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Italian Prisoners of War in the South African Imagination: Contemporary Memory, History and Narrative

Donato Andrew Somma

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Johannesburg 2013.

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Dedication

To the Italian Prisoners of War who dedicated themselves to creating in a time of destruction, and to the South Africans who enrich our imagination by telling their stories.

Abstract

This thesis offers a critical exploration of the ways in which South Africans remember the Italian Prisoners of War who were detained in South Africa during the Second World War. It proposes that the material traces and narrativising of their experiences by South Africans reveal tiers of memory-making that speak to successive social, historical and political contexts in South Africa since the end of the Second World War. In tracing the connections between these tiers, the thesis engages questions of history- and memory-making by constituting the memory of the Italian Prisoners of War as a 'site of memory'. The implications of constituting memory thus are mapped as the research investigates processes of narrative at play in the writing of history, the writing of fiction and the telling of stories in relation to the Italian Prisoners of War. The thesis is at once a theoretical reflection on these questions of history, memory and narrative and a contribution to heritage studies more broadly, in that it questions the value of memory and memorialisation of events that are less central to current national discourse. The dearth of critical work on South Africa in the Second World War prompts questions of who remembers what and why, as well as what becomes of memory when the primary repositories and places of memory are passed on to subsequent generations and to communities indirectly involved with the subject of that memory.

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Chapter One: Introduction

> *Now, their subtly fine bindings, gleaming against the drab covers of commonplace recollections, they stand out, and seem worthwhile recounting* (Kermode 2008, 9).

In the light of the traumatic local history that defined South Africa in the second half of the twentieth century, it is easy to forget that South Africans played an active role in the world-changing campaigns and battles of the Second World War. Across racial lines as soldiers of the Union Defence Force and as members of the unarmed Native Corps, South Africans made significant contributions to campaigns in East Africa (Orpen 1968), North Africa (Orpen 1971; Brown 1972) and Southern Europe (Henry & Orpen 1977). Other than the dramatic domestic politics following the war, part of the general amnesia around the period, beyond the limited circulation of soldier memoirs and the activity of veteran associations, can be attributed to the fact that the war never came to South African shores. While it certainly came close enough in the form of torpedoed vessels off the coast and even the docking of soldier transport vessels (Wessels 1996), the blackout protocol at Durban was a figurative grand drape that South Africa drew around itself to keep the 'theatre of war' out. One of the few ways that the effects of the war entered the daily life of South Africans at home was through the presence of Italian prisoners of war (POWs hereafter) living and working within the Union from the time of their arrival, around 1941 to the repatriation of the last prisoners in 1947 (Carlesso 2009).

The first Italians imprisoned in South Africa during the Second World War were not soldiers but rather a mixture of Italian nationals living in South Africa and some naturalised South Africans of Italian origin. They were systematically rounded up starting on 11 June 1940, the day after Italy declared war against Britain. Six internment camps, plus one in what

is now Namibia, were set up to contain about 800 Italians along with German nationals and even some South Africans identified with right-wing activity or as having fascist leanings (Sani 1992, 295). Though many of these prisoners were released after a few months, a number of infrastructural and social conventions concerning Italian internment in South Africa were established. These included the first reactions of South Africans to Italians being held in South Africa, a discourse that ranged from whether or not they should be imprisoned at all, to later debates as to whether or not they should be allowed to work on farms. Friendships formed in these early camps consolidated sympathies between Italian and Afrikaner national imaginaries that would have an effect on how many Italian-South Africans positioned themselves politically after the war. The establishment of assistance committees by Italian-South Africans provided the first instances of connection between these newly arrived Italians and the Italian-South African community who would continue to commemorate the POW experience after the war. Among these committees CAPI (*Comitati Assistenza Prigionieri Italiani*) is the most important, and was involved with aiding Italian POWs from 1941.

The first Italian POWs to arrive from theatres of war came as a combination of soldiers that had surrendered to the British in North Africa and to South Africans in East Africa (Sani 1992, 297). Officers were generally sent to India, while privates and non-commissioned officers along with some Italian chaplains and medical officers were sent to South Africa. In February 1941 land was set aside near Cullinan (east of Pretoria) to accommodate these prisoners. Zonderwater started out as little more than a set of guard towers and a tented camp but would grow, certainly by 1943, into the beginnings of a small town. From 1942, Italian POWs were permitted to work outside of the confines of Zonderwater, a trend which grew radically after the armistice of July 1943, in which Italy surrendered to the Allied forces (Carlesso 2009, 167). Italian POWs, who had initially been a

marginal presence in the receiving camp in Pietermaritzburg, and within the confines of the Zonderwater camp, were now scattered across the country, billeted on farms and in small external work camps. Many remained in these work camps until the long repatriation process began in May 1945. The final repatriations to Italy were in 1947, when the last of the 'non-collaborators' returned home. Up to 100 000 Italians spent part of their war years as POWs in South Africa (Carlesso 2009).

The Italian POWs were an unexpected and strange presence, set apart from the South Africans they lived and worked with by language, religion, political outlook and their very status as prisoners. They disrupted, joined and initiated various South African narratives during their imprisonment and afterwards.[1] Entering the country, which had sided with its colonial master Britain, as enemies, the complexity of domestic politics soon produced a range of responses to their presence in the central processing camp at Pietermaritzburg (KwaZulu-Natal), the main camp of Zonderwater on the Highveld (Gauteng), and the numerous work camps and private farms that housed Italian POWs after Italy's capitulation in 1943. Their difference was noted and commented on by South Africans at the time as the former, often inadvertently, shook up societal norms relating to race, labour practices, courtship and romance.[2] This in turn reinforced a certain South African worldview already suspicious of outsiders but also kindled the possibility of alternative worldviews.[3] The prisoners also joined a larger historical narrative of the Italian immigrant presence in South

[1] See Delport's recent work on the changing attitudes of South Africans post-World War Two (Delport 2013).
[2] Among others, Steve Moni's *Captivi Italici in Sud Africa* 1989, a four part documentary on the Italian POWs in South Africa points up the disruption of ideas of race in parts three and four, respectively titled "*I Neri Bianchi*" ("The White Blacks") and "*I Boeri Italiani*" (The Italian Boers"). In it, testimony from surviving prisoners is used to present the disruption to established South African social norms. Prendini-Toffoli has sourced material from the POW period, interviews and letters and the documentary cited above, that she has used to render an image of charming and romantic Italian POWs in her magazine article "The Prisoners of Zonderwater" (2001).
[3] In this regard long-standing, religious-based socio-political concepts in Afrikaner culture such as the "*Roomse gevaar*", the perceived threat of Roman Catholicism (Cloete 1992, 43), often came into play in dealings with Italian POWs. Catholicism was perceived, among others, as a 'danger' as it split the unity of Calvinist Afrikaner identity (see van Robbroeck 2011, 106). Positive interactions ameliorated these perceptions in many individual instances though doing little to change immigration policy on a national level post-war. Though it is unclear whether attitudes to Catholicism were articulated as the "*Roomse gevaar*" during the war, Giliomee suggests that by the fifties this term was in use in Afrikaans student councils at various universities (2009, 547).

Africa, reinvigorating what had always been a small presence marked by significant, but largely isolated contributions to industry, culture and politics (Ferreira 2009). Finally, they initiated a new way of thinking about Italians in South Africa, and through the memorialisation of their POW experience, the ex-POWs influenced Italian-South African identity in the post-war decades of the twentieth century (Sani 1992, 339-348).

I expand on these various contributions below only insofar as they inform the main topic of this thesis, namely, a critical reflection on the presence of the Italian POWs in the South African imagination today. At a distance of almost seven decades since the end of the Second World War, we are uniquely placed to witness a shift in the locus of memory as it relates to Italian prisoners of war in South Africa. The shift is one from the first-hand memory of those who lived through the war, including Italian POWs, Italian-South Africans and South Africans, to those who retain fragments of second-hand memory.[4] In this shift the imagination of these inheritors of memory has added to the layers of memory of Italian POWs in South Africa; filling gaps in loss of memory, tying POW memory to other memories and improvising fictional accounts consciously and unconsciously. The realm of Italian POW memory today is as much a presence in the imagination of those who hold second-hand memory as it is a historical occurrence. This presence in the imagination is a conglomerate of various instances of remembering the war and circulating narratives about the Italian POWs through various channels. The work continues today and it has fallen to a new generation, the first without the bedrock of living ex-POWs, to continue remembering.[5]

[4] While the focus of this study is very much on living memory of the Italian POWs in South Africa, it should be noted that an increasingly active and organised group of Italian POW descendants works at the rock face of memory in Italy and globally. Using social media platforms, especially Facebook, this group is beginning to reach out to numerous South Africans with Italian POW stories, memories and information (ZONDERWATER Facebook group).

[5] Critical scholarly work on the material and cultural life of prisoners of war is growing. For work on the material traces of prisoners of war life see works by Wickiewicz, Mckay, Draskau and Wilkinson (in Carr and Mytum 2012).See Eldredge, Snizek, Dusselier and Carr in the the same publication for research on the creative and cultural life of prisoners of war. See Bunbury's work based on the oral histories of Italian POWs in Australia (1995). Also, *Prisoners in* Paradise, Calamandrei's comprehensive documentary on Italian POWs in America (2001)

This research presents the idea that, when taken as a whole or 'site', the subject of Italian POWs in South Africa is a site of memory, that is, a vibrant, multi-tiered set of stories that exceed the significance of the historical events on which they are based.[6] With a focus on those aspects of Italian POW stories that are living – published, circulated or told in interview in the twenty first century, by South Africans – this thesis traces the interacting levels of memory of South Africans regarding the POW era and the ways in which the traces of memory are suspended in larger narratives of the South African context.

The successive tiers of memory-making are worth discussing at this point, and some broad categories accommodate most of the forms of memory encountered in the research. At the core of this memory are events leading up to and including the POW experience of approximately 100 000 Italian soldiers during the 1940s. Archival records serve as the primary 'memory' of this period; particularly the POW records that exist between the National Archives Repository (Pretoria), the Zonderwater Museum (Zonderwater) and, to a lesser extent, various collections in the Military History Museum (Johannesburg) and the Wits Historical Papers (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg). Historical records at the National Archives and at the Zonderwater Museum include individual prisoner movement from arrival through to repatriation, including medical histories and work at external work camps. Much of the material in both archival holdings is in the process of being re-cataloged and reorganised at present (Pers. Comm. with Emilio Coccia, president of the Zonderwater Block Association). In addition to this, there are records of communications regarding the prisoners and the camp between the camp welfare organisation, camp medical and camp command and other structures of the Union Defence Force. There is at least one scholarly article published by a medical practitioner who worked with the prisoners. Lieutenant

[6] That is not to minimise the service, surrender and internment of Italian soldiers, nor the active service of South African troops, but rather to acknowledge that capture and home front service far from the theatres of war is not typically within the purview of official histories. As the literature below attests, the troop movements and major battles are treated in the media of 'histories' and 'memoirs', while the wartime fate of surrendered soldiers is usually, if at all, told by themselves through the memoir.

Colonel L Blumberg wrote retrospectively about the health of Italian prisoners of war in the Union (Blumberg 1969). Both the Zonderwater Museum and the Military History Museum in Johannesburg contain collections of Italian POW material ranging from documentation of the time to artistic and functional creations of the prisoners donated by South Africans and Italians.

A second tier of memory is the body of published memoirs, histories, archived realia, a film documentary and other material created under the aegis of the ex-POWs themselves, or using their input as primary material. This second tier features rich, detailed accounts of various POW experiences that were forged into a powerful meta-narrative that still exerts a strong influence on Italian-South African discourse, such as it has been, in the decades between the end of the period of POW internment and the beginning of the twenty-first century.[7] Gabriele Sani's *History of the Italians in South Africa 1489-1989* (1992) is undoubtedly the most influential and broad-ranging, in its attempt to tackle the widest scope of Italian presence in South Africa. It was produced by the Zonderwater Block Association. It has had a particular influence on a similarly ambitious monograph by Ferreira (2009), also dealing with families and individuals in South Africa across centuries. Giuliani-Balestrino's *Gli Italiani nel Sud Africa* (1995) also places the POW experience quite centrally in the story of Italian-South Africa. Mario Gazzini's *Zonderwater* (1987) deals specifically with the Italian POW experience from first-hand experience, as does Steve Moni's four part documentary *Captivi Italici in Sud Africa* (1989). Various memoirs by ex-POWs, often aided by an amanuensis, which capture particular experiences of individuals, have become more popular in the early twenty-first century but still very much drawing on first-hand memory (see Bonzi 2006; Salvagno 2007; Annese 2010). Carlesso's *Centomila prigionieri italiani in Sud Africa: il campo di Zonderwater* (2009) is the first major publication on the subject of the

[7] See Buranello's work on contextualising the Italian immigrant identity in South Africa, through scholarly and fictional literatures (2009).

Italian POW experience to draw on forms of archival and second-hand memory making in addition to first-hand memory drawn from secondary sources. Academic work on Italian POWs has tended to tackle a single subject within the POW experience (see Milanese's work on writings produced in the Zonderwater camp, 2002, and Somma on music in Zonderwater, 2008).[8] The third tier, the domain of the current research, is the tier of second-hand memory.

In the opening decades of the twenty first century, with the passing, or at least withdrawal from active public life, of the last remaining ex-POWs in South Africa, the narrating of their experience has opened up to a wider community. In this community are: South African-based descendants of POWs, who often have a powerful need to recoup lost stories and missing pieces of a filial narrative (see Franco Forleo's website article *Zonderwater POW Camp 1941-1946*, http://www.francoforleo.co.za/Zonderwater.html); researchers, probing various aspects of POW life and activity from a variety of disciplines; amateur and local historians, whose curiosity comes to rest on the romance of the Italian POWs; creators, artists and writers who use the Italian POW experience as source material and, finally, there is the group that I would describe as 'inheritors', these are people whose daily life or family past intersect with the world of Italian POWs, be it through a family connection forged during the war, or, for example, living in a POW-built home.

None of these tiers exist in isolation and it would be artificial to delineate the three neatly. The ex-POWs and their inalienable right to articulate their story are disrupted by the inherent distillation of autobiography over time and shifting self-perception. Added to this are shifting perspectives on each of the POWs' stories as these pass through the hands of journalists, artists, researchers, descendants and locals who know snatches of stories. Another complexity is the inevitable cross-fertilisation between all these participants. The three tiers

[8] South African literature, academic and otherwise, features a similar spread of a scholarly texts dealing with troop movements and battles (see Orpen 1968, 1971, 1975) as well as a few amateur historical works dealing with wartime South Africa (Cryws-Williams 1992; Siedle Gibson 1991) and a number of memoirs by veterans (see Landsborough 1956; Hartshorn 1960; Reitz 1965; Chambers 1967; Leigh 1992).

are more usefully imagined as nested one within the other. At the centre, are the events of the forties assiduously recorded by the South Africans and marked on the landscape with POW-built homes, roads, passes, and artworks.[9] The period of reflection and narration by ex-POWs forms the next layer, and is an expansion of core ideas and narrative themes. Key contributions from this period include the memorialisation of POWs through events, sites and publications (some of which is analysed in this work). The third layer of the nesting is the outermost layer, the surface of which re/presents POW discourse to the world today. This layer has partial access to the inner layers and interacts freely with the material from those inner layers. It presents its improvisations in the form of re-purposed, second-hand memories to the world.

In this research, second-hand memories are accessed through two kinds of source, the ontological differences between which are germane to the argument. The first source, discussed in Chapter Three, is that of the Afrikaans historically-based novel. Working from traces of second-hand memory, the respective authors have spun stories that rely heavily on what circulates within the overall 'site of memory' and, in doing so, add to it. Two short interview-derived vignettes are appended to this chapter entitled 'Fiction' as an indication of some of the parallel processes that link the story-telling in published fiction with the story-telling in the interviews that constitute Chapters Four and Five.

The second source of memory used in this research is the interviews I conducted with the inheritors of second-hand memory across the country. These interviews revealed those tropes, biases, vignettes, half-remembered stories and vivid recollections of people whose lives have intersected with the world of the Italian POWs. Their participation in the evolving narrative of Italian POWs is not always contingent on a direct interaction with ex-POWs. In

[9] Here, to name a very few of the extant works: paintings in the Old Recreation Hall in Cullinan, Gauteng (See the website of Ekala Tours, Cullinan Historical Tour. http://ekalatours.com/cullinan-historical-tour.php); the old railway bridge in Dullstroom, Mpumalanga; the Italian Church in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal; and St Joseph's Mission, Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal.

some cases the connection is tangential, through a common third party, or even fantasised. Most frequently, their 'memory' is an evolving and organic discourse that is anchored to an object. These objects range from newspaper and magazine clippings to published histories and fictional novels, from photographs, paintings, buildings and inscriptions to anecdotes and memorial sites. The range of objects, their respective functions and the generic imperatives of each inflect memory in ways that, together with the narratives of the interviews, reveal the precise place of the Italian POWs in the South African imagination today.

And its place is in the imagination, as Italian POW history is not necessary for the coherence or even problematising of a broader South African historical narrative. Nuttall and Michael have suggested that a few very specific obsessions have marked South African cultural theorising namely, "the over-determination of the political, the inflation of resistance, and the inflections given to race as a determinant of identity" (2000, 10).[10] These categories have had the effect of nurturing a sense of exceptionalism in the South African story that does not easily accommodate complex stories linking South Africa to the rest of the continent (Nuttall & Michael 2000, 2), let alone including the small-scale interactions between a small group of non-South African individuals, largely repatriated after the Second World War. Even within the memory and experience of 'white', middle-class South Africa, where the vast majority of the traces of Italian POW memory reside, both the largely unifying drive to develop the Apartheid state after the war, and the shift to individualist and consumerist subjectivities that Hyslop suggests undermined the Apartheid regime from the 1970s (Hyslop 2000, 37), were equally exclusive of the complexity of Italian POW history in the country. Historiography in South Africa has taken its cue from a dogged pursuit of divided histories, creating for the most part separate, mutually exclusive histories. Furthermore, historical reflections have tended to take the most prominent binary opposition of their day as the

[10] Where the 'political' is defined as pertaining almost exclusively to the anti-Apartheid struggle (ibid.).

framework within which to construct histories. Thompson et al., address this tendency to write within binaries in their preface to *The Oxford History of South Africa*, volumes 1 and 2 in the context of their attempt to broaden South African history to include that of black South Africans (1975 [1969]). This book was offered as redress to the construction of South African history reduced to the conflict between Afrikaner and Briton but in some ways failed to follow through on its promise by cutting the history of black South Africa short. De Kock et al. in *South Africa in the Global Imaginary* (2004) suggest a similar set of binaries in South African literature, this time between black and white, as well as between indigenous and foreign narratives.

With very little state support for their memory, the Italian ex-POWs in South Africa set about writing up and memorialising a relatively neat version of events for the ex-POWs to use as reference and record of an important part of their lives. This version focused on duty, work ethic and honour (discussed in Chapter Five of the present work). In doing so, I propose that they were part of the undermining of the value of their own stories by downplaying and minimising the traces of trauma that are an essential ingredient of many contemporary accounts of the past. Blaser has suggested that invoking powerlessness and despair and the capacity of the ordinary person to overcome these, aligns 'white' narratives with characteristics typically considered 'black' in the South African racial imaginary in the twenty first century (2008, 82), thereby gaining purchase in a public discourse that places a high value on "healing truths" (Posel 2002, 155). In another vein Nuttall has suggested that autobiographical reflections on individual white subjectivity during late Apartheid retain currency in contemporary South African life by revealing evidence of alienation from the status quo under Apartheid (Nuttall 2001). Neither the approach suggested by Blaser or Nuttall match the overwhelmingly positive writing tone adopted in the second-tier of Italian POW memory making which strive for a conciliatory and nation-building tone with a World

War Two frame of reference. The sanitisation and minimisation of representations of trauma, when added to the privileging of the products of removal activities (the activities that 'spend' time in prison, working against boredom and despair, see Goffman in Wilson 159-160), have relegated the story of Italian POWs in South Africa by not representing the trauma of imprisonment as a major feature. This in turn has permitted both Italian-South Africans and South African to use the events of the POW era as colourful bolstering for more ostensibly important stories and histories.

And so this project presents a critical engagement with the surface of the 'Italian POWs in South Africa' site of memory. It traces the accessing of nested levels of memory in the living stories. Innumerable threads link the tiers of memory and their respective literatures to the body of literature of living POW stories that are the focus of this research. One of my central arguments is that the stories about Italian POWs in South Africa are themselves a site of memory. They are mutable and responsive to changes over time. Given the small group of people who have published literary, scholarly and biographical material on the Italian POWs in South Africa, the circulation of information from first-hand memory into print and then back into second-hand memory, recycled as aspects of living memory, is a feature of this piece of history that I analyse throughout.

In this movement through various media of memory, perceived characteristics of the Italian POWs are, by turns, highlighted, downplayed, accentuated as idiosyncratic and emphasised by juxtaposition with South African characteristics. Other aspects are lost completely and filled in with adjacent histories (stories of other wars in some cases), stereotypes and assumptions.

Occasionally in this work I use the terms 'cameo' and 'silhouette' as metaphor and shorthand for these processes. The metaphor communicates the idea that these stories form miniature parts of a larger picture and that, for their size relevant to the larger stories and

sweeps of history, they contain exquisite levels of detail. This level of detail is a central feature of the cameo as a form. Alternatively, the silhouette as a form is a precise evocation of a profile without detail. Both cameo and silhouette are forms that, much like the stories about Italian POWs in South Africa, go in and out of fashion; they also often have commemorative functions as portable mementos. Additionally, ‘cameo’ has a performative application and in theatrical casting and even lighting terms, the cameo is a highlighted and brief appearance by a character, instantly recognisable and delighting because they ‘appear as themselves’.

Chapter Two: Theorising History, Memory and Narrative

2.1 Memory and History

'Memory' and 'history' between them cover a vast terrain, and indeed, studies dealing with both, in whatever proportions, are often criticised for the instability of each term in the research (see Confino 1997). In focusing on living stories across interviews and some published fiction, this research has drawn relevant theoretical impetus and methodological cues from fields dealing with aspects of both individual and collective memory, as well as from concepts that have required recalibration for dealing with collective memory in units smaller than 'the nation' or even a stable, homogenous community. As a final layer of complexity, the relationship between first- and second-hand memory underpins much of the analysis. What follows is an anchoring of this research in some of the larger theoretical questions around history and memory as categories of knowledge that are mutually constitutive. Attempts to divorce and reconcile these categories, as a result of tensions within the discipline of history and between history and other disciplines in the course of the twentieth century, have made of the history/memory dialectic a singularly rich framework for conducting research into changing perceptions of events in the past. In this regard, the works of Halbwachs and Nora have been of particular influence on the present research, and these are discussed in some detail.[11] However, unlike their work, and for reasons outlined in the method discussion (below), this research does not investigate the memorialisation of the Italian POWs by institutions or organisations, though much of the material I have gathered

[11] This leads directly from their influence in their respective fields of collective memory and memory and history. Coser has suggested a number of major sociological studies resulting from and supporting initial claims made by Halbwachs (see Coser in Halbwachs 1992, 28). Among these: the study of Schuman and Scott's of generational memory and its peak periods in late teens and early twenties, crucial to which is Halbwach's notion of the relationship between autobiographical and historical memory (Schuman & Scott 1989); Schwartz' study of the versions of Abraham Lincoln constructed by various generation rests of on the Halbwachsian notion of collective memory underpinning cultural continuity (Schwartz 1990). In spite of debate over his own politics, discussed briefly below, Nora's legacy to cultural studies and history has been the application of the concept of collective memory to what Crane describes as "conceptual entities" (1997, 1379); diverse objects around which living memory accrues and is reformed by changing politics.

from individuals makes reference to the work of memorialisation carried out by ex-POWs, and their main organising body the Zonderwater Block Association. The theory that has been most useful in presenting an interpretation of the Italian POWs in the South African imagination has been theory relating to the interplay between individual memory and group memory and the value of both of these in changing perceptions of history. Drawing on Nora's conception of a site of memory as the primary category of analysis, I have used the elements of Halbwach's autobiographical and historical memory to interrogate ways in which memory exceeds the lives of those who experienced the Italian POW era in South Africa.

Analysis in this research, then, proceeds from concepts of individual and collective memory into explorations of those themes that recur and those that are forgotten in relation to the Italian POW presence in South Africa. It does this within the three broad categories of: published fiction with fictional Italian POW characters (Chapter Three), stories that centre on named POWs (Chapter Four) and stories revolving around POWs whose individual identities are forgotten or relegated (Chapter Five). The processes of narrative at play in both memory and history open up into a discussion, at the end of this chapter, on the category of fictional works in this research. Beginning as a way into the published material on Italian POWs in South Africa, it became apparent that a number of Afrikaans fictional novels published in the twenty-first century featured fictional Italian POWs. The five novels analysed here do not have a parallel in other forms of South African fiction, and so I undertook to investigate some of the thematic content in these novels. These novels do not represent a literary trend as much as a roughly decade-long fashion. While I am not interested in their popularity, or readership per se, their existence prompts interesting questions in relation to literature's place in South African story-telling more broadly. The increasingly intense search for personal and individual identity as a reaction to statist focus of Apartheid-era white identity (Hyslop 2000, 36) as well as Ndebele's notion of reinvention through narrative post-TRC (1998, 27) may

hold part of the answer to questions of why the fictional POWs show up, but for the purposes of this research the articulation of the Italian POW within a specific linguistic/cultural complex revealed much about what the site of memory could be used for. The novels at once reflect and reinforce widely held beliefs about the Italian POWs and their place in South African history. Further thematic analysis of these novels in light of the discourse emerging in my interviews reflected strong 'fundamentals' about the 'sayable' and 'unsayable' in relation the the POW-era in South Africa. And so, the theoretical considerations presented below, starting with history and ending in fiction, lead into to a methodological explication in the section entitled 'Stories and Memory'.

Though it is not the approach adopted in this research, the debt of memory studies to the field of psychology demands acknowledgement, in part, not only to address the place of trauma in the present work, but also to provide some context for the discussion of collective memory that follows. The field of individual memory is dominated by psychology-based theorising. Remembering and forgetting, especially as these relate to trauma (Olick et al. 2011, 15), have been a mainstay for the system of psychology which Byatt has called "One of the great memory-connected systems of our times" (Byatt 2008, xvii). The mechanisms of defence, retrieval and fabrication that are involved in the processes of individual remembering have, in extrapolation, powerfully affected thinking about society and its relationship to history (Olick et al. 2011, 9-10; Nora 1989, 15). In addition, the understanding of these mechanisms has fed creative expression throughout the twentieth century, an idea that underpins the discussion of literature and the memory of Italian POWs discussed below. Psychoanalysts dealing with the effects of trauma have, according to Byatt, found that those who have gone through the "more natural process of forgetting and adjusting" have survived trauma with more success (Byatt 2008, xvii). Though possibly overstated this does point to an obvious approach taken by the ex-POWs who forgot and remembered so selectively as to

allow them to move on from their war experience, at least in so far as their public selves were concerned. This in itself is as unremarkable as 'moving on' is the condition of all societies that survive war, but thinking about memory in terms of the individual psyche cannot account for the recurrence of memory after the death of an individual whose experience is the basis of those memories. Memory frequently exceeds the biological lifespan, and often with growing rather than diminishing force. This is a point well-made by Hofmeyr in relation to displacement and the persistence of memory (1993, 160). Ex-POWs certainly did some of this forgetting to survive, but more important for the present research, is the status of remembering and forgetting in the individuals who did not directly experience the trauma. The people I interviewed for this research frequently began the interview by saying that they had little or no useful memory of the Italian POWs and that the stories belonged elsewhere: with more authoritative sources, with published accounts, with predecessors, with parents, with relatives who had died, people in the next town and many other deferrals. Nevertheless, each produced a story that was a complex mix of themes that recurred across many interviews and forms of literature. This returns to another aspect of the psychological dimension of memory, the idea that each 'visit' to a memory, involves a process of reconstruction in order to get to it, that there is no static memory through time but rather successive reconstructions in the moment (ibid.). Though not a project that concerns itself with how memory is constructed in either neurological or psychological terms, this research does acknowledge that strong elements of an individual identity inflect each of the stories that circulate today about Italian POWs. Furthermore, in the reconstruction of memory through various frameworks of collective identity, a leap is made from the historical to the imaginary, and vice versa. So while aspects of the art and science of individual memory come into play, these are theoretically framed through ideas of story-telling (discussed below) rather than through the body of psychoanalytic theory that is often invoked in relation to memory. This is

the point of connection in this research between ideas of memory and history and their relationship to imagination. But first, some points on collective memory.

The work and ideas of Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora have provided the deepest anchoring for concepts of collective memory and the relationship between memory and history respectively. This conceptual depth is attributable, in part, to the sheer scale of historical time under consideration in their respective projects namely, the social frameworks that have inflected the historiography of the 'Holy Land' and successive historical forms of French national memory.

Calling for a history that included their story as central to that of France's history, French expatriates returning from the newly independent Algeria challenged received notions of French identity and history. By the 1980s, French national identity was fertile ground for consideration of the related phenomena of memory and history in French society as developing distinct identities that were mutually antagonistic. The former, sacred and alive, existed as the heartwood from which the latter, secular and dead, could be stripped as if it were bark. To extend Nora's own metaphor, much of his 1989 article (and the larger project that it represents) deals with the very process of the violent separation of the bark from the tree (1989, 10).[12] The anxiety that this stirred in Nora and his fellow historians about the future of French identity and its perceived diffusion informed the entire project of *les lieux de mémoire*.[13] The present research investigates a set of memories that hover between communities or, put another way, a community largely unaware of itself is constituted by the sharing of these memories. The place of this community in the broadest idea of the nation, the concept tied time and again to memory by hyphenation in Nora's model, is in many ways

[12] The sites of memory selected, under the directorship of Nora, as representing elements fundamental to French national memory are reflected in the four volume publication that organises them thematically. (Nora 1999; 2006; 2009; 2010)

[13] Though 'anxiety' is my own term for this response, Nora's work in the 1960s, distinguishing the *Pied Noirs* (French colonists in Algeria) from the French of France (Nora 1961) is a clear starting point for his intellectual focus on identity, memory and history and France.

moot; there is no measurable impact that the present community of memory related to Italian POWs has on the South African historical landscape when history is tied to the idea of a nation. The lack of a clearly defined role for the memory of Italian POWs has meant that those stories which circulate about them and are repurposed are kept alive by a much more idiosyncratic set of motivations. Though these are far from obvious, they are significant for what they reveal about the social frameworks (discussed below) that define collective, if not national memory in South Africa. My assertion, which will be worked through below, is that the subject of Italian POWs in South Africa is a site of memory, and that the symbolic power of this site is used in discreet and often highly idiosyncratic ways by the constituents of the community of memory precisely because it has no defined role in national historical discourse. With Halbwachs, Nora asserts that there are as many memories as there are groups available to remember (1989, 9) and, in the pluralistic South Africa of the early twenty-first century, it could be argued that the distance from memory to history is much shorter than the longer process that he identifies, one in which the passing of one form of society is entirely replaced by another, his key exemplar being the replacement of peasant culture with modern capitalism (1989, 7). Indeed, it is not an overstatement to suggest that for each group who holds a memory in South Africa, there is a claim to history and the means to transform every memory into history.[14] The mechanisms and opportunities for the conversion of memory into history are many. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission opened up space for multiple, previously silenced voices to stand front and centre in the rewriting of South African history and projects such as Freedom Park in Pretoria and the District Six Museum in Cape Town seek to inscribe living memory of trauma and loss into monuments that consciously turn on the interplay of memory and history (See the Freedom Park website

[14] It does not automatically follow that each of these groups is able to leverage a claim to history into political or economic power, only that, in principle post-Apartheid South Africa touts the right to self-expression and self-identification as a pillar of its democracy.

http://www.freedompark.co.za/cms/index.php; See the website of The District Six Museum http://www.districtsix.co.za/).[15]

South African scholarship is similarly replete with publications that strive to critically place the memories emerging from formerly stifled voices at the centre of history, and indeed arguing for objectivist revisions of received histories that operate with some strongly relativist principles (Lalu and Harris 1996; Witz and Rassool 2008; Coombes 2003; Hoeschler and Alderman).[16] As a useful parallel to the tensions that operate in the writing and rewriting of history through successive intellectual and political changes I refer to Novick (1988). He has articulated the struggles within American professional history over the last century and a half as a struggle between received objectivist approaches and relativist tendencies. He argues, convincingly, that these developed respectively from an American over-investment in European (particularly German) scholarship's certainty that patterns in history are 'found' not 'made' (Novick 1988, 2) and the crisis of intellectual identity experienced by European-trained American scholars following the First World War; a crisis in which objectivism was part of a welter of philosophical and political ideas that may or may not have thrown the world into chaos (ibid. 111). Following swings between extremes of objectivism and relativism pre and post the Second World War, the state of play at the end of the twentieth century, he suggests, was an openly antagonistic relationship between

[15] This in itself is probably a manifestation of not only new historicism and the idea of 'history from below' but also the adoption of Nora's idea that some societies without history exist in memory, and that this memory is later mined for the nuggets of history it may contain. Though his model places memory societies in pre-historical contexts the concept may extend to societies denied history under domination.

[16] Lalu and Harris critique both the objectivist assumption that, with the TRC process, history would be 'uncovered' and the relativist aspiration that a synthesis of all experiences represented at the TRC would lead directly to national reconciliation (1996, 24). Twelve years later Witz and Rassool reflect on the decade since South African historiography's "break with positivistic methods" (2008, 6) and heritage studies' increasingly important role in that time. This brings into focus the changing role of the discipline of history in South Africa. Taken together, these works reflect a South African version of the tensions between the retrieval of history (the claim of objectivist history) and the representation of history (the relativist stance). Coombes examines processes of renegotiating public space to reflect "historical knowledge" from opposing and asymmetrical political and social perspectives in the 1990s (2003). Hoeschler and Alderman explore the making of memory and place in post-totalitarian states (2004, 351) through a wide spread of disciplines. Coombes, with Hoeschler and Alderman, moves the debates of objectivism/relativism out of the academic setting and into landscapes and public spaces. All of these examples engage with the questions of best practice in terms of re-making memory and history and the ideological and political implications of various methodologies.

objectivist and relativist positions on the one hand, and the reality of the vast majority of historical projects negotiating a path between the two extremes (ibid. 2).

The alliances and enmities on a national scale in times of war initiated much of the soul-searching among American scholars, where methods and ideological positions were alternately bundled and unbundled. In Novick's argument the idea of objectivism was questioned by European and American scholars in the uncertainty following World War One, but it returned in an unreformed way to galvanise America for the Second World War (1988, 281). In a number of ways this bears more than a passing resemblance to South African historical scholarship's move from being under the close control of colonial and Apartheid domination to a point of revising received histories.[17] Like the counterculture era in America, core, left-aligned principles in the South African struggle have complicated its post-Apartheid historians' position on the objectivist/relativist spectrum; with the multi-perspective approach to history a *sine qua non* of a pluralistic society contradicting the need for an objectively wrought history that can combat Apartheid apologists and denialists.[18]

It would seem that the older ideal, of the unreflexive objectivist historian has been largely replaced by the historians that Nora described as poking around the familiar atelier of the abandoned house of national-memory; filled with personal and subjective connection to the site of memory that they are part of, and are investigating (Nora 1989, 18). In the South African context, scholarship investigating abandoned national memory is countered by projects that seek to establish new houses of national memory at the same time as critiquing the process of memory-history formation itself.

[17] See discussion of Thompson 1975 above, and Nuttall 2009, as examples of the inclusion of new perspectives in South African history and cultural studies across a number of decades, from the concept of representing a broader spectrum racial demographics in the historical landscape in the former, to exploring the concept of 'entanglement' in the latter.

[18] In this regard see Yvette Christiansë's work (2009) on the archive and interpretation of slavery at the Cape point up revisionist and redemptive historical work. The suggestion of Lalu and Harris is that the tools of academic history require constant, conscious refinement (1996, 37)

A site of memory, according to Nora, exists in the interplay between the material, the symbolic and the functional. It requires a thing, or things, to rest on, a reason to continue existing and ritual activities to keep it in active circulation. The site of memory is set apart from the historically significant object, place, person or event because the material, symbolic and functional are equally active (1989, 19). All of this complex interplay presupposes a will to remember, grounded in identification with values that will serve a community of some kind. What happens then when the homogeneity of this will to remember begins to dilute into the adjacent communities? Does the power of a site of memory also dissipate? As the POWs who so carefully managed an image for themselves pass on, the Zonderwater archive (a material aspect of the site) and the three military cemeteries (symbolic sites of ritual) and the ex-POW association (the functional aspect of the site), the site of memory that is "Italian POWs in South Africa" becomes atomised to use Nora's term (1989, 16). Nora observes the diminishing importance of the sacred function of memory as a prop for the nation and that the atomising of memory into duty-memory makes remembering the role of each individual. Similarly, the Italian POWs carefully crafted a site of memory to contain their nation-based identity as imprisoned Italians in a distant land, and as they have grown old, the duty-memory imperative to maintain that memory has flagged with their diminishing numbers and energy. But duty-memory has been passed on to subsequent generations in combination with a sense of a loss of history in general, and the disappearance of the towering figures that drove the ex-POW world of post-war Italian-South Africa.[19] As the received narrative becomes increasingly remote, every trace becomes the potential site for new meaning, and this is the very core of archival memory in Nora's model. With increasing heterogeneity in the types of communities that hold traces and stories of the POWs, distance-memory emerges, a sense of discontinuities in the past as opposed to the continuities that characterised memory-history

[19] In this regard, aspects of the life and work of Enrico Mottalini and Secondo Rech are discussed in this research.

(ibid.). Emerging from interviews for the present research is a sometimes desperate attempt to re-establish those continuities, some shame at having let them slip away and a great degree of creativity in filling the gaps left in those discontinuities.

Crucial to the present research is the idea that sites of memory, as opposed to historically significant sites, can and do change their meanings (1989, 19). Simultaneously connecting and driving the nodes of memory apart at the sites scattered across South Africa are political, social and religious positions, the narratives of work ethic and civilization, as well as those of an imagined Second World War. The fact that these cross and re-cross each other creates a weave of unpredictable change in significance; the essence of the site of memory.

It has, however, been argued that in spite of his claims that history is the opposite of memory, Nora himself was central to the most ambitious historicization of memory (Fogu and Kansteiner in Lebow et al. 2006, 301). In the concluding chapter of their work on the memory of World War Two and Nazism in postwar Europe (2006), Fogu and Kansteiner present some important critique of the contemporary uses of Nora's concepts at the height of the 'memory wave' in scholarship. Collective memory, is seemingly 'made from similar material' to history and yet is not history in the traditional sense (2006, 285). Similarly it is collective but manifests, largely, in the actions of individuals, and is as much "conscious manipulation as unconscious absorption" (ibid.). They critique Nora's historicization of memory into the premodern, modern and postmodern as well as the implication of such historicization; namely that there was a time when a natural continuity sustained links with the past (premodern), that this formed the foundation of the state archives and memorials (the modern) and that the collapse of ideology supporting the state generated, and continues to generate a slew of second-order simulations of natural memory that have no antecedents (2006, 301). Their own work, particularly their case studies of Poland, Switzerland and Italy,

has built a strong case for the idea that what they call the 'poetic arsenal' of institutionalized historical culture provides contemporary memory with a frame of well-formed tropes that it regularly draws on (2006, 302). Though this contradicts some of the more instrumentalised uses of Nora's historicization of memory (especially the idea that history 'wins') it does support the more fundamental Noranean principle of the porous boundaries that connect memory and history, what Fogu and Kansteiner refer to as the "poetic axis" on which both turn (ibid.).

This research takes as its starting point that the idea of Italian POWs in South Africa is a site of memory over and above the historically significant places and publications that anchor it, and that the larger 'Italian POWs in South Africa' site of memory that is mutable and adaptable to the needs of the disparate community of South Africans who participate in it.[20] Another foundation for the research is that this site of memory features aspects of what Nora presents as consecutive forms of memory simultaneously.

One of the earliest uses of memory Nora identifies is memory-history, the mythology that is used to define a nation. In the site of the Italian POW in South Africa, much of the mythologising of the Italian POW is co-opted into the narrative that props up the idea of the South African-Italian or the Italian-South African post-war. Following on from memory-history in which a set of themes that represent values can be traced though the memory-history of a nation is archive-memory, the shedding of signs (Nora 1989, 13) and the divesting of the work of memory to the archive and the discipline of history. At present the archive of Italian POWs in South Africa is that of the Zonderwater Museum. Originally in the from of a collection of donated objects from the era and mountains of paper-work, relating

[20] I have used the term "community" in at least two senses up to this point and wish to maintain both sense. In the first instance the community is the broadest, and, in an Andersonian sense 'imagined' community of all those who have some purchase or stake in the idea of the Italian POW. They are not a coherent community in the sense that they share these ideas, but rather that they are part of an invisible map in the site of memory of Italian POWs in South Africa. A second application for the designation of community is the more quotidian sense of a group of people living together and accumulating and preserving stories over time.

mostly to the transport, health and welfare of the POWs, the archive is growing at present as descendants and inheritors continue to donate material. Furthermore, many of these people use the archive for personal research into their link with the POWs. This links to the next phase in the Noranian progression of memory: duty-memory.

In addition to the imperative of the ex-POWs themselves to remember, discussed above, duty-memory also connotes the role that the inheritors now play. Like the ex-POWs themselves who felt duty- and honour-bound to continue to advocate for the memory of the Italian POWs in South Africa, so too do certain descendants and inheritors, who often devote resources of various kinds to living up to the memory of the POWs. Part of the anxiety of these participants in the site of memory is linked to that anxiety that transforms every trace into the next potential Rosetta Stone for deciphering identity in archive-memory. The imperative to adopt memory as a personal responsibility, once it has been abandoned by a larger collective, is part and parcel of what Nora called the "psychologization of memory" (1989, 16). As memory becomes individual it also becomes more idiosyncratic, in the interior of an individual psyche, the site of memory that is the Italian POW can take on the shape of its container and be inflected accordingly.

The anxieties attendant on archive-memory are also linked to distance-memory the relatively new sense that history deals with an unknowable past and can, at best, illuminate the discontinuities between present and past. This is an almost full reversal of previous models of history that claimed that the past was knowable. This is precisely what we do not expect from memory, whose very purpose it would seem, would be to relate things past and present (1989, 16). This alienation forms Nora's picture of memory's final break with history. The historiographical phase of history has marked former truths as versions of truth, and this distances those who remember from the topics of history as their claim to truth is, at best, attenuated. In the present research these breaks are multiple. There is no national position on

the Second World War as South Africa's participation was based on partial buy-in and the resulting political divisions went on to form post-war politics. There is also the enormous range of responses to the POWs themselves by those who interacted with them, not to mention the larger, complex issue of whiteness in post-Apartheid South African historiography (Nuttall 2001). Taken together this made of the history of the POW period a bewildering array of perspectives many of which bear no relation to the attempts to standardise the narrative.

Nora suggests that in the face of the disturbing realisation that the past cannot be found at all, let alone intact, that it cannot be 'resurrected', what is left is a process of "representation" (1989, 17). The historian's new role is that of storyteller, pulling from "mere" history the interpretations that are at once close to his or her heart and feeding the appetite for an experience of the past (1989, 17-18). The showmanship required to identify and work with sites of memory that function not only as markers left in time for future generations, but as things that will return in the cycles of memory is designated by Nora as "thaumaturgical" (1989, 18). The magical connotations of this term become clear when one considers that two of Nora's explanatory metaphors for the sites of memory themselves both turn on visual trickery. The first is the Möbius strip that describes memory and history as presenting two distinct surfaces but, when traced reveals only one continuous surface. The second is the mise en abyme, the placement in the void that occurs between two mirrors or the mirroring of one image within another. Both present the senses with information that suggests predictability and hints at infinite repetition. The sites of memory are significant not only because they generate meaning in a given moment, but that they can return in the cycles of memory. This uncanny quality makes their description and discussion a thaumaturgical process. While identifying and analysing sites of memory, towards a representation of the

past, is filled with the processes that seem arcane, Nora identifies quite specific ways to test the validity of a site of memory.

For all of its openness to new interpretation there are some limits to what can properly fit into the 'genre' of a site of memory. Nora identifies a broad range of "anything pertaining to the cult of the dead, anything relating to the patrimony, anything administering the presence of the past within the present" (1989, 20). To consider the memory of the Italian POWs in South Africa as a site of memory is to perform the thaumaturgical function of seeing the "invisible thread linking seemingly unconnected objects" (1989, 23). This, according to Nora, is crucial to the constituting of a site of memory, more so than its apparent rigour or evocative power of a suggested site is the possibility to imagine it. The ability to imagine it already suggests that the site is a network of significance. Indeed the site of Italian POWs in South Africa does include aspects of the cult of the dead, in the sense that remembering POWs is important to those who knew them or are related to them. However, the site itself escapes relegation to history as the cemeteries and the POWs who rest there form only a very small part of the stories connected to POWs. Put another way, the site of memory that is the Italian POWs far exceeds the official memorial sites. In terms of patrimony, the houses and objects made by POWs are also heritage anchors for the site. Again, the fact that many of the builders are anonymous helps to extend historical significance into a site of memory more complex than historical record. Handling the presence of the past in the present is also relevant to this site of memory as buildings, cemeteries and even the novels written about the POWs are all concerned with the place of their lingering ghosts in the present moment.

It is important to note that Nora also defines the sites of memory as "their own referent", that while they often have content and form in reality, their significance transcends these (1989, 23). As self-referential signs, the sites of memory remain at once closed in on

themselves and always open to new interpretation. Nora has taken this a step further in including the literary with the historical as the two forms that have always legitimised memory, and that in the world post memory-history there is still room and indeed demand for the kind of depth offered by the historical novel. As the sites of memory reposition memory in the centre of history, that history then serves as a "replaceable imagination" (1989, 24).

Halbwachs' work is almost universally recognised as seminal in the field of collective memory studies. Addressing the relationship between the scholarly enquiry into collective memory and the memory 'industry', Olick et al. (2011) are careful to place Halbwachs and his ideas within a context. This context is largely in the orbit of Durkheim and Bergson, both of whom were concerned with the implications of European 'advances' and 'civilization' (Olick et al. 2011, 16). Bergson noted a proportionally inverse relationship between the growing capacity for objectively-wrought record keeping and the diminishing of meaningful connection with the past. For his part Durkheim laid foundations for the work of Halbwachs by considering the ways that different societies conceptualised time (Olick et al. 2011, 18). For the present research, at least two assertions of Halbwachs are important to consider.

Perhaps the more fundamental is the idea that individual memory requires social frameworks to function and that it is the shifting of these social frameworks in response to the needs of the social landscape of the present, rather than the agency of individuals, that ultimately shapes collective memory (Olick et al. 2011, 19). While Halbwach's essentially sociological ideas have gained increasing respect as contemporary neurological and psychological models have thrown their weight behind the intellectual project of memory studies, there are voices calling for something less radical than the complete exclusion of the individual from studies of collective memory (Fogu and Kansteiner 2006, 287; Winter and Sivan 2000). Fogu and Kansteiner note that accepting the role of social frameworks in the formation and transmission of individual memories does not imply that the memories

themselves are collective. Socially constructed 'representational artefacts' (be they images or memorials), once articulated or installed, cannot necessarily predict the impact that they will have on individual memories or the formation of collective memory from that point on (Fogu and Kansteiner in Lebow et al. 2006, 288). The mediation of these artefacts within individual minds is an aspect of 'collective memory' that can easily be ignored if one is seduced by over-identification with the notion of social-frameworks.

I have already stated that the site of memory being examined is made up of a disparate group of individual memories and their attachments to things and ideas. Despite highly individual manifestations of the overall site, there are definite recurring themes that characterise the types of memory encountered and these could be usefully understood through social frameworks informed by politics, religion, geography and others. A critical use of Halbwachs' frameworks provides a way to account for both the consistencies and differences that I have encountered across the diversity of this group. Halbwachs argues that the social frameworks of collective memory and its recall are not simply made up of the sum of preserved individual memory, nor are they empty forms where recollections can be filed. Instead, the social frameworks of collective memory are reconstructions of the past based on the ideas of the present (Halbwachs 1992, 39-40). Furthermore, the individual takes on the perspective of the social framework in order to remember and in doing so becomes a manifestation of that framework. One of Halbwach's main refinements of the Durkheimian approach was to emphasise not just collective memory's ability to sustain itself beyond the use of 'props', but to do so through multiple social frames in the minds of those who remember (Halbwachs 1992, 25; Olick et al 2011, 20). In the present research the things that are said about Italian POWs require cues for recall and frames of reference to emerge from the individual memories, family memories and community memories that contain them. These cues in turn are informed by articulations of the units of the individual, family and

community that exist in the present and so begin the work of reshaping collective memory in the way that Halbwachs suggests.

Halbwachs' reasoning on the relationship of collective memory to a society is particularly lucid. The conceptual cohesion of a given society relies on a certain unity among the individual memories of those who constitute it. They can only achieve this shared understanding by using each other's memories to trigger, fill in and flesh out a shared memory (Halbwachs 1992, 182). As the needs of a given society multiply and fracture, so the need for different memories emerges. This runs counter to the idea of a certain unity within the society and necessitates erasures and distortions to memory as the society tries to achieve greater coherence. Complicating this process is the fact that in addition to the memories that serve as 'landmarks', to use Halbwachs' term, there are the activities of the present. Memory responds to these and changes accordingly (Halbwachs 1992, 183). My reading of the diverse memories of Italian POWs in South Africa shares aspects of Halbwachs' reading of the Holy Land as the landmark around which the ideas of successive and diverse societies understood their respective presents (Halbwachs 1992, 191). This allows the present research a theoretical container that can hold both the drive for a unity of narrative and the differences that draw the memory apart.

