return to the *paese* became suddenly much more affordable for the Garfagnino diaspora resident overseas. Since then, the 1980s and 1990s have seen the retirement back to the Garfagnana of a considerable number of the cohort of emigrants who left as young people in the 1950s, as well as a burgeoning international tourism market, and re-awakening of interest in their ancestry on the part of the second and third generations resident abroad. It is perhaps precisely the archaic qualities of the *Maggio*, its appeal to tradition in the dispersed but self-conscious cultural community of Garfagnini, that enabled it to survive against seemingly overwhelming technological and geographical odds.

⁶³ For discussion of this movement in the 1960s see Comin and Barwick’s chapter in this volume.