A second assertion of Halbwachs is a clear distinction between 'historical' and 'autobiographical' memory. Olick et al., expand autobiographical memory from the events that one has experienced to include those "around which one's memory is oriented" (Olick et al. 2011, 19). An example of this would be a recollection of individuals of where they were and what they were doing when the attacks of September 2001 occurred. It is worth flagging here that Hirsch's notion of postmemory (discussed below) may expand autobiographical memory even further to include events that shape individual memory before one's own birth. Olick et al., define historical memory as referring "to residues of events by virtue of which

groups claim continuous identity through time." (Olick et al. 2011, 19). Both historical and autobiographical memory require stimulation through either ritual, symbolic or ceremonial activity in the case of the former or through interaction with those who share the memory in the case of the latter (Halbwachs 1992, 23). Halbwachs' collective memories require reinforcing and remain collective precisely because the will to maintain them exists whether this is through the commitment of members of a group who experienced those events to continue to convene, or through social institutions that give or withhold support for memory based on the perceived value of the version of history that it represents (Halbwachs 1992, 24).

These clear distinctions between autobiographical memory and historical memory are useful in thinking through the limits of the organic memory of living people and the institutional motivations for preserving aspects of the past beyond living memory. Researching the Italian POW in South Africa poses some particular challenges as the instances of individual memory are no longer called to cohere in the ways they were when the memory of Italian POWs was controlled by ex-POWs themselves. There is historical memory at play, but the 'institution' of memory for the era of POW presence in South Africa is now almost entirely without a master narrative. And yet, the themes, the parameters of what and how to remember, that were established by the ex-POWs continue to exert influence every time they are evoked. What they set up is the last 'stable' thematic content tied to the sign of the Italian POW. This received memory is then further complicated by the autobiographical memory of sons and daughters, spouses and neighbours, whose memory of the POW/s that they knew is highly personal. Their memory is 'orientated' around the individuals they knew. Coser, in his in introduction to *On Collective Memory* states:

> *There are no empty spots in the lives of groups and society; an apparent vacuum between creative periods is filled by collective memory in symbolic display, or simply kept alive through transmission by parents and other elders to children or ordinary men and women* (Coser in Halbwachs 1992, 25).

In the present research the increasingly open-ended reasons for remembering POWs have made the 'apparent vacuum' between the end of the POW era itself and the moment at which individuals experience a recurrence of memory, whether through their own desire to remember or through the arrival of a researcher, a rich and complex set of transmissions and interactions that transcend some of the traditional divisions between autobiographical and historical memory. Theoretical concepts of individual and collective, historical and autobiographical memory in relation to the presence of Italian POWs in the South African imagination exist in this tension between the idiosyncrasies of each moment of recollection and the "long-term structures to what societies remember or commemorate that are stubbornly impervious to the efforts of individuals to escape them." (Olick et al. 2011, 20)

The distinctions and working definitions offered by Halbwachs and Nora are fundamental to this research. However, in designing the analysis of the much more circumscribed historical era, the almost seven decades of South African remembering and forgetting Italian POWs since the end of the Second World War, I have sought theorising with its origins closer to home. The work of Nuttall and Coetzee on South African memory-making (1998), Nuttall on whiteness in South African biography (2001), the work on literature and the imaginary of De Kock et al., (2004) and Stanley's text on post/memory and the South African War (2008), have aided thinking in South African terms through a period of history that was dominated by the legislated racism of Apartheid. The legislated silencing of vast numbers of South Africans has developed a sensitivity to the nuances of recovering

voices and, most importantly, harnessing the creative processes of artistic and literary production to render the invisible visible. The global significance of the rise and fall of, as well as the recovery from Apartheid make it the magnetic core of historical statements pertaining to the last half of the twentieth century in South Africa, and the South African thought on the subject has, arguably, helped to shape memory into history through processes of recovery. The South African scholarship cited above helps to theorise the presence of what initially appeared anomalous in the living stories related to Italian POWs in South Africa: while the traces of buildings and objects, the stories of children and grandchildren and even localised lore were all anticipated as recognisable forms of what history 'leaves behind', the spectral and romanticised presence of Italian POWs in Afrikaans fictional literature was not. I was also not able to ignore its presence as many of the stories I encountered in interviews seemed to cross-reference themes that appeared in this literature. It therefore became necessary to theorise the inclusion of fictional literature in a study that seeks out the 'living' stories of Italian POWs in South Africa.

The unpublished paper on *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati* by Kissack and Titlestad presented compelling points on the role of post-Apartheid fiction as a creative force riding the narrative explosion unleashed by the TRC (Kissack and Titlestad 2005, 7). They identity the TRC process as the watershed moment at which narrative became the key mode for processing trauma at a national level, a manifestation of Njabulo's (1992) idea of "the rediscovery of the ordinary" (Kissack and Titlestad 2005, 5). In Van Heerden's novel they see the 'ordinary' of the fictional town of Yearsonend develop "through a portrayal of social and political relationships through a series of oscillations in time" rather than through a chronological plot (Kissack and Titlestad 2005, 7). Their paper was a flashpoint in my own research in two ways. First, it acted as a model for the contextualising of a work of historical fiction in a particular historical moment, and secondly it drew attention to the unavoidable

parallel processes of writing history and writing fiction, as I began to reckon with the fictionalising role I was playing as a researcher "gathering stories".

I developed an acute awareness that the interviews I was conducting both elicited and represented a new phase in the memory and history of the Italian POW era. The interviews were producing narratives rich in local and national tropes but inflected with the individual idiosyncrasies and nuance of their tellers. Similarly, the novels with fictional Italian POW characters were, in the case of two of the authors, the fictional extension of received scraps of narrative from relations – his father in the case of Etienne van Heerden, and her uncle and mother in the case of Irma Joubert. Evidence was building to suggest that, beyond the platitude that the processes of fictionalising history and making stories into history, had much in common, here was an example of this actually occurring; that the two could feed each other. With reference to the study of oral history in particular, Hofmeyr is critical of the broad "fusion of literature and history" apparent in some cultural history studies (1993, 1). In tracing the lives of stories from oral and folkloric spheres to print and institutionalisation in her own work (1993, 139), the complexity and detail of such moves reveal the relationship between forms of literature.

To tie these ideas into those of Nora and Halbwachs already discussed, it is worth pointing out that Nora identified the symbolic as integrated with the material and functional aspects of any site of memory. The novels analysed in this research fulfil the criteria for the symbolic as they aphorise and distil various traces of the POWs into new forms that serve as "replaceable imagination". I would suggest that, as the history-memory and even duty-memory acted on by the ex-POWs in remembering their experiences faded, the duty-memory and archive-memory imperatives kicked in among their inheritors, and that this drive was worked out in some ways in the fiction that has emerged. I also argue that the passing of the generation who experienced the Second World War also made their memories and stories

available for fictionalisation. Finally, Nora suggested that the new role of the historian is that of story-teller in line with his notion that literature and history have always legitimised memory. In some ways the novel is like a site of memory, closed and always open to new interpretations. In relation to the ideas of Halbwachs already presented I will argue that the historical novels presented in this research capture aspects of the social frameworks that continue to shape how the past is reconstructed in collective memory via the ideas of the present.

This does raise important questions that apply to many studies of collective memory, one articulated by Kansteiner (2002) among others. Kansteiner argues that a methodological failing of memory studies is that it largely replaces important analysis of reception with an extension of the concept of autobiographical memory from the individual to the collective (2002, 179). The inclusion of novels as case studies in the present work should, according to Kansteiner, suggest some form of reception analysis. Kansteiner's critique stands, as does his recommendation that media and communications studies should form part of memory studies, where memory studies aim to make claims about historical representations and articulated, specific groups of people, the 'memory makers' and 'memory consumers' in his terminology (2006, 180). However, in this research I am more concerned with processes of narrative and their recurrence across a defined set of fictional literature and a widely dispersed community largely unaware of itself.

In Nuttall and Coetzee (1998), André Brink called attention to the TRC as an event that evinced the idea of a common process at work in fiction and history as both of these relate to the 'real' (Nuttall and Coetzee 1998, 30). If history were to be rewritten to reflect what had been silenced, then it would be necessary to tell – and by implication find, imagine and process – several versions of what had been received as 'given' versions of history (Nuttall and Coetzee 1998, 41). He also identifies the seemingly binary relations of

"public/personal, history/story, facts/fiction" as being equally founded on memory (Nuttall and Coetzee 1998, 31). He views history as the rendering of memory in language, and that through this process of narrativisation, the imperatives of story that underpin fiction writing are always at play: "in the process of textualizing the event it is also narrativized: that is, the representations of history repeat, in almost every detail, the processes of fiction. In this activity…history, memory and language intersect so precisely as to be almost indistinguishable" (ibid.). With narrative at the heart of history Brink proposes not just a subversion of power but a rethink of fiction (Nuttall and Coetzee 1998, 33).

In this research the Italian POW has been 'textualized' in numerous instances. The ex-POWs oversaw some writing of their own experience and each ex-POW that I interviewed for my Master's dealing with music in the Italian POW camps in South Africa had very clear narratives in place for their experience (Somma 2008). Then, beginning with Etienne van Heerden's *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati* in 2002, a small crop of Afrikaans novels appear that seem to hold the Italian POWs as subjects mise en abyme: recurring in the cycles of memory as they emerge from, and are re-inscribed into, a particularly Afrikaans cosmology (the subject of Chapter Three in the present work).

In his introduction to *South Africa in the Global Imaginary* (2004) De Kock describes the origins of South African literature as mapping unresolved difference, a heterogeneity of "mutually excluding series and genealogies" (2004, 1). Furthermore, these exist with almost no awareness of each other despite their proximity (ibid.). For De Kock, Afrikaans literature has presented the fenced-off farm as the bastion of a culture fending off various threats: the elements of Africa itself, British imperialism and "'non-white' otherness" (2004, 4). In this research the family farm recurred time and again as the place where teams of POWs or even a few individuals were posted. Their presence, at the heart of arguably the most powerful

symbol of the Afrikaner imagination, was an aspect of the current story-telling about Italian POWs that could not be escaped in both the interviews and the published fiction.

De Kock presents the writing of post-Apartheid South African as a suturing device that creates a seam between incommensurate elements. The seam, as both the join and furrow or ridge that marks it is; "the site of a joining together that also bears the mark of the suture" a place of both convergence and difference (2004, 11). This research presents a seam, the analysis of the interviews and literature have been brought together to allow the reader to trace the neat and ragged line of a stitch between history and memory and between fact and fiction. It extends the work of previous seams; each of the interviews and novels analysed represent the efforts of their tellers to join the incommensurate: forbidden love, religious differences, language barriers, generational gaps, the living and the dead, the foreign and local.

2.2 Stories and Memory

This part of Chapter Two engages with questions of methodology and attempts to locate my choices within the broader theoretical concerns of the research. The design of the research responded to the findings of an informal set of pilot interviews and discussions as well as the first trip to Limpopo. The methods that emerged as useful (broadly, the literary analysis referred to above and the approach to the interview material discussed below) have gradually converged, while maintaining discrete core identities that nuance the overall findings of the research. In the final parts of this chapter I will reflect on some on the reasons for these choices. Here, I navigate through a model of historical research that covers a broad range of material resources and then unpicks the complexities of stages of memory-making across various media, and across generations. The final part is a reflection on the complexities of analysing narrative in interviews.

Olick and Robbins (1998) have provided a broad survey of the chaotic but productive state of memory research from Halbwachs to the late 1990s. An intention of their mapping is to produce "a useful tradition" from the diverse lineages of memory studies to form a basis for future research. Among the long list of approaches they suggest form part of this lineage (1998, 106), the key disciplinary approaches employed in the present work are listed: history, sociology and literary criticism. Chronologically sandwiched between Halbwachs and the Foucauldian 'mentalities' approach of French historiography they list (after Schwartz 1996) some aspects of intellectual culture in the 1960s and 70s that they suggest account for the interest in memory by multiculturalists, precipitating the much discussed 'boom' in memory studies (Olick and Robbins 1998, 108). These are worth recounting as they seem to speak to the central aims of this research and by implication, the methods employed. The first is their identification of historiography as a source of power and domination, the second is an attack

on the assumptions of "linear historicity, truth and identity". The third is the process of memory contestation and popular memory for particular aims (ibid.). In these aspects, some precedent for the present pastiche of methods is validated. In drawing on multiple disciplines this thesis hopes to disrupt grand narrative history in the South African context but also to use narrative, as fiction, vignettes and life-stories as a way to problematize neat pictures of the past and the perceived vacuum in knowledge of South Africa as a part of World War Two beyond the activity of its soldiers.

I begin by presenting a broadly analogous dark tourism study from Australia that managed a comparable diversity of material, each element requiring its own analytical tools and ultimately, a theoretical framework that would not only contain this diversity, but also generate coherence in the findings by illuminating comparable phenomena.[21] The subject of Jacqueline Wilson's research is the re-purposed prison, but it is a subject that encompasses an enormous scope of material for analysis. In *Prison: Cultural Memory and Dark Tourism* she offers critical interpretations of graphic and textual graffiti, reflections of experiences as a family member of a prisoner, interview material, ex-prisoner testimony, media representations of prisoners, and critical reflections on the tours operated at de-commissioned prisons spread across Australia. It is her sophisticated combination of essentially ethnographic methods, filtered through contemporary lenses of feminist methodology as well as refinements of ethnographic approaches to writing history that interests me in relation to this project (Wilson 2008 24, ix respectively). Wilson's study of dark tourism in these institutions explores the aspects of de-commissioned prisons "deemed to be of historical significance" (Wilson 2008, 1) alongside those aspects that are ignored and actively covered up. One of her aims is to relate what is presented as prison experience (in the public sphere) and how this stands in relation to the lived experience of prisoners and ex-prisoners. The

[21] "Dark Tourism", coined by Foley and Lennon refers to the field that emerged in the late 1990s to analyse sites of tourism that focused on tragic or violent historical events. Furthermore, to explore the interest of tourists in these sites (Wilson 2008, 9; Foley and Lennon 2000)

study then critiques salient tropes of Australian identity politics as these are read from the prisons as well as how the prisons are reconstructed as historical sites. In the field of heritage studies and projects from a global perspective, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has traced the reframing of cultural practice and lived experience through to heritage product, a process in which the de-natured practice moves from habitus to 'meta-cultural' product in order to facilitate the move from (local) culture to (global) heritage; changing everyone's relationship with the practice and places of memory (Kishenblatt-Gimblett 2006, 161-162). In the South African context Kate Flynn and Tony King have written about the re-purposing of 'Number Four' prison into Constitution Hill; a site to underpin post-Apartheid commitment to constitutionalism and as physical and discursive reconstruction (Flynn & King, 2012, 65). Flynn and King and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett acknowledge that heritage is, by its funding connection with governments and interest groups, a manifestation of the values of those groups (Flynn and King 2012, 66; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006, 35).[22] Wilson argues that contemporary Australian society affirms a desired version of its history at these sites and disrupts the assumptions of this process by including the voices, read from graffiti and other media as well as interview material.[23]

Her method for processing this enormous spread of material is rooted in "an ethnographic approach to history" (Wilson 2008, ix). The ethnographic elements in the work are founded on a Geertzian thick-description model; careful documentation couched in a rich rendering of social and historical context for the prison narratives. However, her approach

[22] It is worth noting that Flynn and King explicitly exclude interviews with former inmates (ibid.) in favour of "built heritage" focus and in deference to extensive interviews already undertaken by Lauren Segal (2006).
[23] In her work contemporary Australian society is that society which, through mass media, tourism and a legacy of colonial legislation, is collectively responsible for the simultaneous embracing of romantic (Wilson 2008 194-195) aspects of a convict heritage and an othering of contemporary Australian prisoners and their families (Wilson 2008 5, 216). Wilson's work is an attempt to address these injustices through a social historicist "history from below" approach; inclusive and indeed based on the perspective of those formerly denied a voice (Wilson 2008, 6).

was not to unpack the places themselves, but rather the "cultures" that emerge around those sites:

> *Notwithstanding my interest in the prisons as physical entities, the study is not confined in its analytical scope to the sites themselves; nor is it in any taxonomic sense a report on the content or modes of presentation at the sites, although there is of course some reportage of that kind. Intrinsic to my overall argument is an examination of certain broad historical and cultural aspects of the popular narratives that inform the sites' interpretation, and which in turn influence tourist and general public perceptions of prison populations in general, contemporary and historical* (Wilson 2008, 3-4).

Though not unusual in the mixed method approach often taken in such sociological/cultural studies projects, the particular balance she strikes between reading what is presented as the Australian prison experience and extrapolating this onto the broader canvas of Australian identity is particularly useful for the present project.

Those who shared stories of Italian POWs for this research were able to draw on a well-established set of themes and modes of narration in creating their stories. However, unlike Wilson's research sites, the 'gate-keepers' – her term for the often tacit collusion of various parties to produce a coherent or unified narrative for the site – in my research were displaced. In the first instance, many are deceased, having done the work of memorialising in the decades following the war. Secondly, the custodians who presently preserve the memory of the POWs are neither willing, nor able to contain or control the stories that circulate about Italian POWs. In addition to this freeing up of the discursive space around POW memory is the sense that the memory and history of that era have no direct bearing on the present or immediate future of the South African historical landscape (as discussed above). While this

sense was apparent in the lack of connection made with interviewers between the events of the forties and the present, the didactic nature of some of the fiction, in which the past presented lessons to present would suggest the opposite.

With the shift in the moment of active gate-keeping to the past, this research stands in a slightly different relationship to its subject than Wilson's did. Nevertheless, there is still the central matter of relating a finite set of historical facts to a complex, multi-voiced contemporary identity through ongoing practices of representation; Wilson's methodology stands as a workable model.

Wilson's social historian's use of ethnographic thick description of the sites she researched worked in "the study of relatively small groups of people for historiographic purposes, using the methodologies of the anthropologist." (Wilson 2008, 4). Similarly, the present research locates the interviews with those who held POW stories in densely wrought contexts that ranged from the broadly cultural, to the literary, geographical and historical, contexts suggested by the content and circumstances of each interview encounter. Each living POW story is described as it connects to the places and things that those interviewed produced to validate or enrich their story. The connections between these stories form the broader site of memory of the Italian POWs in the South African imagination.

Wilson identifies two key theoretical underpinnings worth discussing in light of their methodological implications in her work. These challenges of method are analogous to those in the present research, though in this work concepts of memory play a greater role in managing these challenges than they do in the work of Wilson. For Wilson the challenge of memory tied to the prisons as physical spaces necessitated a method that would address the distinctions between what goes on in the entirely isolated world of the prison, what is left of that world when it is decommissioned and what is accessible by the public of it afterwards. Dramaturgical theories of identity as articulated by Erving Goffman (1959, 1961) provided

analytical tools for the space as well as how identity is formed and performed in these spaces (Wilson 2008, 4). Goffman's definitions of the 'total institution' and how such institutions perpetuate a specific form of torture in the way time is experienced also informs Wilson's analysis of the traces left by inmates in the form of graffiti (Wilson 2008, 85). One final point from Goffman, the notion of 'removal activities' is also pertinent to the present work. These activities are ways to 'kill time' that often end up as evidence of time spent in prison and can even be used by prison officials to represent prison life, as evidence in a museum context, or even as commercially available mementos (Wilson 159-160). I refer to Wilson's use of these terms as opposed to Goffman's because she has managed to adapt them as interpretational tools for prisons that are decommissioned. The fact of an institution's closure is important for the present work as I am dealing with the ephemera of an era of imprisonment, not imprisonment as a state of being per se. Nevertheless, the traces of trauma that inflect the stories I have gathered are important to consider even if, in transmission from first-hand experience to a story that is circulated, the charge of emotional content has been largely neutralised over time. A third-hand story in which trauma is flagged is a very different kind of story to the first-hand account of imprisonment. Wilson's adaptation of Goffman is important for this work in that it emphasises the link between what can be recovered from the past and the traumatic conditions of production of those traces, be they stories at a remove, or the products of 'removal activities'.

Wilson's use of theories of narratives of the self is extended into an assertion that the constructed narratives of nation are formed in the same way, as self-fulfilling, cognitive conditions of telling the life of a person. This rests on her reading of Jerome Bruner's narrative model (1991, 1997), that the self is an autobiographical project in which adaptations are contingent on new input (Wilson 2008, 3-4):

> *This 'autobiography' takes the form of a coherent, approximately linear narrative that contextualizes our present self within a succession of life events, and places us within the hierarchy of progressively broader narratives of kinship, community, society, nation, gender, social stratum and so on* (Wilson 2008, 3).

This conception seems to be in agreement with certain fundamental assertions of Halbwachs (discussed above) regarding the nature of collective memory as only understandable through various social frameworks, albeit argued from the individual to the collective. However, it was Wilson's later refinement of this idea that has relevance for the present research. She quotes Bruner in her argument for the potency of narrative form in particular:

> *[T]he ways of telling and the ways of conceptualizing that go with [the life narrative] become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself, for laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present but directing it into the future* (Bruner in Wilson 2008, 175).

Wilson, in attempting to reconcile the positive identification with certain narrative tropes in prison tourism among Australians with silenced prison narratives and the brutality evident in limited medical reporting on current prison conditions, quotes Bruner (1997) to help articulate her argument: "eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organise memory, to segment and purpose-build the very 'events' of a life" (Bruner in Wilson 2008, 175).

The site of memory that is the Italian POW experience in South Africa features similar complexities; through the telling of a story about POWs, each of the story-tellers I

interviewed, was able to organize memory by drawing on the shaping power of received narratives of place, local and national history, religion and many others. This realisation of the dialogue between life narrative of the individual telling the story and received POW narratives, and that the form of the story was a key to unlocking it, have both influenced the method of analysis in this work. I will expand on the use of narrative methods below.

In the introduction to this work I signalled the importance of Liz Stanley's *Mourning Becomes* (2008) as providing both theoretical and methodological models for my own work. I would like to expand on some of the methodological implications of her ideas here. Stanley addresses the representation of deaths in the South African War concentration camps through interpretational frameworks in "successive stages of memory-making" (Stanley 2008, 4). Her work is a refined synthesis of many of the ideas presented thus far as the theoretical and methodological frames of the present work. Chief among these is her taking up of the challenge posed by Nora of the contemporary historian working consciously at a representation of history as opposed to history as retrieval. Also, her reference to interpretational frameworks indicates an adoption of Halbwachs' frameworks conception of collective memory. Stanley's post/memory is concerned with problematising the idea of any "direct recall" of the past, with varying degrees of agreement with what is accepted as fact about those events (Stanley 2008, 4).[24] The work unfolds on a foundation laid by Derrida of "the irreducibility of a certain history" (Derrida in Stanley 2008, 32), that is, that there are lives lived and experienced that cannot be refuted as fiction and that this referentiality is one marker at the other end of which is the present. Between these two points, the then of something happening "and the *now* [sic] of writing about it" there are accounts that also cannot be reduced to entirely true or false statements (ibid.). In a chapter entitled "Small

[24] In a number of instances in the work Stanley does indeed work with the retrieval of history from archival sources, as her project is, in part measuring the distances and shifts that occur between events and second-hand memory. The fundamental principle at work in her study is that the past cannot be retrived as a complete and singular truth.

Personal Reminiscences Concerning Large Human Issues" (Stanley 2008, 19) Stanley begins to put her post/memory to work as a methodological tool for holding the "often difficult encounters" that her research engendered (ibid.). She recounts the range of responses that the topic of her research elicited even in casual conversation and brings these responses into a more nuanced reading of the ripples of an historical event and its myth long after it is deemed to be having a direct impact on the present. Post/memory allows for the inclusion of a set of responses that include individual "narrowing of the eyes", "mild incredulity" and "worrying" (ibid.) as well as the vast paper archive of official letters and documents between key players in the interpretation of historical events. Stanley also confronts her role as "part of the performance" in conducting research that draws on reading memorial spaces but also the trauma of past events (2008, 23). Her critical awareness of this kind of work as not producing a better version of truth but rather drawing more participants into the "perimeter of memorial spaces" (ibid.) is an offer analogous to the one made in the present work, where exploring what exists as stories of the Italian POWs in effect reinvigorates discussion about them. The matter of the ethics of reviving through representation is also briefly addressed at one other point, where she relays the indignation of Finkelstein (2000) in relation to what is considered the proper place of research, media coverage and contingent capital in memory studies (2008, 264).

"Post/memory" as used by Stanley has a final resonance with methodological concerns in the present work. Stanley identifies post/memory as a social construct post the event, and that the "fundamental epistemological shakiness" of any claim to know the past is one of its strengths as an analytical device (Stanley 2008,76). The activity of remembering requires occasion (in the sense that it requires a reason to emerge) and can never be complete recall of all aspects of the past; therefore, what is presented is as significant as what is partially represented or not remembered at all and reflects the complete interdependence of

the individual and the social. In the present work the interviews and discussions about the Italian prisoners of war unfolded within the perimeter of memory defined by my 'occasioning' the telling as researcher, providing a reason to remember, and allowing the participants to pick up on the story they had as "shaped by the politics of who and what was to be remembered or forgotten" (Stanley 2008, 87). As the politics that had formed these stories changed so did the stories, and as those stories that had not been 'occasioned' in some time were brought to light, there was a recognisable shedding of older formations and the addition of new ones. Stanley's post/memory thus provided methodological space for identifying, gathering and interpreting these stories in a mode that was sensitive to, and inclusive of, elements that could easily have been ignored.

The post/memory coined by Stanley is itself derived from the 'postmemory' used by Marianne Hirsch in her study of the multiple levels of the familial gaze (Hirsch 1997, 5). The method employed by Hirsch to draw memory and photography into an examination of trauma across generations in *Family Frames* is based on the mutually constitutive acts of looking and writing. In the theoretical introduction above I discussed De Kock's notion of the act of writing as a suturing device and the embracing of that idea in this project (in De Kock et al. 2004, 11). Hirsch has provided a model for the interdependence of writing and memory as represented in objects drawing on a long history of theorising about the relationship between the image and the writing about an image. This global theorising ranges from classical *ekphrasis* to the Barthesian *punctum* and *studium* of photography and finally picks up at the point of Mitchell's (1994) idea of the 'image-text' (Hirsch 1997, 4). Of particular importance for the present research is that what interests Hirsch about the relationship of the photography to memory is its particular relationship with the 'real'; that the photograph is a trace of an encounter with something necessarily real, as opposed to optionally real in the sense that the traditional sign in the discourse of artistic representation may or may not have a referent in

reality (Hirsch 1997, 5). Hirsch traces the powerful contestations that can happen around photographs as a function of "meta-photographic texts which place family photographs into narrative contexts either by reproducing them or describing them: novels and short stories, fiction and documentary films, photographic albums, installations and exhibits, autobiographies and memoires, as well as essays and theoretical writings about photography" (Hirsch 1997, 8). The object of Hirsch's research is the "composite imagetexts" that can be 'real' photographic images or fictional images, embedded in narrative contexts that are biographical or fictional. Here, discussion of these contextually different imagetexts "in similar terms" is not so much a denial of their difference as an acknowledgement of their equal contribution to the conventional familial gaze that she is trying to disrupt (ibid.). In this project, where so much of what emerges from the past about the Italian POWs in South Africa is read as given, the inclusion of material that is outside of the confines of a single form (the interview that cites a personal communication, the newspaper article that cites a published history, the novel that cites an anecdote) has become key in rendering visible the layers of the past and the successive moments of remembering. Each story gathered is a representation of the past that refers to other representations; though the form of these representations is part of their message (the photograph and novel work in different ways) they both contribute to the living story that is produced. The play of memory and history in this regard is what constitutes the present work as a site of memory in the same way that Hirsch identifies Spiegelman's *Maus* as a site of memory (Hirsch 1997, 22).

Though the core fixations of Nora, memory and history are key to Hirsch's conception of the past in the present, her 'postmemory', the underpinning of her method, is first defined as distinct from memory by virtue of generational distance, and distinct from history by dint of "deep personal connection" (ibid.). She proposes the profound work of imagination involved in second-generation memory of the holocaust as a force equal to the

task of living with the aftershocks of traumatic disruption and destruction. Children of holocaust survivors are inescapably bound to events that shape their own existence and to which they have very little access. Dominated by absences (Hirsch 1997, 33) postmemory is their processing framework.

Stanley's post/memory – completely rejecting direct recall of the past in the present – was initially considered a closer fit to the material that I encountered in connection to this research. It moved away from Hirschean postmemory by refocusing on problematising questions of memory and history. After all, time and again I was encountering narratives of full lives, buildings built, industry and agriculture introduced, a far cry from the decimation and destruction that permeates holocaust narratives. However, Hirsch's model, premised on the need of a generation to process profound trauma for its own survival, often forced its way into the present research. Elements of trauma in the stories circulated by ex-POWs about their experiences were, I discovered, artfully disguised or deferred. That this has found its way into the subsequent re-telling of those stories is at once a testament to the ways of processing trauma after World War Two, and also, an indication that the processing of the experiences may not necessarily be complete.

This is where methodological questions of interpretation of the present material synthesise elements from Wilson, Stanley and Hirsch. Working from the irreducibility of certain historical events, through layers of story to the access points of living stories in the present, this research has been unfolded through accessing narrative accounts with a particular sensitivity to the contextual aspects of the interview itself and the interviewee. Generational distance, gate-keeper status and the kernel of trauma in each story have provided on-going substantiation for the identification, selection and interpretation of the material in this thesis.

The terms ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ have been used interchangeably up to this point and are used interchangeably within certain limits in the research as a whole. In some instances ‘story’ is my designation for the vignettes that I came across that seemed to signify as stand alone utterances; having value as a stylised, usually short piece of narration often with a single ‘punch-line’, illustrating a single point. These often had a theme that was considered well-known or common sense by the teller, assuming a shared set of cultural references relating to how Italians are. They are treated as such in the research. ‘Narrative’ is the term I use for the bigger, more complex structures that emerged in the interviews, those tales that located or made meaning from the POW history in the life of specific individuals, a family, a village or region. Though this is a rough and by no means fixed division within my own work, it does rest on theorised positions on narrative.

In “Do We Live Stories or Just Tell Them?”, a chapter in his work on the contemporary philosophy of social science, Brian Fay explores two historical doctrines on narrative and posits narrativity as a critical common ground between them. The basis for his argument is that human agents are story-telling creatures because it is by creating a narrative context for action that action becomes meaningful, by making sense of the past and informing the future (Fay 1996, 179). He first presents the doctrine of narrative realism; that narrative structures exist in human life and are therefore uncovered or discovered by historians and biographers, not created and imposed onto past events (ibid.). The human life has its contextual limits at birth and death with highs and lows occurring (albeit unpredictably) in between. Furthermore, that this is a fundamentally true state of affairs (Fay 1996, 182). Fay points out that what the approach of narrative realism fails to take into account is that story-telling is premised on causal outcomes and the significance of events as judged after those events. Events continue to produce ripple effects that are taken up and ignored at different times, and so narrative realism, as a statement that lives are story-shaped, cannot account for

the importance of narrative in sociological and historical enquiry. Narrative constructivism seems to account for the gap in narrative realism by asserting that narrative is imposed on an undifferentiated series of events (Fay 1996, 190). Fay suggests that the blind spot in this doctrine is that agency seems to be narratival, and that in order to act one must have a sense of the link between the past and future (Fay 1996, 192). In an ongoing life, narrative forms are already at play and that picking up on these and weaving them into one's own narrative is part of how intentional agents make their actions intelligible (Fay 1996, 194).

Narrativism offers a middle ground between these two doctrines that, Fay suggests, need each other in order to make sense. Narrativism acknowledges that there is more to narrative than merely representational device (the position of narrative realism), and that narrative is also malleable and can and does legitimately change as reasons and evidence for changing it comes to light (constructivism) (Fay 1996, 194). For this project, the notion that stories (narratives) are both lived and told, both 'in' and 'about' human life, is central.

The positions of both narrative realism and narrative constructivism are evinced to a certain degree in the present research in the following ways. The stories are shaped, contained and delimited by the larger, global events of the Second World War. The lives of the POWs and the South Africans involved in the historical encounters were unavoidably linked to the outcomes of series of political stances, battles, and policies of detention and repatriation by both Allied and Axis powers. Their narratives share this shape in line with theories of narrative realism. However, in the lives lived between then and now the constructivist view is borne out, as shifting causal outcomes have continued to edit the extant stories in South Africa in the present and, by extension, have eliminated others completely. Narrativism, therefore prevails as a mode of holding both of these to be true and valid.

In collecting the stories that constitute the bulk of this research, a key difficulty was finding the entry point into stories about Italian POWs. Ubiquitous in that they are a

quotidian feature of the folklore of many places and families, when asked to produce the story for research purposes the discomfort of many of the participants with reproducing what they felt to be someone else's story (a father, a grandfather, a mother, sister, neighbour etc.) made more standard forms of biographic narrative interview almost impossible. In particular, the minimal intervention "single question aimed at inducing narrative" (Wengraf 2001) would have left many participants feeling exposed, interrogated and without a stake in the research process. My approach was far closer to the active interviewing advocated by Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (1998). Their approach is premised on, among other things:

> *What happens…if we enliven the subject behind the respondent? Construed as active, the subject behind the respondent not only holds facts and details of experience, but, in the very process of offering them up for response, constructively adds to, takes away from and transforms the facts and details…This activated subject pieces experiences together, before, during and after assuming the respondent role* (Gubrium and Holstein 1998, 117).

While acknowledging that certain methodologies have already gone some way toward addressing the contextual, social circumstances of the interview – among them certain feminist methodologies, ethnomethodology, poststructuralism and constructionism (Gubrium and Holstein 1998, 115) – as a corrective to the exclusive content focus of earlier forms of sociological interview, the active interviewing of Gubrium and Holstein is conceived as a moment in which respondents "are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers" (Gubrium and Holstein 1998, 114).

The 'active' element in active interviewing is not limited to acknowledging and incorporating the agency of the respondent or participant. In fact, it is the construction of the

interviewer as active, in the interview itself as well as in the analysis of the interview material that distinguishes active interviewing. An awareness of interpretive acts in the interview moment by both interviewer and respondent makes it the first point at which meaning is "actively and communicatively assembled" (ibid.). It is important to distinguish the active role of the interviewer in suggesting links, diverse perspectives, encouraging story-telling and generally creating environments conducive to relating narrative, from a goading toward desired answers (ibid. 122-123). Gubrium and Holstein suggest that an ongoing self-awareness, especially regarding assumptions, bias and subject position, is crucial to addressing some of the interviewer's own defence mechanisms (ibid. 120). In the research for this project my Italian name and designation as researcher often elicited polite, sensitive and politically cautious story-telling on the assumption that I was looking for good news about Italian POWs. It took sometimes subtle and sometimes overt communication of my own willingness to discuss the stories in the degree of detail and openness set by the participants in order for them to feel less worried about offending the memory of what they often assumed (incorrectly) to be my grandfather. It took mutual disclosure to activate more than the most superficial narrative production. Gubrium and Holstein assert that in creative interviewing "the interviewer's deep disclosure both occasions and legitimizes the respondent's reciprocal revelation." (1998, 119). Many of the interviews feature my disclosure of comparable interview situations, other stories and a layman's exposition of the project's aims to allow participants to orientate themselves and select narrative positions; positions that could be then be explored collaboratively. This created permission for the respondents to activate their own "substantial repertoire of interpretive methods and stock of experiential materials." (ibid. 122)

The analysis of active interview data can offer insight into both the context and content of utterances on a given topic. Things said by the respondents "are considered for the

ways that they construct aspects of reality in collaboration with the interviewer" (ibid. 127). The active element in analysis of the material completes the picture of what is possible with this approach. To allow the data to 'speak for itself' in a richly described context, the active interviewer relies on meticulous empirical work to represent "the complex discursive activities through which respondents produce meaning" (ibid.).

If the active interviewing method works against some of the fictions of objectivity believed to be at work in more standard kinds of sociological research (Potter 1998 147, 149; Gubrium and Holstein 1998, 126), it does not negate the kinds of information that can be read from those forms of research. In his work on the semi-structured interview as qualitative method, Tom Wengraf identifies three kinds of information that can be harvested in analysis: discourse, objective referents and subjectivity (2001, 7). Though the semi-structured format was passed over in this research for more active forms of interviewing, and a theoretical frame that reads interview as a peculiar form of naturally occurring talk (discussed below), the broad categories proved useful in thematically organising material for analysis at an early stage.

Wengraf defines discourse as it emerges in interview as "the mode of talk spontaneously chosen by the subject" (ibid.).[25] One form of discourse analysis would be to determine what is 'sayable' and 'unsayable' as per the systemic (usually tacit) rules that govern the surface performance of what is actually said. This form of analysis, after Foucault and Chomsky, reveals the role of power as the 'regimes of discourse' in the material (Wengraf 2001, 7-8). I will say more about this form of discourse analysis below. Wengraf's second aspect of analysis is the 'objective referent': those things that are said in interview that refer to reality external to the interview; an aspect essential to corroborative and forensic

[25] Wengraf prefers 'subject' to 'participant' and I have retained this usage in discussing his three aspects of analysis precisely to remind myself of the differences. These aspects, which he considers together as an assurance of a degree of objectivity in relation to a 'subject', function equally well together in enriching context in relation to a 'participant'.

forms of analysis (Wengraf 2001, 8). The final aspect he defines is 'subjectivity' or the modelling of fixed and mutable characteristics of the interview subject (Wengraf 2001, 9). He presents the latter two aspects as being dependant on the filtering of utterances in an interview through the lens of discourse, such that both objective referents and subjectivity flow out of the discourse and are read with it in the findings.[26] In this research the discursive nodes that connect POW narratives and stories across the country provided a strong coherence to stories that belonged to otherwise very diverse 'subjectivities'. In most cases, it was the discursive repertoire that held together long after even the most basic objective referents proved incoherent or incorrect. In other words, even when the stories turned out to be about Italian emigrants rather than POWs, or about the South African War rather than the Second World War, they provided insight into the mechanics and poetics of story-telling about Italian POWs.

'Discourse' in Wengraf's work is meant to be understood as the material for Foucauldian/Chomskian forms of discourse analysis that can inform aspects of both hypothetico-inductivist and hypothetico-deductivist methodological models (Wengraf 2001, 2-3). Jonathan Potter, in his work on discourse analysis of 'naturally occurring talk' (1998) suggests that there are ways to combine the topic scope of Foucauldian discourse analysis, that is founded less on specific and actual interactions, with the rigour of linguistic models that, on their own, are rather limiting and too mechanistic to treat larger systems (Potter, 1998, 145-146). Potter argues for the applicability of this method for inductive methods where the analysis is of "texts and talk in social practices"; conditions which allow for theory to arise from the material. In this model the material of the interview is the medium that reveals what people do (Potter 1998, 146). Potter transfers the characteristics of 'naturally occurring talk', those interactions that occur without the "usual apparatus of interview …

[26] Figures 1.1 and 1.2 in his opening chapter demonstrate this (Wengraf 2001, 9).

protocol", into a theoretical stance that allows interviews to be considered as conversational interaction (Potter 1998, 149). Instead of a mechanism for harvesting information the interview can become an "arena of interaction" (ibid.). Conscious of the many pitfalls of equating a contrived conversation with the equally problematic construct of a 'natural' conversation, Potter is interested in the cultivation of a mentality that allows the researcher and participant to contest and explore the parameters of a topic, allowing the subjectivity and even certain cognitive aspects of the participants to be made relevant in interaction as they emerge (1998, 158).

2.3 Research Process and Chapter Outline

To read the surface of memory of Italian POWs in South Africa, I have constituted memory of them as a site of memory in this research. I have focused on memory as it manifests in South African contexts through the two media in which it has the clearest imprint: Afrikaans historically-based fiction and in interviews with people who made themselves available to share second-hand memory. In the chapter dealing with fiction (Chapter Three) I have used the concept of the seam of literature in relation to history to unpack some of the main thematic material in circulation in the third tier of Italian POW memory, the only tier to deal with memory without the guidance of ex-POWs. The fiction also revealed some of the main social frameworks through which Italian POW memory is processed in South Africa, by South Africans today.[27] For this reason I have placed the literary analysis first. The printed word offers a fixed starting point: each novel has an authorial voice, speaking in a single language, located in a publishing house's style. This was significant within the research process, as the subsequent voices encountered in my interviews, living voices in their day-to-day lives, provided a bewildering scope of intention, subject matter, subject position, languages, multiple narratives and on the spot editorialising. The richness of these multiple strands in the living stories meant that in placing the fiction first in both the research process and in the architecture of the thesis, I was afforded the opportunity of using the worlds contained within the covers of the novels as fixed references points in a narrative stream that was constantly in motion. Two vignettes are appended to this chapter as a transition from dealing with published fiction to the analysis of stories gleaned from interviews. They serve as transitional because they rest on very tenuous connections with the theme of Italian POWs.

[27] It remains for future research to continue the work of Milanese and Buranello in furthering the story-telling of this era by Italians in collaboration with Italian South Africans.

As with the novels discussed, the vignettes use the imagined Italian POW as the basis for an elaborate mapping of their contemporary community and landscape.

The chapters dealing with living stories (Chapters Four and Five) build on the thematic traces identified in the fiction chapter and explore the material gleaned from interviews conducted by the author between December 2010 and September 2012. Interviews were conducted in Gauteng, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and Mpumalanga. In each case the network of the Zonderwater Block Association was used to reach beyond the initial contacts of Italian-South African community members and into the local South African communities.[28] Interviews were conducted with those who identified themselves as willing to share a story.[29] Ideas of post/memory and narrative theory informed the analysis that at once activated and revealed memory. It was the shifting nature of memory and the role of 'occasioning' memory as a researcher that crystallised the present project into one that performed the thaumaturgical acts of identifying a site of memory and tracking it. This was very much a case of forming a site of memory in the face of what Nora identified as a loss, shift or change in the 'environments of memory'; in each successive year, fewer and fewer ex-POWs were able , or willing to participate in story-telling. Here, active interviewing techniques created a context in which participants, those who held second-hand memory, were free to reposition themselves within the stories they told or to retain a position forged some time ago, or to defer to other sources perceived by them as more authoritative. Tracking these choices was part of mapping the site of memory. These shifts in who inherits and uses the memory of the Italian POW experience are juxtaposed with changes in the South African

[28] My own previous work on Italian POW culture served as a strating point for accessing these netwoprks as well as making th choice to conduct research outside of the official archives (See Somma 2008; 2012).
[29] Two barriers to more a broader range of interview subjects shaped the present material. The first was an assumption that I would only want to talk to Italians – the research topic and my name suggesting to people that I would want "Italian stories" from Italians. The other, more widespread practice is to associate World War Two history with white South Africans. Though there are compelling and rich Italian POW stories that involve black and coloured South Africans (See *Captivi Italici*, Part 3), none emerged as willing to discuss POW history and there is also a sense that World War Two South African stories are 'white' stories.

political landscape. The tiers of memory in the Italian POW site of memory coincide with the rise and fall of Apartheid and the post-Apartheid moment, now in its second decade. Throughout this thesis references to changing political and social contexts refer to this period between the end of the Second World War and the writing present.

The clustering of case studies into the chapters outlined above, as opposed to equally valid topographical or thematic groupings, was made to emphasise the overall site of memory. To emphasise that, for all of the crucial specificity of place and culture and local history, the threads of the overall site emerge consistently.[30] This thesis explores theoretical questions around history and memory in a South African context and contributes to the body of South African heritage and cultural studies. Ideally, the research will serve in two arenas of knowledge production. The first is a modest contribution to applications of the notion of 'sites of memory'. The theoretical implications of applying this concept to units smaller than the nation, include an enriched and expanded view of South African heritage in a pluralistic, twenty-first century society. In this regard the work of Rassool, especially that on the making of the District Six Museum, has challenged the role of the historian as one isolated from the day-to-day effects of history and, by extension, the role of memory in restoring dignity (2006). The work of Witz on the 1952 memorialisation of van Riebeeck, delved into the new stories that were required for consolidating white South African identity after the Second World War (2003). In doing so, both have made a strong case for forms of memorialising that resist uncritical or merely fashionable narratives. Though this research does not focus on the formal memorialising of the POW experience, much of what circulates on the surface of memory today is underpinned by unexamined assumptions from previous moments of formal

[30] An important note here is that the overall site of memory of Italian POWs in South Africa is always flagged as 'overall' to distinguish it from the multiple sites that constitute the various case studies; where 'site' is used to indicate a physical place or location.

memorialising.[31] The second contribution would be to encourage future critical research on the Italian POW experience in South Africa. Numerous sources and avenues of research remain entirely untapped due to the treading of well-worn paths in the tiers of memory-making. These include: research into the lives of children of Italian POWs born out of wedlock, the culture of contraband and the economy of POW life, a comprehensive study of the museum itself, and race relations between POWs and South Africans. These topics of the next tier of memory- and history-making require a step into aspects of Italian POW life that were taboo for various reasons up until to this point in time. By making explicit relationships between the tiers of memory in the context of a mutable site of memory, this research aims to pave the way for such enquiries.

[31] In subsequent chapters references are made to more formal moments of memorialising, such as the Goodwill Festivals of 1978 and 1984. References are also made to the annual memorial services at three sites around the country. None of these have been formally analysed as much of their content is concerned with received observances, rituals and symbolic gestures that do not speak to the place of Italian POWs in the South African imagination.

Chapter Three: Fiction

3.1 Situating The Long Silence of Mario Salviati

In this chapter I present the analysis of five published novels and the story-telling that emerges from two interviews I conducted in Limpopo. These have been grouped together for a number of reasons. The first is that they instantiate the seam; the idea that the writing of a story that joins incommensurate forces and things produces a trace of the join, its ridges and furrows, revealing the tension involved in knitting them together along the seam formed by the writing. In the fictional novels the weight of the war experience and the tensions of Apartheid that followed the war are attached to small family stories, their incommensurate relationship stitched together with the thread of the POW characters.[32] In the case of van Heerden's novel, another layer of tension is added to the war and Apartheid era; the colonial era exists in a ghostly form and is also stitched in with the extrasensory gifts of the POW Mario Salviati. In the case of the stories from Limpopo, the seam consists of large stitches connecting Italy, various places in Africa and a single farm in the case of Nipper's story. The story of a stand of chestnut trees is an unconscious piece of fiction tied into the story of emigrants and commercial enterprises; stitching a place and a history together with POWs who were not actually there.

> *And in the process of textualizing the event it is also narrativized: that is, the representations of history repeat, in almost every detail, the processes of fiction. In this activity, in other words, history, memory, and language intersect so precisely as to be almost indistinguishable: the 'origins' of history, as recovered through memory, are*

[32] One other Afrikaans historical fiction novel is worth mentioning for the attention and critical praise it garnered, though the Italians in this novel were the ill-fated silk workers who arrived in Knysna to begin a silk industry, as opposed to Italian POWs and for this reason they are not included in this analysis, though connections could surely be made in a broader literary analysis of Italians in South African fiction. I refer to Dalene Matthee's *Moerbeibos* (The Mulberry Forest, 1987). An English edition appeared in 1989.

> *encoded in language, and each of these three moments becomes a condition for the others* (Brink 1998, 32).

With reference to the complex processes at play in the TRC, Brink posits the representation of history as a process akin to fiction. The three moments he identifies in the production of a text, "origins of history…recovered through memory…encoded in language" (ibid.) could be paraphrased as an instant remembered and then expressed. Brink acknowledges the intentional disparity inherent in fiction and history's stance in relation to reality, but also points out that in the construction of history from the previously silenced voices of the TRC the content of the "public/personal, history/story, facts/fiction – are ultimately predicated on memory" (Brink 1998, 30). Byatt echoes this sentiment:

> *What is true about the relations between invention, imagination and ideology in individual processes of remembering is of course also true of public, and communal memory. Nations put up public memorials to events that are part of a desired history. They construct history books for children. They prune and reinforce desiderated narratives* (Byatt 2008, xviii).

The thaumaturgy that Nora described, the magical act of representing things as they return in the cycles of memory, could be argued as a largely unintentional result of creating historically-based fiction. In this section I argue that the Italian POWs who appear in the fiction are ripe subjects, sites for exploring South African history and historical perspectives. In each work there are varying degrees of depth and conscious reflection on the history itself but the novels each reveal a set of social frameworks through which the authors and, by extension, their readership, view this part of the past. A version of post/memory is also

evident in this section when time and again an author reforms and reflects on the politics of the past through the lenses of the present.

The introduction to the anthology *Memory* (2008) also addresses the processes of memory in relation to creativity and narrative. Communal memory, it is suggested, can become national history. This is not to in any way suggest that the processes of writing history and fiction are interchangeable but rather that with the common processes of what Stanley and Nora have identified as representations of the part (as opposed to attempts at retrieval), the fiction presented here foregrounds characters in its representation where histories (of the unreformed objectivist kind) would foreground the 'historically significant' larger events. The Italian POW site of memory serves as a malleable common topic linking history and story. In van Heerden's novel *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati* (2002) a desired history is unfolded in the fictional town of Yearsonend. At the core of this desired history is the wordless, fictional Italian POW, Mario Salviati. The desire is not for morbid reflection on the horrors of the centuries-long suffering of the town, but rather a desire for a place in which to explore it; the desire for a familiar but non-specific landscape that has a presence over a long span of time. Van Heerden's desire manifests as a surrealist space filled with highly symbolic structures and characters. In order to create this space traces of real places, times, events and people are drawn in, a fact articulated by van Heerden in his specific acknowledgements (van Heerden 2002, 437). The flashpoints for his imagination are drawn from memory, though not necessarily his own memory, and experience of the Karoo in combination with archival historical research. I will argue that a kind of second-hand/communal memory is also drawn on; the prejudices and world-view of a small Karoo town form the backdrop for two of the sub-plots of the novel namely, the political history of a part of South Africa, and broader questions relating to the power of art.

In thinking through the "private act of the imagination encapsulated in story and the publicly sanctioned act of history" (Brink 1998, 37), Brink identifies three pertinent elements of story: "At least three characteristics of story are relevant here… story as the outcome of a process of internalization and personalization; story as the construction of a version of the world; and story as the embodiment of an imagining or a complex of imaginings". (Brink 1998, 38)

The first "story as the outcome of internalization and personalization" interrogates what passes for fact in the public domain. It is in this kind of story that we encounter biography, which has a particular, if highly personal, connection with what is agreed upon as real. Other kinds of story are not necessarily bound by this. This personalised story often reveals how public events project onto the very personal. The second characteristic of story presents itself as one version of truth and thus allows a reader to choose, compare or create composite versions and Brink suggests that the kinds of telos formerly built into these versions is what characterised older types of historiography. The third is infused with all the idiosyncrasies of an individual imagination, the complex of creative forces driven by "private motivations, hidden agendas, prejudices, suspicions, biographical quirks, chips on the shoulder, and conditionings that constitute the idiosyncratic, individual mind" (Brink 1998, 39). This characteristic, I suggest, is the most alienating for what we like to think of as the central tenet of traditional history, that is, a reliable communication of events. Tracing these characteristics at the nexus of story and history and the nexus of memory and history in van Heerden's *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati* offers insight into the interactions of what Halbwachs called autobiographical and historical memory (Olick et al. 2011, 19); that is, events around which the individual memory orients itself and the thing that a society uses to claim continuing identity over time. Moreover, the novel highlights the function of a site of memory in its representation of the changing social status of the Italian POW over time.

Kissack and Titlestad (2005) have identified van Heerden's novel as an example of what Ndebele foresaw in his 'The Rediscovery of the Ordinary' (Njabulo 1992 in Kissack and Titlestad 2005, 1) as well as Brink's argument that imagination should take its place in literature as the mediator between "past and present, individual and society" (Brink 1998 in Kissack and Titlestad 2005, 6). Both Ndebele (1998) and Brink (1998) have described the possibility of post-Apartheid literary creativity taking its cue from the narrative explosion of the TRC. With the explicit focus on the *telling* of truth, the TRC set the conditions for reconciliation, rightly or wrongly, at the point of articulating experiences of trauma and culpability. Responses to this from the Afrikaans-speaking world ranged from Krog's deeply tortured monograph of alienation *Country of My Skull* (1999) to Giliomee's reactive *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (2009).[33] For Kissack and Titlestad, van Heerden's *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati* instantiates this detailed threading of geographically-specific stories, laden with the debts of history, through the twentieth century (Kissack and Titlestad 2005, 7).

Kissack and Titlestad examine the text with careful attention to the intersection of private and public, memory and history, and as "an imaginative exploration of South Africa's post Apartheid social realities" (ibid. 8). These tensions are all located within the bounds of the fiction. The authors' claim is not for the extension of a reading of the text into a reflection of history, nor is it suggesting the reverse, as history manifest within the novel. Their analysis is one that takes fictional characters as the unit of analysis, and the tangling of their social and historical roots as the focus.

The analysis below, with its focus on the character of Mario Salviati and the other Italians, is taking Brink's third characteristic of "story as the embodiment of an imagining or a complex of imaginings" (Brink 1998, 38) as a way into South African perceptions, as they

[33] Giliomee's outrage at the undermining of Afrikaner identity in the TRC context was itself an extension of the twentieth century narration of Afrikaner history. Moodie identified the tenets of the 'sacred saga' (1975) and Thompson identified the main themes of its mythology (1975).

exist on the contemporary surface of memory of the Italian POW presence in the country. Van Heerden offers, through the complex of his imaginings, a weave of multiple time warps across the constant, singular spatial weft of Yearsonend. Salviati's place in this weave requires a drawing out of local historical attitudes to Italians before, during and after the Second World War.

We are taken into the world of the fictional Karoo town of Yearsonend by Cape Town art administrator Ingi Friedländer, on a mission to purchase a unique artwork for the new Houses of Parliament. The sculpture that she is looking for is set up as a metaphor for the changing social landscape and the redemptive role of art in the new South Africa. Its creator, Jonty Jack, does not want to sell, and so understanding his motives becomes the key to securing the purchase. However, it is a key that also unlocks the complex world of Yearsonend, a surrealist space in which the past and present exist simultaneously. The ostrich feather boom, the Boer War, mixed marriage, murder and lust all feature as baroque cogs in the machinery of the town's main secret: the location of a gold-filled wagon, lost in the hinterland of Yearsonend. The secretive inhabitants of the town are themselves waiting for Mario Salviati, the Italian ex-POW to reveal the secret whereabouts of the wagon. Long-time resident of Yearsonend, the Italian stonemason has spent his working years realising the dreams of the town, and pursuing sculptural dreams of his own. He has married into a local family and put firm roots into the rocky soil. Always a stranger, locked into complicated dynamics with the town's major families and its other Italians, he is unlikely to yield these secrets. Beside his marginal existence as an outsider, he is deaf, unable to speak and, in his old age, blind. The tragic history of Yearsonend is locked away in his long silence.

The idea of the Italian prisoner of war is handled in very particular ways in the novel as the difference of Mario Salviati is key to his effectiveness as the catalyst of change and disruption within the story. The thematic constraints for what is and is not said about the

prisoners in the novel follow the contours mapped by the overall site of memory of Italian POWs in South Africa, and in doing so generates a kind of credibility in the story. The framing for the reception of the Italians in Yearsonend conform to aspects of Italian POW history confirmed in other parts of the site of memory – they are recounted in the annual speeches and the publications and documentaries – leaving the kinds of things that they do in the story freed up for treatment by the author's imagination. Van Heerden has the advantage of an historical occurrence, a real disruption of the norm, from which to draw a fictional disruption that unpacks real social issues. Mario Salviati's social difference is clearly defined but he also appears near enough to the characters that surround him to generate empathy from them and the reader. The strength of this liminal role as a device in the fiction of *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati* may rest on its basis in historical occurrence, as the social proximity and position of the Italian POWs in relation to the people they worked and lived among during their stay in South Africa was always in question: 'How white are Italians?' In this work of fiction the question vexes the inhabitants of Yearsonend as much as it did real South Africans during the war, as all subsequent social interaction proceeded thence – can we respect them, relax with them, eat with them, worship with them or love them? This aspect of POW history surfaced in the novel is dealt with in some depth in Steve Moni's documentary *Captivi Italici in Sud Africa*, the third part of which "The White Blacks" ("I Neri Bianchi") examines the endemic forms of racism at work in deciding how Italian labour should be treated (*Captivi Italici in Sud Africa*, 1989). In the next section Lou Jurriaanse's interview also touches on the politics on her grandfather's farm and how compromises were reached to accommodate the ambiguity of race presented to South African sensibilities. It was this paradox of the Italian presence that gave such strength to its impact on local memories and why the actions of real prisoners remain vivid. Each choice and action of the prisoners was a new piece of information to be weighed up against existing prejudices. The Italian POW site

of memory, especially this aspect of race, allows the reader to track some of the changes in politics and position toward race over time. With shifts in political position it is possible for those who have the threads of living stories and those generating fiction from historical bases, to compare the political biases of the past with liberal attitudes of the present, or to emphasise the inclusion of Italian POWs in the life of a family as a form of evidence for progressive attitudes to race in a family, farm or the past of a town.

Van Heerden seems to be picking up on the same fictional turn, namely; if South Africans were improvising a narrative around the unknown quantity of the Italian prisoners then a writer can engage in the same process in a work of fiction where he wants to improvise on real socio-historical themes. As a narrative strategy, then, the confluence of historical fact and fiction manifest in an Italian POW in South Africa is a rich one. This turn also has its place in the overall site of memory, with both functional and symbolic elements to it. Of the three aspects that Nora suggested interact in any site of memory, the functional aspect of the Italian POW in this piece of fiction is in stabilising reality through a set of historical circumstances, connecting Yearsonend to the rest of the country and to the world. On the symbolic front the Italian POW characters can, by turns, be villainous or sympathetic characters developed out of historical circumstances of imprisonment, frustration and alienation. In this novel, they present less of a clear 'lesson' for the reader than in the novels analysed below. Nevertheless, one read them based on cues from their historical circumstances. We recognise Salviati as an individual unit forming part of a national phenomenon, a recognisable figure, one whose story, as unusual as it is, is well within the realm of historical possibility. Against this factual oddity the mystery of General Taljaard (a character with unnaturally extended life) as well as Granny Siela Pedi, the angel and Captain William Gird (observing events from a parallel world) all provide the fantasy element of the book. In some ways it is the very unlikely circumstances of the Italian POW sojourn in South

Africa that forms the platform from which the truly fantastic elements in the novel are normalised and unfold. To sacrifice nuance for a moment, the crudest reduction of the logic would read: if a deaf Italian POW could arrive in a Karoo town then anything is possible.

Indeed, many other characters and events in the novel draw on historical fact. There is a sub-plot involving the ostrich feather boom and the industry it spawned, and the reference to author and adventurer Captain Sir William Cornwallis Harris (the inspiration for Captain William Gird). All of these have historical bases, but are fictionalised in a way that does not draw on widely held preconceptions about them. They are obscure and do not need a ready-made path in imagination to do the work that the character of Salviati must do in the novel, namely, making plausible the parallel timelines of the novel.

Mario Salviati, I suggest, is a conglomerate of many 'real' Italian POW stories that enliven local histories across the country. As a pastiche of real experiences, the reactions he engenders taps into reactions to the prisoners that are a matter of public record. Van Heerden acknowledges some material and archival traces of POW history that, along with conversations with people who had some information about POWs, triggered his creativity. Though the second tier of memory, the autobiographical efforts of ex-POWs following the war, tended to focus on the positive aspects of their experience, there is substantial record of the mixed reception they received from various South Africans, varying from admiration and real friendship, to antagonism and mistrust. In the following chapters there is reference to individual instances along both of these trajectories, and these traces of memory weave in and out of the published and circulated material within the Italian POW site of memory, creating a base with a wide range for imagination to draw from. These reactions to the Italians is South Africa in turn emerge from broader streams of stereotyping. A number of authors have dealt with global, or at least English-speaking perceptions of Italians as these perceptions were formed, consolidated and perpetuated during and after the Second World War

(Severgnini 2006; Richards 1995). Italy's involvement in the war, from its allies to its capitulation, as well as actions on the battlefield set certain stereotypes in motion that have filtered all the way through the twentieth century and, arguably, linger into the twenty first (Fussell 1989; Marazzi 1997). I will mention some of these as they emerge in the analysis below.

I begin with an analysis of instances in which Italy or Italians are referred to in the book. With remarkable regularity these references tap into what must be widely held South African perceptions of Italians because their style of presentation and effect rely on preconceptions; they are never explained or unpacked so they read as normalised attitudes. Even before we meet Mario Salviati a subtle, almost subliminal link is established between Italy, madness and art: "But she combed her fingers through her long corn-gold hair, turned her Florentine profile to the man and declared, 'Art without madness isn't worth the bother'" (van Heerden 2002, 8). It could be argued that the reader is being primed here, being asked to unbundle the charmingly dishevelled jewellery roll of Italian indexes and stereotypes that inform much of what is thought about Italianness outside of Italy. Ingi Friedländer, Capetonian art administrator and employee of the National Gallery, is invested with a natural and dignified beauty when we learn that her long corn-gold hair frames a "Florentine profile". The term 'Florentine profile' refers to a style of portraiture in Italian renaissance art that defined and objectified female beauty by conventions including the strawberry blonde to corn-gold colours of youth and the demure aversion of the eyes as the subject posed in profile. This allowed full access of the male gaze, without a return gaze and reduced to decorous the role of female portrait subjects (Simons 1988). Though her beauty is revealed in an unguarded moment, the Florentine profile of Ingi Friedländer allows a similar, uninterrupted gaze. There is some indication of how she looks before she candidly expresses

the link between madness and art. This is not the last time Italy, madness and art and beauty come together as core themes underpinning the profound romantic streak in the novel.

In pursuit of worthy art (art that speaks to the transformation project of the gallery that employs her) Ingi pursues the latest sculpture of the hermit Jonty Jack, scion of a short-lived rural 'aristocracy'. Art generally, and his sculptures in particular, are linked to the project of transformation and are deemed better at communicating the story of a place than the records of statutes, dates and forced removals (van Heerden 2002, 171). For his part Jonty considers Ingi's position and how trapped she is by the political climate of the day, as a frustrated artist trying to mend the past but disconnected from her own creativity. These musings address the confluence of art, memory and history. As evidence of an alternative to this tangled mess of ideologies Mario Salviati, and his lifelong work in the medium of stone, are offered as an example of the success of art against close-mindedness (ibid. 170-172).

This brings the significance of Salviati as a character into contemporary issues and indeed he serves as an elegant tool for van Heerden's thinking about art and contemporary South Africa in these passages. However, much of what is said about Italianness through most of the novel draws on more prosaic stereotyping of the kind assumed to be common during the Second World War. This is for the very purpose of establishing the parochial 'myopia' of the Yearsonend community that Salviati overcame.

Van Heerden captures a broad spectrum of Second World War-white South Africa's reservations about Italians. In doing so van Heerden is applying a specific social framework to his view of Yearonend's past. In the story key characters struggle to emerge from fixed prejudices of the past. The perceptions inherited through generations lock the town into its past and many of these perceptions are attached to the Italians among them. A blunt listing of the perceptions underpinning these recurring prejudices in the novel would include: Italians as being musical, Italians as labour and craftsmen, Italians as emotional, of questionable

morals, sexually overactive and not quite white. This last characteristic forms the crux of what all those features preceding it add up to in the race ideologies forming up at the time. The appearance and expression of each of these perceptions in the text draws Italy (as a pre-established cluster of signifiers) through the plot, setting up an Italian 'other' against which Yearsonend's inhabitants play out their internal power struggles. It is in the details of the expression of each perception that something of the fundamentals about Italians embedded in the South African mind is revealed.

The link between Italians and musicality is a widely-used trope, both in South Africa and elsewhere (Somma 2008, 4; *Captivi Italici in Sud Africa*, Part 3). It makes an appearance in this work even though the central character is cut off from the world of the senses one sense at a time. Specific Italian music, arguably the Italian music, is sung by the non-Italian wife of Mario, Edit Bergh. Van Heerden draws Ingi and the reader into the past by half-heard, ghostly renditions of the opera arias '*Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore*' (van Heerden 2002, 27) and '*Addio del passato*' (2002, 43). In both instances Ingi is unsure whether or not she is imagining the sound. She hears them in a state between waking and sleeping and they bring the character of Edit to light even before the reader meets her. The first aria '*I Lived for Art, I Lived for Love*' is sung in its original setting by the eponymous Tosca, an opera singer contemplating the course of her life and the impending tragedy of the choices she is forced to make (Puccini 1900, Act II). The second, usually translated as '*So Closes my Sad Story'* is sung by another tragic character on her deathbed in Verdi's *La Traviata* (1853, Act III). The lives of both Tosca and Violetta have parallels with Edit, who makes the ultimate sacrifice to protect her beloved Mario. Indeed, even the hero's name is shared between *Tosca* and *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati*. The presence of these Italian arias in the Karoo, like Ingi's Florentine profile, is to complete the Italian presence in the town. Mario Salviati himself embodies certain Italian characteristics but lacks two, beauty and music, although he helps to

create the acoustic phenomenon of the ‘singing stones’ in the canal he constructs (van Heerden 2002, 188). No self-respecting unrolling of the Italian jewellery roll would exclude song and beauty, and so they are placed in the mouth and visage of Edit and Ingi respectively.

What Patriarca (2006, 4) has called the ‘solar’ aspects of the Italian nature are dealt with outside of the character of Salviati, the warmth, the brightness, the fresh renaissance élan. They are present, to meet the expectations of what Italy means in the global imagination (of which South Africa is a part) today, but Salviati takes us into a past where the outsider was viewed with suspicion, before the stereotyping of Second World War had convinced the world of the harmlessness of Italians (Fussell 1989, 123).

Germane to this, for Salviati and the real Italian POWs, was the significance of their labour. After the armistice in which Italy changed sides to assist the Allies, Italian POWs who signed an the agreement rescinding their allegiance to the fascist regime were allowed to work. However, due to protest from white South Africans who claimed that this was robbing white men of scarce work, it was decided that Italian prisoners could only work as labourers (Pers. Comm. With Emilio Coccia). The title of the last part of van Heerden’s novel is ‘Palm Stone’ (van Heerden 2002, 247-345) referring to the stone that Salviati picks up on the train platform and kisses to indicate his occupation to the inhabitants of Yearsonend (2002, 59). He carries this stone with him everywhere and it is suggested that it starts to grow into the palm of his hand, forming a metaphor for the inextricability of the man and his work. There is much more to the relationship between Mario Salviati and stone than can be easily contained in the term ‘occupation’; he has a sensual and all-pervasive yearning to work with stone. Van Heerden describes him as the only POW rejoicing when their train leaves the wine-lands and climbs into the dusty, rocky plains (2002, 53). This relationship with work, endemic to the labour of craftsmen, follows the seam of real POW history. There were many instances in which Italian skill and also raw labour were deployed in infrastructural development in South

Africa. Full advantage was taken of the skilled labour that they brought with them. Big Karel Bergh, whose vision is to construct a water canal to feed Yearsonend, has the scientific but not the practical knowledge needed to see his vision come to fruition. Salviati brings the skill and Karel views him as an inexhaustible source of labour on more than one occasion (2002, 49; 2002, 59). On their first meeting, while Karel is assessing the strength of Salviati, the latter is trying to work out whether this brown man is really white. He finally decides that the money and power the latter seems to wield in town must mean he is white. Issues of labour, skill and race are bound up from the beginning. Karel Bergh, of mixed descent, is always looking to legitimise his wealth, to trade it for respect in Yearsonend and Salviati, also an outsider, straddling the line between white Christian and transient potentially non-white labour, finds an ally in Karel. The reader is given a clear picture of the power dynamic, Karel always rides ahead, with Salviati riding at the flank of his stallion, and that this was how Karel Bergh wanted it to be (2002, 74). One more aspect of the few Italians who stay in Yearsonend is that, with the exception of Salviati, they are all deployed in work that they are not fit for. Each of them is complicit in perpetuating a fable about themselves in their effort to land a easy job with a family that suits them. That is how Lorenzo Devil Slap, a man without a trade, becomes a cook, and how an anonymous tailor can be seen peering under the bonnet of a car (2002, 59).

The origin of these stories leads directly to discussion of another marker of their cultural difference, one that binds up prejudice against their Catholicism with a dim view of their emotionality and morality. The only interpreter on the train taking prisoners through Yearsonend is in a state of inebriation and decides to improvise some stories for the prisoners with the express intent of catering to the expectations of potential employers in Yearsonend. His son, Look Deep Pitrelli, who later owns the public house in Yearsonend, inherits his Italian father's lax morals, and we are told that "As always when he was sharing a secret, he

spoke with a distinct Italian accent" (2002, 413). In Yearsonend the Italians are treated with suspicion because of their difference and the easiest anchor for this suspicion, other than that they are prisoners, is that they are Catholic.

Van Heerden sketches the Karoo inhabitants of Yearsonend as people who knew hardship and had a fairly developed sense of cynicism as a result. As a foil the Italians are depicted as vital and warm (they need to "restrain their warm Italian hearts" 2002, 139), although this is always presented as a mixed quality; the line between artistic expression and idolatry, emotional expression and hysteria, romance and sin, warmth and heat is one that is carefully monitored by the Yearsonenders. These binaries are often given expression along the following lines: for Ingi, from a cosmopolitan context in a post-Apartheid South Africa, the light side of these qualities is always apparent. She sees in Mario a romantic artist. For the inhabitants of Yearsonend (captives of their own past) the Italians are a threat, as the image of the Madonna sculpted by Mario attests (2002, 141). The gentleness and caring she expresses are invisible to them. Van Heerden refers to the citizen's Calvanism as "elemental as the plains" and "as hard as the Karoo rock" (2002, 138; 2002, 139). Again, the redemptive qualities that Mario brings are cleverly woven into the very material, the very hardness of the place he lands in, as from the seemingly impermeable he creates an image of gentleness and mercy.

General Taljaard summarises the status of Mario Salviati in Yearsonend thus: "Our people aren't sympathetic to foreigners. In addition, he was a prisoner of war. And a Catholic. As you know, people are wary of the Catholic Threat" (2002, 180). The Catholic Threat (the *Roomse Gevaar* in Afrikaans) was a largely post-war fear of the intersection of papist and left-wing agendas that Italians were believed to embody. In the day-to-day of Yearsonend, before the formulation of an official threat, simple religious prejudice can safely be assumed to be at the root of the fear of foreigners whose difference needs a name. It is

General Taljaard who explicitly brings the idea of emotionalism and Italianness together when he mocks his wife, daughter of Mario and Edit, following a rare but dramatic outburst from her: "Italian blood…And Catholic on top if it" (2002, 265). That her faults are multiple and transgressive is indicated by pairing them. In formulating his criticism with a compounding analogy, "on top of it", the General makes a clear link between the notions of emotionalism, Catholicism as culture, and ethnicity as culture.

This is not the only instance of clustering indices. Mention has already been made of Look Deep Pitrelli's Italian accent kicking in when telling secrets (2002, 413), barely two pages on we are informed that together Dumb Eyetie (Mario) and Devil Slap (Lorenzo) are referred to by the locals as "the two blighted ones" (2002, 415). There is great balance in the way van Heerden presents his characters as all too human mixtures of morality and motivation: we encounter the accent and alcohol-laden gossip of Look Deep, a page or two before the unfair assessment of two unfortunate souls as cursed. Devil Slap has a bright red birthmark across his face as well as a limp, and he and Mario are seen as having incurred the wrath of God at some point, thus deserving of their marks. The religious bases of judgement are vicious throughout and more will be said of the biblical tone evident in the town's perception of Devil Slap's sexuality below. Across the pages describing aspects of Look Deep, Devil Slap and Dumb Eyetie is a broad spectrum of responses to the Italians, mostly rooted in responses to their morals and religion. Another, more vivid juxtaposition between morality and religion as it relates to the Italians occurs in the explanation for Mario's blindness.

Frustrated after years of waiting, Lorenzo Devil Slap realises Mario knows the location of the lost gold. He leads Mario at gunpoint to the foot of the Madonna statue and signals to him to drink a bottle of grappa in the hope of extracting the information while he is drunk. Mario passes out, so inebriated his eyes are partially open. Bitter and malicious, Devil

Slap urinates in his eyes and leaves him on the mountain (2002, 425-426). The fact that this startling chain of events filled with violence and rage unfolding under Mario's opus of mercy is another clustering of Italian indices relating to religion and morality. That van Heerden draws on these may be another example of established connections or clusters of ideas. The term 'Italian', far from being an innocent category of nationality, has particular connotative capacity in the South African imagination.

The Yearonenders watch carefully for signs of sin and, while both the blighted ones are assumed to have sinned, the spotless behaviour of Mario, and possibly his association with Karel Bergh, necessitates a shift in focus to Lorenzo Devil Slap.

> *Mrs Pistorius, immaculately dressed as usual, graced the pavilion with her two giggling daughters, who blushed and twirled their parasols on the step below her. She was looking for an Italian who could cook with passion but who could also drive the Ford and prudently ferry her daughters to school… 'And what will you do if he cooks with prudence and transports your daughters with passion?' asked some wag, quite ruining Mrs Pistorius' morning* (2002, 51).

Mrs Pistorius finds peace of mind when Lorenzo steps from the train. She is sure that his birthmark and limp will render him unattractive to her girls. She has, of course, underestimated him and the town cannot help but remember the thoughts they had that first day the Italians arrived, when "The dark Italians' reputation with women and their general exuberance had preceded their arrival by train" (2002, 54). "Dark Italian" becomes a term associated exclusively with Devil Slap through the remainder of the novel. His darkness is at once a racial reference, a reference to his birth and a reference to his unwillingness to turn the other cheek (2002, 210). His birthmark takes on religious and sexual connotations as a sign of

his pride and the scarlet of his passion. The Yearsonenders refer often to the night his pillow caught alight, the fact "Italian passion…is a terrible passion" and that "a certain Mediterranean vigour" had come to their town (ibid.). The dark Italian/s had "lynxes in their loins" (ibid.).

Van Heerden's deployment of the Italian as sexual agent provocateur is not without the awareness of the relationship between the exotic and erotic. He says as much in relation to Lorenzo's realisation that Gwen Pistorius (one of the daughters who needed ferrying) is in love with his stories of Italy and tragedy (2002, 213). There is also a short passage in which Meerlust Bergh, an amputee, considers the relationship between attraction and deviation from the ordinary (2002, 295). Bergh has developed a highly coded use and "flamboyant social asset" of his prostheses (ibid.), with a different leg for each mode of life, one for business, another for wooing etc. With this awareness placed in the minds and words of the characters there is little room for two-dimensional readings of Italianness. Lorenzo's life of frustration and personal pain are played out on the body of Gwen Pistorius, possessing her on all levels as retribution for years of service to her kin, and as we learn more about him, we are able to sympathise (2002, 216). The stereotype of Italianness is, however, precisely what is at play in the minds of the Yearsonenders. Suppressed sexual energy in the town is waiting for a single match, and in the young Italians it sets the town ablaze.

That the entire mythos of Italian sexuality is a construct adopted and used by the collective unconscious of Yearsonend is evidenced by the boundaries within which it is quickly contained. If curtain twitching as the young men parade up and down the streets is a tolerated secret guilt of the girls of the town, then the open liaisons with the brown girls of Edenville is where the line is drawn (2002, 211).

3.2 Bridge-Building and Winding Roads

In his novel Van Heerden treats time as a permeable element. In the discussion above I have identified time as a surrealist element, an aspect of the narrative that is multiple and non-linear, interacting with Yearsonend as a fixed element. Van Heerden allows all of the past and present lives of Yearsonend to exist simultaneously. The Italian POW Mario in this landscape is a figure of quasi-historical, quasi-human character, existing simultaneously in the world of his own memories, the diminishing senses of his body and the cross-currents of time that run through Yearsonend. Nine years after the first Afrikaans edition of van Heerden's novel (seven after the English edition), Afrikaans fiction generates a few more Italian prisoners who, though less numinous, are able to draw on many of the same tropes that formed the character of Mario Salviati. These newer characters are deployed in more prosaic ways, needing little more than what exists within the limits of their character type to fulfil their purpose in the respective narratives. In this section I extend the suggestion that there are a set of baseline assumptions about Italians that reflect a synthesis between received prejudices, mostly religious and political, and the confirmation or negation of these contingent on interaction with Italian POWs during the Second World War. The memory of this has filtered through tiers of memory since the departure of the POWs. That it re-emerges periodically in the public sphere (in this case Afrikaans novels published within just over a decade of one another), and changes with shifting political and societal currents, makes the memory of this interaction more than a side-alley of history, but rather a site of memory. Like van Heerden, the following novels use history and first-hand memory as a springboard for creative work. This in turn feeds into the second-hand or post/memory of the 'Italian POW in South Africa' site of memory. Nora has proposed that one of the criteria distinguishing a site of memory from an historically significant event, other than its adaptability, is that links

between seemingly unconnected things can be made (1989, 23). With this cluster of novels there is a clear internal consistency to the kinds of things said about Italian POWs. This, in turn, matches what is said across a wide spectrum of the living stories about POWs examined in the subsequent chapters, thereby linking seemingly unrelated areas of memory.

As with the analysis of van Heerden's work above, in order for a novel to work – in the sense of delivering an engaging narrative – the reader has to develop an understanding of credible characters and, as stereotypes function on exactly that premise of characters that can be easily accessed, they provide easy access to an entire chain of significance that does not need to be rehearsed in the novel itself. The authors discussed below access these to create a range of Italian POW cameos and silhouettes; small parts in the cogs of an historically based fictional history with varying qualities of difference and detail pertinent to their role in a narrative.

The title of this section, which analyses three Afrikaans novels, refers to thematic and title-related translations of the four works.[34] Bridge-building is both a literal plot line in *Anderkant Pontenilo* (Joubert 2009) and an extended metaphor throughout the trilogy. The title of this first book could loosely be translated as "Across Pontenilo", the name being Italian for the 'Nile Bridge', and refers to the Nile on the farm that the Italians are posted at.[35] The other novels of the trilogy, *Pérsomi: kind van die brakrant* ("Pérsomi: Child of the Barren Ridge") (Joubert 2010) and *Kronkelpad* (Joubert 2011) deal with themes of identity, various forms of imprisonment and the ravages of war. *Kronkelpad* (roughly "Winding Road") draws threads from the previous two novels together and serves as a summation of the inter-dependant lives that the Second World War brought together. Mariël Le Roux's *Die Naamlose* (2010), "The Nameless" (dealt with in 3.3) similarly deals with questions of

[34] Unlike *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati*, the novels discussed here, *Anderkant Pontenilo*, *Pérsomi*, *Kronkelpad* and *Die Namelose*, do not exist in English translation. I am indebted to Zunelle Breytenbach for her assistance in the thematic extractions, and first-language speaker insights into that material from the four novels.
[35] "Beyond Pontenilo" is a possible alternative translation for the title.

belonging and identity, with an almost anonymous Italian POW as the link between past and present, alienation and belonging.

Before an exploration of some of the tropes used to construct Italian POWs in the novels, it is worth situating both the authors and the reception that the novels have received. Irma Joubert's profile as presented by her publisher states that she was a history teacher for thirty five years and that this grounding informs the kind of research she puts into her novels (http://www.tafelberg.com/authors/6791). This along with the fact that *Anderkant Pontenilo* was awarded the ATKV Prize for Romance Novels situates the author and her work comfortably in the realm of Afrikaans historical romance fiction.[36] The acknowledgements she writes at the end of the first novel credit her mother, a young woman in the Second World War, and her uncle, a colonel in the same war, with being irreplaceable first-hand resources for everything from quotidian details to events and the ambience of specific places (2009, 511). The fictional world of the trilogy has its triggers in memory.

Mariël Le Roux's debut novel dealt with the theme of internment in concentration camps. *Wilhelmina: kampkind op Java* (2007) centres on the story of a child in the POW camps set up on Java (present day Indonesia) to hold Dutch nationals at the end of the colonial era following the Second World War (http://www.indischekamparchieven.nl/). *Die Naamlose* was a runner up in the Sanlam-Tafelberg Novel Competition (http://www.tafelberg.com/Books/10525). Both novels hinge on the Second World War as the springboard, if not the actual time, of the narrative.

[36] The *Afrikaans Taal- en Kultuurvereeneging* (Afrikaans Language and Culture Association) awards prizes for Afrikaans language publications of various kinds annually.

3.2.1 The Joubert trilogy: **Anderkant Pontenilo**

The novel *Anderkant Pontenilo* turns on the truism that the relationships made in times of war could not be imagined under any other circumstances. The Second World War moved large numbers of people to places they would not have had any opportunity, let alone the means or desire, to visit in peacetime. The novel brings the stories of two places together. Antonio Romanelli, one of three sons of a sculptor in a small Italian town, is destined to marry Gina, the daughter of Don Veneto. Their nascent relationship is put on hold indefinitely by the outbreak of war and the drafting of men from the town to fight in North Africa.

Meanwhile on a small farm in South Africa, the Fourie family is divided by the irreconcilable political positions of three generations of its menfolk. The sons are against the war and side with the politics of Malan while their father wishes to remain neutral, a Herzog man. Grandfather Fourie supports Smuts and is favour of the war as an ally of Britain. In this complex, highly politicised setting, four youngsters attempt to navigate their aspirations. De Wet, Klara, Gerbrand and Christine each begin their adult lives under the clouds of war and, at least for Klara and Antonio, love is found in the most unexpected circumstances.

This first novel in Joubert's trilogy introduces a number of the main characters in their home setting in the lead up to the arrival of Italian POWs on the farm *Bosveldplaas*. Their characters and motivations are sketched in relation to the war that will eventually bring them together. Joubert achieves this in a way not typical of the novel as a genre, with brief footnotes that flag historical events, movements and concepts. These are more frequent in the initial chapters, as an expedient contextualising strategy, providing another level of depth to the fiction as we see the taglines of history running like news tickers at the foot of the page (2009 7, 14, 27, 34, 38, 94, 95, 168). As letters from the war front become the principle method of communication between the key characters and the main mode of tracking the

war's progress, the footnotes diminish as the lived experience of the war takes precedence over the facts of history (2009 142-143, 153-156, 161, 162-163, 176-177, 188-191, 200-201, 218-219 etc.). Here the seam of writing is revealed in quite a distinct way, the incommensurate worlds of one set of correspondences against a world at war. Between the letters and the footnoted chronology of the war, Joubert is sketching the social frameworks, as she perceives them that inform the love story about to unfold. It also establishes a baseline against which the shifting attitudes of her characters to the Italian POWs can be written.

In the action of the main text the Voortrekker Monument and Afrikaner nationalism are under construction and the Fourie's farm has a male character for almost every contemporary political outlook of Afrikaner South Africa in the late thirties. Grandfather is pro-war and pro-Smuts, Pa aligns with Herzog's desire for neutrality and the sons, De Wet and Boelie, favour active resistance to the war effort. Boelie joins the Ossewa Brandwag and is imprisoned at Koffiefontein. Gerbrand, the son of tenant farmers on *Bosveldplaas*, sees signing up for the army as an escape from poverty. His active service and death bring the war home for a number of characters and impacts their attitudes to the war in general and Italians in particular: among them Klara, a Fourie daughter destined to fall in love with a man who is part of another story on the other side of the world.

Antonio Romanelli is to wed the beautiful Gina Veneto, but the complex internal politics of the small North-Italian town are disrupted by the call-up to serve Italy in North Africa. The rise of Fascism is also presented and we learn that Antonio's brother is in hiding with his Jewish girlfriend.

The Second Battle of El Alamein brings these worlds together when Gerbrand is killed and Antonio captured. As news filters back to their respective homes, Antonio begins the journey as a POW that will lead him to the farm in South Africa, where he becomes involved in the construction of the bridge across the 'Nile'. It is worth noting here that the

idea of bridge-building has significance in the overall site of memory. In the second tier of memory making, by ex-POWs after the war in South Africa at least two events signalled the desire to build bridges of the social kind between the Italian-South African community and South Africans. The first was the Goodwill Festival of 1978 under the direction of ex-POW and president of the Zonderwater Block, Enrico Mottalini (*South African Digest* 1978 and Somma 2008, 76). The second, also presided over by the Mottalini-era Zonderwater Block Association, was the 1984 Goodwill Festival unveiling the memorial on the Du Toitskloof Pass (discussed in Chapter Five).

As the fictional bridge in Joubert's takes shape the initial hostility Klara feels towards Italians is softened and she eventually falls in love with Antonio. In this way her journey as a character is defined by her own shifting concept of what an enemy is. For the most part the Italian characters are rendered in ways that draw directly from some of the main stereotypes, but there are also various specifically South African Second World War perceptions of Italians that find their way into what is said to or about the Italian characters. These perceptions, most probably a combination of the ineluctable influence of one novel on another and the writing from a similar social framework, match those found in van Heerden's novel. But more than that, they reinforce the idea that it is the Italian POW in South Africa as a site of memory that informs all manifestations of fictional Italian POWs; a malleable and intriguing piece of history in which cameos and silhouettes pass periodically across the field of vision and reveal the social frames of that moment in time.

The broadest strokes are to do with food, wine and music. These are used to distinguish the Italians as culturally different from the Afrikaans South Africans in the novel. We hear via letter from Gerbrand in North Africa that, in trading cigarettes for canned rations he encounters olives for the first time and is repulsed, and that there was also wine to trade when Italians were around (2009, 201). Before Antonio arrives on the farm roughly halfway

through the novel (2009, 270-271) there are two Italian POWs on the farm. Guido and Valerio are not developed as characters but serve as 'place-holder' Italians until Antonio arrives to take the action of the story forward. Their quasi-anonymity allows the most general ideas that South Africans held about Italians to emerge on the farm, Antonio can then steer these to foreground or background. They cannot communicate in English or Afrikaans, so as the progress on the bridge comes to a halt, they serve particularly well as the objects of pity for Irene (Klara's sister):

> *"O" sê Irene, "ek dink buitendien dis simpel om oorlog te maak. Kyk nou na die Italianers hier by ons op die plaas. Weet julle, hulle maak sulke mooi musiek in die aande daar by hulle kamer in die skuur, maar hartseer musiek." Sy bly 'n oomblik stil. "Klara, ek is so jammer vir hulle, hulle verstaan nie een woord wat ons sê nie, hulle kan met niemand praat nie, net met mekaar, en hulle is baie ver van hulle huise af"* (2009, 259).[37]

Irene's sympathy takes its cue from the music they make, music of longing that she ties to their longing for home. This is, however, not enough to sway Klara: "*'Hulle het vir Gerbrand doodgeskiet,' sê Klara plat. 'Ek háát die Italianers.'*" (ibid.).[38] In the same letter cited above, Gebrand also mentions their talent for singing (2009, 120). As the trilogy progresses, a love of music takes on greater dimensions and in the final instalment attending an opera in Italy is one of the experiences that brings the events set in motion in the war full circle. For now, the rather two-dimensional Italians that precede Antonio are given humanity through their incomprehensible, exotic music. As in van Heerden's novel, the assumed musicality of

[37] "'Oh,' said Irene, 'I think it's stupid to go to war. Just look at the Italians here on our farm. You know, they make such beautiful music in the evenings in their room in the barn, but it's sad music.' She was silent for a moment. 'Klara, I feel so bad for them, they don't understand a word we say, they can't speak with anyone except each other, and they are so far from home.' (Translation mine).
[38] "'They shot Gerbrand' said Klara flatly. 'I hate the Italians.'" (Translation mine).

Italians is a safe default trait to assign them in this silhouette form, where all that the reader needs is s general outline of Italianness.

Antonio's arrival is the turning point for Klara. Though the gradual and inevitable love between them is crafted and drawn out incrementally and gently, in the best tradition of romance novels, the initial spark between them is clear; at least from Klara's side. Their first encounter is rendered from Klara's perspective via the narrative voice. We know nothing of Antonio's first impressions:

> *By die tafel oorkant hom, met sy rug na die deur, sit nog 'n man, potlood in die hand, effens oor die planne gebuk. Klara sien sy brëe skouers , die opgerolde moue, die sonbruin arms. Sy swart hare krul effens oor die kraag van sy hemp…Dan neem Irene haar hand en draai na die ander man. 'Dis nou my suster Klara wat op universiteit is,' sê sy in Engels. 'Die een wat Italianers haat.' Klara kyk op. Die man se swart oë is formeel, byna uitdrukkingloos. Toe steek hy sy hand na haar uit. 'Antonio Romanelli,' sê hy, 'van Italië'* (2009, 270-271).[39]

Her embarrassment, at having to reconcile her prejudices with the presence of a man she is attracted to, lingers over an intervening chapter (chapter 16 takes place in Italy) and later she is still blushing and bungling her introduction and trying to serve coffee as if nothing has happened. Reference is made again to his dark head of hair, curtly nodding after an awkward handshake, and then his 'rich voice' says '*grazie*' when she serves him coffee (2009, 281-282). Klara's irrepressible reaction, though by no means wild, is enough to set in motion the discourse of mysterious stranger (and he is referred to as 'the stranger' in this section) and

[39] "Sitting opposite him at the table, with his back to the door, is another man, pencil in hand, bent over the table. Klara notices his broad shoulders, the rolled up sleeves, his tanned arms, his black hair just curling over his shirt collar…Irene takes her hand and turns to the other man. 'And this is my sister Klara who is at university' she said. 'The one that hates Italians.' Klara looks up. The man's black eyes are undaunted, almost inscrutable. He extends his hand. 'Antonio Romanelli' he says, 'from Italy.'" (Translation mine).

attractive Italian. As with Ingi Friedländer in van Heerden's novel, Klara is thrown off-centre by Italian masculinity, though in the former novel there is none of the physical attraction initially. Van Heerden's novel attaches earthy power to Mario rather than overt attractiveness. In the next section of the present research I explore Lou Jurriaanse's comments on Italian masculinity and beauty. That Antonio cannot yet speak Afrikaans draws their courtship out into a word by word rapprochement and also provides the author with the ability to render Antonio as someone seen by Klara, but not engaged with, thus prolonging both the mystique and charge of their initial meeting.

In all of the novels discussed in this work there is very little departure from received and widely circulated forms of Italian masculinity as promulgated up to and during the Second World War. In her study of Marcello Mastroianni as the first of a new kind of post-war and post-fascist Italian man, Reich outlines the still significant perceptions of Mediterranean masculinity as operating from public displays of honour and good name, underpinning unapologetic sexuality and effortless performance (Reich 2004, 3-4). With their feathers somewhat trimmed by war privations and imprisonment, all of the Italian men in the novels presented here operate from a position somewhere on a spectrum defined by these stereotypes from Mario's earthy sensuality to Antonio's gracious chivalry.

The themes of food, wine, song and romance as attached to Italy are general enough, but there are also a few themes in this novel that I suggest are the result of the particular dynamics of South African and Italian interaction during the Second World War. The first has already been hinted at: craftsmanship.

As an extension of the more general perception of Italian culture as aesthetically sensitive, South Africans experienced first-hand the results of the special relationship between the craftsman and his metier. Countless ornamental fountains, pieces of furniture and stone buildings scattered around the country attest to this, and can be thought of as being

distinct from the equally impressive construction works, some, but not all of which, are noted for the quality of craftsmanship. The centrality of craftsmanship as a binding force between the dreams of South Africans and the know-how of Italians is rendered similarly in *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati* and *Anderkant Pontenilo*. As with Mario Salviati and Big Karel Berg, so it is between Antonio Romanelli and Boelie Fourie: the forging of an alliance between Italian men and South African men happens when the latter see in the former the capacity for craftsmanship that stands between him and the final taming of Africa. This process is repeated once again in *Anderkant Pontenilo* when Antonio acknowledges to the architect Moerdyk that Romano Romanelli, supervising sculptor of the marble friezes that adorn the Voortrekker Monument, is his uncle (2009, 330). Antonio himself is an aspiring architect and in some ways this removes him from the 'consummate craftsman' theme. As if in recognition of this gap in the thematic spread of associations with Italians, Joubert defers this quality to the secondary characters Guido and Valerio, who are able to dress stone beautifully but unable to build the bridge in the babel of *Bosveldplaas* (2009, 283). Mario helps Karel Berg apply the Bernoulli Principle to watering Yearsonend and Antonio helps Boelie span the Bush Nile.

Another theme that emerges directly from the historical scenario is that South Africans were brought face to face with the ethics of POW captivity because there were Italian POWs in South Africa but also South African POWs in Italy and Germany. Naturally, comparisons were made between conditions, and it is given to Gerbrand to bring this subject into the ambit of the novel. It is significant that Gerbrand raises this. In the novel his words acquire weight following his death. His sacrifice serves as a moral compass for many of the characters, especially Klara, and in his expressing his hope that the South Africans are treating the Italians better than the Germans are treating the South African POWs is escalated from a suggestion to an imperative following his death. In a letter from Tobruk, he is

reminded of Boelie's imprisonment for sedition in Koffiefontein as he hears of the appalling conditions of the South Africans in German camps (2009, 218-220). His final lines to Klara are that he hopes the South Africans are looking after the "*Itaais*" better, that they weren't too bad and actually friendly (2009, 220). Fussell's comments on the stereotyping that placed national armies (Axis and Allied) on a scale with humanity and ferocity at opposite ends pertain here (1989, 116). Though officially the enemy, the Italians are likeable and it is necessary for Gerbrand to give this veiled blessing to Klara and Antonio in light of his death at the hands of Italians.

One final theme that is specific to Italian POWs in South Africa, as opposed to the more general themes, is that of the POWs as representatives of a certain politics. It is clear that the Fourie house is a complex microcosm of the varying stances toward the war adopted by Afrikaners. It takes Irene to synthesise a few of these into a clean slate for the Italian POWs. To identify this moment we return to the scene in which she cheekily presents Klara as the sister who hates Italians. In this moment she is once again the character who says things she should not, happily bringing the elephant in the room into conversation (2009, 271-271). Following this scene Klara chastises Irene for her betrayal. Irene responds:

> *Dis jý wat gesê het jy haat die Italianers. Jy dink mos die hele oorlog is hulle skuld. Maar Boelie sê dis alles die Engelse se skuld. Hy hou van die Duitsers en die Italianers, want hulle gee die Kakies op hulle herrie. Ek hou ook van hulle* (2009, 282).[40]

It is in the open and perhaps naïve nature of Irene to take the experience of living with Italians in the present over the loss that haunts Klara. It would seem that Irene is allowed to

[40] "It's you who said that you hate the Italians. You think the whole war is their fault. But Boelie says it's the English's fault. He likes the Germans and the Italians because they give the Khakis [English] hell. I also like them." (Translation mine).

pick a set of politics that suits her daily life over an ideological stance that validates her past, as with Klara. The literature on how South Africans and Italians related to one another during the war reflects the spread of open animosity to open warmth that unfolds on the farm in Joubert's novel. From the alliance between Afrikaners and Italians through England as common enemy (Sani 1992, 294, 295; *Captivi Italici in Sud Africa*, Part 4; Carlesso 2009, 66-67) to later suspicions of communism and religious bias under the banner of the *Roomse gevaar* to lifelong friendships like those between Villa and Sonnabend (Burroughs et al. 2005, 30, 34), Prinsloo and his loyal friends (Sani 1992, 298), MacNeill and Pent (Interview 3).

Anderkant Pontenilo features both Italian cameos and silhouettes. Antonio is important to the unfolding of the trilogy, but is not as centrally placed in the events of the war as others. He plays a small, individual part at El Alamein only, as walk-on cameo in the war. Unlike the South African soldier Gerbrand who, we learn in the next novel, builds a bridge in Abyssinia and fights at Tobruk and dies at El Alamein, and whose specific role in the war places him at the centre of a larger historical backdrop, Antonio's war years are spent building a bridge in an historically unimportant place. His cameo in the pageant of the war and the pageant of the Fourie's family story is important, but not easily reconciled with the idea of a war hero. The restrictions of what he can and cannot represent also align him with the design of a cameo portrait; marked as different from the background, instantly recognisable, but incapable of dynamic movement. The combination of general stereotyping and the particular dynamics of South African Italian interaction during the war set the limits of the cameo's frame. Guido and Valerio are closer to silhouettes in their strictly two-dimensional rendering. They are the 'outline' of Italians, whereas Antonio at least has more character.

Between Boelie, Klara, Gerbrand and Irene, questions of loyalty are set up that in the following instalment of the trilogy are transformed into questions of boundaries and belonging. The depiction of Italians in this fiction mirrors the representation of historical Italian POWS in other parts of the site of memory. As in the fiction, the prisoners discussed in subsequent chapters of this research vary in depth of characterisation with the telling of their stories. The Italian POWs in South Africa provides a flexible enough site of memory to contain even the faintest trace that, in the Möbius strip of memory and history is passed back and forth between the ‘facts’ of the past and the improvisations of imagination about the past. In each instance the site of memory responds to the needs of the story-teller.

3.2.2 The Joubert trilogy: **Pérsomi**

Pérsomi is the the second of the three novels by Joubert that deal with the Second World War. The title refers to Pérsomi, daughter of the tenant farmers on the Fourie's land, who is haunted by the question of the identity of her biological father. She is also attracted to Boelie, the eldest Fourie sons, but cannot quite surrender to her feelings for him. This turns out to be just as well, as her high intelligence (a quality also ascribed to her unknown father) leads into a career in law, which in turn embroils her in the cause of the forced removal of Indian merchants in the area. This alienates her from both the local community and Boelie.

This middle novel of the trilogy shifts its focus to the fortunes and mysteries of the tenant family who live on *Bosveldplaas*. Added to Gerbrand who is central to the first novel are his sister, the Pérsomi of the title and their parents Lewies and Jemima Pieterse. The chronology of this novel is noticeably longer than that of *Anderkant Pontenilo* as it encompasses events of the childhood of Pérsomi and Boelie before the Second World War to those of Apartheid – the Group Areas Act features as a plot line, the Sharpeville Massacre is mentioned (2010, 553) as is the beginning of sporting isolation (2010, 561) – and the Cold War – the building of the Berlin Wall, (2010, 554).

On the title leaf of the final book in the trilogy Joubert (2011) indicates that while *Anderkant Pontenilo* and *Pérsomi* can be read independently, the third should be read as the end of a trilogy. This indicates that *Pérsomi* will retell certain key events and character interactions for its own purposes. This is certainly the case for Gerbrand's stories, which are retold in the form of letters to his sister Pérsomi, in a register different to those he sent to Klara that feature in the first novel. The novel as a whole is also much more politically driven as the events that form the characters, from the end of the war into the rise of Apartheid, are more than mere background; domestic politics has real everyday impact in this novel. The research resources listed at the end of the novel (excluding those also used in the other

novels) is the longest of the trilogy. It suggests a closer relationship between the character dynamics and events of moment in South Africa and the world (2010, 571-572). The Italian POWs who inform so much of the first book are almost absent as active participants. However, I have included this middle novel in the present chapter specifically because it is the thematically rich idea of imprisonment set up with reference to the Italians that constantly inflects the story lines in *Pérsomi*. Here it could be argued that a moral is being drawn from the Italian POW site of memory and that this is being deployed to consider other aspects of South African history.

Ideologies form and reform the idea of imprisonment and belonging throughout the novel. We are reminded that for his commitment to the Afrikaner cause, Boelie spends time in the Koffiefontein prison camp (2010, 176) and is later released into a version of house arrest ('*plaasarres*', 2010, 100). The Indian community, particularly the Ismails, are 'imprisoned' by the increasingly restrictive and disempowering laws of Apartheid (2010, 473).

A third kind of imprisonment is implied with reference to Gerbrand in this novel. The first chapter opens with reference to his desire to leave school to work (2010, 9) and through his letters to Pérsomi there emerges the sense that material conditions in the army are better than those he left behind (2010 58, 192). Finally from his first to his last letter the dream of becoming a pilot dominates (2010 59, 191, 204, 213), and this seems tied to his desire to better his life as the bread-winner of his family back home (2010, 220). Gerbrand also states his horror at the idea of being held in a German POW camp, saying he would rather die (2010, 191). Gerbrand's ambition and love of freedom and commitment to doing right by his family are, in the right combination, ingredients for a war hero. For Pérsomi his death lays a strong moral foundation for her own ambitions (she becomes a lawyer), her love of freedom

(she defends the local Indian community) and her commitment to family (she is looking for her biological father).

The motif of bridge-building established in the first novel is echoed in Gerbrand's detailing of the bridge he helps to build in Italian-Somaliland (2010, 122-123). Related in a letter this once again reflects actual events that South Africans were involved in during the war (Orpen 1968, 81-82). It also contains a detail that Joubert acknowledges as one of those from the unflagging memory of her uncle, namely the smaller carrying capacity of the Union's water bottles as compared to those carried by the Italians (2009, 511). Without rancour Gerbrand mentions battle with the Italians and the capture of many Italians and that they constructed a pontoon bridge across the Juba River. Through his letters we hear of him fighting anonymous Italians, living among them as captives making their way to the coast (2010, 174) and eventually news reaches the farm that he has been shot by a soldier whom Klara assumes to be an Italian.

His interaction with these nameless, silhouette Italians and those at home having to continue living with Italians set the tone for the final moral of the trilogy: the idea that war throws people together regardless of background, and that these people continue to create shifting ideas of belonging and identity (discussed below). Another kind of moral being implied is that all people strive for the same things. In this novel Gerbrand mentions the Italians being exiled from their failed colony as the locals establish their freedom, that the Italians help guard their captors who provide them with safety (ibid.). A parity is set up between Italian aspirations and those on the farm and by extension, those of Afrikaners more generally. The Italians serve as a non-South African 'other' against which the Fourie and Pieterse family can, if not compare, then at least mark their own shifting place in South Africa – through the resulting schisms of the Second Anglo-Boer War within Afrikanerdom, the striving for a national identity, white poverty, and pro and anti-Apartheid positions. The

Italian POWs and Italians in World War Two serve as a parallel but non-South African vehicle that attempts to open an objective space in which to consider the Afrikaner across the twentieth century.

These political musings are quite neatly contained in *Pérsomi*, as the next novel uses history to explore political decisions in terms of the personal and moral rather than the legislative and economic, and the reader returns to the concerns of 'small' histories. The winding paths that give their name to the third novel draw on the Holocaust, with Italian pivotal characters assuming their cameo roles. Here Italy itself also enters the picture and is understood by comparison to Afrikaans culture, again, with a redemptive outcome.

In subsequent chapters that deal with the living stories of various Italian POWs there are a number of stories that operate in a similar fashion to *Pérsomi* in this trilogy. The Italian POW in South Africa, as a site of memory, allows for the gaps left by forgetting to be filled with the historical, political and social concerns that dominate the mind of the story-teller. In many instances, particularly evident in the stories of the nameless POWs (Chapter Four), the slightest trace or suggestion of POW presence, even after all details of that prisoner's presence have been forgotten, is the trigger point for musings about other wars, other conflicts, other forms of imprisonment. Rather than being forgotten altogether, Italian POWs linger in the imagination as a cipher for other things.

3.2.3 The Joubert trilogy: **Kronkelpad**

The final installment of the trilogy by Joubert draws many characters and themes to a close, but it also introduces and develops characters that had smaller roles in the previous novels. Marco Romanelli endures a much harsher war-experience than his brother, who found love and a home in South Africa, albeit as a POW. Marco just barely survives the Nazi concentration camps, sent there with his Jewish girlfriend, and returns broken to his family in 1945. His brother invites him to recover in South Africa where it is hoped the dry climate will expedite his healing. In South Africa he meets Lettie Louw, the local doctor who has given up on all hope of finding love. Gradually a deep love develops between them, only to be cruelly cut short by the polio epidemic that claims the weakened Marco. The novel begins with Lettie recounting the war years to a young researcher, itself a reflection on the construction of memory and history, and ends with some surviving characters making a sort of pilgrimage to Italy, the country that shaped their loves and lives.

The entwined processes of history and memory are given a particular centrality in this novel; as the narratives of the main characters from the previous two novels wend their way to resolution and tend increasingly toward reflection as opposed to action, it becomes clear that their individual and community agency was contingent on much broader events, events on the scale of what might be considered history proper. To forefront what it is that forms the imaginary boundary between experience and memory and history, Joubert introduces the process of history making in the opening pages: Rialien Naudé is a second-year history student visiting Lettie Louw as part of a history project (Joubert 2011, 7-11). She is surprised to hear that Lettie knows the the term ‘historiography’ (2011, 8) and then proceeds to question her about things that “Tannie Lettie”, humanised from the more formal “*dokter*” by virtue of her new complicity in the history-making process, can serve as a “primary resource” for (2011, 9-10). Over a cup of tea Lettie steers the young student away from those parts of

history that are either too remote for her memory to reach (the 'rebellion'),[41] too remote from her experience (the daughter of an established doctor was spared the effects of the Great Depression and the problems of 'poor whites') or too painful (the polio epidemic that claimed Marco). She also brings the idea of history in the making to Rialien whose brother is involved in the South African Border War (the book opens in the late 1980s). The brief meeting with Rialien leads on to a reverie in which she wonders how it is possible to convey a time and place to someone so young "*vir die meisie wat eintlik nog kind is*" (2011, 11).[42]

The reflexive capacity given to Lettie as she considers her long life and its relationship to history sets the tone for the novel, in which characters are often given the opportunity to reflect on their own past in terms of an historical context. This is especially true when several characters make a trip to Italy: Lettie, De Wet, Klara, Antonio, Boelie and Pérsomi are drawn into reflecting their past and on their country as they travel around Italy absorbing the architecture and art. The significance of their tourism will be discussed below, but it is worth noting here that Joubert is conscious of universalising much of the characters' life experience. Essentialised aspects of a human condition are pointed out time and time again. The conversations between Lettie and Rialien often segue into sections of the novel dealing with the past and act as editorial pieces, with Lettie actually saying that "*die geskiedenis herhaal homself*" (Joubert 2011, 120).[43] This is in the context of Rialien comparing the picture of Marco just after his liberation from a Fascist concentration camp to photographs of the Second Anglo-Boer War concentration camp survivors (ibid.). Lettie extends the abhorrence of inhumanity to the current Apartheid laws (ibid.). As in the previous novel the point is made that South Africans treated the Italian POWs very well, when Antonio comes to Marco's bedside well-fed and tanned from South Africa (2011, 123).

[41] Which rebellion this refers to is not clear but in terms of events labelled 'rebellions' in South Africa prior to the Second World War only two are possible. The Rand Rebellion (1922) and the Five Shilling Rebellion (1914) (see Callinicos, no date, and Swart 2006, 88-102).
[42] "to this girl who is after all still a child." (Translation mine).
[43] "History repeats itself." (Translation mine).

Marco is drawn into the world of South African-Italian stories when he is encouraged to go to South Africa to make a full recovery (2011, 132).

The ease with which the suffering of Italian POWs in South Africa is routinely overlooked is quite palpable here. The received wisdom, a result of the mythologising of the Italian POW experience entered into jointly by ex-POWs and South Africans after the war (the second tier of memory making) has resulted in a slice of human experience in war, a traumatic experience, being unconsciously shifted over to the other end of the spectrum of war-time experience: not only did POWs in South Africa not suffer, they thrived. The surfacing of this in the realm of fiction, where two brothers, one a Holocaust survivor and one an ex-Italian POW can be physically compared, reinforces this notion: "*Antonio kom aangestap, gesond en sterk van die kos in die suiderland waar hy was, bruingebrand deur die suiderland se son*." (Joubert 2011, 123).[44] A further aspect is that, having explored the general concept of imprisonment through Antonio, the Italian prisoner in South Africa is in some ways passed over for a story of 'real suffering.' If this is the case then why does this character have to be Italian. Why could a Jewish camp survivor not have arrived in Bosvelddorpie? Though the substitution of one character for another in the context of fiction generates another novel altogether, thinking through this particular substitution marks the very point; that the novel as it stands requires a specific collection of signs that only the fictional World War Two Italian could offer. The love interest needs to be a stranger, likeable and in need of help in order to attract Lettie. Being an Italian POW held in South African would not have sufficed in terms of the order of his suffering. So much of what circulates about the Italian POW experience focuses on South African kindness to their wards (Sani 1992, 301) and minimises the early terror and hardship of the 'tendopoli' phase of Italian imprisonment (*Captivi Italici in Sud Africa* 1989, Part 1) not to mention the mixed treatment

[44] "Antonio comes walking towards them, looking healthy and strong from the food he had been eating in the southern land, and tanned from the southern land's sun." (Translation mine).

at various farms (Interview 10, 00:16:36). The author signals a serious recovery from dire physical hardship could only be possible if the sites of imprisonment are Fascist concentration camp or those of the South Africa War. The Italian POW experience does not provide enough memory of trauma to generate a sufficiently broken Marco. Having Marco be an Italian survivor of a Fascist camp allows Antonio to build yet another bridge (that between Lettie and Marco) between two cultures that have already been established. Marco can take on wholesale certain aspects of Italianness without having to develop them. These include his charm and love of music, emotionality, elements that recur throughout his time in the novel.

The love story that unfolds between Marco and his doctor, Lettie, forms one part of the novel. The romance typically attached to Italians that plays out so effortlessly in the romance between Klara and Antonio, is given a more tragic edge in this story. His choice to go with Rachel to the concentration camp defines him as loyal, romantic and brave. His Italianness is of a different sort to that of Antonio and of a kind that allows an immediate connection with Lettie; his surprise at meeting a female doctor is expressed with the Latin quote "*Ex Africa semper aliquid novi*" which she immediately identifies as Pliny the Elder (Joubert 2011, 148). Theirs is a meeting of minds but still one grounded in exoticism of a kind; Marco is Italian enough to cry at the train station when he meets his brother and this is identified as a mark of his Italianness (ibid.). The brothers are observed by Lettie as being "*gevorm uit dieselfde blok marmer*",[45] (a return perhaps, to sculpting and craftsman references) and it is barely two pages from their meeting that Marco makes his first pass at Lettie who defers it immediately by citing his Italianness:

Hy knik gemaak ernstig. "Dis vreeslik. Maar nou ja, as dit beteken ek gaan aandag van 'n mooi jong vrou kry, sal ek my dit laat welgeval." Spot hy met my? wonder Lettie

[45] "made from the same block of marble" (Translation mine), along the same lines as the English, "cut from the same cloth."

dadelik. Maar sy gesig lyk vriendelik, dit lyk nie of daar enige spot in sy öe is nie. "Jy is net so 'n vleier soos jou broer, Italianer," ... (2011, 150).[46]

The second part of the novel provides final resolution for the various characters presented in the trilogy. In order to facilitate this, the characters, those who have survived, undertake a deeply symbolic journey to Italy.

Lettie, De Wet, Klara and Antonio, Boelie and Pérsomi all travel to the country whose role in the Second World War brought them together. The trip offers various resolutions. For Lettie, there is the promise of connecting with a part of the now deceased Marco's early life and the hope of rekindled love with De Wet. For De Wet, he had last come to Italy to collect and almost 'rescue' Christine, whom he later married. Antonio is revisiting the country of his youth with Klara his wife, and Boelie and Pérsomi, though their story unfolded entirely in South Africa, are present to complete the list of characters complement. The case may be argued that they provide a perspective on Italy that comes from those whose story is not so directly entangled with Italy.

There is something of the pilgrimage in the progress that the party make through Italy, one chapter in particular sees them moving from one historical tourist site to the next in Rome (2011, 402-419). At each of these, various members of the group recall aspects of South Africa or of the first time they were first in Italy. In this way the group's South African identity is given strong links to place and significance beyond South Africa.[47]

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[46] "He nods his head, pretending to be serious. 'It's terrible. Nevertheless, if it means I'm going to get attention from a beautiful young woman, then I'll go along with it.' Lettie immediately thinks, Is he mocking me? But his face is friendly, and his eyes don't reveal any mockery. "You're a flatterer just like your brother, Italian,'…" (Translation mine).

[47] Though not within the ambit of the present research, there is an entire mirror site of memory that deserves scholarly attention at some point, namely the site of memory of South African POWs in Italy during World War Two. Similar questions about remembering and forgetting, about memoirs and novels and living stories in Italy would add to theoretical discussion about the relationship between memory and history. The South African presence in Italy at the time is enriched by the fact that active troops, many more than South African POWs were in Italy at the time (See Kros 1992 and Orpen 1975). In my interviews for this research many people who held stories about POWs in South Africa also held stories about relatives in Italy (Interviews 4 and 6).

As the group stands in front of the Coliseum Lettie remarks: "*Dit voel skielik asof die geskiedenis 'n werklikheid word,*".[48] In the same way that past and present are brought together; there is a connecting of Italy to South African as De Wet recalls his own imagining of the past when he first visited Rome in the 1940s. He compares his picture of the roaring crowds to those that filled Loftus when the Springboks played the British Lions (2011, 406). Later, as Antonio talks them through the architecture of the Pantheon, Boelie comments on the "*ingeneursvernuf*" ("engineering expertise"), Antonio recalls that he is sure he was only asked to build the town church in South Africa because he was Italian (2011, 407-408). The influence of Italian architecture on Moerdyk's designs for the Voortrekker Monument is also mentioned, and that monument's friezes are recalled as the group stare in wonder at the Trevi Fountain's marble figures (2011, 410). Italy as an artscape and built environment allows for the group to assess time since their last visit, or for Pérsomi to berate Boelie's good-natured parochialism ('philistinism' is what she calls it), to fit their monument into the world of monuments, to hear their sports crowd in the vacated shell of history's stadium. Italy also helps Lettie face her feelings for De Wet; in the Vatican she offers up a silent prayer to help her get her feelings under control (2011, 424). The Italians, who she notes are not known for being "quiet" or "timid" (2011, 429), seem to be encouraging her to speak about her love for De Wet and, as they near Venice, the Casanova in De Wet becomes bolder:

> *Hy draai sy sjarme oop op my, hy's 'n opperste Casanova, weet Lettie toe hulle stadig die laaste stasie binnetrek. En watter beter plek om Casanova te speel as hier in romantiese Italië?* (2011, 430).[49]

[48] "It suddenly feels as if history has become reality." (Translation mine).
[49] "He's turning on the charm, a real Casanova, thinks Lettie, as they slowly pull into that last station. And what better place to play Casanova than here in romantic Italy?" (Translation mine).

There is one more offering that Italy makes linking the group to a past dream. Marco had always talked about attending an opera at La Scala. As Lettie fulfils this dream, looking at the cheaper seats that she knows he sat in decades before as a student, there is some closure for her and she is free to change her relationship with De Wet (2011, 448-451).

Throughout the novel the war is seen to bring various kinds of people into contact albeit through violent circumstances. This 'moral' is what finally draws the threads together and in front of Da Vinci's Last Supper, a place under threat of bombing in the Second World War, Lettie thinks over the horrors of war and how the war also brought them together (2011, 458). History, memory and the stories of the characters in the trilogy are brought together in sweeping romanticism. In the genre of the romantic historical novel Joubert is free to allow the romanticism to flavour the smatterings of memory she has second-hand from her relatives as well as use the 'facts' of South Africa's role in the war as a setting. Under the "Guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust" on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website, a section entitled "Do not romanticize history". This is based on a concept of and commitment to sacrosanct history that should not be tampered with, an almost diametrically opposite view to that often taken with the Italian POW experience (See website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust, at http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/guideline/). Joubert seems aware of this aspect of World War Two writing generally and places the idea in conversation between Rialien and Lettie:

> *Die jong meisie kyk op, haar oë is baie groot. "Tannie, dis so 'n hartseer storie!" sê sy. Haar gesig word selfs meer ontsteld. "Dis… nee, dis nie 'n storie nie, dis die waarheid?"* (Joubert 2011, 134).[50]

In this final instalment of the trilogy the idea of the past, as existing somewhere between memory and history is dealt with quite directly. In the end the characters can reflect on and change their lives as new possibilities present themselves. They do this through coming full circle with their own stories, at the centre of which is the rich historical seam of the Italian POW site of memory.

[50] "The girl looks up with eyes wide. 'Auntie, that's such a heartbreaking story!' she says. Her face grows even more concerned. 'It's…no, it's not a story, it's the truth?'" (Translation mine).

3.3 **Die Naamlose,** ***Mariël Le Roux 2010***

Carli is raised in a string of abuse-ridden homes. Her alcoholic father derides her mother's Italian ancestry and harbours dark secrets about the death of her mother and a deformed new-born sibling. He is also responsible for murdering a second caring figure in Carli's life, Lena, who worked on the farm and knew of the murder of Carli's mother, Ma Bella and the baby. Dora, who replaced Carli's mother and Lena, was in turn replaced by an abusive minister, the only alternative to a welfare orphanage. Finally, Dora's son Wimpie, one of Carli's only friends, dies as a result of rising racism and anti-miscegenation laws. The farm Grootvlei is a prison that she escapes from as soon as she can. Using the scant information she has about Italy, and scraps of documentation that hold the promise of a new identity, she begins a life-long journey to find a home and a family.

The Nameless is a novel that explores the ideas of belonging and identity from the perspective of a young woman, Carli. Her early life is a series of losses, including the loss of her grandmother, mother, guardians and her first love. The only hope she nurses throughout this childhood is the fantasy of an Italy she has never seen and this imagined Italy becomes the home that she longs for with increasing urgency throughout the novel. Her hope is encoded in the almost magical formula much used by her mother, Ma Bella, the idiom "*Eendag-op-'n-reëndag*" (literally "one-day-on-a-rainy-day"). Similar to the English idiom "pipe-dream", the Afrikaans places emphasis on the remoteness and unlikelihood of a wished-for future. Nevertheless Italy's distance and unattainability in the face of her adversity are part of its attraction for Carli.

The role of Italian prisoners in this novel aligns much more with the idea of a silhouette character. Key to the tragedy of Carli's life is that so much of what she experiences seems to stem from arbitrary misfortune: her suffering is the banal and cruel outcome of

meaningless events that could just as easily not have happened. And this is where the Italian POW has a role to play. Bruno, her grandmother's brother decides to stay in South Africa after the war; he had been held in South Africa as a POW. Thus begins the chain of tragedy in which one catastrophe follows another along tracks that Carli has no control over. Bruno's sister, Ouma Bella, is sent to South Africa to try and break her depression, this does not work and she commits suicide. Her daughter, Ma Bella is trapped in a marriage to the drunkard Wilhelm, who uses her return fare money to buy her a wedding dress instead. The clergyman in whose care Carli is placed is a paedophile. The incoming anti-miscegenation laws push her and Wimpie apart. Each of these isolating and entrapping occurrences compound the arbitrariness of Carli's predicament. They are brought full circle by the fact that the family has an Italian connection which Carli could take up and, in some ways, try to redeem the lives of those who have withered at Grootvlei by picking up at the last place where things seemed to have been better. The formulaic invocation of Italy continues as it is euphemistically referred to as "*annerland*" ("otherland").

Some of the same Italian POW stereotypes that operate in van Heerden and Joubert are used in this novel, and they are used to establish two baselines for the narrative, namely, for the community to have reason to marginalise Carli, and for Carli to have an anchor for her identity that is completely separate from the dysfunction of Grootvlei. The marginalisation of Carli is centred on questions of race, and among numerous cruel comments from her father, at least one makes a clear statement about where he feels Italians are in the racial hierarchy that places whites at the top. Lena, one of the farmworkers, has just been killed by Wilhelm, on suspicion that she is about to reveal the drowning of the '*katkoppie*' (a euphemism for the anencephalic child born to Ma Bella). Her husband arrives to confront him and finds Wilhelm beating Carli. He takes her away and Wilhelm shouts after him:

> *Of miskien is dit glad nie so 'n slegte plan dat jy haar saamvat nie, dan lê sy tog aan die kant van die grootsloot waar sy hoort, daar waar haar voorgaslag uit annerland vir altyd sal lê* (Le Roux 2010, 84).[51]

The big ditch divides the living areas and burial plots of the white and "non-white" inhabitants of Grootvlei. Significantly the remains of Italians have not been buried with those of the whites; Bruno and Ouma Maria are on the 'wrong' side of the grootsloot and Ma Bella lies beneath a tree, where she and the *katkoppie* were hastily buried. Later the *oudominee* gives the reason that it was because they were Catholic, but also quickly turns to the topic of Bruno's alleged miscegenation (Le Roux 2010, 162). The allegation that the 'curly-haired' children in the area are his illegitimate progeny would have been a damning statement for a *dominee* in rural town to make. The double standard applied is clear as Wilhelm's family have ongoing relations with the farm workers. The role of the Italians is once again to allow the revelation of such double standards, a kind of litmus test for what it means to be between discourses or on the outside of the dominant discourse.

When her first love, the mixed-race child Wimpie, commits suicide, after they are discovered, Carli starts to plan her escape from Grootvlei in earnest. The theme of imprisonment is a recurring one, and one of the only things that truly connects Carli to her family. We learn that Bruno suffered a kind of imprisonment by poverty and pride, not wanting to admit his mistake in staying in South Africa (2010 53, 271). Ma Bella is imprisoned in her marriage to Wilhelm (2010, 56), and she speaks of being washed up on South Africa's shores, as from a shipwreck (2010, 45).

Carli is able to project all of her desires on to an imagined Italy because the real link to Italy is so tenuous, Bruno died when her mother was young, Ouma Maria committed

[51] "Or maybe it's not such a bad idea to take her along, then she can lie on the side of the big ditch where she belongs, in the same place where her ancestors from otherland will always lie." (Translation mine).

suicide when Ma Bella was fourteen. Ma Bella lived long enough to plant some stories in her mind and leave her with a magical formula void of actual content. Carli owns the jacket that her great-grandmother made for her grandmother before they left Italy, one of the few objects from *annerland* (2010, 44). She also has the stories and secretly learnt Italian songs that her mother teaches her when they are alone at the riverbank (2010, 44-46). When she becomes closer to Wimpie she shares these with him, and he becomes part of her fantasy of returning/escaping to Italy (2010, 123). When she finds his body she retreats into this fantasy once more, reciting the magical formulae:

> *Ek skuif met my bene onder hom in sodat hy met sy kop op my skoot lê. "Jy moet net warm word," sê ek vir hom, "dit sal help." Ek vryf oor sy lyf, oor sy gesig, oor sy hare. "Eendag-op-'n-reëndag, as ons twee ryk is, vat ek jou saam annerland toe. Ek belowe." Ek hou sy kop styf teen my bors vas* (2010, 231).[52]

She sings him Ma Bella's songs one at a time, exhausting the magical resources that she uses to keep her own hope alive (ibid.). Years after his death her promise to him still haunts her (2010, 241). As an adult she is able to turn her magical formula into reality as she recalls the rest of her mother's advice, about the wooden box that its contents (her Italian passport) will help them one-day-on-a-rain-day (2010, 248).

In this novel the Italian POW experience is a silhouette. There is very little detail about the actual Italian POW for a very specific reason in this novel. In order for the main action of the novel to take place, for Carli to find an identity, she has to have only the slightest clue that there is another way of living other than what her abusive home life and community can offer. The exoticism of the Italian connection, where the language itself

[52] "I moved my legs under him so that his head lies in my lap. 'You must just warm up,' I say to him, 'that's what you need.' I rub his body, his face, his hair. 'One-day-on-a-rainy-day, when we're rich, I'll take you with me to otherland. I promise.' I hold his head tightly to my chest." (Translation mine).

becomes a ritual activity without context, is a perfect example of the ways that the Italian POW site of memory can function. Deprived of real detail or extensive backstory, the Italian POW can serve as the trigger or flashpoint for South African stories. As with van Heerden and Joubert, Le Roux is able to access points of a site of memory, through second-hand memory and half-heard local history, to connect a South African story to a something outside of itself.

The Italian POW site of memory has provided the flashpoint for these three authors to generate unique South African stories. In *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati*, Italian POWs are first presented as a set of stereotypes. Mario, in his silence and connection to other worlds, is the epitome of an outsider who, in the final acts of the novel, redeems all by releasing the town from its own secrets and past. In *Anderkant Pontenilo* Italians are established as a people apart in relation to food, wine, music in much the same way that they are in van Heerden's novel. These stereotypes of the Italian are then given a South African inflection as the idea of craftsmanship binds Italians to the project of infrastructural development by Afrikaans South Africans. The parallel between the imprisonment of Italians and other forms of oppression is emphasised. *Persómi* carries this idea forward and adds to it reflections of the position of the Afrikaner over the course of the twentieth century. *Kronkelpad* rounds these musings off with reflections on ideas of universal humanity, the tragedy of war and questions of what counts as memory and what counts as history. Le Roux's novel offers another way into the Italian POW site of memory by giving a child's perception of a foreign culture and another family as root and ground of her quest for identity. Her search for a name is significant for what it revels about how the idea of the Italian POW can be used. As the repository of memory shifts from the living memory of veterans, ex-POWs and South Africans to archives and second-hand memory, the potential

for the site of memory to be used for wider reflection and as the source and resource of story-telling increases.

The last two stories related in this section on fiction, analysed below, are drawn from interviews I conducted in Limpopo. I have grouped them with these novels to demonstrate the similar processes at work in developing fully formed fiction and generating stories about Italian POWs. Both of the stories below could have been placed in any of the chapters which follow. They contain material about named and nameless Italian POWs, but it is their value as stories that warrant their inclusion here. The lines connecting them to POW history are very thin, in the case of Nipper the idea of the Italian POW is tied in closely to his South African father's wartime experience and his own life in Haenertsburg. In the case of the chestnut story related by Barry, Italian POWs are invoked to fill in a blank of the farm's history. As with the novels, the Italian POW site of memory and, to some extent post/memory, in the sense that multi-generational remembering and forgetting are involved, provide a backdrop that offers particular ingredients to South African story telling.

3.4 Nipper's Stories

Nipper Thompson and his wife Sylvia live on their farm Wegraakbosch Organic Dairy in the Cheerio Valley, Magoebaskloof. I interviewed him on the recommendation of a number of locals who had indicated that, being part of a family that had been in the area for some time, he would have a good grasp of local history. The early morning interview in his kitchen included input from his wife Sylvia and, as part of an audience for his stories, houseguests who had come in for breakfast.

Nipper is a natural storyteller and clearly enjoys sharing humorous stories. His specific talent for recombining elements of a story in service of a narrative with a 'punch line' provides opportunity to analyse some of the tacit assumptions at work in his perception of POW history. With the exception of a brief reference to Giuseppe Pent (Interview 4, 00:04:30), the only Italian POW remembered by name and deed in the town, and Giuseppe Mascata, who he thinks may have been a POW (Interview 4, 00:07:12), the subject of Italian POWs is a trigger for a number of stories relating to Italians and POWs, but not necessarily Italian POWs.

The interview with Nipper was framed as an enquiry about Italian POWs in the area. In his response he mixed narratives that dealt with prisoners of war, both Italian and South African, as well as narratives about the Italians as a people, distilled from ideas about Italian POWs, Italians he knows and Italians that his father knew. Nipper's stories were constructed through cross-referencing these threads of inter-dependant sources for his stories and this is how the comedy in his stories is achieved. There is *a priori* knowledge required about Italianness and about POWness that must carry across the vignettes for them to function as entertaining stories. In no particular order, he weaves the experiences he has had with local immigrant Italians with his father's stories about his experiences as a South African POW in

Italy. There are also his father's stories about Italians in South Africa. These different levels of experience and second-hand memory adopted from his father form the frame of reference for things both Italian and POW in his stories.

The entire interview consists of two quite clear kinds of discourse from Nipper. There is his verbalised thought process searching for details of names, places, things and events relating to Italian POWs. This information is usually attached to a references to someone else in the area, or related to families that have moved on from the area (the Rechs, Murrays and Baragwanaths are mentioned). This is also the level at which his wife Sylvia contributes, supporting and offering detail corrections. The second kind of discourse is the funny story. Nipper signals these at a number of points in the interview with some version of "there's a story" ("there was a guy" at 00:01:51, "there's a story" at 00:04:05, "There was another interesting story" at 00:12:23). I have extracted these stories here and, conserving their chronology, traced a line from the memory of his father (who remains unnamed throughout the interview) to his own experience.

N: Yes, Stockholm Syndrome, I think there was actually quite a lot of that in the area as well, because my old man was in an Italian prisoner of war camp, he loved Italians –

D: Oh, he was in an Italian prisoner of war camp there?

N: Ja, he says the best time of his life, is when they escaped from prisoner of war, out of the prison. Hell, it was actually quite hectic, they were in a, they built a prison in an old dry river bed, so it was quite sandy. You know, they didn't want to use up valuable, fertile land. And they actually would dig and the sand would sometimes collapse on their back and they would have to wait for their friends, he said –

D: They were tunnelling out?

N: Ja. And they actually didn't even have to use the tunnels, the Italians capitulated or whatever and they just left the gates open. And the guys just walked out. And so he went from one side of Italy and they walked right across and they heard no, no, no the Allies were the other side [laughs] –

D: And they had to walk back –

N: And he said it was the best – (Interview 4, 00:00:00)

The first comment that Nipper makes, right at the beginning of the interview, is that he thinks his father had a case of Stockholm Syndrome, where a captive comes to identify with and even side with their captor. This was said partly tongue-in-cheek, as Nipper is aware that it must have been a very difficult experience at the time (he understates this by describing it as 'hectic' and singling out the misinformation that sent his father from one side of Italy to another). His father's attempted escape, release and subsequent adventures criss-crossing Italy in search of Allied troops all signal the shift in his perception from Italians as captors to Italians as helpful friends in the adventure of finding the Allies. Nipper remembers some specific details of his father's story. Such as his father staying with charcoal makers in a forest, of very poor people sharing what little they had with the South Africans.

N: Ja, well he loved them there already, because they just looked after them you know, they had the clothes on that they had. Anyway, so when he got here there was a guy called, I can't remember his name, but they used to go drinking together and one day they were coming back and they saw an ant bear, I don't know if you know what an ant bear looks like? It sort of looks like a pig. And my father said "Hey! There's an ant bear." And this Barney or whatever his name was said "A bear! A bear!" [All laugh] Look, he wasn't very sober at the time [all laugh]. (Interview 4, 00:01:40)

Having established the serious tenor of his father's own POW experience, Nipper's next comment shifts the tone. We are still talking about Italians, having established that his father loved them. What follows could be read as what it was his father loved about them, to which end a drinking story establishes camaraderie and legitimised space for odd behaviour. The ant bear story, obviously well known to those who know Nipper (Sylvia, his wife, asks if he has told me the ant bear story at about 00:13:50), turns on the over-reaction of the Italian drinking buddy. Part of the humour is that it is a story about drunkenness and part, I would suggest, is about the over-reaction. This tendency to over-reaction is a core element of POW stories told by people in this particular family. Nipper's aunt, Gub Turner, uses a similar mode of story-telling when good-naturedly sketching the verbose and expressive Italians in her husband's stories about them (her payoff line to a story about stolen bread is to ape an Italian shouting "mamma mia!" (Interview 6, 00:55:00).

The next vignette offered by Nipper returns to a story he had heard about Augustino Rech, one of the immigrants living in the area. The story takes place in Italy before Augustino had arrived.

> *N: He's a carpenter ja. He does beautiful stuff, ja. I mean there's a story about Augostino. He was shoeing a horse this was in Italy, he's shoeing a horse there. You know you work looking, you don't look where the horse is. And he's holding the hoof like this for the vet to actually knock on the shoe, and the horse bites him on the back. So he just turned round and he hits it and the horse collapses, just is out hey. So the owner of the horse is mad hey, but he saw those big hands of Augustino [all laugh] and he didn't know [all laugh] was in a bit of a tough position.* (Interview 4, 00:04:00)

Nipper moves from an acknowledgment of the skill of Augustino as a carpenter to an illustrative story that reflects on his skilful hands as instruments with the kind of primal power and presence that feature in stories about Secondo Rech. In the story Augustino is a skilled craftsman, making beautiful things, a useful assistant, shoeing an animal, and a force to be reckoned with, felling a horse and scaring its owner.

Both stories have their origin in Italy, one his father's and one his own, though the latter takes place in Italy. The next brings us to South Africa, as he recalls another local Italian who may or may not be a POW. This is Giuseppe, who has for many years worked for Peggy Murray.

Giuseppe is also credited as a skilled grower (Gub Turner speaks of him as a farmer, Interview 6). Conferring with Sylvia, Nipper recalls that the 'deep trenching' he did for his avocadoes, evidently not a standard method at the time, was the secret behind their success.

> *N: Because, Giuseppe, I mean he would do incredible things, apparently make like for each avo he would dig a huge hole and do a deep litter and, what do they call that Syl? That type of, where you put stuff –*
>
> *S: Trench.*
>
> *N: Trench, deep trenching. And he'd produce incredible avos. And subsequently we've heard that, if you don't want phytophthora in avos, you must actually get the other good, it's a fungus* – (Interview 4, 00:10:09)

This Italian, potentially a prisoner, who lived in the town after the war, had ideas that differed from local practices, in this case something that they would only come to realise as valuable later. The next story is one of his father's again and shows how South Africans also had

knowledge and skills that came in useful to the Italians. This encounter is between Nipper's father and some escaping Italian POWs:

> *N: There was another interesting story. My old man was up in Zim, it was Rhodesia then, and um they were driving from um Fort Vic up to I don't know Umtali and there was a prison, you know they'd interred these guys there. And these guys escaped and were trying to walk through to Mozambique, which, apparently I think they would have been safe there –*
>
> *…*
>
> *N: And they went through lion territory and all that [laughs] and these, no he said it was near Lundi, Rundi River whatever it was, that they picked these guys up, and there's lion and elephant there. They picked these guys up and Clifford, you know, he said jeez, he said they said no, they want to go back to the camp where they've just escaped from. And he said no* kak *man, we'll help you, we'll –*
>
> *…*
>
> *N: Um [chuckles] they reckon no, no that place is a lot, lot safer than being outside with the lions and everything [chuckles] they reckoned* Here *this is hectic. They hadn't slept for days, sort of hanging on to trees – [all laugh]* (Interview 4, 00:12:23)

Here Nipper's father and a friend help Italian POWs escaping to the free ports in Mozambique. As locals they have transport and a better sense of the lay of the land. That the Italians are scared of the lions is in some ways a continuation of the fear articulated in the ant bear story.

Nipper then mentions some sites around the country as I tell him more about the project (Montagu Pass for example) and then mentions Casa Clavella, a small hotel that was

built by Italian POWs in the area, bringing us back to the topic of local Italian POWs (Interview 4, 00:14:00). A key salient trope of Italian POW discourse occurs here as he describes the fine craftsmanship. Neither of these two fragments are stories of the kind that Nipper constructs elsewhere in the interview. In the overall scheme they seem to be fillers between the main events of his story-telling. In them he defers (to general complimenting of their work in the first and Gub Turner in the second).

The return to a complete story with a set up and punch line is signalled by "N: Look, I don't like all Italians" (Interview 4, 00:17:21). Nipper draws the listener's focus with a statement that seems as if it going to disrupt the hitherto seamless narrative of good, hardworking Italians that are funny. He continues:

N: ...Enrico, gave me a thing for sharpening a scythe you a scythe –

D: A device?

N: No it looks like a koevoet the head of a koevoet I'll show it to you come have a quick look [get up to go] and then I said to Enrico, I said do you use a ball peen hammer to? "Oh! You should have been drowned at birth!" [Chuckles] How can I like the guy? [All laugh] [Outside, discuss Emilio selling up to go back to Italy at some point][Walk to the dairy].

N: [00:19:15] You see you sharpen those things.

D: Ja, a scythe.

N: Those blades. Which is quite interesting, you sharpen it by hammering.

D: On that, with the edge on that?

N: Ja, you're actually stretching it, you making it –

D: Ah, I see.

N: Um, so Enrico gives me, this is the one, I should have been drowned at birth, just because I suggested a ball peen hammer. [Both laugh] God. Porco dio!

The story is in fact a continuation of both the theme of over-reaction and the theme of funny Italians and their different ways of doing things. The emphasis on both excess and difference is expressed by Nipper by his use of a common Italian blasphemy "*Porco dio*" (roughly equivalent to "goddammit"). To inhabit the language of Enrico is a form of expressive identification employed to round the story off. It also, through signalling some insider knowledge of the language, indicates that Nipper shares some of his father's fondness for Italians. The final story related in connection to Italians is Nipper's own. This is the story of the cheese business on his own farm:

N: And we make cheese here. And it's actually Italians [unclear] it's actually old Helen and Aldo that um they're probably one of the best driving forces for us to go making cheese. They came, we were just doing a little bit in the kitchen, and they came one day, and they asked to see where we store our cheese. And they'd go and select out the ones that really looked dodgy. Old Helen would say Here hierdie ding ruik soos poep! *you know.* (Interview, 4 00:19:54)

The reference is to an Italian immigrant and his South African wife who, in selecting the most pungent cheeses, changed the way that Nipper aged and marketed the home-made cheeses he produces. Following the interview he showed me the extensive ageing processes and principles that they now work on. Like the provenance of the chestnut groves, in the story that follows, there is an Italian link driving the cheese production that centres on different tastes and the value of that for small-scale farm produce. Again, Nipper achieves a kind of

full circle effect by telling the story of the cheese as starting in their kitchen, getting the stamp of approval from an Italian and yet still seeming strange to a South African. Another layer to this particular story is that the Helen in question is described elsewhere as "almost more Italian than him almost" (Interview 4, 00:05:35)

As separate stories, these stories emerged through the course of the interview in the fragmentary and apparently haphazard way of wandering through knowledge and memory on a subject that is not an everyday one. Evidence for this is that in between the stories, that stand as complete in terms of beginning and end and a clear structure holding them together, there is a great deal of second guessing of his knowledge about the Italians past and present in the area. This is precisely because he does know them so well, that the details of their arrival in the country, as immigrant or POW are not always clear when set against the years of interaction he has had with them. This is also in evidence when he relates things about the Italians that his father knew. However, when extracted from the flow of conversation there is a noticeable symmetry and even-handedness to the delivery of stories that are Nipper's and those that are his father's. The place of Italian POWs is found between the gaps of clear memory and the headlining stories that Nipper is able to produce in answer to the topic of Italians and POWs.

1. Father's story in Italy – Stockholm syndrome, his father's greatest adventure and hardship. Italians were kind to him.
2. Father's story in South Africa – On return he befriends an Italian and they encounter an ant bear. The Italian hears 'bear' and is scared witless.
3. Nipper's story in Italy – Augostino Rech, a carpenter, knocks a nipping horse to the ground.
4. Nipper's story in South Africa – Peggy Murray and Giuseppe Mascato. This Giuseppe had great success with avocadoes because of techniques only he used.

5. Father's story in Africa – His father encountered escaped POWs in lion country in Rhodesia. He helps them.
6. Nipper's story in South Africa – Enrico Usseglio's over-reaction.
7. Nipper's story in South Africa – His own cheese business and the 'driving' force of Italians.[53]

As Nipper moved between sharing his knowledge of the local Italians in terms of details and who lived where, he had related the stories above in the order given. The beginning point was two successive stories from his father, followed by two stories of his own. Each of these was either a story from Italy or a story from Africa. A theme that emerges is that of mutual help. The original acts of kindness at the hands of Italian civilians are matched by his father later in his assistance of Italian POWs in Africa. Another mirror effect is that the first and last words on the subject of Italians have to do with their generosity of spirit in Italy toward his father, and in South Africa in encouraging the cheese business. The weighting of stories also shifts from those in the remote past, from his father, to those that he himself has heard or been part of. Thematically, key qualities that Nipper ascribes to both the category of POW and the category of Italian are carried through many of the stories. The essential goodness, the kindness that the Italians show and engender from him and his father is clear. It is tempered only by the sense of power communicated in relation to Augustino. This leads to the next theme, which points up the difference of Italians as perceived by Nipper. And this he expresses in two ways. The first is the excess of reaction seen in the horse-shoeing story, the ant bear story and the scythe-sharpening story and the choosing to return to a POW camp, all of which hinge on an over-reaction to a situation. The other manifestation of excess are the deep-trenching for avocadoes and the seeking out of ripened cheese. These are credited with being excessive but ultimately logical and even useful aspects of Italian savvy. There is also

[53] Two further story fragments emerge right at the end of the interview and are related to things said by two Italians. They do not have the same direction and arrival point as the stories listed here and so are excluded from the list. They are addressed in their own right below.

an underlying theme of fear that runs through many of the stories, that faced with the creatures of Africa, from ant bear to lion and elephant, the Italians' courage wavers.

Seen in their chronological order, as almost triggering one another in between the ostensible 'work' of information sharing in the interview, Nipper's stories map out a world filled with entertaining cameo appearances by whimsical and kind Italians. This was certainly the dominant narrative at work, although when we left the house and were talking at the dairy, Nipper related two fragments of stories, improvised conversations between himself and between two Italians that attempt to break the romance of Italianness he has established.

> *D: So they got, they just got stuck in with a whole lot of new enterprises –*
> *N: Plenty, ja, like I don't know if you chat to Enrico about, um, you say to him jeez, you know, what about chestnuts. And he'll reckon jeez, he had to survive on chestnuts, he hates chestnuts* – (Interview 4a, 00:00:28)

> *N: Old Secondo reckons he's going to butter this guy [Sacco] up, you know he wants to go walking over his farm and all this. So he speaks to him all lekker in Italian. Huh. And old Sacco just told him to fuck off in Italian. [Both laugh]* (00:01:23)

Both stories lack the full commitment and drawing out that Nipper and his father's generous characterisation of Italians had, but they do reveal an attempt to break the spell of romanticised Italians. Here we have an Italian rejecting, outright, the pernicious chestnut that so many are ready to ascribe to them as foreigners' food (discussed below), and we also have two Italians, engaged in the "lekker" activity of a shared language, missing the mark of mutual understanding completely.

These aside, Nipper's cameos are set up in a mirror fashion. For every cameo of a Italian fish out of water, there is the mirror cameo, with colours reversed, of his father in Italy. For the story of his father's local knowledge saving the day, there is a story of Italian know-how changing something in Haenertsburg. Though many of these cameos have faded to silhouette, there is still a clear sense of the outline of recognisable Italianness and a shared sense of what it means to be a POW.

Nipper deftly uses the faintest traces of POW history to relate a set of stories that locate him and his father in their community and in Southern Africa. His access to the tiers of memory is through what he was told by his father and he has tied these into the things he knows about the non-POW Italians he lives with in Haenertsburg. The Italian POW site of memory serves local and familial story telling for Nipper.

3.5 Chestnuts

Barry Dickinson and his wife Margaret manage Black Forest Mountain Lodge, just outside of Haenertsburg, Limpopo. They are relatively recent arrivals to the area and Barry suggested to a colleague of mine that he thought the large chestnut grove behind their home might have been planted by Italian POWs. The reasons why he thought this reveal some important aspects of the presence of Italian POWs in the South African imagination. Also, though I had stated my interest in Italian POWs, Barry made no distinction between Italian POWs and Italian immigrants. Again, this reflects the almost seamless lines between the manner of arrival of Italians in the town and the choice to stay that has sealed their bonds to each other and the place. This was the first formal interview in the area, and I took the opportunity of speaking with a local to plot out the connections between some of the names that people had suggested to me. Most of the interview was spent in working out the relations by marriage and by blood within the local Italian community. A second theme of the interview was the chestnut grove that Barry wanted to discuss with me. I have extracted the main points he and his wife made in relation to the chestnut grove and discussed them below in chronological order. Barry begins to explain his story of the grove by distinguishing between those who eat chestnuts and those who do not and also, who eats them now:

B: …I believe that Italian and Portuguese and folk like that, eat these things.

D: Yes, chestnuts.

B: South Africans in general don't. There's a huge orchard here. I think it was planted because of the community that was here that wanted them.

D: Yes. Ok.

B: We can't get rid of them now, the monkeys eat them.

D: Ja, ja.

B: You know, but I really believe it was done for that purpose for the people that wanted chestnuts and if you look in the area there's quite a few around here, you know. But we have the biggest orchard as such. (Interview 2, 00:03:02)

Italians and Portuguese people are established as those who enjoy chestnuts, that South Africans do not turns out to be a reflection on the commercial viability of the crop as much as an assertion of cultural taste. Monkeys are apparently the only ones eating the chestnuts. Barry's concept makes sense in that taste is so specific to culture, however, the largest number of Italians in the town is the group living there today, unless there were many more during the war, an idea that is unlikely as all evidence points to a small number of POWs brought there by Col. MacNeill.

When Barry asks his wife her opinion she disagrees, suggesting that the orchard was planted with the intention of selling it as a cash crop, to Johannesburg in particular (Interview 2, 00:05:20). They both return to discussing who eats them and Barry recalls that his Portuguese daughter-in-law had brought her parents and they had left with "bundles" of them. This triggers Margaret to mention that black South Africans eat them but will not buy them (Interview 2, 00:06:45).

We now have a fuller picture of how these orchards are used today. Wildlife and local South Africans happily eat what is now an untended crop. The final piece to understanding Barry's theory is that he has seen Portuguese people treasuring them and that he and his wife have a vague recollection of another Italian in area keeping an orchard.

M: I think they, it might be him that also, but someone, one of the Italians tried the chestnut, but South Africans. Even if you go like we've got this huge big vegetable

> *place, it's an absolutely, it's a dream of a place, they sometimes even try to sell them, we've tried. When we first came here we thought, we would resurrect the crop. And one year we picked and we packaged and we had stalls in town and we tried the local grocery –*
> *B: They went mouldy. Folk, it's not a crop. But the, our daughter-in-law is Portuguese, she brought her parents here, they went home with bundles. They love it as well, it's their food.* (Interview 2, 00:06:30)

The forging of a connection between the failed resurrection of the crop and the Italian POW era is a telling one. I would suggest that the attempt to reconcile the failure of a commercial venture with the continuing evidence of the potential for that venture provides a strong reason for drawing on the past and imagining a time when the trees were valued and why there are a number of orchards around town.

The Italian POW history of the town is kept in circulation by the presence of Italians in the town today and forms part of people's everyday knowledge. There is a blurred line between the POW Italians and the immigrant Italians precisely because people like Secondo Rech (discussed in Chapter Four) were immigrants who were interned as opposed to captured soldiers who became POWs. So, for Barry, the continued presence of Italians is a reasonable explanation for an established but useless orchard. He has seen southern European people enjoying the crop after all. Like the Italian POWs, the orchards cannot be explained but also cannot be forgotten. Unlike other crops, an orchard remains unless consciously removed from the soil. Every day, the continued presence of the orchard requires an explanation, and the remote past of the town provides an alibi in exotic people who tended these trees for their own sustenance.

A longer memory finally offered some clarity on the chestnut grove and why it was there. Far from having anything to do with the local Italian community, the grove was set up by Gub Turner, who had planted it in the hope of raising a crop (Interview 6, 00:49:00). Others tried to sell to the local community and some Italian-South Africans did begin to plant on their own farms. It is a feature of the post/memory of Italian POWs in South Africa that between the time that they were in Haenertsburg and the moment at which it is time to explain an old chestnut orchard, the two foreign visitors should be tied together in a story that is not entirely false and not entirely true.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen van Heerden engage the Italian POW in South Africa as a flashpoint for imagination, using individual memory and the very real historical attitudes of a fictional community to represent a place and the changes to its social dynamics over time. In doing so his novel highlights what a site of memory can do: Mario Salviati's changing social status mirrors changes in South African society. Joubert engages the Italian POW site of memory by using social frameworks of the early war years to set up an unlikely romance in *Anderkant Pontenilo*. Her use of the site of memory is far more prosaic than van Heerden's because its express purpose is to maintain the allure of stereotype in the interests of developing romantic character. In *Pérsomi* the site of memory is a backdrop for musings on the idea of freedom and what it can mean in various contexts. Here the Italian POW site of memory is reduced to s silhouette, clear, but without detail, it is juxtaposed with other forms of imprisonment, or the absence of freedom. *Kronkelpad*, the final novel in the trilogy uses the site of memory to reflect on history and war. Italian POWs provide her with a second, foreign but familiar cultural subject to explore distinctly Afrikaans South African historical experience. Le Roux uses the site of memory to construct a fantasy goal for a child at odds with her social context and personal identity. Finally, Nipper's stories and the chestnut vignette show how slivers of POW history become touchstones for other parts of family or local lore.

Together, the fictions presented in this chapter confirm the idea of the Italian POW site of memory as ripe for exploring South African history. They demonstrate the availability of the site of memory to adaptation. Changing social frameworks can be mapped retrospectively from the perspectives of the present. This act of post/memory reveals a seam that binds stories of family and farm to global events of the Second World War, but also to

contemporary notions of identity and history. In doing so the thaumaturgy of representing history is carried through to fiction writing, where both work at "reinforcing desiderated narratives" (Byatt 2008, xviii).

This then ties directly into the overall aims of this research, to unravel the story telling on the surface of contemporary memory in a way that reveals multiple-tiers of memory making. Complicating over-simplified, or monolithic South African histories by demonstrating the variety of ways in which historical 'irreducibles' can become the springboard for creative work. These creative works – whether they serve as meditations on art and beauty in post-Apartheid South Africa, or fire the romantic imagination, or help to explain the place of a family or an orchard in a specific locale – work their way into the Möbius strip of history/memory, until the distinction between the surfaces of memory and history are indistinguishable. In the following chapter I am going to pick up on the kinds of manifestations of this Möbius strip, the story related by Lou Jurriaanse has an explicit link that connects a piece of published fiction to a family story, in a move similar to the way Barry and Nipper connect their lived stories to things that they have heard about Italian POWs.

Chapter Four: Named Prisoners of War

In this section I explore three stories that relate to specific POWs, and relate these to the overall site of memory of Italian POWs in South Africa. There is a distinct quality to stories that centre on an individual POW. Firstly, they are stories that maintain a direct line through all tiers of memory making. That is, a person who was there has passed on aspects of his experience and this has filtered through subsequent moments of memorialising and rediscovery all the way through to the moment of the interview. In each of the stories presented in this section, a specific POW has set a tone for memory, parts of this have survived and others have been lost.[54] The is significant in the light of theories of post/memory: where a clear line of memory from the event in the past to the present could potentially exist, there is instead a series of story-telling moments that have all of the adjustments, editing, forgetting and refocusing of memory that exist in the POW fiction dealt with in the previous section and POW stories that are not centred on a specific individual POW dealt with in the next chapter. All POW stories, living stories, fictional creations and silhouette images without specific content, seem to draw from and feed into the same site of memory; an adaptable and flexible structure that modifies with each telling, and in doing so, reveals the social frameworks at paly in any given moment.

[54] Three additional stories I encountered could have been included in this chapter. For reasons of economy, and because key aspects of the excluded stories are covered in detail in this section, I have not analysed them, though the interviews are reproduced in the appendices for reference. They are: Rosa Fardella discussing her father's POW experience (see Interview 12), Rita van der Heever discussing Mr Giobello (sic) (see Interview 7), and Mike Chisin with his parents, Zeppe and Paola, discussing Zeppe's POW experience (see Interview 15).

4.1 Lou Jurriaanse and Trento Ventura

This was the story as we had it

> *You can imagine jy weet, an Italian and a prisoner of war en nog 'n Catholic on top of all of this. You know it's just not on.* (Interview 1, 00:09:13)

> *So he said this will end now. So both of them said this is true love and we love each other and we are prepared to get married. However, during our research we discovered that the prisoners of war were not allowed to get married you know when they were transferred it wasn't allowed anyway but I think that wasn't the issue for my great grandfather. He just said no and you will get off the farm by tomorrow or next week or whatever. He was going to fire him and send him back to Zonderwater.* (Interview 1, 00:09:24)

> *So that night, they stole some poison, this is the way we have the story, and went into the barn and drank the poison together. And when they found them the next morning she was dead and he was a little bit alive. So, my great grandfather nursed him back to health, furious, and then sent him to Zonderwater anyway. This was the story as we had it.* (Interview 1, 00:10:00)

In 1943 Italian POW Trento Ventura changed the course of his life and that of a South African family on whose farm he was working by beginning an affair with the spinster sister of the Afrikaans farmer. The story as related by Lou Jurriaanse, the great-granddaughter of the farm owner, reads as a piece of fiction filled with the high stakes romance and epic scope

often apparent in World War Two fiction. While the narrative is engaging in its own right, the "editing" involved in its forgetting and re-emergence prompt several questions.

My interview with Lou Jurriaanse on 6 December 2010 was the result of two second-hand accounts of the story of Anna Sluiter, the spinster great-great aunt, and Trento Ventura. The first was a recounting of the events leading up to a visit of the Italian family of Trento Ventura to South Africa related by Marietha Smit, mutual friend of the author and Lou Jurriaanse. The second was a discussion with Zonderwater historian Emilio Coccia shortly after these Italians had left. In the relatively small community of Italian POW researchers and enthusiasts this news had spread fairly quickly.

The reasons for this interest warrant some consideration, as do the routes by which it spread. Byatt's 'desired history' is presented at a national level lovingly tended by those with a stake in editing and disseminating the national narrative (Byatt 2008, xviii). Hazareesigh's critique of this approach stems from reservations about the heroic and slightly precious approach of the French to their *lieux de mémoire*, that Nora's sites exclude many of the more shameful moments in the recent history of France (2008, 89, 91). That national history is the story of victors, is well established, but in the case of Lou's story the characteristics that Brink identified, of internalisation, creating a version of the world and, perhaps most important, the embodiment of imaginings (Brink 1998, 38), are all in service of a desired history, the nature of which is addressed below. Certain qualities present in the narrative capture the imagination and support the idea that the Italian POW has a clearly defined place in the South African imagination and that, as a site of memory, this position can change. Indeed, one of the most significant findings in this section on Lou Jurriaanse's story, is that she performs the shifts in perception and political, social and religious positions towards the Italian POW.

The story of Anna Sluiter and Trento Ventura has all the basic elements essential to a historical romance novel, such as those analysed in the previous chapter. First among these is the unlikely pairing, in age and culture they were very different. Anna was in or near her fifties and Trento was around twenty-five years of age. She was a spinster in a respectable family. She was employed as a kind of manager in the medical practice her brother-in-law ran from the farm. Trento was an Italian soldier and a prisoner. The romance in the story stems from their difference, a difference that marks their love for challenge and ultimately tragedy. The presence of poison heightens the sense of crisis in the story as well as drawing it from drama into the more electric world of high stakes associated with melodrama, as does the figure of the tragic heroine. That Anna Sluiter dies and Trento Ventura does not is also grounds for ascribing melodramatic qualities to the story as a whole.

Across a number of media melodramatic plots elements are loaded with features that heighten the emotional charge and regularly include some of the following characteristics that appear in Lou Jurriaanse's recounting of Trento and Anna's story: sensational situations, crises, strained familial situations, victims, couples and sacrificial acts.[55]

In addition to the discursive space generated in the telling of the story there is a single object that ties the story in to another world, that of objects and their role in relation to verification and evidence. Having finally tracked down the family they believed to be descended from Trento Ventura, Lou and her boyfriend, Hennie (who had done much of the groundwork in establishing contact), received confirmation when both sides realised they had copies of a specific photograph. This object, the subsequent history of which will be discussed in more detail below, served as the basis of a new chapter in their connection.

Following my interview with Lou Jurriaanse, a number of questions emerged related to both the narrative itself and the way in which it had become a part of the lived experience

[55] Melodrama has a long history in both opera and theatre. The particular argument being made takes into account salient characteristics of melodrama that have filtered through opera, theatre and film history http://www.filmsite.org/melodramafilms.html.

of Lou and those around her almost seventy years after the events described. First among these is a curiosity as to the reasons for the disappearance of Anna Sluiter from the collective consciousness of the family. Following her death she was not spoken about in any meaningful way until the mid-nineties. Other than the obvious stigmatisation attached to suicide, and the social conventions that she transgressed were so dire as to exclude her from the family narrative for so long, is it possible to read a certain stance in relation to the Italian POWs in her exclusion? Another question relates to the reasons for Lou and her boyfriend Hennie's persistence in following the story until they found a point of contact with the descendants of Trento. If Anna's passions were so carefully silenced, what were the conditions under which Lou had so much permission to uncover and expose them? The defusing of the emotional charge that clearly surrounded the events when they occurred is indicative of a shift that may be more than the effects of remoteness in time. A final enquiry is that relating to the adventure elements in the story as it stands, its transformation into an adventure story. The shifting social frameworks through which the story was filtered over time offer some explanation for this. As the family values transformed, so did the value and focus of the story. The move from a shame (the suicide) to a romantic adventure is evidence of how dramatically the significance of a site of memory can shift in a few decades.

At each point the narrative, receding in lived memory, but emerging as tantalising story, offers fresh perspective on a small group of South Africans' relation to the mystique of one Italian. At various points we encounter the records of a suicide and a soldier (medical and military records), a love story, a melodrama, a detective narrative, and adventure narrative, and finally a 'full circle' narrative about family and belonging.

What follows is an exploration of the material garnered in the interview with Lou Jurriaanse. I have chosen to analyse certain aspects relating to the content and form of the interview in a chronological order, that is, the chronology of the interview itself. This is

because the revelation of ideas by association reveals the web of significance that the story is suspended in for the narrator.

Bloody Italians

With that, let me tell you the story. Ok. About thirteen years ago, it was just after I moved in here, my dad referred to a story of an Italian prisoner or of war. Oh, no let me go back, my dad when he was little they lived on my great-grandfather, his grandfather's farm in Ermelo. My grandfather had studied forestry and my great-grandfather was a keen tree planter. So my grandpa, with his wife and two children lived on my great-grandfather's farm and ran the farming side, my great-grandfather was a doctor and ran his consulting rooms and practice from the farm as well. In 1943 while they were living there they got six prisoners of war to come and work on the farms as they all did. My dad was five and my aunt was one so the story as it happened neither of them could remember they could simply remember the story through having been retold it by my granny or whoever. So in 1943, while they were living there these six prisoners of war came to the farm. And the other four, five have completely paled into insignificance, no-one remembers their name or anything except for Trento. Now there is Trento and that is my dad [shows photograph] and this photograph itself has an interesting story but I'll get to that later. And he was lovely looking wasn't he? So nice. You'll see in the other pictures just now. And he was twenty-five years old and on the farm lived also, with my great-grandparents in their home, Anna who was my great-grandmother's sister, spinster sister, and who was fifty. Which was quite bloody old… It was then hey, you know, and I've seen, I don't actually have a picture of her here although I could find one, but she was old and fat and…not attractive; she really wasn't. And then as I said about ten or thirteen years ago, one Sunday at lunch my dad

> *referred to this story and these bloody Italians you know and this one who'd had the affair with tant Anna. And I said "What?" And my dad said "Yes, this Italian prisoner of war" whose name we thought then, my dad remembered as Trento Vallenti… And this guy had been twenty-five had come there to work and had ended up having an affair with Anna who was double his age. And my great-grandfather who was a very difficult man obviously at the point where he'd discovered this he was horrified beyond description… You can imagine jy weet, an Italian and a prisoner of war en nog 'n Catholic on top of all of this. You know it's just not on.* (Interview 1, 00:06:09)

Here at the very beginning of recounting her story Lou clearly reveals her feelings in relation to the two protagonists. For Trento there is a warm admiration, and in the interview the sense that she was enamoured of him came across very strongly, frequent reference to his good looks and youth are made throughout the interview. For *tant* Anna there is a range of feelings from indifference to revulsion. We are told that Anna is "old", "fat" and "not attractive". In fact, so unkind was the framing of Anna that I found myself trying to regain some ground on Anna's behalf by bringing the topic of discussion back around to her, unsuccessfully. I would suggest that underlying this abhorrence for her kinswoman is a narrative desire to set up a juicy binary that plays out on every level; that the freshness that Trento brought to the farm was met with the decay of age. An extension of this may be the opposition between the ordinary everyday character of Anna, a spinster aunt past her prime and an exotic young Italian. Lou's romanticised 'crush' on Trento needed to have something to stand up against and what better character than the dead ordinary *tant* Anna. Later in the interview Lou reiterates her revulsion for Anna and admiration for Trento in more trenchant terms:

> *Yes. You know what, I liked the story so much, the original story. You know the whole true love thing it appeals to me enormously né? En hierdie hele, the fact that he was young and pretty and, and a prisoner of war and he comes out there, and I suppose it is different in war times, and he has this affair with this fat, ugly, frumpy old Afrikaans chick* – (Interview 1, 00:31:42)

Lou does eventually concede that, despite outward appearances, they may have shared a real and profound love. But this is painfully wrested from her instinctive revulsion at the ordinariness of *tant* Anna.

The significance or degree of importance of this binary between the lovers could be argued, but a few moments later Lou reiterates the more obvious differences, and places them in the mouth of her great grandfather: "*jy weet*, an Italian and a prisoner of war en *nog 'n* Catholic on top of all of this. You know it's just not on" (Interview 1, 00:09:13). Slipping between Afrikaans and English marks a difference in the voice and sentiment she is invoking. For Lou, Trento is a kind of hero, and her descriptions of him are in English. To give us the perspective of her great-grandfather on the whole affair recourse to his language is necessary.

The paternal voice is the foil to her 'crush' on Trento throughout the interview. Before her great-grandfather tells us "it's just not on", we have another typically South African expression that in the mouth of her father gives us a continuity from great-grandfather down to father. At the Sunday lunch where the story first resurfaced Lou's father "referred to this story and these bloody Italians you know and this one who'd had the affair with *tant* Anna" (Interview 1, 00:08:35). The intensifier 'bloody' is a useful expression for the particularly straight-laced and reserved masculinities of many Commonwealth nations. It allows them to express a sentiment but not betray an emotional reaction. As it is a non-specific, non-taboo intensifier, this useful little adjective reveals that emotions ranging from

mild irritation to anger may have been felt but have left the man un-phased and therefore still in control, still manly. And in connection with Italians we can safely read mild irritation as a result of their behaviour but nothing that ever permanently de-stabilised the status quo. This particular bloody Italian did of course disrupt the family but rather than admit it and work through the shame of suicide and an illicit affair, the entire story was hushed up. I would suggest that this bloody Italian is stripped of significance as a serious role-player in the family history through this appellation.

Lovely Italian sort of stuff

> *Ja. Because my great-grandfather was Jurriaanse, as I am, and she was Sluiter which was my great-grandmother's maiden name. Yes, so she is my great-great-aunt. And this is the story as my dad told it, and I said why have you never told me this story before it is so beautiful jy weet dit – it's all about true love and, jy weet if we can't live together we will die together and all that lovely Italian sort of stuff. And my dad said no this is a stupid story anyway …* (Interview 1, 00:10:40)

When the story is revealed Lou immediately wants to know why it was not discussed before. Her father's response is simply that it is a stupid story. By this we can assume that he is referring to the melodramatic elements at play, forbidden love, the suicide pact and poison. I am referring to melodrama here specifically as opposed to drama. And this is precisely what appeals to Lou, the impossibility of it all, the action against all odds. "All that lovely Italian sort of stuff" seems clear enough when she said it to me, but what is it? Choosing death together over life apart is straight out of *Romeo and Juliet*, star-crossed lovers in a fictional Verona caught in the crossfire between two families, but what other 'stuff' would count as

Italian? Each possible quality would have to count as 'lovely' for Lou and 'stupid' to her father, emotional versus rational.

"lovely Italian sort of stuff" vs "a stupid story"

True romantic love – Forbidden love

Forbidden romantic love as special – Forbidden love as dissention

Age difference as special and romantic – Age difference as unnatural

In choosing to side so fervently with the right of Trento to pursue his forbidden and illegal love Lou is making a stand about her own romanticism, and this stand does not exist in a vacuum. Lou is taking charge of how post/memory is framed in her family. The redemption of Trento and Anna is a move toward identifying with a new set of values, different from those prevalent in her own family at the time of the events. As with the novels in the previous chapter, the Italian POW site of memory provides the material and symbolic context for a new story for the Jurriaanses.

Detective work

> *And I said what happened to Trento and he said he doesn't know, Trento was sent back to Zonderwater. And it bothered me enormously, I wanted to know what had happened to this guy. So at that point I tried to do a bit of research I went to the state archives in Pretoria and I tried to find this and that but never anything really and then I sort of forgot about it and two years ago we spoke about it again. And my boyfriend is a very enthusiastic researcher of things. So he said he will find Trento. So he went through every fabulous source; in the process meeting Emilio Coccia and there's another Italian guy in Cape Town called Roberto, [unclear] I forgot the surname. And with all these people and going week after week after week to the military archives and working*

> *through 160 of those boxes. He eventually, because, we knew at this point, as he had done his research, we knew the date of Anna's death. And it's interesting because there are two dates. She has two different dates of death. But she clearly was not dead the next morning when they found her as we had been told in the story. She had only died two days later in the hospital in Ermelo, I'm sure in agony after having drunk poison. And he had obviously not died but we knew those two dates, so we knew that anything that was close to those dates. And we also knew, this we heard from, I think Emilio told us this, that anyone who was called Trento would have been born in November of 1918, because that is when the town of Trento in northern Italy was freed from the Germans, by the Allies. So, in November of 1918 lots of little boys were called Trento so it was most likely that his birthday was middle of November 1918, which indeed it was, but at least we had an idea of his birthday, we thought. So then Hennie went and eventually found an article…* (Interview 1, 00:10:40)

The next section of Lou's narrative recounts the clue by clue uncovering of Trento's identity. The main difficulty in tracking his POW records was the confusion around his last name. The detective work involved immersion into the minute details of prisoner of war records, hospital records and even naming traditions. Again, the struggle against almost impossible odds (there were almost 100 000 Italian POWs in South Africa over the course of the war) is central to the very romantic drive behind the narrative. Lou's description of Hennie going "through every fabulous source" clearly positions the experience as a pleasurable though demanding one. This particular construct and its connotations seem to highlight the desire element in Byatt's 'desired history' as it captures the frisson of discovery and adventure in the process of revivifying the past. It is also a moment of thaumaturgy in the Noranian sense.

Like the historians who aim for representation of the past as it recurs in the cycles of memory, Lou is polishing up the cameo appearance of Trento Ventura in her family history.

How to drink poison like an Italian

> *…So, he found a report, a military report, written, beautifully hand-written and the re-typed in both Italian and English of two days after the incident with Anna having died, at the Zonderwater prison. Now somewhere along the line someone had said to us that he would probably have been sent to the psychiatric ward because apparently if, as a soldier, you try to commit suicide it has to do with damaging state property which is not allowed, so you then go for observation. So he went for observation to the psychiatric ward, but obviously he wasn't crazy; he was heartbroken and had tried to commit suicide – [giggles] – although when we met his son-in-law much later the son-in-law said, you know how an Italian drinks poison? No. He says like this. [She relished this demonstration. Taking a sip of wine and then spitting it out to the side almost as soon as she has it in her mouth]*. (Interview 1, 00:13:50)

The bubble of Trento's nobility is first broken for Lou by a member of his family, his son-in-law. It is in this exchange that some of the tropes of Italians in the Second World War emerge. It has been noted by Fussell (1989, 115-129) that both Allied and Axis powers rated the key nations participating in the war along lines determined by typecasting and stereotype. Key among these was the perception of Italians as ideologically flimsy, not very brave and keen on romance. Lovers not fighters is the most apt description. Trento's son-in-law produces a fine example of this stereotyping when describing the less than heroic manner in which an Italian would take poison, namely, not at all. Though it amuses Lou she is quick to rescue the dignity of Trento, suggesting, again with reference to his youth and strength, that

he must have kept his word and taken the poison but survived because he was younger and healthier "I'm sure he did but he was young and strong I mean look at how beautiful his arms are [points to the photograph] so I'm sure he did" (Interview 1, 00:14:55).

Nominative Determinism

D: Which is also such a great name for a story.

L: Yes it is lovely ne?

D: I mean it couldn't have worked out better –

M: Avventura

…

L: Yes, yes, it's lovely.

D: And her name too, Anna, what did you say her surname was?

L: Sluiter. (Interview 1, 00:17:10)

Lou was always ready to latch on to the literary hook in her experience. There is a hunger for the exotic and the synchronous in this story – she seeks it out, trying to find it around every corner. Though she enjoyed relating the story, I was aware that she was carful to relate how they came upon any given fact, how the research was carried out and who related specific details, in other words she relates the story with a certain amount of pride in her and Hennie's commitment to rigour and 'facts' as far as possible. Yet, as soon as she was given the opportunity she launched into conspiratorial rapture about the nominative destiny of the protagonists in her story. In the time between meeting the descendants of Trento and the interview Lou had begun to learn Italian. Even with a basic knowledge of the language, the English cognates of "adventure" and "venture" lurking in Trento's surname were apparent to her. At the heart of Anna's name is the action of "closing" – rendering Anna as she who

closes, is closed, does the closing. It is almost too good to be true for the fictional drive of the story and the binary between them as characters that Lou found so exciting. In this regard the active interviewing method was liberating for the participant. Lou was able to work from the encouragement and collaboration between us to value the story as much as the facts that were discovered along the way.

They ate with them at the table

> *Yes, they were just working there, ja. But my dad says that they were labourers but they lived, when we went when the Italian family came out now we went to Ermelo to go and look, the farm is no longer in the family, but we phoned up the owners in advance and said if we could come and look. And the old farmhouse is still there but the, it was two little rondavels and another little house, they're broken down but the ruins are still there and that is where the prisoners ate, ah lived, but for example they ate with them at the table. So they weren't treated as, they were labourers, that was their job, but it seems that they weren't treated sort of as…Respectfully as equals. They were obviously not treated as the black labourers were treated and they were definitely not treated as prisoners because they had free-range on the farm and they ate with the family.*
> (Interview 1, 00:18:30)

And here we have the crux of the racial matter. All around them, in the activity of every day, the family was faced with potential equals, people who could, with the smallest stretch of definition and categorisation, be included in the life of the farm. Breaking bread with the black man was, however, still a far country, filled with unknown dangers. And yet the Italian, suspiciously foreign in look and manner, was included, seated at table and given the opportunity to prove himself. Where was the line, was there room for the Italian to convince

them that he was worthy, or was there already a baseline of acceptance for him? While there is clear evidence for the latter in this discussion about where they lived and ate, the fact that it needed to be said indicates some process of deliberation. They had on their side the fact that they were, to a certain degree, white. On the 'credit' side, they were certainly European on the 'debit' their prisoner, foreigner and papist subjectivity worked against their inclusion in family life. What is clear is that when faced with the choice of placing them in one or the other of the two racially defined social spaces, on this farm there was a decision to include them in the privileged space of whiteness.

There are indications that this was not the case on every farm and every work crew. An extensive examination of the racial category to which Italian POWs were assigned is undertaken in Moni's four part film documentary *Captivi Italici in Sud Africa* (1989) Part 3, titled *I Neri Bianchi* ("The White Blacks") explores the nature of Italian POW labour, with insightful observations of the links between various forms of labour and race in South Africa at the time.[56] Emilio Coccia also revealed that in some cases, Italian regionalism was being translated into South African racial terms (Coccia Pers. Comm.). One case involves a Northern Italian refusing to stay in the same dwelling as a Southerner on the grounds that the Southerner was dirty. Alessia Milanese has also noted the North-Italian bias in affirming an Italian identity for the prisoners in the 1943 Christmas message in the POW newspaper *Tra i reticolati* (Milanese 2002, 57). This kind of regionalism 'others' swarthy, Southern peasants, and centres the Aryan qualities of industrious, enterprising Northerners. Emilia Pent, wife of an ex-POW was quick to indicate the varying levels of inclusion in South African domestic lives on farms, attributing it to the qualities of individual farmers (Interview 3, 2011). In her final line Lou reveals the implication of inclusion for the Italians, stating free-range and shared meals as the key markers.

[56] It is also worth noting that an oblique critique of Apartheid is also made, with the exploitation of black labour in the contemporary South Africa of the documentary juxtaposed with the unfair treatment of Italian prisoners in the Second World War.

Kisses and Vines

L: …Because when we eventually met our Italian family, who of course are not our family, but we thought that they might have been. But by the time we eventually met them they, as we got off the train… they were unbelievably keen for Hennie to be Trento's son… And they said but are [you], and of course we got off the train the three of us, and I'm not particularly tall but of course in Italy I'm tallish and all three of us are blonde and they are all really small and dark, well many of the women are blonde but they dye, and they run at us and kiss us like crazy. And Hennie, who's a very Afrikaans guy was a bit baffled by five Italian men who storm him and kiss him on the mouth and this sort of thing but anyway we had the most amazing time with them, we really did. And they said to Hennie, who's born '68, so he's clearly not Trento's son, who left here in '43, but he is bald, so they thought he might be a bit older, "Are you not Trento's son?" and he said no.

D: Was that like first-off, one of like the first discussions –

L: Immediately! That was the first thing. They look at him and say are you not Trento's son? He says "I'm not!" And as it turns out they have a wine farm and none of the sons want to farm so we are wishing that he was the son but he's not. He is not. So this is sad but true. (Interview 1, 00:26:16)

In this section of the discussion Lou reveals two of her own narrative desires and tropes: first, the emphasis on the differences between Italians and Afrikaners and second, the deep desire to leverage this past into an authenticable connection between herself and an imagined Italy. The former is used to a large extent for comical effect, an indexing of difference – we are like this, they are like that – in graphic terms. There is the physiological differences between

them, but more complex and compelling, the kissing, that default stereotype so often noted by 'non-kissing' cultures. The exchange of the kiss has a place in both cultures, signifying intimacy and affection. The difference is the public versus private demonstration of this intimacy, as well as the speed with which it is established in the different cultures (with Italians perceived as in the lead). Compounding this is the role of Afrikaner versus Italian masculinity in relation to the kiss. When all of these differences are thrown together on a train platform it gives Lou another vignette to add to the adventure.

This public show of affection was, however, down to much more than Italian warmth. Trento's descendants are aware of a half-sibling sired at some point, somewhere during the war years.[57] It's clear from Lou's commentary on this wished-for, but ultimately untrue blood connection that her second desire, for a long-lost Italian home/family is a deep-rooted one. Somewhere in Italy there could have been some vines with her name on them. The "sad but true" fact that she has no blood ties to the Venturas has not stopped the family working on their connection over the years so that the desired history, based on the remote actions of an odd couple, is now a reality for two families separated by language, culture and basic arithmetic.

[57] Trento had a marriage and child before the war. He was also sent to England during the war and fathered a child there. Confusion as to whether he had a child in Africa was generated by the Photograph of Trento on a horse with a young boy. This child, Lou's father, was presumed to be his son, although the age of the child and his arrival in South Africa do not tally.

Too Many Kisses



Figure 1. Trento Ventura and Aardt Jurriaanse. Photographed by Anna Sluiter.

> *They have, this picture my dad found* [points to picture with her father, as a child, and Trento on a horse] *which had obviously been taken, oh, by Anna, she was the photographer on the farm. So Anna, the girlfriend, had taken this picture of the two of them and it had been somewhere in my dad's cupboard.* (Interview 1, 00:34:32)

> *Yes. Yes. And their picture is completely, you know they [makes a kissing action] they're big on this kissing, [kissing action] you know and kissing so on this picture his face is off as they've kissed it off over the years. But the horse and my dad are the same. And then I told my dad about this amazing picture that they'd emailed and he*

> *said you know it's vague but I think I've seen this picture before. And he went and looked through the old boxes from my* ouma *and he found the picture.* (Interview 1, 00:36:00)

One photograph, two cultural practices. On the one hand there is a reverent and physical manifestation of love – the Italian family, over the course of decades, erases the face of their beloved Trento from the photograph. It is a way to be closer to an image of him in his prime. In this image (at the corner of their lips) is a stranger, the identity of whom they could only ever guess at. In the years since the end of the war the threads of Trento's adventures during the war are woven into the image and the mysterious boy on the horse becomes a long lost relative. In the conceit of photography as old as the medium itself, there is the anonymity of the photographer. Trento's family never guessed that the real family secret was behind the camera in the loving gaze of the photographer as she captured Trento.

The other habitus results in an image intact, a record of childhood on a farm, in a culture where things are things and people are people and transubstantiation is not the norm. Nothing of young Aardt Jurriaanse is believed to reside in the image. In this culture it sits with others in a box to serve as the record of a time and place until it is called upon to serve as evidence.

Another aspect relating to the nature of the photograph and its role in this situation is the difference in signification between one photograph alone and many. For Trento's family this single photograph without context or legend is the basis for understanding him and his time in Africa. With the knowledge of what it is of and where it fits in to the family history, it loses part of its value as an individual object and is significant only as part of the contents of *ouma's* photograph box.

Once Lou and Hennie had found a prisoner record of Trento, they set about establishing contact with the various Ventura families in the Italian region that he hailed from. When they received a response from one family an image was scanned and sent as evidence of Trento's time in Africa. Recognising her father she later showed the image to him, with the face of Trento erased. The two images, each containing there own erasures and blind spots helped to complete the picture of that time and gave Lou the first object through which her desired history could become a lived reality.

Appadurai, after Simmel, has proposed that it is exchange that creates value, as opposed to the more traditional economic model that reverses the order (2009, 56). For Lou and her new "family", meeting each other brings together for exchange and affirmation, two parts of story in the form of two copies of a photograph that has led two distinct social lives on two continents. For Lou, it is also the manifestation of a desire to live a history shot through with some exoticism. I have stated that Lou is careful to draw distinctions between the value systems informing the behaviour of the Afrikaner men in the story – Hennie, her father and her great-grandfather; and the values inherent in the Italian men – Trento, his son-in-law, and the five men who met her on the train platform. However, there is very little that links her to the values she reads in the Afrikaner men, certainly little in comparison to the strong sympathy she feels for Trento. In the performance of her story Lou is building an Italianness into her own identity, and is allowing the romance and nostalgia to fuel her imagination. Lou's identification with the Italians is illustrated by two instances, one at a graveside in Italy and the other at the ruins of the POW *rondavels* on the farm in Ermelo:

> *It was unbelievably emotional the whole farm thing. Now Venezia and Ennio, the two who came. Venezia is his youngest daughter and her husband. Now we met Mercedes, the other sister, and Almarido who is their cousin, when we went to Italy but only her*

> *youngest daughter and her husband and their one son came out to visit us. But they are very emotional. So if you bat your eyes too quickly they burst into tears, they cry all the time. So when we went to the farm, the crying was unspeakable…But when we went to his grave and their mother's grave I immediately started crying. And they were very touched by the fact that I was crying over their dad…. So then we had a good old bawl together and we all felt much better… But Hennie always says he thinks that that was the initial cement to the relationship is the fact that we could all have a good cry at the grave.* (Interview 1, 00:38:40)

In both instances it is Lou, exclusively, who shares the emotional life of the Italians; expressing her involvement in their terms. As much as "they cry all the time", Lou is also crying in both of the instances she relates. It is worth noting that at this stage in their association there was not a common language: the Italians could not yet speak English and Lou could not yet speak Italian. Both have since started learning.

Her identification then led to an attachment to the new family. The adventure story, that at first scarcely seemed credible, was becoming a reality. In the break from the imagined connection to a real one, disbelief had to be suspended. The feelings in their meeting sealed the new pact between the families:

> *And it was an amazing feeling, because with them like I often find when you meet people that you are related to, even though you don't know them particularly well there is a connection of sorts. And for me the connection was always there with them, it was as if we were related, and then in my head, in a way, you know, we are. So we then went across and met them in Orbotello and then 6, 8 months later they came out and*

> *they came and stayed with us here. They came for 3 weeks in March this year. It was fantastic! And they completely loved it here.* (Interview 1, 00:33:37)

Lou and Hennie's excitement over the detective work had begun to kindle the desire to connect other parts of the family, a female cousin and her mother, and Lou's sister soon became involved in the visits (though her brother apparently was "not bothered at all, he never even met them"), both of the Italian family coming to South Africa, and the South Africans visiting Italy. By way of reconciling the worlds that she was processing into a new imaginary, the paternal voice, manifest in her father is redeemed by showing a new interest in the "stupid story":

> *My dad, my dad is... is an unbelievably unemotional person he doesn't do that rubbish. And when the Italians eventually arrived here he was getting quite excited as time went on. And after about two years, two days here he said "How's it that you get to have the Italians all the time and when are we ever having a turn?" And I said, but we'd already had lunch together and dinner and whatever. And he said "but can't we have them for a day?" I said "of course you can have them for a day". But he was sort of trying to be quite nonchalant about it, however he absolutely wanted in.* (Interview 1, 00:37:00)

It's in this instance that the turn of Lou's narrative comes through, where the threads of her sympathetic, nostalgic "crush" on the Italian POW, her cultural habitus' aversion to it, and her own dim view of Afrikaner femininity come together. From the beginning the desiderated history was being formed; second-hand memory, the archive and imagination were filtering fact and fiction into a potent love story, one that has connected two groups of people over cultural and physical distances. I would suggest that the fulcrum on which the adventure story

turns is not the drive to know, because action was not taken by Trento's inheritors, but rather the drive to authenticate an imaginary.

Lou's drive to authenticate the events of 1943 is not one she undertook lightly or naively. She was careful to point up the integrity of their research and the sensitivity to the feelings those involved at every stage:

> *And my dad also says, when they were kids it was not spoken of, she was not spoken of and it was not spoken of. And I mean for them, in their life it must have been very real because she had lived on the farm and she'd run the practice, and she'd worked in the practice…*(Interview 1, 01:00:17)

Neither was her enquiry naïve, Lou is clear that real events, including a death and a lifetime filled with memories for Trento were at stake. The following extract indicates Lou's deep personal connection with Trento as she imagined him but also the acceptance that he must have moved on:

> *and in the end it would seem that the love was real. And for me that's so lovely and I just wanted to know what happened to him afterwards because I always thought, you know, he must have probably ended up going home and getting married, which he did, I mean it's sort of statistically, it's sort of likely.* (Interview 1, 00:32:07)

The anxiety of influence

There is one more surprise in the story of Lou and Trento, an unlikely intervention made by fiction that may have provided a broad backdrop and even a goad to her narrative. At the conclusion of our interview Lou asked if I had read van Heerden's *The Long Silence of Mario*

Salviati. At that time I had not and she lent me her copy, the Afrikaans edition (2000). As I later worked through the English translation and interview transcript, I noticed a correlation in the range of attitudes toward Italian POWs and by extension Italians. In this research such correlations are not uncommon as the boundaries of what is and is not considered Italian is quite clearly demarcated in the way South Africans speak about all Italians (POW or otherwise). Nevertheless, it occurred to me that more than sharing a broad set of sources, the narrative of van Heerden's novel and the narrative of Trento and Anna shared an imaginary, a discursive space that included phrases, ideas, markers, stereotype and terms of reference. Two uses of language and the characteristics of the protagonists in both Lou's story and the novel reveal the mark of the latter narrative on the former.

The first of the language uses is in Lou's listing of those qualities of Trento that offended her great-grandfather's sensibilities. That Trento was an Italian is the prime offence, and it would seem from the tenor of her delivery, the mock-*paterfamilias* voice discussed above that is used in the delivery of all her great-grandfather's prejudices, being a foreigner would have been grounds enough for suspicion. Then we are told that he was a prisoner, and a prisoner, whether political captive of war or criminal, has transgressed in some way. Finally, there is the last insult to her great-grandfather, "En *nog* a Catholic". This formulation of cumulative flaws in the Italian POW has a direct parallel in two instances in *The Long Silence of Mario Salviati*. In the first exchange is one discussed in the previous section: the protagonist Ingi Friedländer is given a history lesson by the loathsome General Taljaard, in which the invidious social standing of Mario Salviati is explained: "Our people aren't sympathetic to foreigners. In addition, he was a prisoner of war. And a Catholic. As you know, people are wary of the Catholic Threat" (van Heerden 2002, 180). This echoes in form and content Lou's performance of her great-grandfather's values. In the second exchange General Taljaard expresses his anger toward his wife, a wistful, sensitive woman whose

father is the unfortunate Mario. The same themes emerge but in stronger almost violent terms as the General mocks her unseemly emotional outburst: “Italian blood…and a Catholic on top of it.” (2002, 265).

The paternal voice of Lou’s great-grandfather is a distillation of an imagined set of values; imagined because she never knew him and what she knows of him seems to have been passed down through the memories of her father and perhaps her grandfather. Yet he emerges as vivid, engendering a change in her own voice-quality when she speaks his values. It is a voice that is also the baseline of her father’s voice and her performance of all three traces, a watering-down of those prejudices she imagines him to be the font of; from his gruff immovability to her father’s reservations about emotion (that acquiesce in the end), to her own bubbly cooing over the “pretty” Italian. In the parallel voices from the novel, General Taljaard is like great-grandfather Jurriaanse, with his prejudices given a brassy finish through decades of military polish. And Matron Taljaard is made more pathetic by being barely present in the ‘real’ world, little more than a cipher between the present and past. But more about Lou’s possible identification with the characters will follow.

The second use of language that holds across Lou’s narration and the novel is the appellation for Italians. Van Heerden defines many of his characters with titles and nicknames, possibly drawing on the tradition of conservative respect for title and small-town differentiation by nickname. However, most of these either designate a role or a trait ranging from positive to neutral: Dancer Moloi, Colonel Cornwallis, Field Coronet Pistorius, General Taljaard, Advocate Pistorius, Red Beard, Matron Taljaard, Big Karel Bergh. Only the Italians, who when they meet are called “the two blighted ones” are given pejorative nicknames (2002, 415). Mario Salviati himself is known as Dumb Eyetie, whose wonderworks are not what define him as much as his disability and foreign provenance. Then there is Lorenzo Devil Slap, who is defined by his flame-like birthmark, an aberration given

an ominous turn by a guess at its origin. Finally, though not a central character, Look Deep Pitrelli is defined by his busybody activity, carrying in his name the public admonishment for looking for the gold (an activity that occupies all the inhabitants of Yearsonend). This kind of naming is intensified for the novel, but it can also be read as being at the extreme end of the continuum beginning with the mild irritation of "these bloody Italians" (Interview 1, 00:08:35).

A final set of parallels between Lou's narrative and the novel can be made between the positioning of the lead characters. I would suggest that this juxtaposition in fact exceeds the definition of 'parallel' as the characterisation crosses the bounds of what exists in the narrative of the novel and the narrative of Lou.

It is difficult to articulate the sense that Lou communicated to me of the open secret of her admiration for Trento and I have applied the term 'crush' in the hope of intimating the confluence of romance, nostalgia and innocence with regard to her feelings. Ingi Friedländer leaves Cape Town hoping to restore her sense of wonder at the world; from the outset she is looking to revive herself with this trip. Yearsonend and the brief physical relationship she has with Mario Salviati fulfil her wishes. The Italian POW she meets is mute and blind, as is Trento, frozen in photographic time; they are both visible but cannot communicate. Like Lou, Ingi is compelled by her Italian's physicality (van Heerden 2002, 330-331) and his bitter-sweet life story and spends time thinking about Mario's love for the shy and plain but talented Edith. She does this with a little more sympathy than Lou accords Anna, but with the same affect of increasing her admiration for Trento. Both Lou and Ingi undertake to do the research to reach the Italian POW; they are compelled, curious and finally determined to unlock the secrets of their respective mystery men.

There is more than direct influence at play here. To observe glibly that someone, with the basic material for a narrative reads a novel with similar basic material and grafts her story

onto a polished piece of fiction is to miss the processes of memory and history that are working on both story-tellers. At the beginning of the previous section dealing with some question of van Heerden's use of content with an historical base, Brink's concept of the links between private act of imagination in story and the public act of 'history' were invoked (Brink 1998, 37). I suggested that all three of the characteristics of story/history identified by Brink as relevant were evident in van Heerden's novel: the internalisation that makes personal the 'facts' of a public history; the 'version of the world' characteristic that invites comparison; and the story as a complex of imaginings that emerge directly from the idiosyncrasies of an author (1998, 38). Brink's identification of these as characteristics common to both private memory and public history holds when applied to the narrative generated by Lou from the material of Trento and Anna's story. To suspend the question of whether or not what Lou is working with is 'memory' allows us to run through Brink's characteristics in some detail.

The first, story as the end product of personalisation and internalisation, certainly holds true. Out of the nearly 100 000 possible characters in the pageant of Italian POW life in South Africa Lou has carved the three-dimensional character of Trento Ventura. His subsequent life, loves and quirks exist outside of the specific life she has made for him through the internalisation of what passes for fact in the public domain. His military, prisoner and medical records existed as dormant fact until she engaged with them.

The second characteristic "story as the construction of a version of the world" (ibid.) is most clearly manifest in her numerous self-indemnifications: "this is the story as we had it", "every fabulous source", "eventually found an article", "sort of statistically likely", "so this is sad but true", "he found a military report" (Interview 1). Lou is clear that she is offering a version of the world that can be held up against others. She is aware, in her construction and presentation of it that it contains only those structural components that came

under her lens, or to put it another way she made the best, most complete story from the material available to her.

Lou has strong feelings about what Derrida would call the 'irreducibles' (Derrida in Stanley 2008, 32) those facts that remain about who did what and how. She has drawn the characters and their actions through her own highly personal filters, Trento comes out brighter, Anna barely emerges intact and the ultimate triumph is the love and adventure story. This is precisely the third characteristic offered by Brink, the creative forces backed by "private motivations, hidden agendas, prejudices, suspicions, biographical quirks, chips on the shoulder, and conditionings that constitute the idiosyncratic, individual mind" (Brink 1998, 39). If the same characteristics can be traced in both narrative processes then it can be said that, whatever other characteristics there are, both narratives span the space between the private and public, between story and history.

And what of the critical element of memory? Neither van Heerden nor Lou is working exclusively from direct or personal memory as in both cases the eras that generate their texts predate their existence. But both of them access powerful machines of memory as well as second- and third-hand memory. The machines of memory that they both rely on are the archival material. Lou cites a number of national and private archives that informed her research.[58] Likewise, van Heerden's careful reconstructions imply archival research confirmed by the contents of his acknowledgments page (van Heerden 2002, 438). Traditional research resources aside, van Heerden credits three sources for the creation of the fictional POW Mario Salviati:

I. Paul Murray introduces him to South Africa's Italian community.

II. There is a photograph of an Italian mason working on the Meiringspoort Pass [Meiringspoort, Little Karoo, W Cape, entry to the poort is via Klaarstroom,

[58] The Zonderwater Museum and archival holdings are situated in the compound that, by virtue of the presence of war graves, belongs to the Italian government. The archival material is also in the possession of Emilio Coccia in his capacity as president of the Zonderwater Block Association.

55kms east of Prince Albert en route to Oudtshoorn and the coast]: "An unknown Italian, unable to communicate with his fellow-workers, laying stones in the retaining wall built at the time of the tarring of Meiringspoort".

III. A belt of plaited leather was given to his father by an unknown Italian POW who worked on their family farm, Doornbosch (ibid.).

Among these three sources the memories of others is apparent. Point one indicates the social network that actively preserves the memory of Italian POWs. South African-Italian communities often collectively preserve the memory of POWs even if the latter were not directly involved with them or related to former.[59] Within the diasporic/emigrant generations the context and condition of leaving Italy and arriving in South Africa are foundational to identity; POWs form a niche sub-group in the larger community. His second source is more cryptic and obviously served as a trigger to his own creativity. The simplicity of the legend leaves vast areas for the imagination to fill in. Who was the mason and what was the block to communication? The third brings us back to memory as it is an object from the past, imbued with the compound qualities of belonging to his family, his home (and by extension the region that features so strongly in his work) and being made by an unknown Italian POW.

Lou and van Heerden are both at play in the field of post/memory, working on, with and through memory in the archive, memory in a photograph, memory in a belt, or memory in people. They access the Italian POW site of memory from a curiosity about the past in some measure, but primarily because it offers ways to process that past. For van Heerden, his novel is an extended treatment of the role of art in change, the nature of silence and secrets and the damage that an unaddressed past can cause. For Lou, her family story is, through the reconnection with Trento Ventura's descendants, rewritten and given an ending that leaves

[59] The annual memorial service for the POW dead at Zonderwater on the first Sunday of November (the traditional month for Catholics to remember the dead) is an event that grows year-on-year. This indicates a growing interest in it by the community in general, as almost all ex-POWs are now dead, and only those who died during imprisonment are buried here.

the door open for future adventures. Both Lou and van Heerden are engaged not only in the action of creative fictionalisation but also the core business of historiography. Nooteboom outlines the fantastic breadth of imagination in the private and internal world of history as perceived by an individual:

> *Ultimately, it was your body that remembered these things for you. Strange chemical processes in your brain had seen to it that you were aware that you were aware of the Paleozoic, which therefore, somehow or other had become part of your experience, so that you yourself were connected with unimaginably distant times to which you would belong until you died, by virtue of that same mysterious mechanism (2008, 370).*

This quote exposes the secret of long silences of the kind that Lou and van Heerden explore. Whether the moment is Paleozoic or the Second World War, as much as the project of traditional history is to produce the précis or the axiomatic, the personal project is to fuel the imagination toward a desired history, which is then looped back in to the public sphere. To make us feel not just that we have firm and authenticable knowledge through links to things and people that were actually there, but that our knowledge is remembered and embodied, a trace of actual experience.

4.2 The Rechs



Figure 2. The entrance to Consolata Farm, Limpopo.

The farm Consolata *lies a few kilometres outside of Haenertsburg (Limpopo), just off the road to Tzaneen. Some of its land was sold to the government and now forms part of the Ebenezer dam. The home, built by Italian POWs, is now perched at the end of a peninsula that juts out into the dam, surrounded on three sides by the water. It is still the family home of a branch of the Rech family. The Rechs are originally from north-eastern Italy, hence the Germanic surname. They have a long history in the area, dating back to the arrival of Antonio Rech, great-grandfather to the current generation still farming there, in the late 1920s. Antonio's sons, daughter and wife followed him in stages and it was Secondo Rech who established the family at* Consolata. *Secondo Rech seems to have cast a long shadow in terms of defining and re-defining Italianness in the region. Every person I spoke to in Haenertsburg and Magoebaskloof mentioned the*

Rechs, and Secondo in particular, as an important reference point for anyone interested in anything Italian. His success as a farmer and his presence as a hiker established him in the local imagination. He passed away in 2005, having compiled a life history in the 1990s (Branson 1998) and the story of the farm (McComb 2006, 2010). Like the peninsula that Consolata rests on, the Rechs extend into the dam of local history with slender but definite links to an Italian terra firma; their story is unique but also belongs to the landscape. I met with Secondo's daughter Anita and son-in-law Joseph Unterpatinger at the farm.

Three particular themes of the Rech story are explored here. The first notable aspect is the insight offered by Joseph Unterpatinger into the more widespread presence of Italians in what was the Northern Transvaal. Patterns of immigration provide a background understanding for at least the Italian contribution to the local cosmopolitanism. The second is the self-memorialisation of Secondo and its perpetuation as a powerful example of some of the main tropes of Italianness often perceived and commented on by South Africans. These are articulated in the chapter discussing South African fiction and POWs but, read from the memory of his inheritors and descendant, their recurrence in the remembered Secondo is illustrative of their pervasiveness. The third aspect is Anita Unterpatinger's deflection or deference of research attention to the home itself, and the documentation her father had generated, as the main resource for the research. In doing so, she introduced me to the reciprocity at play in this research. Questions about Italian POW history engendered a response from her that was a mix of regret at not knowing more about the house and the things in it, and a profound curiosity about those things. Not for the last time was I cast in the role of verifier, the person who could decode what had been left of the home and in the home by her Italian parent. This is a characteristic peculiar to the third tier of memory; without ex-

POWs to anchor the stories, descendants and inheritors of their work are interested in retrieving stories from that part that are often completely lost. This loss, however, enriches the overall site of memory as those same descendants and inheritors try to fill in the blanks about the past by drawing in other stories. As encountered in the POW fiction and later in the chapter on nameless POWs, the ingenuity and solidity of POW building is a starting point, but there are also the 'spirit' of POWs in the home and the substantial legacy of Secondo Rech himself. Anita Rech lives in a building of post/memory, and her relationship with it changes as the story of its origins begins to fade.

Italians from Maputo

Haenertsburg and Magoebaskloof had, and continue to have, a small community of Italians. A number of residents made reference to the larger group of Italians in Mooketsi, a town to the north of Haenertsburg but it was Joseph Unterpatinger who informed me of the fact that many Italians had moved north from Maputo, Mozambique to the then Northern Transvaal pursuing opportunities to acquire farms in the early part of the twentieth century. He was sure that there had already been Italian immigrants settled in Mooketsi before Antonio Rech arrived in 1921. The Northern Transvaal becomes an obvious gathering point for Italian immigrants if one considers the fact that a number of them were making not one single jump from Italy to South Africa, but often seeking their fortune by working their way through Africa, between centres belonging to Italy or at least friendly toward Italy. Understanding Italian immigration into South Africa as part of a broader Italian diaspora in Africa suggests rich possibilities for future research, linking the webs of narrative in which Italian POW history is appended to the bigger story of Italians globally.[60]

[60] Verdicchio's critical study of nationalism through the Italian diaspora offers a potential model (1997).

Secondo Rech

> *On Thursdays he used to walk the mountains to collect firewood or mushrooms or do hay making. These early years were very much a walking experience and developed his body to the extent that he can now, at the age of 87, walk any mountain in the Drakensberg. He recalls, at the age of only seven and a half in 1919, the day he accompanied his uncle Giuseppe [sic], "Joseph" over to Monte Grappa which was over twenty six kilometres from their village to attend a victory celebration celebrating the first anniversary of the end of the 1914-1918 War* (Branson 1998, 1).

Secondo Rech was born in 1911 in the village of Caupo, Seren del Grappa, Belluno Province, Veneto (ibid.). His story, and the way that he walked it into the local landscape presents a perfect example of how Italian identity as a general category is given particular life in the South African context through the generative mythos of the Italian POW experience. A précis of key moments extracted from the life history he compiled with John Branson (1998) would include: his early childhood in small-town Italy, then emigration to South Africa in his late teens to work with his father in the then Northern Transvaal. Following this move and a brief imprisonment at Koffiefontein were years of work to establish forestry in Limpopo and purchase his own farm. He marries a South African, Elize van der Merwe, and raises a family. Extreme poverty and hardship characterise the beginning of his story as much as success and good standing in the community define the latter (Branson 1998). In his early childhood the deprivation in north-eastern Italy, including the pillaging of his family farm by Central Powers soldiers in the First World War, gives him an instinct for survival in war and prepares him for the changing fortunes of an Italian national in South Africa (Branson 1998, 1 and 4). His father and one of his brothers had been naturalised but by the time South Africa entered the Second World War in 1940, Secondo and his brother Mario were among the

unfortunate Italians rounded up and sent to Koffiefontein in the Free State (Branson 1998, 4). He was therefore an immigrant Italian and Italian civilian internee. In the life of Italian-South Africa these identities could carry different inflections. An insider-outsider binary may be too strong as it connotes conflict, but it is interesting to imagine his post-war life in these terms. He was an insider in that he shared an ordeal with fellow Italians in Koffiefontein, but an outsider in that he had not seen active service on the side of Italy. This, along with his age, he was nearly thirty at the time, puts him outside of the POW experience shared by the close-knit Zonderwater POWs. All of these specifics of his identity are lost in the general category of Italian POW, evidence perhaps for the power of the POW category in self-identification and the South African perception of Italian-South Africans. Anita Unterpatinger further enriched descriptions of her father in response to a question about how her father self-identified, implicit in the question of whether or not he spoke Italian and if he spoke English with an accent:

> *D: With an accent?*
>
> *A: I would say so, I would say, I feel he wasn't Italian Italian as such because he married my mother who was Afrikaans you see and in this home we spoke English because of her not being able to speak Italian and my father not Afrikaans…* (Interview 5, 00:01:48)

Marriage and language are tied up with identity in Anita Unterpatinger's assessment of her father's self-identification and, though she and her husband Joseph disagreed on degree, they both experienced Secondo as a person who had left Italy behind and was South African. When he joined the interview a little later, Anita asked Joseph a version of the question 'How Italian was Secondo?' His answer was in a firm first-person voice:

J: And he said look, now I'm living in this country so I must go and live in a country of my choice. He had his Italian roots, he had his Italian way of doing things. But he was then um, I think saying look I'm here, I'm not going to go back, so I must live in South Africa as a South African so to speak.

A: Yes, I would say so.

J: Which is actually a contradiction because he was very much South African but he was also very much rooted as an Italian, ja.

A: [Unclear] he did certain things but his style of eating was very much more South African, not really Italian… (Interview 5, 00:34:04)

Joseph, himself a German immigrant, makes a counter-claim:

D: Did you find he got more Italian the older he got?

A: No, I think…

J: I don't know, he watched much more television, RAI, than anything else.[61]

[They dispute]

A: Well I think it was…

J: Ok.

A: Well you don't know yes it was, [he was] very much tuned into RAI, very much toward the end.

J: Very much, so then in the end I think he got more, I think so. I think it, I think his working life was very living in South Africa… (Interview 5, 00:35:01)

[61] *Radiotelevisione italiana*. The state-owned Italian public service broadcaster.

Joseph then makes an interesting change in the direction of the conversation. By way of illustrating Secondo's character he begins to talk, in the same forceful first-person voice, about Secondo as a farmer.

> *J: Ja, and ah, look his farming method was still practically: you utilise the land according to climate and whatever it is, so he says tomato, potato mm-mm, no good – timber, that's the one. On the other side where it's very dry, what you grow? Grapes? Grapes. Of course then he started prickly pears and he says because he used the land in its natural environment to grow what is suitable for that, it's no use to enforce, you can grow prickly pears here, okay, but I think it will be better there. And there is no timber, timber is here, don't try to force onto the land…* (Interview 5, 00:35:28)

> *J: I think it was an inborn kind of thing…*
> *A: I think so.*
> *D: But also very practical…*
> *J: Ja, he was a very, very practical farmer, and he said look here, don't work against nature, work with it. Ok, and that was his way of farming, which was…*
> *D: And the work that you do here now? I mean are you guys working her now?*
> *A: We just continue, continue what he …* (Interview 5, 00:36:46)

His farming instincts are 'inborn', a sentiment apparent in the detailed descriptions of how Secondo plants various tracts of land to the right crop in *Characters of the mountain and their memories* (Branson 1998 3,5,6). There is also a noticeably 'green' turn to the memory of Secondo, that he implicitly understood the principles of sustainability that are now becoming the fashion in commercial farming.

Another trope of Italian identity that often appears is in written in Secondo's account of his acquisition of the farm that would become *Consolata*. In spotting and making a bid for it at auction Secondo is up against a Captain Graham.

> *At the auction, where my brother Elisio accompanied me, the only other person who showed some interest was Captain Graham, whom at that time owned the Vise's farm. The bidding went up in increments of half a crown. Eventually Captain Graham thought that the asking price was too much and he disdainfully told me to "have the bloody place"* (McComb 2006, 1).

There is another version of this story in Branson (1998) in which Secondo loses the auction and is told he can have the place by Captain Graham a few days later. In both the message to the reader is that Secondo saw something where a South African missed the opportunity. "Have the bloody place" is the proud captain's dismissive rejection of something he cannot deal with. Italian POWs in South Africa generated a number of stories in which their ingenuity with very little capital paid off (Somma in Carr & Mytum 2012, 268-269; Somma 2008, 11). The illustrations (figures 3 & 4) below are an example of this. An Italian POW spots the high quality wood of the 'Springbok's' bench on page 1. By page 7 he has stolen the bench, worked it into a violin and is selling it back to the South African soldier for three pounds.[62]

[62] This illustrated story accompanies one of the violins at the Zonderwater Museum.



Figures 3 & 4. Two of the "Story of a violin" illustrations. Author's photographs, originals at Zonderwater Museum.

Another story compiled by McComb (2000) recalls Secondo and Mac (the local service station owner) purchasing a World War Two bomber pilot trainer to fashion a tractor for the farm. In the process they haul it as contraband from Pietersburg (now Polokwane) to Haenertsburg overnight. Secondo's cunning even extended to purchasing the plane with the fullest tank from the Pietersburg Air Force Base surplus. The parallels between these stories and other POW stories run further. Through hard work, craftsmanship and ingenuity, the Italian POW, like Secondo, fashions something useful out of nature. One of Secondo's first tasks on arriving at his newly acquired farm was to cut a wattle tree out of the half-abandoned kitchen before setting out to alter the landscape forever with his pine tree saplings (Branson 1998, 5). Time and again Secondo changes the natural and social world he lives in through his farming and building, first a road to the homestead, then zinc covered *rondavels*, then a lean-to to accommodate the rest of the family from Italy, and finally the house on *Consolata*, which he built with hired Italian POWs. Later his walking trails changed the way locals interacted with their surroundings as he guided groups to conquer one after another of the Drakensberg Mountains (Branson 1998 3, 7). The story of his life that he shared with Branson is a list of landscapes tamed, planted to useful crops,

and walked into submission. It calls to mind the superhuman feats of folk heroes like Paul Bunyan, who, with brawn and a skill change the landscape they encounter and become giants in the retelling of their exploits. In discussing the fictional Mario Salviati, similar characterisation of the Italian as a primal force emerged.

Secondo's early building was to accommodate his father, mother and siblings, but by the time he acquires the land to build the farm *Consolata* his identity as an independent immigrant is beginning to emerge. And, following the time in Koffiefontein, where he met the priest who would name his farm, this house is where his second encounter with Italian POWs takes place.

The writing of his life story and the move from immigrant to POW and then back to immigrant is unusual in the Italian POW discourse. However, it is worth noting that the process of setting down the story of an individual POW, especially of the bildungsroman kind, in which an Italian makes a great success starting with virtually nothing, is typical of the second tier of memory making, where ex-POWs narrativise their experiences in Africa. At Consolata, the site of memory is built on this written account of the farm's origins and Secondo's early days in South Africa, but it continues to grow and change as his daughter and son-in-law add to and comment on his life and work.

Does it look Italian?

In both form and content *Consolata* is a fantastic metaphor for the Rechs. Like the family it is an unusual peninsula projecting into the landscape but still linked with a mainland; local and foreign, present and past. Anita Unterpatinger is aware of this double identity and while I was there she asked me to offer an opinion on the provenance of some of the objects because, while the house contains traces of Italian presence the supporting narratives have often been lost.

The structure of the house has a massive quality to it, as if reflecting the elemental nature of Secondo himself. The stonework in some parts of the house resists alteration and puts up a fight when tampered with.

A:… the only structure we changed was the entrance here Joseph, we closed one side.

J: We just fixed it actually up to, look here a lot of the things were [unclear]…

D: Ja it's an old house…

J: The old brick walls and there were leakages and that type of thing, so we did a lot of restoration as such. But we changed the entrance from here…

A: Yes, I told that…

J: Broke out that stone it took them three days to break that stone and re-put it in here, because this stone is terribly hard [laughs].

D: Difficult stuff to work with.

J: Very difficult.

A: You can see the width of it, they cursed me, they cursed me when I asked them to do this.

D: That is solid hey?

A: [laughs] And it was solid stone, you know we didn't realise it was solid stone, we thought it was just the outside

J: We thought it was brick maybe inside, but it was solid…

A: Solid, solid stone. Even here in the bathroom when I set out, I'll just show you it was quite. I was not a very popular lady. I just want to show you here. This toilet here had no window. I actually asked them also thinking it was just a bit of brick.

D: Look at that!

J: Solid. Everywhere. It was a big job this one.

A: Can you see the workmanship here, ooh they were cross with me.

(Interview 5, 00:38:03)

Solid workmanship and finishes unusual for the area define the whole home for the Unterpatingers and they are curious to know what parts of their home are original POW work, even down to the convex mortar finish in one of the external stone walls. I could not verify most of this but the evidence that POWs had been there was literally carved into the masonry.

A small stone, just under the right eave of the central entrance roof is the signature of an Italian POW who helped to build the house.





Figures 5 & 6. Left. The POW-built farmhouse at Consolata. Right. The inscription, under the eaves on the stonework at the central entrance to the house.

The inscribed stone reads "PDG LANDI GIOVA– 12-10-1944" and probably records the builder, Giovanni Landi. PDG is the acronym for '*prigioniero di guerra*' ('prisoner of war'). In the life history and story of the farm's name there is no mention of specific POWs, Anita also does not remember the names of any specific POWs, but does recall the POWs that built the home coming to visit the family (Interview 5, 00:10:00). She knew Giuseppe Pent but does not recall him having anything to do with the building of the house. POW records at

Zonderwater revealed three prisoners named Giovanni Landi; two born in Fisciano and one from Caserta. Two of them were transferred to England in 1942, excluding the possibility of their having worked at *Consolata*. One of those born at Fisciano, Salerno in 1916 was a Corporal (Caporal Maggiore) captured at Tobruk on 3 January 1941 and repatriated to Italy on 15 July 1946. No record of him in the Outside Employment projects has emerged, but it seems an E Rech, probably Elisio, later employed at least two other prisoners, Giuseppe Mastroeni and Alberto Scopetti from 27 April 1946 to 4 January 1947. Secondo recalled employing two POWs in 1944 (Branson 1998, 6).[63] In leaving an inscription Giuseppe Landi serves as the link to POW history built into the farmhouse's foundations. Tracking this down solves one of the unanswered questions about what is Italian or POW on the farm. It is an instance where the researcher's gaze and the curiosity of the owner of the home are combined with scraps of oral and written history to burnish an aspect of local history. Two other objects in the home added to this process.

> *A: And you know we, take this, we've got this bell here in the front, we don't know where that came from we've forgotten if he told us. Very sad.* (Interview 5, 00:00:16)

> *A: And all this, I could gather, was built by the prisoners of war. Now you see this [points to a bell outside of the house], I don't know the history of this, I mean, and I could kick myself. I mean and it's stunning.* (Interview 5, 00:11:25)

[63] Thanks to Emilio Coccia for the detailed feedback he was able to offer from the POW records.




Figures 7 & 8. Front and side views of the possibly POW-made bell.

That she has lost the background story to the bell that hangs at the front door is something Anita refers to at least twice in the conversation: the bell was taken down to search for a signature, but there was not any visible signature or clue as to its provenance. It seems that the form and decoration itself prompted questions from Anita, along with the fact that she knows it was part of the home since her childhood. At least two features of the workmanship suggest it was not produced locally. The most obvious is the foliate mask below the bell itself, a common feature of classically derived decoration in the European canon. The classical *mascherone* may or may not include foliage but the practice of including masks is widespread in the European canon, and decidedly not a feature of South African decorative styles. The second is the stylised foliage down both outer sides of the casing. Stylised foliage can be seen in relief on some South African furniture but is not typical. The doorbell, in its specifics and as a whole is unusual; and unusual in ways that, having seen other POW craftsmanship, suggest it may well be a POW work. A superficial comparison between the floral design and foliage detail on the Rech bell and similar details on a St Cecilia statue by POW Zagato (housed at the Zonderwater Museum, figures 9 & 10) reveals some possible clues:



Figures 9 & 10. Zagato's St Cecilia. Front and detail.

The overlapping petals of the five-petal rosettes, the feathery quality of the foliage are quite similar, as well as the staining of a lighter wood.

We had walked around the outside and inside of the house when Anita said: A: It's got incredible atmosphere, this part of the house. Um, you can just feel the spirits, not the spirits but the ja it's just amazing…" (Interview 5, 00:16:00). She was searching for a metaphor for presence of the 'spirits' of POWs, tied up as they were with thoughts of her father and her own childhood, when I asked her if the painting below was by a POW (figure 11). Her response was "Does it look Italian?" An answer to this question has not emerged yet but the cryptic signature "G. P[i]edolfi K.I.C XXI 43" seems promising.



Figure 11. Possibly a POW-painted sacred heart image. Oil on canvas.

Whether the painting proves to have been done by a POW or not, the question "Does it look Italian?" captures some of the elements that inform many discussions about Italian POWs. Indexical and formal signs lead to assumptions when confronted with a work of Catholic iconography that is a finely-modelled, naturalistic rendering in oils. There is also the half-remembered presence of Italian POWs; their spirits infuse the house with a foreign quality that still feels strange after so many decades.

A final coda to the visit to *Consolata*: the peninsula in the dam is connected to a much longer history through its name. Secondo Rech remembered his journey to Koffiefontein as a truly happy one – surrounded by countrymen, music and wine, the train gathering Italian nationals and moving steadily south became a party train, often loudly welcomed by Afrikaans-speaking South Africans as a protest against what they saw as a British war (Branson 1998, 4). In Koffiefontein Secondo met and befriended a Father Luca from Kenya (McComb 2006, 1):

> *We had continued to correspond after I had left, and I wrote to him to tell him of my new acquisition. I also asked him if he had any suggestions as to what I should name the farm. He suggested the name Consolata, meaning consoling, as this was the mission station he came from in Kenya. I immediately accepted this very beautiful name as it fitted the spirit of my endeavours to acquire my own farm.* (McComb 2006, 1-2)

In naming his farm *Consolata* Secondo stitches into the foundations of his new life a link to the mission in Kenya, but also a link to Koffiefontein, a link to POW solidarity and even a link back to the shrine of the *madonna della consolata* (Our Lady of Consolation) in Turin, that gave its name to the international Consolata missionaries.

Imagine a map with *Consolata* at its centre. Small threads connect it to a local community and to South African POW history; longer threads connect it to patterns of Italian migration. The longest strands, compound cords of history, connect it to far flung missions and the Belluno valley. The layering through time and space that can be found at the Rech home served as a training ground for future research. The Italian POW presence in the South African imagination is half-remembered and woven in tightly with bigger stories, other stories and stories that require some polishing to be seen. Every bit of polishing also brings the reflective quality of POW history into clearer resolution. As Anita and Joseph Unterpatinger, John Branson, Graham McComb, Emilio Coccia and I continued to remove the tarnish of decades and memory loss, what was revealed was our own image. Oral history, research and archival work are activated in the research process and the highest possible polish also gives the clearest reflection of those working at it. The Italian POW site of memory is responsive to whoever is trying to extract significance from it, and small additions of information to Secondo Rech's legacy emphasise the interrelatedness of the various tiers of POW memory.

4.3 Giuseppe Pent as remembered by Emilia Guillerminotti and Enrico Usseglio

I arrived in Haenertsburg on Sunday 21 August 2011. Contact through a mutual friend was made with one Father Jeff Steele whose ministry gave him a detailed knowledge of the Catholics in the area included among which are a number of Italians. Like most people in the area he was aware that Italian prisoners of war had been held in the region during the war and had been involved in a number of construction works. That was the extent of his personal knowledge on the matter but he was sure that people in town would have more detailed knowledge. He had very kindly arranged for an interview with the widow of an ex-POW who had lived in Haenertsburg for the Monday afternoon, so I spent that Monday morning wandering around the town. In this way I was introduced to three institutions of the town's life, identifiable as such by being 'open for business' on a Monday. Esther, who works at The Pennefather *(a collection of guest cottages, mini-museum, curio and book shops) was a great introduction to Haenertsburg. She was the first person to try and enumerate the complex world of Italians in the town, the more established of which did not have Italian-sounding names at all. She was also aware of the POWs but wasn't clear on which of the current Italians were ex-POWs or related to them. It was from this conversation that I was also introduced to the idea of Haenertsburg as a special place, that people are chosen, almost called, to live in (Esther, 22 August 2011, personal communication). It was Esther who contacted Louis Changuion by phone to tell him about my project. Louis is the local historian with a special focus on the Boer War history of the region. He also happens to distribute printed material in the town as he is set up for it, being a prolific author. So, on his rounds delivering printouts of emails and other documents he stopped at the shop. His extensive knowledge of the people in the town and the ways in which they arrived there augmented what Esther had already communicated.*

Like her, he knew that the Italians had built a number of things in the town and was sure that recently he had come across a useful fact that POWs had built, or helped to build, Stanford Dam. This was in relation to his latest writing on the history of trout fishing in the area. Later that morning I visited the superintendent of Ebenezer, largest of the dams (run by Lepelle Northern Water) who indicated that the dam system was completed in 1957 and thus the dates didn't quite fit. However, he was not certain and so referred me on to some other locals who may have known more. The Italian POWs were proving harder to find than I had initially thought. I finally met with Jamie Turner, life-long resident and proprietor of the general dealership in Haenertsburg. He put me in touch with his aunt Gub Turner, and had much to say on the importance of people like Gub to the long-term memory of the town and the archiving of its stories. Jamie was also the first person I met who used the term "on the mountain" to describe residents. (Extract from the author's field notes).

Had I not already booked an interview with Emilia Guillerminotti in Pent, the widow of ex-POW Giuseppe Pent, I would have seriously doubted the existence of any POW traces in the town. Haenertsburg was a place with a clear sense of self (on the mountain), where the town had come from (articulated in the writing of Louis Changuion) and its destiny (Esther and others often referred to the 'calling' that was living in Haenertsburg). And yet the half a dozen or so locals that I had spoken to in person or contacted telephonically were sure of the presence of Italian POWs but no-one could pin down a specific name or place yet. Traces of the POWs seemed everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Meeting Emilia began to clarify the picture to some extent.

Emilia Guillerminotti in Pent met me at her home on Apple Farm, with her neighbour Enrico Usseglio, a close family friend. Giuseppe Pent, her husband, had passed away in June 2010 and Emilia was understandably emotional recalling him and their life together. The

interview began with a retelling of his call-up, active service and capture, followed by anecdotes to illustrate how desperate their situation was from capture to arrival in South Africa and the proper establishment of essential amenities at Zonderwater camp (Interview 3, 00:20:00). Giuseppe Pent arrived in South Africa sometime in 1941, both Emilia and Enrico recall him describing Tobruk and, as the battle and siege took place in that same year it, is reasonable to assume that there was some connection between the battle or its after effects and his capture. Emilia was unclear about the name of the place where he was captured but Marsa Matrouh (Egypt) fits the name that she had only heard spoken but did not know how to spell (Interview 3, 00:16:00).

The interview revealed a number of important facts that I have since used to try to understand the POW presence in Haenertsburg/Magoebaskloof. First among these was that Giuseppe Pent was selected by a Col. Dr. MacNeil (sic) for his meticulous gardening work and building skills to work on his farm in Magoebaskloof. Emilia describes how he was treated like a son and that, through the help of the colonel, avoided the compulsory repatriation after the war (Interview 3, 00:08:00). Soon after this the question of living POWs came up but there was no mention of any other POWs in the area (Interview 3, 00:13:00).

An assumption of mine on arriving in Haenertsburg and at this specific interview was that Giuseppe was one among a handful of POWs; on the evidence available it seems he might have been the only POW whose name and individual identity is clearly recalled, based on his post-war life in the area. The assumption stems from the common pattern of teams of POWs moved from Zonderwater to an area to work on a specific project or to be split up between farms in given area. In the case of the latter they seem to have been billeted together and so be thought of as a group. In an interview with Nipper Thompson the next day mention was made of another possible POW who had lived with a local family (Interview 4). There might also have been more POWs at Mooketsi or Polokwane itself. Like everyone else in the

town Nipper spoke of Italians in the plural, mixing stories of Italians in Haenertsburg (the Rechs, Usseglio and Pent), with stories from his father's days in Italy in World War Two and even his father's Italian drinking buddies after the war (ibid.). POWs are spoken of in the plural in Haenertsburg. It would not be unusual for one POW to stand out among a few; this is clearly the case in the story of Lou Jurrianse and her great-great aunt and Trento Ventura (Interview 1). In the case of Lou and her story, the actions of a specific POW come into focus because of their impact on a family's history. Emilia's husband was an Italian in a small town who, according to her, recounted his wartime experiences endlessly, especially in the last few weeks of his life (Interview 3, 00:58:00). Surely she would have been aware if he had been with other POWs in Haenertsburg during the war? No-one in the area was able to name another POW. Why then, were they spoken of in the plural?

One answer may also bring us back to what Emilia had to say about her husband's working life as a builder. In listing the important buildings that he worked on she named Subiaco Mission, Doornspruit Mission and Siloe School for the Blind among others. These are all religious with strong links to the communities they serve and that are well known to locals (Interview 3, 00:13:00). She also mentions the many private homes that he built, so many that his prolific construction work was mentioned in Father Steele's eulogy at his funeral (Interview 3, 00:09:00). Later in the interview I asked if he had worked on Ebenezer Dam, in an attempt to reconcile the conflicting reports about POWs working on dams in the area. Emilia was sure only that he had built houses in the area (Interview 3, 00:59:00). It would seem that the many buildings that Giuseppe completed in his life as an ex-POW have been attributed to an Italian POW or POWs.

Emilia and Giuseppe lived as immigrants among some other Italians and they forged quite a close community. As with all small communities there was the usual wrangling and disputes, as in one case when a local naturalised Italian tried to get Italian POWs to work for

almost nothing on his farm (Interview 3, 00:39:00). Similar to the domination of Haenertsburg local POW lore by the figure of Giuseppe Pent, the "ur-Italian" of the region more broadly was Secondo Rech.

In this interview I was keenly aware of the processes involved in the different tiers of memory-making about Italian POWs. For Emilia, it was important that two elements of her husband's life were communicated clearly to me. The first was to give a good report of him as a soldier. To this end she detailed his role in the war and was frustrated by her inability to recollect every detail she must have felt he would have been able to do. This also seemed to be the reason that family friend Enrico was at the interview; as a second memory, and indeed, he fulfilled this role. The second element was to give a good report of him as a husband. Just beneath the surface of her grief was a touching and deep love story. Emilia wanted to convey the risk and the thrill they both had in the adventure that they had embarked on together to live in Africa (Interview 3, 00:22:15).

Other aspects of Giuseppe's life far outweigh the stories that are left about his time in captivity. His work in the Haenertsburg area, doing his duty as a solider and the life he had with Emilia are the themes of his life as living stories. This is typical of the second tier of Italian POW memory, where ex-POWs set the mould for how they would be remembered. It is not only significant for the overall site of memory to see the project of another era of remembrance at work, but also deeply touching to see the same project carried on by an ex-POW's widow and friend.



Figure 12. Giuseppe Pent remembered as a soldier.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the family story of Lou Jurriaanse was rewritten using the Italian POW site of memory. Trento Ventura's role in her family's past was an opportunity for her to rethink and, in the telling, actually perform, a new and revised narrative for her family. The Rechs, or at least Anita Rech and her husband, have the strong presence of Secondo Rech reaching through the tiers of memory-making. They also live in a site of memory, a building that allows them to remember and forget over time. Finally, Giuseppe Pent's story is a clear example of the strength of the second tier of memory-making continuing after his passing. In each of these stories the same processes of narrativising are at play as in the fiction analysed in Chapter Three. It would seem that even with the presumed stability of a fixed subject, the strength of the overall site of memory to shift the values of a story and adapt it for retelling is irresistible.[64] Indeed, even in the attempt to represent the story he had told in life, Emilia and Enrico's retelling of the life of Giuseppe Pent is already subject to the partial elisions, small memory lapses and aphorising according to theme that characterises second-hand memory.

The previous chapter explored fiction's ability to access the tiers of Italian POW memory as the springboard for creative work. It focused on second-hand memory's generative capacity, creating stories that serve a variety purposes. This covers one aspect of the aim of this research, in that it shows the cyclical return to significance of a site of memory. This chapter explored the mechanics of memory in relation to the functioning of a site of memory. In it we see memory at work in the lives of people who are inheritors, both partial and sole inheritors, of the legacy of Italian POW memory. The processes at play in Nora's model of the changing forms of collective memory over time are evident in condensed

[64] One additional story could have been included in this section. As in the previous chapters, choices of content for analysis were difficult, as each POW story reflects the overall site of memory as well as often exquisite detail. The story of the Prinsloo farm is referred to below but has not been analysed in full. The interview with Ruth Prinsloo is reproduced in the appendices for reference (see Interview 20).

form in the range of stories related here. In these stories we encountered memory-history, in the stories generated by and perpetuated about Secondo Rech, strongly situated as he was in the sacred story of the development of the land. Duty-memory emerges strongly in the story of Giuseppe Pent as told by his widow and friend, who are in the process of eulogising and memorialising his life. Distance-memory and archive-memory are at play in the stories of Lou Jurriaanse and Anita Rech and her husband, where forgetting and remembering are persistently trying to articulate themselves in relation to history. While the chapter demonstrates the changes in the things to which memory can be attached by hyphenation, it does not necessarily arrive at the same conclusion as Nora, that history wins out over memory. Memory seems to be happily living alongside history in hybridised forms. This is certainly the case with Lou Jurriaanse, where improved access to empirical information only augmented the strong relation to family memory, and grew her story. The Rechs too, seem ready to allow research on their house to continue as a way to develop not history, but the resurrected memory of their home. The story of Giuseppe Pent, still filled with the feelings of loss and mourning, is yet to be drawn out of the context of his whole life, with the real man still a coherent collection of roles and memories.

In the next chapter there are also names, in fact there are lists of names in at least one case. However, the representation of these men has been decontextualized from the fullness of their lives. In dealing with the nameless POWs who form part of the Italian POW site of memory, we can complete the picture of what kinds of Italian POWs exist on the surface of contemporary memory.

Chapter Five: Nameless Prisoners of War

In this section I offer some analysis of those stories I came across that defied simple categorisation. In Chapter Two, dealing with fiction, my analysis could move freely within the relatively defined confines offered by the covers of a book, with an author's acknowledgment of the flashpoints for their inspiration and sometimes an acknowledgement of a specific historical item or person given as a postscript to the novel. The practice, noted in that chapter, of offering the reader the historical sources for the fictional events of the novel is one aspect of including the reader in the creative process in a small way. Another aspect of this practice is that it reiterates the fictionalising that the author does when working from these usually small points of inspiration. In my analysis there was also the ability to ascribe traits and tendencies to the generic imperatives of specific forms of fictional literature: the historical romance of Le Roux, the serialised epic of Joubert, or the surreal and symbolic work of van Heerden. These provided challenging, but defined analytic confines. Similarly, in Chapter Four dealing with named POWs there were fairly neat narrative devices framing the analysis; in the stories related to me the devices (conscious or unconscious) emerged from characteristics of actual individuals, a flesh and blood person with likes, dislikes, friends and enemies. Placing these characters in a time and place and gathering stories about them was strongly anchored in the memory, albeit complex, of an actual individual.

In this chapter I present a third category of Italian POW story that combines the imaginative work of the fiction that was analysed in the third chapter with the historical traces of actual POWs in South Africa. Unlike the stories that relate to named POWs, these stories do not have a specific referent in the form of an individual POW. In these stories there is usually received lore about the presence of POWs, often attached to a building, but this lore does not include specific names. Once the names of individuals have faded, there is even

more room for the extension of assumptions and stereotypes to inform the discourse. In doing so, those who tell the stories of these nameless POWs draw on a broader set of signifiers – the story of the area, family history, stories about other wars and the like – to fill in the absence of a named individual. The romanticising of the Italian POW is expanded and the complexity of his status as a soldier and captive is diminished. Like Mario Salviati, the fictional, mute Italian POW of van Heerden's novel, these Italian POWs are unable to speak for themselves. Their time in South Africa is recorded by association with work they did.

The focus of this chapter, nameless Italian POWs, provides a kind of control group for both the other chapters in that it demonstrates that the process of fictionalising and creating history can proceed from accounts at any point on the spectrum of post/memory; accounts containing things that "cannot be reduced to entirely true or false statements" (Stanley 2008, 32). Many of these accounts of Italian POWs in the past of a place or family exist on the slimmest possibility of actual evidence and, while there is no reason to doubt any of them outright, their richness, and the confidence in their telling are strong evidence for the suggestion that the Italian POWs in South Africa are a site of memory as opposed to a bland historical fact; they change meaning even when the names of the POWs themselves have disappeared from a story. This chapter serves to chase the ghosts of Italian POWs between two hotels. I look for Italian POWs above and below a mountain pass; a POW church in Pietermaritzburg becomes the home of memory but its builders' names are lost; the son of an inspector of Italian POWs remembers his childhood on an Italian POW-built farm.

5.1 Italian POW Ghosts: Lingering between hotels





Figures 13, 14, 15. Left. The exterior of the Mountain Park Hotel, Bulwer, KwaZulu-Natal. Centre. The entrance to the 'Spooky Graveyard' in the bar. Right. Assorted haunting paraphernalia in the 'Spooky Graveyard'.

In the KwaZulu-Natal town of Bulwer four Italian prisoners of war are remembered. Three of them are nameless ghosts who continue to generate new stories as they are encountered by the guests of Mountain Park Hotel. The fourth prisoner of war exists as a name and an Italian street address that is, as yet, not connected to a story in local memory. Like all good ghosts the four of them are held in limbo, but theirs is the limbo of memory that hangs between two buildings that each hold a thread of story, they are also between memory and history.

Theoretically, the analysis I offer here is at an intersection between the post/memory of Italian POW history and theorising about ghost tours under the rubric of dark tourism. The resurgence or, arguably, the persistence of interest in ghosts is at the heart of understanding the Bulwer node in the Italian POW site of memory; they could even become contributors to the site of memory in the future. For a historical moment to become a site of memory, it has to be able to change its meaning in response to new circumstances. In Bulwer, the memory of Italian POWs has been taken up as raw material for a form of contemporary tourism that

accommodates the thrill-seeking aspect of encounters with the supernatural within the framework of irony and assumed contemporary cynicism towards the same. Italian POW post/memory and dark tourism converge in the ghost walking tours that happen at Mountain Park Hotel. By including Italian POW ghosts in this tour a new and unexpected constituency is brought into the fold of Italian POW memory. Guests check out of the hotel with some currency in the Italian POW site of memory. Both the idea of a ghost walking tour and the overall character of the hotel require explanation, I begin with some theoretical points relating to the former before sketching the context of the hotel itself.

In the context of urban walking ghost tours in the United Kingdom, Holloway (2010) has presented the discursive, affective and material infrastructure to support Saler's assertion that contemporary enchantment, in the sense of being engaged by the unexplained, "delights but does not delude" (Saler 2006, 702).[65] Holloway uses the interviews and infrastructure of around ten walking tours to explore the limits of credibility that are pushed by contemporary enchantment. How do ghost tours build infrastructure that will draw an audience in, and what does it offer to those who do and do not 'believe'? The 'engineering' of enchantment that Holloway investigates (Holloway 2010, 618) is particularly pertinent for the portion of the Mountain Park Hotel ghost tour that I discussed with the owner; the POWs provide a historical basis for whatever haunting may or may not take place. Like the postscripts in van Heerden and Joubert's novels, the engineering of enchantment for the ghost tour at Mountain Park draws credibility and richness from historical realities. The infrastructures Holloway outlines are important for the present analysis as it is through the combination of the things said on and about the tours (discourse), the emotions and sentiments drawn on to construct the tours (affect), and the placing of these in the material infrastructure – the route, the

[65] Saler addresses "Modernity and Enchantment" as a concept by tackling the way the two terms have been related to one another at various historical moments. He suggests that the former has not replaced the latter, despite the assumption that it would (2006, 692). His historiographical survey of the two component terms in the title of his article reveals that the contestations surrounding 'modernity' as a category are in fact quite closely tied to changing stances of the self-conscious 'modern' in relation to 'enchantment'.

buildings and props of a ghost tour – that it is possible to locate a specific tour accurately within what Saler has identified as delight without delusion. At certain points in any such tour there must be a moment, or a series of moments at which a real paranormal event could occur. This is a key ingredient to any such tour. Like a game-viewing drive or a birding expedition the hope of a sighting is at the top of any punter's wish list; but the guide has to have material and form at hand to build and shape excitement and to fill-in in the event of a no show. It is in the filling-in that discourse and affect enliven the material aspects of a ghost tour, and it is in this point that the Italian POW site of memory reveals itself at the Mountain Park Hotel. Holloway contextualises his walking ghost tours within broader trends of the resurgence of interest in the paranormal, and the manifestation of this in dark tourism (he uses the term "thanotourism"). He argues that the interest in the paranormal, together with dark tourism generally, works against the 'disenchantment thesis', the idea that modernisation, broadly, erases the magical by the application of instrumental reason (2010, 620-621). In his analysis Holloway reveals a growing rather than diminishing appetite for enchantment in the face of instrumental reason at the opening of the twenty-first century. In exploring the presence of Italian POWs in Bulwer, I propose that this hunger for enchantment, for a past that is more than a series of disconnected events, the proprietors and guests collaborate in extrapolating delight from the slimmest pieces of POW post/memory.

Mountain Park Hotel is situated just outside the town of Bulwer in the Sisonke district of south-west KwaZulu-Natal. In its publicity material the hotel offers something more than the expected range of outdoor activities and the luxuries of a hotel at the foot of the Southern Drakensberg; it makes a particular point of its identity as a historic hotel, and that this history is available for exploration during the visitor's stay (see the hotel website at http://www.wheretostay.co.za/mountainpark). The history it presents is an odd mixture of fact, fiction and imagination that is given narrative continuity by the enduring features of the

buildings and grounds. It draws on a fantasised past that combines medieval and English Renaissance references mixed with local lore, narrations of its own beginnings as a hotel, as well as the anecdotes of the paranormal. The Italian POW site of memory is fed material and symbolic content by the discourse existing in Mountain Park Hotel; it holds material aspects of the site of memory in that it was partially built by POWs, and it also holds symbolic value to the site of memory in that its ghost stories and self-conscious historical status make it a place that can be remoulded time and time again to varying tastes of what constitutes historical interest. It also instantiates a quality of Stanley's post/memory in that between the facts that mark its history and the repeated process of presenting it to new guests, the hotel's story improvises on things that cannot be reduced to absolute truths or falsities.

The material cues for the odd mixture of styles and historical referents can be found in the building itself. Construction was completed in 1942, with the help of some unknown Italian POWs, and it would seem the intention was to build a mock Tudor-style mansion; this is suggested by the gabled dormer windows, but becomes much clearer in the design of the half-timbered interior; the blackwood beams for which were brought especially from Knysna and its surrounds.[66] The building was inspected in 1942 but a number of setbacks delayed its opening as a hotel until the 1950s; not least of which was the sudden, unexplained and violent death of its founder M. C. Menigal [sic] (this may be an incorrect rendering on the hand-written history of the building, it is more likely to be McMenigal, the current owner's pronunciation is "McNiggle"). This first death at the property and also the ill-luck that dogged the hotel's opening have each found a place in its overall identity. The sombre and dark interior is offset by "carefully chosen relics from the past such as ancient broadswords and battleaxes [sic] brought from England and Spain"

[66] The story of the hotel is presented in one of the lounges on a hand written, framed page that also has a photograph from the hotel in the 1950s. Alongside it is the the framed photograph and legend of the Italian inscription found in the adjacent hotel, and a third frame of the Appaloosa horses that are kept in the stables. Between them these frames underpin the story of the hotel as presented to guests.

(http://www.wheretostay.co.za/mountainpark/). Adding to this is the legend that there are secret passages and trapdoors in the building (ibid.). These and other elements are packaged and presented to visitors as part of a ghost tour that weaves the history of the hotel together with local lore and capitalises on the eccentricities of the mock Tudor style:

> *Mountain Park Hotel is romantic, attractive, tranquil and pleasantly bizarre. This is no ordinary hotel, but is very different with it's* [sic] *creaking floors, crooked doors, low ceilings and unusual ambiance attributed to several ghostly characters said to reside on the property. In fact Mountain Park is truly one of the few genuinely haunted hotels in the country.* (http://www.wheretostay.co.za/mountainpark/).

The present owners have appended elements of the hotel's physical characteristics, as a building that creaks, has crooked, off-centre elements and feels hemmed-in in parts (Interview 11, 00:18:46), to broader historical signifiers that, for obvious reasons, cannot be a part of the hotel's actual history; that is, the hotel is not a medieval haunted castle, nor is it a Tudor mansion. It is not even mock-Tudor, as the style was a feature of much earlier British colonial architecture in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The ghost stories and the ghost tour at Mountain Park Hotel would fall comfortably into the category of ironic presentation of the ghost tour, a tongue-in-cheek approach to the haunting is part of the charm of the place. It carries this approach off in two ways: first, as an additional point of interest for prospective guests and secondly, to help legitimise the quirkiness of the hotel itself, in the sense that part of what a guest buys into in booking at Mountain Park is the acceptance of oddly proportioned rooms, staircases and dining rooms, in exchange for the promise of an encounter with one of the ghostly characters. The haunted aspect is handled lightly though, with the prospect of a haunted hotel tucked into the overall

offerings that include horseback riding, walks, bowling, tennis and volleyball (http://www.wheretostay.co.za/mountainpark/). Like those activities it can be entered into or ignored. This tongue-in-cheek haunting is further emphasised by the fact that the ghost tour begins and ends in the bar, also the site of the 'Spooky Graveyard'. This analysis picks up on aspects of the discursive and affective elements surrounding the ghost tour as described by one of the owners, who runs some of the ghost tours. I interviewed Jill Ward with the intention of discussing information I had that the hotel had been built, in part, by Italian POWs. I found that these POWs had been woven into the story of the building as spectral presences.

Her opening comment was that when she and her husband bought the property, almost thirty years ago, they were told that it had been built by POWs, then, with no information in the central archives in Pietermaritzburg, they adjusted to the view that it might have only been finished by POWs, and this was corroborated by a historian who was working on local history at some point. She indicated that this partial involvement in the hotel's building is why comments about the POWs relate to the third floor, the last floor to be built and the place within the building that is haunted by the three ghosts presumed to be Italian POWs (Interview 11, 00:18:40). There was also a suggestion by Jill that there was something illegal in the POWs working on the building and so this may not have been recorded: "So whether it was political, like, the secrecy act or something because you weren't supposed to be having POWs here, I'm not sure." (Interview 11, 00:00:52). This begins to give some added mystique to the POWs, extending their difference from mere foreign captives, to unlawful foreign captives. What is known about Italian POW labour is that the process was far less haphazard than this would suggest. Prisoner records reveal a clear protocol for external labour camps and teams (Carlesso 2009, 166) as well as Italian-speaking inspectors to check up on the treatment they were receiving (Interview 10, 00:02:40).

The stories of Italian POWs in the area that seemed to lack archival evidence were supported by an unexpected piece of forensic evidence when, during the 2006 renovations of the other hotel in the area (currently the Songbo Chinese Supermarket), an engraved inscription was discovered behind an old bricked-up wall. The inscription is of a name and surname as well as a street address in a town near Ravenna, Italy: "LONTANI, GUERRINO, VIAMARINA, N 65, SAVIO, RAVENNA, ITALIA"



Figure 16. Photograph of the POW inscription at Songbo Chinese Supermarket, hanging in the Mountain Park Hotel.

The photograph taken at the time of its excavation is in a better state than the extant inscription, which I visited in December 2011; it is now partially painted over. There is an authenticating plaque in the bottom left of the frame issued by the Italian government confirming the name and address and supporting it as evidence of the presence of Italian Prisoners of War in the area at the time of the construction of the Mountain Park Hotel. Leigh, owner of the local Build & Save and adjacent buildings, among them the other hotel reputedly built by Italian POWs, suggested that the Italians worked the grey stone used for the steps and the veranda, which he was sure was extracted, with much effort, from the top of the mountains, whereas as the more readily available ironstone that forms the foundation of

the building, was, he suggested, laid earlier by South African masons (Pers. Comm.). In yet another loop linking the Italian POW experience to Second World War memory, Leigh's father was a South African prisoner in Italy. When the inscription was found in the village, it seemed to prove that there were POWs in the area, although there is no date on the engraving itself and I could not establish independent verification of this. Jill indicated that there were no extant inscriptions in the Mountain Park Hotel itself, but that the inscription in the village reveals that there were Italians around at the same time (Interview 11, 00:03:38).

Jill then went on to describe the ghosts in the hotel, each with their own place in the building, there is:

> *…a lady with long, dark hair…We've got three guys, and we think that some of them might be the Ita- because they're on the third floor…And they cause havoc from time to time. We've got a little girl which isn't an Italian girl. She was only killed a little while later, and she's her with her dog, we've got a man and a wife in the bar* (Interview 11, 00:12:11)

Although she has not seen any of the ghosts in her nearly thirty years at the hotel, Jill says staff and guests see them all the time (ibid.). The Italian POWs among the ghosts are assumed to be Italian because they appear and "cause havoc" on the third floor of the building, the floor built by POWs (Interview 11, 00:12:24 and 14:00:19:48). Their presence as ghosts in the hotel is a combination of a piece of received local lore, the mysterious inscription on a wall of a nearby hotel and the tradition of identifying ghosts to add to the hotel that was first deemed unlucky, then cursed (because of the fate of its founder and the long time it took to get opened) and later haunted. A social framework, of the kind Halbwachs suggested holds collective memory, exists to contain the memory of Italian POWs in the area that does not

rely on the particular names or deeds of specific prisoners. In fact the finding of the inscription only confirmed what the community already remembered. At this point in the Italian POW site of memory, it is not the presence of Italian POWs that calls for corroborating evidence, but rather, the Mountain Park building and the stonework at the second hotel that need explanation. Their respective eccentricities, the large, mock Tudor hotel and a building featuring unusual stonework, are given a similar pedigree based on the the scraps of memory that place Italian POWs at both places.

The next aspect of the Italian POWs that is mentioned is in relation to the sturdiness of the Mountain Park building itself. Of the shutter construction of the walls Jill says the following: "so it's not conventional, well, what I call conventional. Hard as Heck! Because some of this stuff is actual rock." (Interview 11, 00:20:20). This theme that recurs in relation to the Italian POWs is echoed elsewhere in Bulwer itself, when Leigh referred to the herculean task of bringing the stone from the top of the mountains, but is also a part of a much wider sentiment that the Italians built things that endure, that required skill and time and craftsmanship. In the Mountain Park Hotel this idea is tied back into the hotel's entire story. There are not discrete parts to the story but rather the large single narrative of the hotel through time. Here, the quality of endurance is accredited in part to the Italians but also to a broader idea that things were made well 'back then'. The ultimate proof of this for Jill is that the hotel survived a tornado:

> *Well we were hit, about fifteen years ago, we were hit direct with a tornado… And I was standing just in the car park then you saw it come down here and hit dead on. And the whole building went like this… Nothing, just a couple of cracks and that was it.* (Interview 11, 00:21:58)

An important point about the Italian POW ghosts that haunt Mountain Park Hotel is that there are no records, in a formal archive or in the received lore of the building, that indicate any Italian POW died there, Jill invited further information on any of the specifics about the POWs who were there from anyone who had any (Interview 11, 00:14:15). This makes their inclusion in the list of ghosts of the hotel even more intriguing. If they did not fulfil even the most basic condition of a ghost, being dead, then their inclusion expresses a will to include the Italian POW that supersedes their factual absence. This was not the last place at which an Italian POW would be imagined to ameliorate the forgetting of specific individuals. The vineyards in Klein Drakenstein (discussed below) and the Rech farm (discussed in the previous chapter), also feature inscriptions that obscure more than they reveal.[67]

I was told about another mystery of the hotel, one that has no relation to the prisoners themselves but that could readily fit into their story as it relates to "the war": an escape tunnel that led out from the bar. Jill: "because of the war at the time, there was a, from the bar downstairs, there was a tunnel that led out, an escape tunnel" (Interview 11, 00:23:45). Though no tunnels have turned up in their extensive renovations over the years Jill related this story and was not able to add any further information about why an escape tunnel would be necessary, or who used it. As with other aspects of the hotel, stories have developed and been added into the fabric of the hotel's discourse, connecting it to times, places, wars and people that cannot be part of its historical record.

Actual POWs still evade capture by memory, and so remain floating around Mountain Park Hotel. Despite an actual name, nothing has materially changed the story that has developed around the construction work done by the Italians. That there was no recorded death there, that the number of three Italian ghosts is not explicable and that the evidence of

[67] Though not analysed in this thesis the inscriptions of a grammar or poetry lesson, on the walls of a shed that served as a POW school room displayed similarly intriguing. At Colonel Prinsloo's farm in Mpumalanga there certainly were POWs, but there names and the faded inscriptions are only partially mapped in the memory of Colonel Prinsloo's descendants (Interview 20) .

an Italian in the area is undated have not dimmed the need for Italian POWs in the Mountain Park Hotel story. Their presence adds an exoticism and a historical curiosity to the hotel's identity as a place of historical significance.

5.2 Stopped Again: Italian POWs above and below the mountain pass





Figures 17 & 18. Left. The Italian POW Memorial on the R101 overlooking Klein Drakenstein, Paarl. Right. Huguenot Buttress in the background and POW-built dam in the foreground.

Following leads from the Cape Town representative of the Zonderwater Block Association, Mino Caira (Interview 14), I visited Paarl to see if there were any living stories about Italian POWs in the area. One of the main people I was looking to interview was Mrs Domenica Ferucci. She was suggested as a key person linking the scant Italian community scattered among various small towns between Cape Town itself and the Worcester community where the cemetery is. For many years she had been involved in gathering the attendants from that part of the Cape to make the trip to the cemetery for the annual memorial service held there in November. Her link to the Italian POW story is a brother, Antonio Burzacchi, an Italian POW who convinced the family to leave Faenza and join him in South Africa in the 1950s.

Once in Paarl and Klein Drakenstein, a few other individuals filled in part of the picture of the Italian POWs who had been in the area. Nellie Basson, amateur historian and long-time resident, and Armand Botha, manager at Keerweder Farm (now Olsen Wineries, see Interview 18) between them inducted me into the stories of the Klein Drakenstein area, the portion of Paarl east of the Berg River, and the area in which Italian POWs had been billeted. Though there are a number of memorialising sites and at least one publication that deals with the presence of Italian POWs, there is very little relating to specific Italian POWs who were in the area. Considering the sustained presence of nearly 1500 POW labourers working on the Du Toitskloof Pass, it seemed strange that an area such as Klein Drakenstein, clearly capable of articulating its history, has no traceable Italian POW stories to connect to the memorial sites. This silence does not, however, mean that the memory has disappeared. Like the POWs at Bulwer, the work of Italian POWs remains and though dormant at the moment, there is every reason to believe that, as has occurred in the Roberston district, the memory of Italian POWs will return at some point.[68]

The memory of the prisoners of war who lived and worked in this particular part of the Cape has been worked into the story of the area as a whole. In doing so, their names and their stories have been drained of detail through the gradual attrition of living memory in favour of a story of the local white community's identity as those who did not/do not cross the Cape Fold Belt, literally and figuratively. This is a quite a specific claim to make, to say that there is such a specific characterisation to the area's history, but Klein Drakenstein and Paarl have a published version of their memory (discussed below), and this has set a benchmark against which new stories about the area are measured. To support the published version, the four informants that I was directed to as authorities on the matter of Italian

[68] Though not dealt with in this research, the Wederom wine estate in the Robertson district of the Western Cape has branded and marketed a number of its wines by combining fragments of local memory and the excavation of an Italian POW-attributed mural into a narrative. This story of two Italian POWs has become "The Italian Connection" on the farm history page of their website, a small museum and the addition of "Arrivederci" (the Italian for "Wederom") to their labels. (http://www.wederom.co.za/history.htm)

POWs included in their number two well-known repositories of general history in the area, namely, Domenica Ferucci and Nellie Basson. Nellie Basson is a farm owner's wife and Domenica Ferucci a formidable farmer in her own right. The other two, Graige Olsen and Armand Botha, were, respectively, owner and manager at Olsen Winery's La Vinette 1 vineyard (formerly Keerweder). Their highs and lows as farm owners represent dominant voices in a local history defined by geography and agriculture; a narrative centred on its location before the mountains. Nestled between the Boland and Hex River Mountains, the communities of Paarl, Klein Drakenstein and Wellington are defined by the gravitational pull of Cape Town on the one hand and the looming mountains that march north to south on their doorstep. The Italian POWs played a historical role in opening up modern connections over the mountains, but this has not altered the presence of the mountain as the defining limit of a specific mindset and local character. The intersecting histories of geography and infrastructure have created multiple approaches to the physical area through successive construction of pass, road and tunnel and, I argue, multiple approaches to memory. Each represents a successive moment in technological advancement that has in some ways relegated Italian POW memory, or at least kept confined to its particular moment.

In this section I will be connecting two memorial sites with the story-telling of two local women as well as the remains of one of the sites where POWs were billeted. Each of these defers to a story of the area more generally and feature Italian POW history as an ingredient, but not as a complete story in its own right. Though the name of at least one of the 1500 prisoners who worked there survives, this section is placed under the chapter heading of "Nameless Prisoners of War" because this story is about an effort and a task, rather than about individual prisoners, whose personalities defined a place and a memory. My findings reveal strata of memorialisation concomitant with the tiers of memory discussed in the introduction, but also missing the final presence in the present. The stories of the POWs in

this area have been sealed up and have very limited access points in the present and this, I argue, is an unintended impact of formal memorialisation.

Two physical markers commemorate the Italian contribution to infrastructure in the area. The older is the cross on the peak of Huguenot Buttress (also called Huguenot's Peak and Huguenotkop). The stainless steel cross on the peak today is the latest replacement of the original wooden cross and a small religious picture of Mary that was in a little box near the cross. The inscription IPOW (Italian Prisoners of War) was engraved on a rock when the original memorial was set up in 1945 by departing POWs (Basson 1996, 16). In 1984 the Italian POWs were commemorated again with a mounted bronze plaque at one of the lookout points below Huguenot Buttress. This is the second moment of memorialisation under consideration. The plaque was created under the aegis of the then Zonderwater Block Association president Enrico Mottalini and inaugurated by him and other Italian and South African dignitaries including South African Defence Force head General Constant Viljoen and a number of surviving ex-POWs, as part of a "Goodwill Festival" aimed at bringing South Africans and Italians together (http://www.historicalmedia.co.za/?p=726). The steel cross was erected as part of the same set of memorial events over October and November 1984 (Basson 1996, 17).

Though it was an immensely important event in the history of the South African-Italian community, largely driven by ex-POWs, the politics of the Goodwill Festival is not the focus of this research. It should be categorised rather, as a significant rescuing of the memory of Italian POWs in the Western Cape and a fundamental instance of the second-tier of memory-making. Following the work of autobiography and self-memorialisation through inscription and autograph during the period of internment, the second tier of memory is that post-war period in which active, ex-POW members of the Zonderwater Block Association initiated their own projects to reflect on the period of internment. In the case of the Western

Cape, the thorough memorialisation in bronze, steel and stone has in some ways finalised or sealed POW memory. While there may be a wealth of stories in the memories of any number of Paarl residents, it is too easy, even for those long-time residents who knew Italian ex-POWs, to defer to the memory locked into the material memorials that constitute what I have called the second tier of Italian POW memory. Nora's distinction between memory and history as respectively the living, vibrant recollection of the past, and the dead marking of places and events deemed important, resonates here. In the second tier of memory-making, when the Italian-South African community wanted to forge close alliances with the dominant culture of the day, there was a time of memorial building, the work of history.

At both the cross and plaque there are no names. What is commemorated is the presence, an enduring presence in the case of the cross, and the work of constructing the pass itself. The cross has been the object of periodic attention by locals in Paarl as it has been repeatedly destroyed by the extreme weather conditions on the peak. In the local history of the area compiled by Nellie Basson there is a recounting of the instances that the cross has been replaced, and an indication that the original did not last long (Basson 1996, 16). The cross is still known as "the Italian cross" but its presence is much more a testament to the community's desire to keep it standing rather than a continuing conscious commitment to the memory of the Italian POWs specifically. The story of various subsequent crosses is the story of the sweat and toil of locals to maintain a cross on top of the buttress. The only instance of the Italian POW origins of the cross being emphasised is when, in 1984, some descendants of ex-POWs and Italian-South Africans became involved in restoring the site. In published material and online, the photography shows various various dignitaries, and those who did the labour at the cross, indicating a shift in its role in the local landscape, originating as a gesture from the departing Italian prisoners, but sustained by the local community. Nellie Basson describes the bright reflection off a mirror hung on the cross as a heart-warming

wonder ("*By die anskoue hiervan kom daar so 'n warm gevoel van verwondering in 'n mens se hart*", "This reflection causes a warm feeling of wonder in a person's heart." ibid.) that travels across the valley with the changing position of the sun.[69] This drift in purpose of the cross is attributable to a reasonable set of circumstances: with few Italians to keep the cross "Italian", the locals have taken it up as their own, seeing it every day affirming its religious as opposed to its historical significance and also marking the passing of time (Basson offers specific times of year when the mirror reflects light to different parts of the valley, ibid.).

Between the peak of Huguenot Buttress and the valley of Klein Drakenstein the old R101 winds along the scenic route around the spurs of the mountains (the newer N1 route runs through the mountains with the Huguenot Tunnel). The plaque commemorating Italian POWs is along this route, with scenic views of both the cross-capped peak and Klein Drakenstein. The bronze plaque is mounted on stone and bears three columns of text surmounted by the crest devised for the Goodwill Festival. The text consists of three vertical columns of, left to right, Afrikaans, English and Italian versions of the same legend. The English reads:

DURING WORLD WAR II
SOME 1500 ITALIAN P.O.W.S
WERE ENCAMPED ON THE FARM
KEEWEDER DIRECTLY BELOW
THEIR TASK WAS TO HELP
BUILD THE DU TOITSKLOOF PASS
THE CROSS WHICH

[69] Published photographs of the cross at close range, the ones referred to here, can be seen in Nellie Basson's book on page 17 (photograph not credited) as well as a colour photograph (Helge Heinzle) at the webpage Historical Media, Constructing the Du Toit's [sic] Kloof Pass (http://www.historicalmedia.co.za/?tag=italian-pows). The photographs may well be from the same event, but seem to be the only photographs of the process of restoring the cross. The former features South African military dignitaries prominently and the latter is a shot of hikers arrived at the cross.

WAS ERECTED ON

FEBRUARY 2, 1945

ON HUGUENOT PEAK

TO THE LEFT ABOVE, WAS TO

COMMEMORATE BOTH THEIR

CREATIVE PRESENCE AND

THE REMARKABLE

FRIENDSHIP WHICH EXISTED

BETWEEN THEM AND

THE PEOPLE OF PAARL

This inscription does the work intended by the Goodwill Festival in that it is careful to focus the discourse of memory on "their creative presence" and "the remarkable friendship" within the frame of "their task was to help". The image of the Italian POWs is being steered here by the memorialising work of the ex-POWs, on the one hand attributing far more agency to the prisoners than they would have had and, at the same time reducing them to a singular identity. The plaque forms part of a longer argument of attribution around the Du Toitskloof Pass and the tunnel that was completed in 1948. Local history favours the idea that the pass, as a modern road, was the end point of improvements to what had been a cattle pass for some centuries (http://www.historicalmedia.co.za/?p=726) Italian brawn, bravery and engineering skill are memorialised on the old pass. However, in the historical memory of Klein Drakenstein and Paarl, their contribution to creating the pass is a small part of a much longer story of finding a way through the mountains, the slippage that often attributes the pass solely to Italians seems to rankle. The reference to "the remarkable friendship", with its singular definite article containing and delimiting the agency of the POWs to a completely

homogenised position, is an example of the often over-simplified memorialising of Italian POWs, both by themselves and subsequent generations. “Encamped”, “task” and “creative presence” are all terms to euphemise the danger and drudgery of POW labour as much as “remarkable” marks the friendship that developed as a divergence from the usual reception the Italians could have met. They may also be read as the post/memory of a largely artisanal community, the post-war Italian immigrant community, reflecting on the presence of their compatriots, as if they were a previous company of useful émigrés.

In terms of the site of memory of Italian POWs; this particular node of memory has a material presence and certainly a symbolic presence, but lacks the functional, a ritual community to keep it active. The material presence has a real sense of permanence about it from both the bronze plaque and the cross that is assiduously restored by the local people. Although it must be said that to read the plaque you literally have to choose to travel down a kind of ‘memory lane’. The R101 and N1 split, with the latter offering a direct and shorter route through the mountains, and the former offering a scenic meander that takes the traveller north to the pass. The symbolic presence of Italian POWs, however general it may be, is permanently inscribed in many different ways, as the “Italian cross” and the memorial plaque are the first places to which any person in the area will refer to when asked about POWs. What the Italian POW memory does not have in Paarl is the functional aspect that Nora indicated would be required to keep the site of memory dynamic. There is no ritualised activity that keeps the stories of Italian POWs circulating. When I visited Nellie Basson and asked for stories about the Italian POWs, she referred me to her book *Klein Drakenstein: ‘n Skatkis van gebeure en gedagtes om te onthou* (a rough translation would read, “Klein Drakenstein: A Treasure-chest of moments and memories to remember”). With the same strange irony that allows forgetting to happen with the installation of a monument, the creation of her book in the mid 1990s has allowed Nellie Basson to defer to it as the

definitive representation of her memory.[70] I had encountered this aspect of remembering and forgetting before, with Rosa Fardella, who had preferred to defer her own memory of her father to a set of articles in which he was interviewed that appeared in the *Natal Witness* (Interview 12, 00:01:56). To return to Nellie Basson, each attempt that I made in the interview to steer toward her own memory of POWs, was in turn redirected to her book. From 00:01:42 to the end of a roughly twenty minute interview, Nellie Basson worked through the index sub-headings that covered many aspects of life in Klein Drakenstein (Interview 17). For her part, Mrs Ferucci was not interested in repeated attempts to open up conversation about her brother, but also directed me to two memoirs written by other Italian POWs (Interview 16, from 00:04:00) (Salvagno 2007; Libratti 2006).

A similar deferral of Italian POW history is at work in the case of Domenica Ferucci. Her own story is a very impressive one, and it is one that has settled into something of a legend over the years. Subsequent research revealed that Mrs Ferucci has in fact told her story many times, and clear themes of the struggle for success, the challenges of starting from scratch and many of the key themes that define compelling émigré stories are all present. Her story was covered by *La Gazetta del Sud Africa*, a publication that publishes news and interest stories for an Italian-South African readership (http://www.lagazzettadelsudafrica.net/domenica-ferucci.html). She has been recognised through awards including, the Cavaliere dell'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana (1986), the Faentina Lontana del 1989 (an award for expatriate women from Faenza), and the Donna Italiana del 2007 by the *Gazetta del Sud Africa*, all of these in recognition of her contributions to Italian community abroad. In the shadows of her well-earned recognition is the brother, whose chance captivity in South Africa provided a destination for the indomitable young Domenica Burzacchi. Antonio's story seems remote and inaccessible.

[70] This brings to mind the Derridean idea of writing things down as a kind of permission to forget them (Bradley 2008, 48).

Other stories have clearly overtaken whatever living memory there was of the POWs in the area, this despite it being a place with a developed sense of historical identity. Nellie Basson's history of Klein Drakenstein begins with an appeal to remember: "*Ons lewe sou maar baie arm en leeg gewees het sonder herinneringe*" ("Our lives would have been very poor and empty without memories", Basson 1996, Foreword). In the same foreword she implores readers to use the book as a handbook of memory, to be returned to over and over again on a Sunday afternoon, and that memories can be selected from the index, rather than reading from page one. The publication is clearly a work by and for the people of the area, to return to their own memories as gathered by Nellie Basson. For them, the Italians are important to remember in that the latter placed the first cross and opened the pass to post-war traffic. But in this printed memory the story that is important is the re-establishing of the cross as time and weather do their worst.

By design, the Italian cross, placed by Italian POWs and replaced by the people of Paarl, looks down onto the bend in the highway where the plaque was placed, and this in turn looks down onto the farm that was Keerweder. The original farm has since been broken up into seven farms that are now under vines. Taking advice from a number of locals I was eventually directed to La Vinette 1, where I was told there was and inscription from "the war" and some remains of Italian POW concrete block houses. My guide was Armand Botha, who has worked on the farm for eleven years.



Figure 19. Inscription on the reservoir at La Vinette Farm.

The unbreakable, and therefore immoveable concrete blocks that were part of the housing for POWs have been left in the fields, and criss-cross rows of vines broken by pine stands that serve as wind-breaks against the south-easter. In one of the fields is a reservoir that Armand said was built by prisoners of war. This is corroborated by the now barely legible acronym inscribed on the outer wall in tall, spindly lettering. The four letters have very small serifs and curvatures that could make “P”s of “B”s and vice versa. The most careful readings of each render a few options: “R” or “P” for the first letter that has a diagonal crack from left to right, and “P” or “B” for the second letter, that is faded on the right, where the bowls to complete the letter’s anatomy would be. These are followed by a “G” and an “I”. An interpretation could be “Ricordo” (“Memento/Remembrance”, this is common in other POW acronyms) or “Prigionieri” (“Prisoners”) or “Paarl”. The second letter could stand for “Paarl”, “Prigionieri” or “Buchucape” the name of one of the camps in the

POW camps in the area (Carlesso 2009, 169). The last two letters complete the message of "[di] Guerra Italiani". The message is a variation on the theme of "Memento of the [Paarl, Buchucape, Prisoners] Italian Prisoners of War". This esoteric acronym, was both more and less mysterious than the other inscription I had been taken to on the farm. Before we left the farmhouse to wander through the vines, Armand had taken me to see the stone in the siding of an original stoep. He suggested that it was linked to the prisoners of war.



Figure 20. Marking another war.

There is a very beautiful and precise script: PEACE PROCLAIMED MAY 31 1902. This stone, which commemorates the end of the South African War with the Peace of Vereeniging, has been woven into a single narrative about war and the farm. I suggest that the conflation of two wars in the discourse of history on the Keeweder farm is a significant slippage. I had spoken with the farm owner, a farm-hand and Armand, and each had referred to the reservoir and this inscription as being the two things that stood out as part of the POW heritage of the

farm. Between the formerly unacknowledged inscription on the reservoir wall (Armand had not noticed it before, Interview 18, 00:16:00) and the inscription of another war, the Italian prisoner of war traces had just managed to hang on at Keerweder.[71]

In linking the material traces of the POWs with the efforts of memorialisation of them, the name of the farm Keerweder offers some ideas. Of the voortrekkers who were attempting to make a crossing into the hinterland at Paarl, Armand said: "Every time they get somewhere they would [be] stopped again, *keerweder*" (Interview 18, 00:02:00). The nameless prisoners of war in the Paarl area are always on the point of emerging, as with the mountain pass that they helped to open up, their resolve to break through is tested; not only in their own time, but in all subsequent moments of remembering and forgetting.

[71] In another creative adaptation of the site of memory of Italian POWs, David Kramer in his song 'Prisoners of War' (from the album *Klassic Kramer*, 1996) also places the Italian POWs in the context of other wars fought by South Africans. He links the Italian POWs in South Africa, the South Africans who fought in Egypt in the Second World War and his own service in Angola in the South African Border War.

5.3 The Inclusive Sacrario and the lost memory of Captain Lamberti





Figure 21, 22, 23. Left. Franco Muraro at the entrance to the POW-built church at Pietermaritzburg. Centre. Back of the church and belfry. Right. The *sacrario* (shrine) behind the church. The cross marking the fallen POWs and the broken-column stele memorial for the POW and civilian victims of the Nova Scotia.

Travelling away from Pietermaritzburg, south east towards Durban on the N3 highway, one can see the 'Italian church', as it is known, on the edge of the suburb of Epworth, once far outside of Pietermaritzburg. This church was dedicated in 1944 to "The Mother of Divine Grace" (MATRI DIVINÆ GRATIÆ) by the "Italian Captives" (CAPTIVI ITALICI). It was used by the POWs for worship, and the dedication on the tympanum, cited above, is a supplication that they be granted the grace to return home (Interview 9, 00:11:42). The outlying suburbs of Pietermaritzburg now embrace the premises of the church, and where there was once a steady stream of traumatised and near-starved, newly arrived Italian POWs, the leafy suburb of Epworth holds the little church in a now thoroughly tamed and safe landscape.[72]

[72] The port of Durban was the South African disembarking point for all Italian POWs and civilian Italian captives arriving from North and East Africa. From there civilian captives from Italy's African colonies were sent off to separate camps from the military captives (Carlesso 2009, 68). Military prisoners were sent on to Zonderwater. (Carlesso 2009, 75, 170)

Behind the church is the area referred to as the *sacrario* (shrine), though the shrine is in fact a military cemetery holding the remains of a number of Italian POWs. Its appellation as '*sacrario*' as opposed to 'Military Cemetery' as at Zonderwater, signals the first of a number of significant differences between the sites; the Pietermartizburg church is a place for remembering more than one kind of POW, a key idea in the analysis that follows. The *sacrario*, and also the new life that the church itself has as a revived place of worship, form a significant node in the overall Italian POW site of memory.[73]

With this little church and its *sacrario* as the strongest material presence of Italian POWs in the area, Pietermaritzburg presents a variation of the idea of a memorialisation that marks an absence of memory in living stories, such as that described above in relation to Paarl in the Western Cape. What makes this site unique is that, where there is a gap in the memory that could link the builders of the church to the site itself, other, half forgotten pieces of history have been brought into the physical site for memorialisation.

I visited this church with the current caretaker, Franco Muraro, and together we discussed the community that was, the long period of dereliction and the subsequent revival of the church. Today, members of the small Italian-South African community of Pietermaritzburg and the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands attend a monthly Italian mass at the church and, in doing so, are layering memories onto a historical site that was almost forgotten. Franco himself also helps to organise the annual memorial service there along the same lines, and in collaboration with, the Zonderwater event, and is also the liaison with the relevant branches of the Italian Consulate regarding POW graves in Pietermaritzburg. His

[73] This research has steered away from analysis of the annual memorial events that happen each November, a month reserved for remembering the dead, especially All Soul's Day on the second. Memorial services occur annually at the three sites where Italian POWs are interred, at Worcester Cemetery (Western Cape), Zonderwater (Gauteng) and the Italian church in Pietermaritzburg around early November. These significant events provide annual, formal memorialising functions and, while it was and is a valuable way for ex-POWs and their descendants to honour their comrades, as this project is concerned with living stories, the memorialising of those POWs who died within the Union of South Africa during internment, does not fall within the ambit of living stories. The memorial events do remain the first port of call for people who have recently discovered an Italian POW heritage or connection. It has also long served as a central ritual of the South African-Italian Community.

particular approach to the memory of the POWs, and role in relation to the POW church form part of this analysis. I will begin with an overview of the church as an ongoing project, some background to the multiple memorialisations that happen at the church and then explore some of the nuances of this part of the Italian POW site of memory in the context of the Pietermaritzburg Italian community.

The precinct that contains the church and *sacrario* is a site at once filled with names and history but empty of names attached to stories. As with the memory of POWs in Paarl, there may be any number of living stories with individuals and within families that were not suggested or traceable, but when tracing these from the centre of POW memory at the POW church, there is little connecting the names and places with living stories. There are names of those POWs who died in Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal) listed on the shrine, and I will expand on the shrine itself below, but unlike many other POW-built structures there is nothing in the church that commemorates the builders. The POWs themselves did, however, produce a record of key contributions to the building of the church as part of the first tier of self-memorialisation. Circulated in photocopied form among a number of Italian-South Africans in the area is a copy of the 1944 booklet '*Prigionieri di Guerra Italiani, Campo di Pietermaritzburg*' ('Italian Prisoners of War Pietermaritzburg Camp'). Printed with the assistance of the local Italian aid committee, it serves as a record of activities and work done by the POWs under the subtitle '*In Attesa*' ('Waiting'). On page 22, in a chapter on the details of the church's construction are the names of the stonemasons, quarrymen, bricklayers, carpenters, mechanics, painters, decorators and altar sculptors who contributed to its construction. Franco had given me a copy of this booklet and it is a testament to the shifting nature of memory that when I asked him if he knew the names of the builders he said that there is no record of the names of the POWs who actually built the church, not even in the booklet (Interview 9, Part 2, 00:00:04:01). I argue that this is attributable to more than a

slip of memory regarding what is and is not written about the Pietermaritzburg church. Franco has a wide-ranging knowledge of the issues, politics, history and character of the church. The care that he communicated throughout our discussion demonstrated his commitment to the memory and the dignity of the POWs buried there and also to the building itself. His opening comments are filled with admiration for the skill of the masons, and later he speaks about POWs buried with their "friends", and the love of country that the priosners died for with deeply felt sympathy (Interview 9, Part 1). But the social frameworks that he employs to speak about the church come from his care of the building as a memorial space and a living space rather than as a place of dry historical significance. I am suggesting that the focus of memory, as it manifests in the premises' caretaker, is on the continuing dignity of the graves on the one hand, and on the story of the church as a living congregation; the destiny of the named builders is not an active part of this place of memory at present. The names of those specific men are not ignored out of disrespect but have rather become of secondary importance to the living story of the church and the ritual activity of the *sacrario.*

Franco indicated that for some time after the war the church was abandoned and periodically inhabited by vagrants even after it had been declared a heritage site (Interview 9, 00:00:09).[74] The threads that kept the church its identity as a place of worship seem to have withered with the repatriation to Italy of the prisoners who had used it. One could say that, with the grace finally granted to return to their home, its original congregation, of necessity, abandoned it. The church began to come back to life when remains of the thirty five prisoners, who had died in Natal during the war, were moved from the Hillary Cemetery, Durban, to the plot behind the church and the area was fenced off (Interview 9, 00:02:27). This was the second time the remains were moved, they were initially interred at Mountain Rise Cemetery, Pietermaritzburg. But these were not only the remains of POWs who had died

[74] The Church is a provincial heritage site. Number: 9/2/436/0016.

in the internment camps. Another tragedy of the war, the sinking of the English ship Nova Scotia, resulted in a loss of Italian life under friendly fire that has made a double-memorial of the shrine at Pietermaritzburg.

It was at the Hillary Cemetery that the memorial to the Italian victims of the Nova Scotia came into the ambit of memorialising the Second World War. Briefly, here is the story of that ship: on 28 November 1942, a German submarine torpedoed the Nova Scotia, a ship that ferried troops along the African east coast. On this trip it was returning South African troops for Christmas leave (134 including British troops), and almost 800 Italian prisoners, among them some civilians from Italian colonies. A horrific series of events followed the actual sinking which involved the now notorious actions of the Kapitanleutnant who obeyed orders to leave the passengers in the water. A shark feeding-frenzy ensued, and body parts washed up along the Natal coast (Interview 9, 00:05:00).[75]

Money was raised by survivors of the wreck in Mozambique to erect a memorial in the Hillary Cemetery in 1982 (Jackson 2004). Franco indicated that with the help of Emilio Coccia the background research to verify the victims of the Nova Scotia and its place in a memorial space that addressed Italian prisoners of war was completed and plans put in place to combine the memorials (Interview 9, 00:09:22). This is the point at which the local Italian community began to raise money for the restoration of the church, along with the funding that came from Italy for the upkeep of war graves (discussed below).

But the remembrance of the fallen POWs and the victims of the Nova Scotia (including Italian women and children from the East African colonies) is not a part of the earliest tier of memory. The POWs had built a church to worship in. Unlike the chapel and altar at Zonderwater, this was not a cemetery that gradually acquired the infrastructure for memorial – the outdoor altar and small chapel at Zonderwater are purpose built for the annual

[75] Two published sources in Italian deal with the tragedy (Mascellari 2008; Isacchini 2008) and there are versions of the material gathered by Allan Jackson in various online histories of Natal. Jackson's work is the most comprehensive (2004). http://www.fad.co.za/Resources/Nova/novascotia.htm.

memorial service (Somma 2008). The first tier of memory, the work of POWs done during the war, has become a kernel around which at least two subsequent layers of memory have been wrapped.

The second tier, the work of memorialising the events of the war in the decades immediately following, that was often done by ex-POWs themselves, seems to have been taken up by the local Italian community. In this case, the memorialising was largely done with a very few links to the POW era, in terms of active ex-POWs. Instead it was collaboration between the growing archive at Zonderwater.[76] Franco Muraro is a farmer and descendant of Italian colonists from Eritrea; in a parallel but related way he is connected to POW history as his father was a civilian internee at Nairobi.

The church itself stood outside of the protection and preservation it would have enjoyed as a site of remembrance if it had the remains of Italian soldiers within its perimeters. Governments maintain the war graves of their fallen far from home as a matter of course, but its status as a World War Two-Italian built church was not enough to recommend it; Franco mentioned that when they approached the war graves authority in Italy (*onorcaduti*) they were told that there are "millions" of churches built by Italians worldwide and that this alone would not result in funding (Interview 9, 00:16:00). The mortal remains of the POWs were at that stage in the military section of the Hillary Cemetery along with the mass grave and memorial stele commemorating the Nova Scotia. It was at this point that the Pietermaritzburg Italian community rallied to form a small trust to restore the church. As the church was restored, step by step the remains were moved and a memorial site developed and eventually the *onorcaduti* provided funding for the care of the remains (ibid.). Thus far, memory at the site consists of the nameless POWs who built the church, the named POWs who were reinterred there and the POW and civilian victims of the Nova Scotia.

[76] Ex-POW Fardella, referred to earlier in this chapter, was an ex-POW who was involved in, if not the restoration itself, then certainly if offering interviews regarding the POW-era (see Interview 12).

The names of some of the POWs who came back to settle in that part of the country, such as Fardella, Santoro and Pasqualotto, were mentioned by Franco when I asked him directly about those who returned (Interview 9, 00:23:52). However, the local and continuous memory of Italian POWs is conflated with a number of other stories, some persisting for their historical and dramatic quality, and others still being lived, namely the quotidian story of a small congregation who still worship there. They are undoubtedly related, but the actual POW element is spread among other narratives. The POW church, that for so long had been abandoned, even though there has been a continuous, albeit very small number of ex-POWs in the area, has now become a place of worship for an Italian-South African community seeking some connection with their Italian heritage (Interview 9, 00:15:15). An example of the different value sets at play in the church, locus of the Italian POW site of memory in the Midlands and a contemporary cultural centre, unfolds around the altarpiece: originally a POW copy of the picture of a saint by Raphael, and now the work of a local Italian-South African artist. At the time of interview (Interviews 9 and 12, December 2011), the congregation itself is still conflicted as to whether a version of the original should be restored, or the current congregation member's efforts should remain.



Figure 24. New altarpiece on an old altar. Interior of the POW-built church, Pietermaritzburg.

The *sacrario* behind the church, site of the annual service, commemorates the fallen soldiers from land and at sea and does so through the amalgamation of memorial objects.[77] The Mozambican survivors had chosen the antiquated and deeply symbolic broken column, signifying life cut short, emerging from a turbulent sea to commemorate the Nova Scotia victims; it was moved, along with their remains, to the POW church *sacrario*. The thirty five soldiers are commemorated with a large cross, effectively a landmark, and an inscription on the covering slabs at the base of the memorial. On the slabs are the names, birth and death dates of the POWs who died in Natal during imprisonment. It is a list of POWs who did not go on to form the local community of ex-POWs, nor did they return to Italy. There is not even a way to know whether they were involved in the building of the church. Nevertheless, reinterring the remains of the POW fallen, the Nova Scotia victims within the perimeters of the revived church, the community has made a conscious choice to "consolidate" memory (Interview 9, 00:03:02).

To compare this act of memory with the cross on Huguenot Buttress is to link two landmarks that each draw attention to an almost absent memory. Both highly visible on the outskirts of their respective towns, the crosses act against forgetting; however, at both sites there is very little that can be done to contain the growth of memory to include new memories. It seems that once a piece of ground has been staked for memory, other memories will be drawn to it. In Paarl, the efforts of the community to keep the cross are now part of the identity of the cross. At Pietermaritzburg, the cross presides over the memory of civilian compatriots and the ongoing worship of a community. The tiers of memory in place at the Pietermaritzburg church, then, include the POW-built church, the second-tier work of consolidating Italian memory at the site and a third tier which consists of the new life the

[77] It must be noted here that all care was taken with the remains themselves. Each of the thirty five POWs' remains are carefully placed in their own box, and the remains of the Nova Scotia victims, which were originally buried in a mass grave are separate. An enormous sense of dignity pervades the work done by both Emilio Coccia and Franco Muraro in respect of POW remains. My comments here are strictly confined to the new formations of memory emerging in POW discourse.

church has as the site of an Italian mass once a month. With the choices made in the material, infrastructural improvements at the Pietermaritzburg church, it can expect more attention in the future as the overall Italian POW site of memory expands. Already there has been interest from descendants in Italy in repatriating remains (Interview 9, 00:24:00; 00:12:24). This supports the idea that emphasising memory attached to a place draws other memory to it. With its memorial services, *sacrario*, and lists of fallen POWs, the Pietermaritzburg POW church continues to be an important processing point for POW discourse; featuring, as it does, the symbolic, material and functional aspects of a site of memory. Just as it processed the arriving POWs during the war, memory is "consolidated" at the church, and the overall Italian POW site of memory benefits from this activity.

In outlining the things said about the Pietermaritzburg church and the items indexed in the engravings and POW-produced literature on the POW era in Natal, the work of memory at different stages is highlighted. As in Paarl and at the haunted hotels, in Bulwer, the Pietermaritzburg church has, by focusing on the POW remains and the development of the church itself, replaced the stories and names of the POWs who were actually there; washing out the details but retaining the shape of POW stories. The main themes of the larger Italian POW site of memory remain. The Italians whom Franco describes brought unique skill and vision to South Africa:

> *people were amazed to see the skill of the* scapellino *[sculptor], they call in Italian. How to work, how to move, to get the stone and brought it here. And there's very little cement between here…There was a new technique with this kinds of stone, the way they worked it. They were amazed with these kind of people with the skill that they have.* (Interview 9, Part 1, 00:00:20)

> *Brought skill and they showed something…the way that things were done, and the people were prepared to work, people with no bitterness or anything.* (Interview 9, Part 2, 00:02:29)

This is then tied into a discourse of colonial taming and pioneering in other parts of Africa and in South Africa, a story that is particularly relevant for Franco himself, as an African farmer.

> *They had a huge geographical area, empty geographical area and they needed people to come and develop that area. And their main thing was to develop the actual countryside, farming and so on, you see and. In South Africa it would have been a total different, because in South Africa with the immigration, the Italian immigration started mainly just after the war. After the concentration camps here. And you could enter South Africa with a skill, if you had, were requested from Italy and as you entered the country, the next day you got a job, you know. So it was a great advantage for South Africa to have these guys* – (Interview 9, Part 3, 00:00:00)

This resonates with views expressed by other farmer/immigrants, like Joseph Unterpatinger discussed in Chapter Four. They are remembered in a number of places for the quality and innovation of their work. Franco mentioned the St Joseph's Mission, a POW-built baroque-style church outside of Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal (see figure 25). A memorial plaque on the church commemorates, as a consensus between the contributing parties to its installation, the work, and only the work (see figure 26). The pervasive quality of this theme of craftsmanship and labour was the overarching theme in another example of nameless POW history in Pietermaritzburg.





Figures 25 & 26. Left. St Joseph's Mission, Ladysmith. Right. The laconic inscription and the list of contributors.

I met with Vincent Lamberti at his factory premises in Pietermaritzburg to discuss his father and the war. Vincent's father was the son of Italian immigrants and a part-time soldier is South Africa when his ability to speak Italian drew him into a position of great responsibility heading up the inspectorate of Italian prisoners for the UDF (Interview 10, 00:03:10). Captain Lamberti inspected the working and living conditions of thousands of POWs across the country, Italian POWs erected the buidlings on his farm near the Lanseria Airport (Gauteng) as well as his sister's farm nearby. Though his childhood was filled with long-time POW friends and acquaintances of his father, as well as the fact that his aunt married a POW, Vincent does not have any stories from that era. The name of his uncle, ex-POW Fasanelli, the name Zambetti came up in interview, but these were not attached to stories, certainly not stories of the war years (Interview 10, 00:04:38 and 00:06:20 respectively). Vincent's uncles were also detained in South Africa as civilian Italians and these events also do not prompt any stories other than to describe them as a complication of the war situation for Italians is South Africa in general, and for his family in particular

(Interview 10, 00:06:48). The narrative that Vincent produced focused on the building and engineering skills of the POWs and also on outlining the links between his family and a number of important Italian-South African families.

In the interview with Vincent, in an effort to excavate the backstory to his father's involvement in the war, his memory would be caught up with explaining another branch of the family, where they are and where they fit into the story. As noted a number of times in thesis, memory anchors itself to the concerns of the person remembering. What is true of the social frameworks at play in collective memory is true of individual memory; so we encounter farmers recalling the farming innovations of the Italians, a reader of romantic novels 'recalling' POWs as romantic figures and even Franco Muraro, caretaker of their church, 'recalls' their relationship with faith as a key marker. It is no surprise then that Vincent Lamberti's recollection of the community that his father was part of gravitates towards the dynastic connections between related immigrants and their business concerns, with the theme of their occupations spanning the gap in memory to the work done by POWs on the Lamberti and Fasanelli farms.

He recalls the Risis, who left their names in Risidale and Mondeor in Johannesburg (Interview 10, 00:07:31). He remembers Giuseppe Raimondo, the pioneering paper maker (Interview 10, 00:29:03), Cannato the gravestone makers (Interview 10, 00:30:54) and other Lamberti's involved in large-scale retail ownership (00:33:02). Each of these maps the relations of the Lamberti family that itself was involved with large-scale rock-quarrying in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.

This industriousness and involvement of his own family as immigrants is juxtaposed with the innovation and strength of design and building of the nameless POWs who built the family farms. He speaks of the little Italy that his uncle owned:

> *But what he built was like a piece of Italy…As you approach the farm there were these huge pots, that, concrete pots. And you just, everything was just finished off…They'd put in all these vineyards and fruit trees…And it was a piece of Italy.* (Interview 10, 00:21:00)

He describes the extremely green and fertile land created by clever water management on his father's farm, water management that hardly ever needed repair or replacing:

> *And I remember there was even a silo they built, that went underground and went right up. And there was a milking shed, which was big, solid, solid building. Very well built. Concrete floors, sloping, for a dairy, um. Ja, the whole thing. There was a piggery for three hundred, a three hundred sow unit. Which was pretty big. And then, they had put irrigation in, um, from that reservoir, where it was piped to the fields below for flood irrigation. And the lands were even contoured and levelled and there was flood irrigation.* (Interview 10, 00:23:40).

The buildings made "intensive" farming possible and profitable (Interview 10, 00:24:40). Now nameless POW-labour, under the eye of Captain Lamberti and ex-POW Fasanelli, made of the two family farms a kind of paradise that Vincent remembers with all the glow of nostalgia for his childhood home. While the POW era is a formative part of his father's life, of the thousands of Italian POWs whom his father met and the many who stayed in touch, only the outline of the POW stories remains alive in this Pietermaritzburg branch of the family; replaced or more accurately located, in the telling by Vincent, within a larger story of immigration and integration into the Italian-South African community and the final integration of the family into a wider South African commercial discourse.

In Pietermaritzburg, the inclusiveness of the POW church and the inclusiveness of the Lamberti family memory, as expressed by Vincent, embrace many nameless POWs in stories that range across buildings established in the town itself and far away in Gauteng. The names of those who drowned or died far from home are inscribed in bronze and stone on the memorials of the *sacrario*, but it would seem that the openness to connecting new and old memory has left the door open for new aspects to be tied into POW memory in the future.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the surface of contemporary memory was explored through the absence, real or supposed, of specific individuals. In each case, the potential for detailed accounts of specific POWs and their deeds exist, but they have been passed over in favour of the wider signifying capacity of the overall site of memory. At the Mountain Park Hotel ghosts are a part of the character of the hotel and Italian POW traces in the town are worked into a desired history. At Paarl, the specific stories of POWs have been overtaken by the broader history of the area. The Italian POW site of memory is nevertheless alive and well, and endures to add colour to local lore. The POW-built cross has been overtaken by the longer history of Christianity in the valley and the inscriptions of Italian POWs and those of the South African War have become part of the story of all wars. In Pietermaritzburg, where every POW began his South African story, the doors of the church they built remain open to new congregations, and the memory of Captain Lamberti, on which the names of thousands of Italian POWs were imprinted, has been cut and tied back into a much longer story of Italian immigration and integration.

Where the previous chapters have offered grounding for claims about successive tiers of memory (in relation to the fiction generated about Italian POWs) and about the processes and mechanics of living memory (accrued around named, specific POWs), this chapter has offered specific evidence for the Noranean idea that within a site of memory, the symbolic, material and functional work together. This is what sets a site of memory apart from a place of historical significance more generally, the site is enlivened and invested with purpose. Each of the places visited in this chapter do have purpose, but this purpose is not always the remembrance of Italian POWs. In the Mountain Park Hotel, the hotel as material is invested with symbolic value by emphasising the link with Italian POWs and their ghosts, this is also

functional as the story is regularly enlivened by the ritual of the ghost tour. In Paarl, the material traces of the POWs are designed to have symbolic value, the cross and the roadside memorial are however, not regularly re-dedicated to the memory of Italian POWs, but rather woven quite tightly into the the story of the valley and the building of its passes. The functional criteria are fulfilled in the service of another set of stories. Finally, the church at Pietermaritzburg has very clear material, symbolic and functional roles determined by the memorial services and church services that it fulfils within a regularised calendar of events. Like the other case studies, it is not solely dedicated to the memory of Italian POWs, but this is certainly a strong foundation of its existence.

These places form part of the overall site of memory that is Italian POWs in South Africa precisely because it requires conscious effort to connect the 'invisible thread' that connects them as part of the site of memory. Their symbolic, functional and, in the case of the hotel, material aspects overlap with agendas other than the memory of Italian POWs, and in addition to validating the memory of Italian POWs as a site of memory it also evinces the process of postmemory. Successive moments of memory-making reveal shifts in the needs of a remembering community and, whereas in previous chapters these communities have seemed connected only by the writing of the researcher, tracing a seam, in this chapter we encountered living and vibrant communities that put memory to work, for very clear purposes.

Chapter Six: Findings and Conclusion

The history of the Italian POWs in South Africa is far from complete. The end of the war, the de-commissioning of Zonderwater as a POW camp and the repatriation of the POWs, was the very beginning of thousands of new stories, many of which crossed and re-crossed each other, in South Africa and across the world. Today, the descendants of those POWs are picking up the threads and piecing together the proliferation of stories into what will undoubtedly turn into a new narrative or set of narratives that in turn will become history. This activity will form the foundation of the next tier in memory- and history-making, one that the internet, research resources, a sense of loss at the passing of a generation and a relatively new sense of personal duty-memory are fanning into flame. But the Italian POW era began a parallel line of story telling that also continued after their departure, albeit for different reasons.

This research has attempted to pick up the threads of those stories, to gather the living stories on the surface of memory in South Africa. In pursuing these stories I have been able to reflect on a number of theoretical concepts at the nexus of history, memory and narrative in the South African context. These include the relationship between the material, symbolic and functional aspects of a site of memory. The POWs who were repatriated, an event of much greater finality in 1947, left buildings, artworks, graves and a very few of their fellow POWs, many of whom existed outside of the law, and therefore secretly until they were naturalised, in South Africa. It was years before these ex-POW Italian-South Africans could raise their heads from the grind of post-war work to think of formally memorialising their experience. As they began to do this, institutionalising the functional and symbolic layers over the POW cemeteries, the material focus of memory, they were also building centres that included certain types of remembering and left others out; the cemeteries are

protected as sacred by the Italian-South African community. But the site of memory was also accruing layers outside of Italian-South Africa's view. In small towns and farms, another manifestation of the site of memory was taking form, revolving around enduring works of craft and engineering, memories of love, and the fascination of the exotic. Today these centres of memorialisation and the more isolated South African memories are gradually finding each other. The overall site of memory of Italian POWs is able to contain and adapt to these new connections. In fact, as the war generation pass on, descendants are more willing than ever to reach out to others for traces of memory that can be pieced together against forgetting. I encountered this time and again in interviews with Lou Jurriaanse, Anita Rech, Vincent Lamberti , Rosa Fardella (see Interview 12) Rita van de Heever (see Interview 7), Prof Mino Caira (see Interview 14), descendants of the war generation who expressed a sense of profound loss at not knowing more about their father's or grandfather's war experience. Part of their willingness to be interviewed was to try and connect with sources of information. Mike Chisin, was interviewed with his parents Zeppe and Paola Chisin (Interview 15). In this interview Mike was already the primary memory for his father, ex-POW Zeppe Chisin. It was a great privilege to witness the mantle of memory shifting from one generation to the next as Zeppe was prompted into memory by his son, who knew his stories so well. Zeppe Chisin passed away shortly after the interview.

One of the most important findings of this research is that, happily, Nora's predicted trajectory of the complete replacement of memory with history seems not to have been the case in the site of memory under discussion here. Indeed, memory seems to be making a comeback, with the Möbius strip of memory/history featuring more and more lay participants in the endeavour to create representations of the past that are not only based in knowledge of the past but also closely tied to second-hand post/memory.

Social frameworks have also changed, and South Africans are more open to revisiting stories that seemed to have a fixed place in collective memory. In addition to social frameworks changing, another of Halbwach's ideas has bearing on the present state of memory: autobiographical and historical memory, the latter being fundamental to a group's continuing identity through time, are beginning to rely more heavily on each other. In the South African context, the retrieved and reconstructed memory of a single powerful story has the capacity to impinge on historical memory in relation to the Second World War. This was certainly the case as new information came to light in the story of Trento Ventura, or the discovery of the inscription at Bulwer.

The processes of retrieval and the invention of fiction off the back of historical events have also provided ways to map the site of memory in this research. Tracking the themes that permeate a specific genre of writing through seemingly unconnected places across the country has made a strong case for the idea that the discursive limits of a topic, what is sayable and unsayable is open to renegotiation in a site of memory. The extraordinary thematic consistency of Afrikaans fiction featuring Italian POWs evinces the flexible but defined boundaries of what the Italian POW site of memory can be used to achieve in fiction.

A paradox that dogged the field work stages of this research was the simultaneous ubiquity and scarcity of the POWs. Across the country, snippets of stories existed everywhere, but stories that participants were willing to commit to interview were much rarer. In many towns there was a sense that Italian POW history had been written and so was complete, in other places the POWs lingered without form, everywhere and nowhere, elsewhere, the person who knew POW stories was always in the next town. Hundreds of kilometres were traversed tracking down POW stories, only to realise that I had passed through a string of them, or versions of the same story mapped across a whole region. In grappling with these findings and the kinds of stories that people were telling me I was

confronted with the phenomenon of post/memory, the reshaping of memory to respond to changing political and social contexts. When the elusive POW stories could find a voice, that voice had a reason, or often many reasons, for keeping the POW story at the surface of memory. The specific articulation of a given POW story often proved the maxim of narrativist theory, that stories are both 'in' and told 'about' human life. The Second World War provided a shape for the stories, suggesting a predetermined form for all POW stories – drafting, fighting, capture, adventure in South Africa and repatriation – but the telling of those stories, especially as second-hand stories, revealed the adaptations and editorialising of decades to produce the surface encountered at the time of interview. In many cases enormous chunks of the POW experience have slipped out of the telling, Anita Rech had almost nothing to say about Secondo Rech's time in Koffiefontein prison as the focus of her story was the life of Secondo and the house he had built after the war. At the opposite extreme, Franco Muraro had very little to say about the ex-POW community after the war, because his concern was and is the *sacrario* and the church.

These generalised observations on the research process offer some contextualising of the project within the continuously unfolding tiers of Italian POW memory. What follows is a tracing of the main arguments through the thesis and statements about its contribution to the theoretical concepts that drove the project.

Chapter Three revealed the uses to which a site of memory can be put. In each of the novels and the two vignettes, aspects of the Italian POW site of memory were put to use to explore things as diverse in scope as the big questions of race in South African history (van Heerden and Joubert), art, beauty and reconciliation (van Heerden), or belonging, identity and freedom (Joubert and Le Roux) to the smaller mysteries of who planted a chestnut orchard or the cross-referencing of experiences between a South African in Italy and Italians in South Africa (Nipper's stories). For Joubert and Le Roux, the romance of their novels is founded on

the seam, the incommensurate of the local and the global stitched together with the rough stitch of war. For van Heerden the past and the present are written into the seam, and Italian POWs bear much of the tension of the seam in his novel.

Within these fictions of various kinds we can see the availability of the site of memory for adaptation, their creators construct fictional Italian POWs out of the first tier of memory, from received accounts, and from the second-tier of memory in their research for the novels. In the vignettes the story tellers use local lore to create narratives for themselves and the place that they live. This is one of the key markers of a site of memory in the Noranean sense, that it should be open to refiguring. In the case of the novels, as they grasp at ideas within the tiers of memory they produce the third-tier, the contemporary surface, a set of recognisable ideas about Italians that they activate to tell their stories. In this way they become a part of post/memory of Italian POWs, in that the circulation of their story, whether through the distribution of their published fiction or in the recounting of a family story, they constitute a successive retelling. The creative fictions, are at once evidence of an attempt to rethink the past within changing social frameworks but can also help to initiate changes, as was demonstrated in the adoption of particular ways of talking about Italian POWs that was adapted from fiction by Lou Jurriaanse for the telling of her own family story.

The named POWs whose stories are found in Chapter Four were, despite the specificity of a particular life, unable to escape being drawn into the overall site of memory. For Lou Jurriaanse, one Italian POW story was the key to rewriting her own family history. For Anita Rech and her husband, their home continues to pulse with POW vigour and mystery, and the story of her father has become the foundation for a much bigger story of Haenertsburg, Limpopo and Africa. Giuseppe Pent’s story is undergoing the transformation from a first- to a second-hand story, with all of the loss and gains involved in that process.

In this chapter, working through the processes of memory as they relate to history was useful in testing the theoretical foundations of the thesis in the work of Nora. Could his stages of memory be detected in minute units, the small stories of individual POWs and the ways in which forgetting would result in relegating a narrative to history? Evidence for his stages presented themselves in a number of ways outlined in the chapter conclusion, but more importantly, were shown to be reversible. That an individual inheritor of Italian POW memory could in fact be drawn back into thinking about them in terms of what Nora thought of as a premodern 'natural' identification with the narrative of their history. This was the case on the Rech farm, where his daughter could think of him in heroic terms as easily as she could remember him as an old man against a more quotidian backdrop. This was in addition to the obvious presence of distance-memory (a sense of loss of the past) in the way she approached the interview itself. The fourth chapter also interrogated the assumption that formal history could and would eventually replace memory. With some very slender points of connection, individuals were able to actively engage with history – archives in the case of Lou Jurriaanse, first-hand written accounts in the case of Anita Rech, and even the halting reference to documentation of her husband's life as a soldier in the case of Emilia Pent – to get back to a form of memory. This at once negates the antagonism set up between memory and history in Nora's model, but also reinforces the idea that they are intimately connected.

In the final chapter, Italian cameos and silhouettes left across the country endure despite the loss of specific content. Along the seam, old fragments of story are being stitched into new stories. In Bulwer, Paarl and Pietermaritzburg, among many other places, the site of memory sees Italian POW content repurposed for new histories. Discussing them tested the ability of the site of memory to hold as a theoretical underpinning precisely because all three of the places discussed had historical significance, they were set up to contain memory, and so were potentially problematic to the concept of a site of memory that should, by definition,

be open to resignification. The three places explored in this chapter proved that the Italian POW site of memory, even with dedicated physical monuments, does remain open to new meanings, with each place playing multiple roles in local memory. At these manifestations of the site of memory it was possible to test if the symbolic, material and functional aspects of the site were equally active. There was material presence: a plaque on a wall, a plaque on a highway, a church, a cross, a memorial, but these needed to prove that they were significant and active in the minds of the people who lived with them. This research demonstrated that the functional and symbolic value of these manifestations of the site of memory was evidently in dialogue with many other narratives. In this the Italian POW site of memory also proved its value to broader thinking about South African history.

This is a significant finding of the research. If a moment of history like the Italian POW era can have very little presence in contemporary thinking, but form a rich aspect of South African perceptions of the past as a dispersed site of memory, then there is value in identifying such sites of memory. If writers of fiction, individuals within families and caretakers of monuments can adapt representations of the past in ways that help them and others perceive and participate in shifting social frames, then there is value investigating the surface of memory the "invisible thread linking seemingly unconnected objects" (Nora 1989, 23) in relation to those moments in history.

Constituting the diverse threads and fragments of memory relating to Italian POWs as a site of memory has made a contribution to the application of Nora's concept to units smaller than the nation, and units of time smaller than the century. Using the concept of post/memory as successive moments of representing the past in relation to the memory and history of Italian POWs has also made some contribution to memory studies that have been widely criticised for equating all collective memory with the collective processing of trauma. Though trauma sits at the heart of the Italian POW experience, many more processes of

individual and communal identity have emerged as being served by the site of memory of Italian POWs in South Africa.

The three categories of second-hand memory that give shape to the chapters of this research – 'fiction', 'named POWS' and 'nameless POWs' – exist only for the purpose of pausing the flow of memory long enough for analysis in discrete chapters. In reality they tumble over each other in a creative chaos that is as alive as the heartwood of memory that Nora distinguished from the 'dead' bark of history. The extraordinary acts of imagination that define the site of memory today are a testament to desire of authors and story-tellers to engage with memory. As these acts of imagination are joined together, a possible addition that the present work could make to the site of memory, the next phase of memory-making will develop, always drawing on the tiers of memory that never fully disappear:

> *There are no empty spots in the lives of groups and society; an apparent vacuum between creative periods is filled by collective memory in symbolic display, or simply kept alive through transmission by parents and other elders to children or ordinary men and women* (Coser in Halbwachs 1992, 25).

This research has demonstrated that the transmission of memory is never a simple one. Each set of choices redefines the available material for the subsequent generation, in some cases prompting searches that plumb the previous tiers of memory. For the South African imagination, Italian POW era has and will continue to provide a rich resource for reflecting on its own history, an unexpected intervention into its imagination that is continually available for re-imagining on the level of the personal, familial, regional and perhaps someday, the national.

Appendices

A note on the interview transcriptions.

I have constructed a 'script' format for the interview transcriptions. In this format a speaker's entrance is marked by their initial so that "D:" in each transcription indicates "Donato". I have omitted most repetitions, stammering, conversational niceties and bits of repetitive encouragement in the interviews. The note at the beginning of each interview provides some context without disclosing any personal information that participants may not want shared. By agreement, names, surnames and the area in which they live, or were interviewed are given to facilitate future research. I have attempted to make verbatim transcriptions, a very difficult task in interviews switching between up to three languages. In so me interviews I have left the underlining made in the initial analysis of the interviews to indicate areas of interest in the interview, many of which were written up in the final thesis. Interviews are numbered chronologically, interviews 8, 13 and 19 were not used at all, they fell outside of the focus of the research, but I have preserved the numbering system.

A key to reading the interviews:

Italics: generally indicate the inclusion of a word not of the dominant language of the interview. Very occasionally it indicates spoken emphasis.

Hyphens: indicate the interruption of one speaker by another.

Ellipses: indicate omissions where conversation was broken by an outside interruption.

Parenthesis: indicate action outside of the utterances of the interview, or sections that were inaudible. They are also used to contain hour: minute: second timings that correlate with the references in the main text of the thesis. These are in bold.

A final use of the parentheses is that in a number of interviews I have omitted material that is entirely off-topic. Another version of this parenthesis use is where the conversation moved toward matters that are critical of other participants in the research, neighbours or

predecessors. This research should not be used as a source of criticism for any efforts in the preservation or perpetuation of Italian POW memory. Digital versions of the interviews are in the author's care.

Interview 1

Interviewee: Lou Jurriaanse.
In attendance: Marietha Smit, mutual friend of interviewer and participant.
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Johannesburg, Gauteng.
Date: 6 December 2010
Time: +- 14:00-16:00
Topic: The suicide pact between POW Trento Ventura and Anna Sluiter, 1943.
Note: a few Afrikaans expressions are transcribed in italics.

D: So I don't know what Marietha [M] has told you about the research, because we started speaking some time ago -
L: It was too long ago and now I can't remember anything.
…
D: I did MA research on Italian POWs that stayed here in South Africa, on them. So it was very much about there identity and how they used that as a genesis point for their South African-Italian identity when some of them came back. So the PhD work I'm doing is the flip side of that, it's dealing with the same group of people but I'm looking at the kind of imprint they left on South Africans, much more, the kind of impact they had here particularly in the context that a lot of Italian POWs worked on farms in rural areas on construction work and construction projects all around the country. So they left quite an imprint in the places that they worked. And I think I was talking to you at a cocktail party?
M: It was Nandipa's party …there on the roof -
D: Nandipa's party and M mentioned to me you know that you had this fantastic story. Subs quent to that I met with Emilio Coccia who I think you know as well?
L: Of course.
D: And you know the story was doing the rounds among the very small group of people who do research on this kind of area. So I thought it would be nice to interview you and just to tell you that I'm going to ask you to tell me your story 'coz really the stories are what I'm most interested in, the kind of narrative and how that's put together -
L: And obviously I mean in terms of the impact; the impact on my family, although not on me personally, but obviously somewhere along the line the impact was real enough that 65 years on we decided to find the family of Trento.
D: I mean that is impact. That is impact that is global and crosses times and decades and so … falls well within what's possible. This is also the first interview I'm doing for this research so I haven't got a set of formal questions, I'm looking for material that will, even in two years time when I come back to it, kind of speaks to me and kind of find the voices that come out of these stories and what they are saying to me. So I have no kind of overarching set of questions for this I'd love you to just tell me your story.
L: I'll tell it as best I can -
D: But before you do. In terms of the ethics of this kind of research -
L: Yes.
D: I will send through to you, as soon as I get a chance, probably in the next week or so, a document which I'll ask you to look at and sign. Just saying what our interview was about and what the research is for.
L: Happily.
D: For me, as long as I can write it up in my PhD and publish from it -
L: Indeed.
D: It's you know…and then any pictures that we look at or reproductions that are made -

L: I have few, but some really nice ones. But yes -
D: So I'll send you all of that stuff, the kind of ethics stuff -
L: Sure -
[brief exchange of details captured in white notebook, also a few more reasons why ethics doc is necessary. Interview resumes at about 6 minute mark]
D: So, with that -
L: **[00:06:09]** With that, let me tell you the story. Ok. About 13 years ago, it was just after I moved in here, my dad referred to a story of an Italian prisoner or of war. Oh, no let me go back, my dad when he was little they lived on my great grandfather, his grandfather's farm in Ermelo. My grandfather had studied forestry and my great grandfather was a keen tree planter. So my grandpa, with his wife and two children lived on my great grandfather's farm and ran the farming side, my great grandfather was a doctor and ran his consulting rooms and practice from the farm as well. In 1943 while they were living there they got 6 prisoners of war to come and work on the farms as they all did. My dad was 5 and my aunt was 1 so the story as it happened neither of them could remember they could simply remember the story through having been retold it by my granny or whoever. So in 1943, while they were living there these 6 prisoners of war came to the farm. And the other 4, 5 have completely paled into insignificance, no-one remembers there name or anything except for Trento. Now there is Trento and that is my dad [shows photograph] and this photograph itself has an interesting story but I'll get to that later. And he was lovely looking wasn't he? So nice. You'll see in the other pictures just now. And he was 25 years old and on the farm lived also, with my great-grandparents in their home, Anna who was my great grandmother's sister, spinster sister, and who was 50. Which was quite bloody old -
D: [chuckles]
L: It was then hey, you know, and I've seen, I don't actually have a picture of her here although I could find one, but she was old and fat and…not attractive; she really wasn't. And then as I said about 10 or 13 years ago, one Sunday at lunch my dad **[00:08:35]** referred to this story and these bloody Italians you know and this one who'd had the affair with tant Anna. And I said 'What?' And my dad said 'Yes, this Italian prisoner of war' whose name we though then, my dad remembered as Trento Vallenti. Trento, nee, Trento Ventura is what he'd remembered. And this guy had been 25 had come there to work and had ended up having an affair with Anna who was double his age. And my great grandfather who was a very difficult man obviously at the point where he'd discovered this he was horrified beyond description. [D interject] **[00:09:13]**You can imagine *jy weet*, an Italian and a prisoner of war en *nog 'n* Catholic on top of all of this. You know it's just not on.
D: Didn't tick the boxes.
L: Didn't at all! **[00:09:24]** So he said this will end now. So both of them said this is true love and we love each other and we are prepared to get married. However, during our research we discovered that the prisoners of war were not allowed to get married you know when they were transferred it wasn't allowed anyway but I think that wasn't the issue for my great grandfather. He just said no and you will get off the farm by tomorrow or next week or whatever. He was going to fire him and send him back to Zonderwater. **[00:10:00]** So that night, they stole some poison, this is the way we have the story, and went into the barn and drank the poison together. And when they found them the next morning she was dead and he was a little bit alive. So, my great grandfather nursed him back to health, furious, and then sent him to Zonderwater anyway. This was the story as we had it. **[00:10:24]**
D: Sorry I just want to get the relations clear, so she was your grandfather's aunt?
L: My grandfather's aunt she was my great grandfather's sister-in-law. She was my great grandma's sister.
D: Ok.

L: **[00:10:40]** Ja. Because my great grandfather was Jurriaanse, as I am, and she was Sluiter which was my great grandmother's maiden name. Yes, so she is my great great aunt. And this is the story as my dad told it, and I said why have you never told me this story before it is so beautiful *jy weet dit* - it's all about true love and, *jy weet* if we can't live together we will die together and all that lovely Italian sort of stuff. And my dad said no this is a stupid story anyway [unclear]. And I said what happened to Trento and he said he doesn't know, Trento was sent back to Zonderwater. And it bothered me enormously, I wanted to know what had happened to this guy. So at that point I tried to do a bit of research I went to the state archives in Pretoria and I tried to find this and that but never anything really and then I sort of forgot about it and two years ago we spoke about it again. And my boyfriend is a very enthusiastic researcher of things. So he said he will find Trento. So he went through every fabulous source; in the process meeting Emilio Coccia and there's another Italian guy in Cape Town called Roberto, [unclear] I forgot the surname. And with all these people and going week after week after week to the military archives and working through 160 of those boxes. He eventually, because, we knew at this point, as he had done his research, we knew the date of Anna's death. And it's interesting because there are two dates. She has two different dates of death. But she clearly was not dead the next morning when they found her as we had been told in the story. She had only died two days later in the hospital in Ermelo, I'm sure in agony after having drunk poison. And he had obviously not died but we knew those two dates, so we knew that anything that was close to those dates. And we also knew, this we heard from, I think Emilio told us this, that anyone who was called Trento would have been born in November of 1918, because that is when the town of Trento in northern Italy was freed from the Germans, by the Allies. So, in November of 1918 lots of little boys were called Trento so it was most likely that his birthday was middle of November 1918, which indeed it was, but at least we had an idea of his birthday, we thought. So then Hennie went and eventually found an article -

D: Sorry just one second, give me Hennie's surname there for the record.

L: Pretorius. Ja. **[00:13:50]** So, he found a report, a military report, written, beautifully hand-written and the re-typed in both Italian and English of two days after the incident with Anna having died, at the Zonderwater prison. Now somewhere along the line someone had said to us that he would probably have been sent to the psychiatric ward because apparently if, as a soldier, you try to commit suicide it has to do with damaging state property which is not allowed, so you then go for observation. So he went for observation to the psychiatric ward, but obviously he wasn't crazy; he was heartbroken and had tried to commit suicide – [giggles] – although when we met his son-in-law much later the son-in-law said, you know how an Italian drinks poison? No. He says like this. [She relished this demonstration. Taking a sip of wine and then spitting it out to the side almost as soon as she has it in her mouth].

D & L: [laugh]

L: He says he's convinced Trento never drank the poison which is very rude, because I think that he did, he was just stronger -

D: And of course it's much better for the story -

L: Mm. no I'm sure he did but he was young and strong I mean look at how beautiful his arms are so I'm sure he did.

D: He would have bounced back much better -

L: Yes, than an old chick. Yes. So anyway Hennie found this report of an incident that had happened in the psychiatric ward where someone called Trento, but with a incorrect surname, had been bashed on the head with an enamel bedpan by a real crazy inmate who'd been in the bed next to him. And it's so beautifully documented he was, it was 8 o' clock in the morning and he was reading his book. And they also write in the report that they know he is not crazy but has to remain for the 4 days of observation. But next to him was a real crazy guy who was

in a straightjacket and who then wet his bed. So the orderlies or the nurses or whoever came to change the sheets and had to take him out of his wet straightjacket and with that the moment he was loose he grabbed the enamel bedpan that was really heavy and screamed: 'You have killed all my family and now you are trying to kill me!' and he bashed Trento over the head with this. So he cracked Trento's skull. And this was also nice when we eventually found the family they said do you know that Trento had a soft spot on his skull. So we said well actually we do know, however, their story was different because Trento had told him, told them, that he had been knocked over the head with a bedpan and then ended up in hospital.
D: So he had -
L: He'd not told them everything. Once we met he'd not told them everything obviously to cover, you know. So anyway, so Hennie had found this guy and where we had been always told that his name was Trento Valenti, his name was Trento Ventura. And we phoned my dad and said does this sound right to you, and my dad said that is the right name now that you say it, it is the right name the name and it had obviously changed in the story over the years –
D: So earlier you said your dad thought it was Ventura but it's Valenti but you're –
L: Sorry, yes, other way round –
D: Other way round. So he thought it was Valenti but it is Ventura.
L: It's Ventura, yes.
D: So Trento Ventura is the name of this person.
L: Sorry.
D: Which is also such a great name for a story.
L: Yes it is lovely *ne*.
D: I mean it couldn't have worked out better –
M: *Avventura*
D: Ja, it kind of implies, you know, it's brilliant –
L: Yes, yes, it's lovely.
D: And her name too, Anna, what did you say her surname was?
L: Sluiter
D: Sluiter. I mean you couldn't have asked for a better story. So going along, just as a side thing, going along I mean this must have been the most exciting thing to be finding out?
L: I can't tell you, it was too fantastic –
D: And becoming like an obsession –
L: Yes, and in the process of course you find out lots and lots of other stuff just about the workings of the prisoner of war camp. So, stories that were completely unrelated to Trento, but that were so completely fantastic. You know as we went, and this, what was his name, the *kommandant* of the –
D: Prinsloo
L: Prinsloo *ne*? And I mean he was such an interesting chap. And it turned out eventually that he was a *tjommie* of my great grandfather. Which might be the explanation why he had 6 prisoners on his farm maybe, as opposed to 1 or 2, I don't know.
D: So do you have any idea what they were doing on the farm, they were there just as labourers?
L: Yes, they were just working there, ja. But my dad says that they were labourers but they lived, when we went when the Italian family came out now we went to Ermelo to go and look, the farm is no longer in the family, but we phoned up the owners in advance and said if we could come and look. And the old farmhouse is still there but the, it was two little *rondavels* and another little house, they're broken down but the ruins are still there and that is where the prisoners ate, ah lived, but for example they ate with them at the table. So they

weren't treated as, they were labourers, that was their job, but it seems that they weren't treated sort of as –
M: Respectfully
L: **[00:18:30]** Respectfully as equals. They were obviously not treated as the black labourers were treated and they were definitely not treated as prisoners because they had free-range on the farm and they ate with the family.
D: Ok.
L: So, ja. I presume they just worked there. The farm, it was a farm he had lots of pigs, trees and some cattle.
D: I mean they often ended up doing specific jobs on farms, not necessarily glamorous ones but often there were kind of skills that they were ear-marked with as having. So you know sometimes a group would have someone from an engineering corps who would build things on a farm, things like that. So often they found their ways into the family life of the farm and the management of the farm because of specific skills they had.
L: Well we know, and it's interesting that that part his daughters didn't know, but he was, in one of his papers, once we'd now found his soldier number or whatever you call that ID number and all his details, he had a something somewhere that said he was a qualified tradesman. But when he went back eventually he worked in a sugar factory and later in a quarrying-related, stone quarrying-related industry. So the daughters didn't know what he would have been qualified as, which is odd.
D: What his trade would have –
L: What his trade would have been –
D: Because they did apprenticeships –
L: Yes. So he obviously did some apprenticeship but we don't know what it was.
D: So then how far were we now, so you had discovered his real surname.
L: Yes, and then discovered that this was the correct surname and then, because we had his name and his number and his whatever, we could trace his movements and he clearly was the right guy, he'd gone to Ermelo and, and now I'm lying about the date, it's not quite correct but I think maybe 6 weeks before the suicide attempt there had been some other incident which we could never find the paperwork on, but there had been some incident where he had been then taken to the Ermelo hospital and put into the psychiatric ward there for observation. So whether they had had a previous suicide attempt, I don't know, whether it was at all related to Anna I don't know, but his children don't seem to think there was any kind of mental instability with him so I would think maybe it was related to her but this we don't know. And because there is no-one left alive who was around, other than my dad and my aunt who don't know. So that we don't know but then anyway we knew that he had been there, he'd arrived early in 1943 and the suicide attempt happened in, I think February, I think he arrived, and the suicide attempt then happened in October of '43. So he'd been, whether on the farm or in South Africa, maybe 7 months when all this happened. And we then saw that he then was moved on back to Zonderwater, and then because of the bashing on the head he ended up in hospital and they had to remove the pressure so they had to cut open his head and take out this little *blokkie* of skull that was floating around, which they took out, which he had this soft spot in his head. And then once he recovered eventually he moved on to England. Where, as it turns out, he had a baby, **[00:23:10]** we're looking for the baby, we've not found the baby. He found the baby in the 1970s.
D: So he was, once he had recovered at Zonderwater they sent him on –
L: They sent him on –
D: To a POW camp in –
L: In England.
D: But now they had changed sides so –

L: Yes.
D: So he technically wasn't a POW –
L: Oh, I wonder.
D: Because Italy in September '43 –
L: They changed.
D: They changed sides …But they were –
L: I don't know Donato, that's interesting I'd never thought of that maybe –
D: You once they changed sides then working as, their status changed. Obviously from POWs to citizens, to foreign nationals.
L: Oh I never thought of that.
D: But they were kept together because they were Italian soldiers, so they were still being directed around until the end of the war as soldiers , but it's interesting that he would be sent to England; interesting choice. I guess he was such a shit-stirrer that they wanted to be shot of him.
L: You see maybe, maybe it was that.
D: You know, hospitalised once, psychiatric ward twice –
L: Hospitalised twice because as he arrived on the ship in Durban his appendix burst so he had to have an appendectomy in Durban, so it was that too, so ja I suppose he was quite troublesome.
D: They may have ja –
L: Thought just get him out. You see I'd never thought of that.
D: Because his status had changed. You know, so he's not a POW labourer, and there were very strict rules about what you could ask a POW to do or not and South Africa was very much on the up an up in terms of treatment of prisoners, it was one of Smuts' big things –
L: Yes, of course.
D: You know, that he wanted them to be to the letter and spirit of the convention so POWs were treated very well but then, of course once they changed sides, I know they had to sign a letter at some point rescinding their allegiance to fascism officially, and thereafter they were permitted to go work.
L: As private people –
D: And they received a salary.
L: Ok.
D: So he would have been earning money on the farm depending, you said February he arrived at the farm –
L: I think it was February, Hennie has all the dates, I'll get all of that together and mail it to you.
D: I mean it would just be interesting to find out why he was sent to England, that's also part of the story.
L: Yes and that we don' know and the problem because lots of the archival stuff in South Africa is, or the index at least is computerised; so you can go on the internet and search. Even if you can't get the actual document you can get the index but in England nothing is computerised so you have to physically go there and search. And we've been saying for a while that we think we'll probably go because this; let me interrupt my own story and tell this story. **[00:26:16]** Because when we eventually met our Italian family, who of course are not our family, but we thought that they might have been. But by the time we eventually met them they, as we got off the train…we went to meet them myself and Hennie my boyfriend and Mieks my cousin who's the same relation to Anna as what I am. And the three of us went and we got off the train, they were in Orbotello [Grossetto province] which was his hometown, none of their hometowns but we met them there because his grave is there. …

[discussion to locate it]. So we went to meet them, as we got off the train they were unbelievably keen for Hennie to be Trento's son.
D: Oh wow!
L: And they said but are, and of course we got off the train the three of us, and I'm not particularly tall but of course in Italy I'm tallish and all three of us are blonde and they are all really small and dark, well many of the women are blonde but they dye, and they run at us and kiss us like crazy. And Hennie, who's a very Afrikaans guy was a bit baffled by 5 Italian men who storm him and kiss him on the mouth and this sort of thing but anyway we had the most amazing time with them, we really did. And they said to Hennie, who's born '68, so he's clearly not Trento's son, who left here in '43, but he is bald, so they thought he might be a bit older, "Are you not Trento's son?" and he said no.
D: Was that like first-off, one of like the first discussions –
L: Immediately! That was *the* first thing. They look at him and say are you not Trento's son. He says "I'm not!". And as it turns out they have a wine farm and none of the sons want to farm so we are wishing that he was the son but he's not. He is not. So this is sad but true.
D: Ja.
L: Ja.
D: So obviously the story of Trent's other son weighs heavily on them?
L: it weighs very heavily on them and in 1970 Trento had had his first heart-attack and then the whole mortality thing pressed upon him rather heavily and then he knew that he had the son because he stayed in the UK, I stand to be corrected on the details again, I think for 6 years, quite a while after the war. Because he'd had this affair with an English girl and had this baby. And then he left –
D: Quite an enterprising –
L: Yes, and actually before the war, before he'd left, he'd been married and he'd had one baby. And then as soon as he left while he was in North Africa, during the bombing of Rome, his wife was killed in the bombing. The baby survived, but he never met the baby, the baby was born after he left. So by the time he eventually got back to Italy, I don't know, I think 7 years later. When he got back to Italy he met his own 7 year old son that he never met, who'd been living with his parents. And he then immediately remarried. So he'd had the first baby, Roberto, and then he'd gone to England and had the English baby then he'd immediately got married, an 18 year old girl; Adelaide. Who's the mother of my family and had another 4 children. So he was indeed enterprising.
D: Ja.
L: So then eventually when we tracked him down and we tracked down his name and his prisoner of war number and soldier number and whatever, Hennie wrote a letter, but a paper letter and we looked up all the Venturas in the Grossetto province. And there were 30 of them and we mailed this letter off to 30 families. And we said: this is who we are and we are looking for the family of this man, these are all his details, this is the time he was here, we believe these are the details and we are looking for him.
D: Was it just curiosity that was driving you at this point?
L: **[00:31:42]** Yes. You know what, I liked the story so much, the original story. You know the whole true love thing it appeals to me enormously *né*? *En hierdie hele*, the fact that he was young and *pretty* and, and a prisoner of war and he comes out there, and I suppose it is different in war times, and he has this affair with this fat, ugly, frumpy old Afrikaans chick –
D: And they both mean it so much.
L: And they mean it **[00:32:07]** and in the end it would seem that the love was real. And for me that's so lovely and it just wanted to know what happened to him afterwards because I always thought , you know, he must have probably ended up going home and getting married, which he did, I mean it's sort of statistically, it's sort of likely. We then wrote this letter and

sent it to Italy. And two weeks later, I said to Hennie we'll never hear anything, two weeks later he got an email and the email was from Trento's youngest grandson, who speaks very good English. His children don't speak, well they do now, they've been doing lessons for two years so they do speak a bit of English now but when we first me them they spoke no English at all.
D: So your first trip to Italy was then 2 years ago?
L: Oh no, no I've been often before but never related to this. Yes the first trip was a year and a half ago; June 2009.
D: Oh.
L: We went in that holiday. So we wrote them this letter and they then said phone us tonight after 8 o' clock. And we phoned after 8 o' clock because the children get home at 8. Because Venezia and Ennio who are the parents can't speak English. **[00:33:37]** And we spoke to the children and we just, we really hit it off with them. And it was an amazing feeling, because with them like I often find when you meet people that you are related to, even though you don't know them particularly well there is a connection of sorts. And for me the connection was always there with them, it was as if we were related, and then in my head, in a way, you know, we are. So we then went across and met them in Orbotello and then 6, 8 months later they came out and they came and stayed with us here. They came for 3 weeks in March this year. It was fantastic! And they completely loved it here.
D: And the putting the story together.
L: Yes.
D: I mean because you each had part of the story …as you say they had part of it with huge elisions.
L: Yes.
D: Had they never heard of her before?
L: They had but differently. He had referred to Anna before but as a friend. And they knew that he'd been on the farm and actually, this was so fabulous. **[00:34:42]** They have, this picture my dad found [points to picture with her father, as a child, and Trento on a horse] which had obviously been taken, oh, by Anna, she was the photographer on the farm. So Anna, the girlfriend, had taken this picture of the two of them and it had been somewhere in my dad's cupboard. But he never knew that he had this until the night when we first phoned them. They said to Hennie on the phone but we have a photo of Trento in Africa. So Hennie said can't you email the photograph, so they said yes; and they scanned in the picture and they emailed it. And I looked at it and I said but this is my dad. And we said to them on the phone, but this is my dad and they said "but he is Trento's son", this is long before Hennie was Trento's son. I said no he was born in '37 he cannot, he can't be Trento's son, this is before the war started, he's not Trento's son.
D: Ja. How old is he here? He's already –
L: He's 5. It was just after he turned 5.
D: That's the great thing about photographs, is how you can spin an entire story from it.
L: Yes. **[00:35:50]**
D: Oh sweet –
L: So they emailed the picture –
D: So she'd obviously given him a print of it.
L: **[00:36:00]**Yes. Yes. And their picture is completely, you know they [makes a kissing action] they're big on this kissing, [kissing action] you know and kissing so on this picture his face is off as they've kissed it off over the years. But the horse and my dad are the same. And then I told my dad about this amazing picture that they'd emailed and he said you know it's vague but I think I've seen this picture before. And he went and looked through the old boxes from my ouma and he found the picture.

D: And is this the original now?
L: Yes. It's the original.
D: What a precious thing.
L: Isn't it fantastic?
D: And is there anything written on the back of this?
L: No. Mm.
D: Nothing.
[Short pause]
L: It's lovely though *ne*?
D: How do you connect with people like that half way across the world!
L: Ja it's amazing.
D: With the same photo after 60 something years.
L: Yes, yes. It's just wonderful you know.
D: What a magical story. And along the way are other people in your family getting excited about it?
L: You know what –
D: Have you got siblings? –
L: Yes.
D: Was your dad getting excited about the story? –
L: **[00:37:00]** My dad, my dad is... is an unbelievably unemotional person he doesn't do that rubbish. And when the Italians eventually arrived here he was getting quite excited as time went on. And after about two years, two days here he said "How's it that you get to have the Italians all the time and when are we ever having a turn?" And I said, but we'd already had lunch together and dinner and whatever. And he said "but can't we have them for a day?" I said "of course you can have then for a day". But he was sort of trying to be quite nonchalant about it, however he absolutely wanted in. But at that point, everyone else including in Hennie's family that are obviously not related by blood to the story at all –
D: Related by research though –
L: Ye, but by research. They were so completely excited that on the first day they arrived actually, a huge family lunch with Hennie's, he has three brothers, and his parents and everyone and all the children because everyone had to meet these people
D: Ja.
L: So yes, and obviously Mieks, my cousin and I, were both very keen on the story and my aunt, Mieks' mum, who was 1, my dad's sister who was 1 at the time of the story. She also, she also spent a couple of days with them. And my sister, my brother was not bothered at all, he never even met them. But my sister was also completely intrigued. And also we took them away with my sister for a weekend -
D: And you went back to the farm? To show them where it all happened –
L: We went back to the farm, oh [exclamation of exhaustion]
D: Crazy.
L: **[00:38:40]** It was unbelievably emotional the whole farm thing. Now Venezia and Ennio, the two who came. Venezia is his youngest daughter and her husband. Now we met Mercedes, the other sister, and Almarido who is their cousin, when we went to Italy but only her youngest daughter and her husband and their one son came out to visit us. But they are very emotional. So if you bat your eyes too quickly they burst into tears, they cry all the time. So when we went to the farm, the crying was unspeakable.
D: Unspeakable, and also infectious I'm sure –
L: Of course! Of course. I cried with much, Hennie says he thinks um, when we arrived in Orbotello the first day, um, when we were going to meet them, I love graveyards, of any sort, anywhere –

D: Are you sure, you're not Trento's daughter?
[All laugh]
L: But when we went to his grave and their mother's grave I immediately started crying. And they were very touched by the fact that I was crying over their dad –
D: So they started crying –
L: Of course, of course. So then we had a good old ball together and we all felt much better.
D: Ja.
L: But Hennie always says he thinks that that was the initial cement to the relationship is the fact that we could all have a good cry at the grave.
D: Ja.
L: Which I'm sure is true. [laughs]
D: He must be so proud of his work?
L: Mmm.
D: 'Cause that's first prize for any researcher –
L: Yes it is.
D: To hit gold like that –
L: Look, he's not a professional researcher –
D: Who is? –
L: But I mean ja, he is very chuffed with himself. You're quite right he um, he got deeply involved in the whole thing.
D: Ja.
L: And because the whole story is so beautiful and the archives are so nicely kept. He had some complaints about them in Pretoria. Ja. He had some complaints about them but generally the records are really meticulously kept, and although they're a bit *deurmekaar* um, and for example, ah, Emilio Coccia, he has all the medical records, but on bloody microfish [phonetic spelling], do you know, you're to young to know microfish –
D: No, no I don't know what that is at all.
L: Microfish was a pre-computer sort of a system where documents were put on slides effectively, but this size, so like you would scan in a document into the computer now you take a picture of it and put it in the slide. So of course you can store billions of documents on this size of slides in a cupboard and then you would take out this whole page and you would put it in front of a projector and then you slide them past and then you look at a slide of the document. And Emilio has documents, and eventually when we knew all Trento's details then we found the medical records also and his records but they not sorted so they're random –
D: It's also one of his big projects now –
L: That's right, so he has a 120 000 documents or 220 000 or something –
D: I don't know, I've never gone through them, I can't bear the thought of going through them –
L: They're just in a complete muddle, there's no order of any kind. But eventually then afterwards we could find it, so ja that essentially is the story –
D: What a fantastic story, so from its beginning 'til today how long has this story been –
L: From the beginning, well the original search was about 10 or 12 or 13 years ago, and then I gave up after a little bit. And, now the second time, we found him in the December holiday of 2008, so and he must have started somewhere during the course of 2008, maybe at the beginning of 2008 I think he started searching, and ja –
D: Fantastic.
L: but it is lovely *ne*?
D: It's also nice where, and it's the difference I noticed from when I did the MA research on this starting in 2004 and doing research on it now. Because the role-players okay, those who

were there and those who were involved, the prisoners, the families that they impacted, because that generation has, to all intents and purposes passed –
L: Ja.
D: Now, I mean your dad was there but he was a little ouk –
L: Yes, I forgot a part of the story, I'll come back to it –
D: Because that's passed, people's interest in it is completely different, I mean even your father when he first mentioned it, it's a side bar to his story.
L: Yes.
D: But enough distance from it generation-wise and in terms of decades, I mean, for example, you don't feel like you lost an aunt to a terrible poisoning –
L: No!
D: You know, you don't have that attachment to the events –
L: God no. No of course not.
D: So your approach to it's completely different –
L: Of course, she died 30 years before I was born.
D: An so it becomes a gorgeously romantic story
L: Yes.
D: And I've seen that difference starting and MA in 2004, starting a PhD last year, the quality of the stories has changed completely, I'm not going to the old-age home and interviewing the men that were there, who have things that they can say and things that they can't say, all the way through my MA I was thinking, you know there's so much these guys aren't telling me. You know, the qualities of the stories are completely different because of that distance. And I mean now this is gorgeous, lovely romantic story –
L: It is.
D: You imagine it –
L: Mmm –
D: It's no-one you knew, it's no-one you had anything to do with, and the relationship you have with that family now is a completely new thing.
L: It's fantastic. There are two bits I've forgotten.
D: Ja.
L: The one is, I have a, I don't know what she is, but she's my dad's cousin. She's sort of not my aunt directly, she's my aunt once removed, and I had not even realised that she knew Trento or of Trento and then when we went to Ermelo, with the family to go see the farm um, we phoned up, my mum said you must phone tannie Ittie, and tannie Ittie was about 8 at the time that this happened, she's a bit older than my dad. But, I'd never realised that she knew anything so when we went to Ermelo with the family in tow we went to tannie Ittie and I said to her do you remember anything about Trento and she says of course I remember him well –
D: As only an 8 year old little girl remembers every single thing.
L: Yes, and then she said she lived in the town but on a Saturday afternoon they used to go to the farm to visit the [**00:46:00]** grandparents. And Trento would make her a slice of bread, and he would put fat on it, you fat or lard or whatever, instead of butter and then he would sprinkle it with sugar and give her this as a sandwich so as I translate this for Venezia she bursts into tears because she says her dad always used to make these for them when they were kids. It's so lovely.
D: Oh sweet man, and the other thing?
L: And the other thing was with this, the English baby, which I'd forgotten. Is when he had this heart-attack in the early '70s and he decided to find this baby, now he'd met the baby as a baby but then obviously gone back and started a new family and a new life and whatever so I presume they had cut all contact. And then he wrote, I'm not sure why, maybe that's just the way it's done, to the local priest of the area where he had lived and he said, this is the story

and I'm old and I want to re-make contact with the baby who must have been then, what, maybe in his early 20s then –
D: Ja, 30s early 30s, '45 say –
L: Say '45 or whatever, yes that's right.
D: Ja, so in early '70s late 20s.
L: Ja, something like that *ne*? I want to make contact with the baby and obviously the mum of the baby had remarried at that point, so the priest wrote him back a letter and said, the baby is here it's all fine everything is fine, however, because of the current family situation we do not recommend contact at this point, which Trento then obviously abided by. Um, and then after he died in '75 that paperwork got lost. So since then, and the children don't know where he went to or where he had lived in England or whatever but they were already grown up at that point obviously, and Trento had told them that there was this half-brother in the UK. Yes, and after that with the paperwork disappearing and the only one knowing the details of the baby's name and the area's name and whatever, that's disappeared but it has bothered them tremendously ever since and they want to find this other brother.
D: Half sibling, ja.
And that's why they were hoping that Hennie or my dad were the half sibling, neither of them are, their dates are wrong, sadly. But I'm sure we'll find that half-sibling at some point.
D: As I say, especially with this kind of distance and also the taboos on you know, discussing, labels of legitimacy or otherwise of children, and things like that loosening up, records becoming available –
L: Ja, I must say we were talking about that and I think, um, the fact that the priest suggested he shouldn't make contact in the early '70s, I'm sure that was right for the time and there was probably a youngish step-father involved and whatever but I mean now it couldn't possibly matter, it couldn't *ne*? There's no ways anyone's going to have hurt feelings at this point if we find him, and I'm sure we will.
D: Or, who knows? There's a difference between being someone's child and being, you know, a distant relative. But still I think the reasons for a priest saying that in the early '70s –
L: It is different *ne*? and it's hardly likely that the parents are still alive now, so the step-father or –
D: The role-players, you know, those directly involved in what happened –
L: I'm sure they won't be alive anymore, or they'd be bloody old by now.
D: Ja, ja, so now what else is in that album? [the photo album of their visit to Italy]
[00:50:24]

[most of the rest of discussion is about where Orbotello is and the spread of the family since then, and also how they stay in touch etc]
… **[00:59:49]**

D: Now have you got any photographs of your aunt?
L: No.
D: Of Anna.
L: No, but I can get, I can get, because my aunt has lots –
D: This is the aunt who remembers her?
L: Yes, yes. So I can get.
D: And she kind of, I mean after her death, did you know that she dies in that way, before your dad mentioned it?
L: **[01:00:17]** And my dad also says, when they were kids it was not spoken of, she was not spoken of and it was not spoken of. And I mean for them, in their life it must have been very

real because she had lived on the farm and she'd run the practice, and she'd worked in the practice –
D: Oh, she'd worked in the practice as well, as a secretary or nurse or?
L: Yes. Not as a nurse I think as the manager of the practice, you know, sort of what would you call it, the office manager or whatever. So she was a very real part of their life –

Interview 2

Interviewee: Barry and Margaret Dickinson
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Haenertsburg, Limpopo
Date: Sunday 21 August 2011
Time: +- 16:30
Topic: The chestnut grove on the Black Forest Mountain Lodge premises, thought to be planted by Italian POWs

B: …the history of it?
D: The history of it ja, I'm speaking to some of the Rechs at some stage so I'll work out which, if they were from the war -
B: Which ones have you heard about from Jeff?
D: There are a couple of different branches and Jeff wants to take me to see, let's see, um, ja, the children of Secundo I think.
B: That's it Anita, that's the Unterpatingas.
D: Unterpatingas.
B: That's right, he's from Austria.
D: And there's another side of the Rech's who are not around at the moment, they're out of town.
B: Ok that must be John and Aydee [phonetic spelling mine] Rech, he's a Rech, he was a mining engineer in Botswana.
D: So the Rechs married into Italians or they were Italians?
B: Aydee is an Afrikaans girl I think, Anita is Italian her husband is Austrian. The rest of them, there's Aldo Draghi D-R-A-G-H-I –
D: Yes I'm going to see them –
B: He I think came out here, he couldn't talk English, she couldn't talk Italian and they met –
D: His wife is Helen?
B: Helen yes, ja, so um. Then there's, you saw Emilia Pent?
D: Well I'll go an see him –
B: Her –
D: Ja her, I'll go and see her 4:30 this afternoon.
B: Ok, fine, ok.
D: So let me just understand, the Rechs, the connection there with Italians is that Secundo married –
B: He married a South African –
D: Girl
B: Girl, yes, who's Anita's mother, there was another girl who's just died and a son who got killed. So there's the one girl left there.
D: Ja.
B: Then there's John Rech, who I think is a cousin of Anita, and then there's Augustino Rech, he's half way down the mountain, he's a carpenter, well a cabinet-maker. Done very well here. He's Rech as well. Again, all related.

D: Somewhere along the line.
B: Ja.
D: So Professor van Zyl said something about the chestnut orchard.
B: That's it over here. Look, it's, [**00:03:02]** I believe that Italian and Portuguese and folk like that eat these things.
D: Yes, chestnuts.
B: South Africans in general don't. There's a huge orchard here. I think it was planted because of the community that was here that wanted them.
D: Yes. Ok.
B: We can't get rid of them now, the monkeys eat them.
D: Ja, ja.
B: You know, but I really believe it was done for that purpose for the people that wanted chestnuts and if you look in the area there's quite a few around here, you know. But we have the biggest orchard as such
D: You mean of chestnut trees, there's quite a few around?
B: Yes
D: You mean on different farms –
B: I mean, yes, ja but not as many as us.
D: As here. How long have you been on this farm?
B: Um nine years, it isn't ours it's my niece and nephew's, they own it. We just look after it.
D: You look after it. And do you know anything about the history of the place?
B: If you look in the books in the lodge; there's photographs in there. Over the road you'll see a couple of old brick columns that was the original farm house of the Zeederburg. He was in the war, he came back again and built that place as the farm house. Then he died and the wife kept it on. She sold it ten-odd years ago. My niece and nephew bought it and converted it into a lodge. Built this place, that place, that place.
D: I see. So you reckon that it might be because there were people around who do eat chestnuts?
B: Oh, [name of wife] wouldn't you agree my pet?
M: Sorry?
B: Chestnuts? I'm sure the orchard was planted because there were people here that would eat them.
M: No, there was a feeling long ago, and one of the people the Italians that you meet has also got a very big chestnut forest, that it was a viable crop. But when they grew it and started trying to export it to Johannesburg and that South Africans just don't take to it
D: Ja.
M: But it's us and it's I'm sure Augustine [sic], you know Augustine that other Italian?
D: Yes, I've got his name here.
M: I think they, it might be him that also, but someone, one of the Italians tried the chestnut, but South Africans. Even if you go like we've got this huge big vegetable place, it's an absolutely, it's a dream of a place, they sometimes even try to sell them, we've tried. When we first came here we thought, we would resurrect the crop. And one year we picked and we packaged and we had stalls in town and we tried the local grocery –
B: They went mouldy. Folk, it's not a crop. But the, our daughter-in-law is Portuguese, she brought her parents here, they went home with bundles. They love it as well, it's their food. **[00:06:30]**
D: Italians and Mediterranean eat them at Christmas, toasted at Christmas.
M: I tell you who does love them because they come and ask if they can have them, and they also steal them from us, are the African people, but they won't buy them.
D: - they won't buy them

M: They'll steal them and ask for them for free.
D: Do you have any idea why so many Italians came here? There were some here obviously as POWs… but how come, there seem to be a lot of Italians in town and on the mountain and in the area?
B: Probably because whoever was here let the word out that it's a nice place. Um, why don't you go and see Louis Changuion? –
D: I met him in town this morning …
B: Because he is a professor of history, so he'll know everything, and he will answer that question.
D:… I spoke to him this morning and he didn't have, because he's more of a Boer War guy, thinks about the Boer War, writes about the Boer War, and also generally about the place, but he couldn't really answer that question, why there were so many Italians. But you know I just think it's just interesting that there were –
B: Then I think if you see Emilia, ask her why, and Aldo Draghi, he came out here, they've just, they were having their fortieth wedding anniversary so –
D: Esther said that he came out here in the late fifties or sixties –
B: And then um, the Unterpatinga's as well. Ask her dad why they came, I've got no idea. The chap who would have known was the bishop here [unclear 'Fulgers'], he would have known.
D: The guy who was here in town? –
B: He was a priest bishop at our church.
D: The Catholic Church?
B: Yes, ja.
D: Which was also built by Italian prisoners of war and that type of thing.
B: My understanding it was done by Rech, Secundo Rech and Emilia's husband.
D: Ok, and they did it.
B: That's my understanding but again check.
D: And how did people living here think about Italians or of Italians?
B: The South Africans?
D: Ja.
B: We don't view them as any, we're strangers as well, we're ex-Zim, they've been here a lot longer than we have. Everybody here has accepted them you know, there's no that's them and us – There may have been in the past, certainly, but not now. In fact they've done an awful lot for the community. They've all done extremely well here, businesses –
D: Business wise?
B: Extremely well.
D: Amazing that there's so many of them here, but it is a beautiful place to live. You're happy here.
B: It is. Love it here.
D: Everyone loves it here. I was speaking to Esther in town at the bookshop… she hasn't been here forever, but she loves living here.
B: Her sister in Helen Draghi.
D: Married to Aldo?
B: So that's the Italian connection there.
D: Interesting. Well that's great. I'm going to have a wander down and around. You say the orchard is –
B: Let me come with you.

Interview 3

Interviewee: Emilia Guillerminotti in Pent
In attendance: Enrico Usseglio (family friend) and Emilia's daughter
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Magoebaskloof, Limpopo
Date: Monday 22 August 2011
Time: +-16:30
Topic: POW Giuseppe Pent and Italians in and around Magoebaskloof
Note: this was a multi-lingual interview with Italian and English and a few Afrikaans expressions.

Em: …ne? Is it ok?
D: Absolutely. I'm interested in the story
Em: Look, read this one –
D: Prigionieri di guerra, the story of Italians here whether they from the war or not, whatever, the whole lot –
En: From before?
D: Before, after –
Em: So long they were Italian.
En: Ma, lei porta un libro?
[All laugh]
D: Doesn't matter how long it is.
Em: Questo é il mio marito come stato preso Masse[not sure if this is one word or two]Madruk 1940.
D: Madruk?
Em: Madruk [] ma non so come si scrive.
D: [reading document placed in front of me] "Commune di nascita"
Em: Da dove siamo [] da dove veniamo
En: [] Giuseppe?
Em: Si [] Giuseppe soldato
[aside between Em and En]
D: So these are your husband's papers? –
Em: For we, for the, what you call it for this pension we had to have all this where he was caught. On the back it tells you when he came to South Africa by, by what boat Enrico? La Mauritania? La nave che venuta giu?
D: That was the one that was shot, the Mauritania –
Em: Non é Mauritania, che barca –
En: La Mauritania []
[discussion about the Mauritania and Lorenzo Marques. Em seems to recall him talking about the Mauritania]
Em: I don't know, you know lots of things I don't remember. This is him, prisoner of war, when they let him out.
En: [of the decorated picture says that it's a beautiful thing and should be framed and hung up]
[coffee discussion with Em's daughter and what I'm doing, the research]
D: So tell me now the story of his, as you know it and whatever details you have, just for the record say what the story was of him coming here.
Em: As it started he was called under the army in 1940 I think it's written on that paper there. And his call up is 1940 and then he was sent to, let me just read that. Some word I don't

understand [reading from document] "soldato di leva, classe 1940. Distretto di Torino la siato da [tries to work it out]" un posto, non so. Cose leggi? [A disjointed narrative of his drafting as a driver and being sent to Yugoslavia, a brief return to Italy then leaves for East Africa from Naples disembarks at Tripoli. Recounts his active service, capture, arrival at Durban and then Zonderwater. Was a prisoner in SA from '41 to '47. All I read from a document recalled from ZW for pension purposes]
D: And the story then when he was here, had he met you?
Em: Oh that's another story! You can write a book. You can write a book about ourself me and him. You can make a film –
En: Ja. He came here because he was –
Em: No wait!
En: Helping in the camp –
Em: In the camp he was a colonel MacNeill [spelling unknown] and McNeill liked him very much, my husband was a very good person. And he used to be particularly doing things in the garden there, you know, he liked to –
En: Work
Em: See things nicely done. Work, ja. So, Dr MacNeill that he was his, what did I say, colonel or whatever his rank was. And he asked him would you like to come with me at Magoebaskloof, he's got a farm here. so my husband came to Magoebaskloof with Dr MacNeill [aside]. So he came up they brought him up a few times they treat him like a son, his son, they were very good to him, and then my husband decide ask to be able to stay as an emigrant or whatever, so he was –
D: Doppo la guerra?
Em: Doppo la guerra. É stato fuori dalla prigionia nel quaranta sette –
En: E rimasto qui –
D: Oh, ok, he wasn't repatriated?
Em: No –
En: Very few of them –
Em: There were 60 000 of them that applied **[00:08:36]** and there was 800 that were accepted and he was one of them.
D: And it was because of MacNeill maybe –
En: Of course –
Em: Of course
D: Vouched for him or whatever the case was –
Em: Ja and he was a builder, my husband, so when he came here he find the first job he found was with a turner, he build a rondavel for this old lady and, anyway, then he stayed here until 19, he came to Italy in, because I didn't know much of him. He was here, you know, and we were all there but he came to Italy –
Daughter: Didn't he stay here for eighteen months?
Em: No, his father he came to visit him for eighteen months, ja. And he was a builder. He was a builder and he built ah lots all the houses round here, not all but most of them, he built them; Williamson up there, he built everyone around –
D: Wow.
Em: Houses ja and as the priest says, when we buried him, in church he said, he didn't know him much, because my husband then he was already old, nearly 90, and frail to go to church, but he say but he left a monument, he built all this building at the [-kop], and Siloi, the mission of the blind –
En: [-spruit]
Daughter: Doo[r]nspruit
Em: [begins to cry and apologises]

D: That's ok.
Em: So then he was supposed to come to Italy 1953 and we heard in Italy that he was coming to marry a certain girl and now then we hear from this girl to say "if I like him I'll marry him, if I don't like him I won't marry him". Meantime, he came to Italy and he was writing to a girl from Venezia, Veneto? Somewhere there, Silvia, I only know the name. and I saw him[her] with him riding bike and, but then I didn't know anything more than that but was weeks after that I'd seen those two. He saw me, that's our church [points to painting on the wall] in our village [name] that my cousin painted, exactly like that. And it was a, what do you call it when you selling stuff for the church? [an auction]. And he bought, Giuseppe bought this painting. But it wasn't that church it was another chapel, we had lots of chapels in our village. And but he saw me and a friend and he asked his friend but who's that girl, which is me. and he said well if you want to meet that girl you must go and dance, because I've always been mad about dancing, and so he did. And so he asked me out and I said, how many girlfriends do you want? And he said no I don't have any girlfriends. And we courted, to make it very short, we courted for twenty three days and then he had to leave. And I was working at the factory somewhere Borgone, and he was going away, and I was such a shy person. And I was coming home, I just stopped and said goodbye, I didn't even give him a kiss or nothing, terrible, I was so shy. And so he said to me, are you going to write to me? and I said well if you write to me I'll write to you and that was it. So we wrote to each other for a year and he asked me to marry him. And then we got, but I was the one saying to my mother that if Lilliana's mother would let her go to Africa not knowing anything, she's crazy! I wouldn't let my child []. **[00:12:28]** And I came [chuckles]. And we got married by proxy, he was here and I was there –
D: And what year was that?
Em: That was 1954. And 1955, April 3rd I arrived in Johannesburg three – days – flying! Three days it took to fly those days, it was small aeroplane, I don't know, I mean that's 56 years ago and, ah, I'm still here. And he died last year in June, 90 years old.
D: That's very recent –
Em: Ja.
En: There's not many left of these prisoner of war –
Em: Ja
En: In Sud Africa, I don't know [] Colombo [] they all gone.
D: Ja, Colombo is passed on
…
Em: So I don't know what else you want to know but that's, and then he stayed and he built that was his work building and planting flowers.
D: Tell me, I'm going to write down some of the buildings that he did.
Em: I have to remember them all, well the three missions Subiaco
D: How do you spell that?
[spelt in Italian]
Em: I think ha fatto un villagio lá, he built a village there. Subiaco Mission ne? and then Doo[r]nspruit hey? He also worked there, Doo[r]nspruit Mission. And Silowe Mission of the Blind. He built a lot there
[spelling discussion]
Em: I don't know if you want any reference when he was found, this is the Red Cross the family didn't know if he was dead or alive so they went through the Red Cross and then the Red Cross they had a bit of the something. And then also, a telegram from Cardinale Maglione, citta del Vaticano, this one it come from the Vatican City [a North African Cardinal confirming he was alive]. That's a nice picture.
D: So this was them tracking him?

Em: Tracking him, ja. **[00:15:43]** The family didn't know if he was dead or alive for years you see. And eventually they –
D: So the family didn't know that he was being held as a prisoner of war?
Em: No, he was caught by Indian in Massemadruk, he was in the trenches hey? He was pretend to be dead but they knock him with a, you know I suppose they were punching every –
En: No!
Em: Wasn't he in the trenches?
En: The Indian he came there on top of the trenches –
Em: Oh yes the machine-gun
[]
En: And they bullet he jumped down and he touch his face, hopefully the bullet comes out. It's very hot so he moved. Then the Indian he say "hey!"
Em: So then he had the four Indian behind him with the gun which he didn't know if they were going to kill him or not. For whatever time, he said that made him mad.
D: Ja. And from then he was imprisoned?
Em: In prison in Egypt then and then well Massemadruk, where is Massemadruk? In Egitto.
En: Inland. In Egitto from –
Em: Inland, and then he also talked of Tobruk.
D: Yes, that was one of the big battles –
Em: The big battle in Tobruk hey? And he was bringing the [] he was driving the lorry for the food of the captains and all the big-shot. That's what he was doing.
D: He was captured then and then shipped down –
Em: I seem to think that he was talking about that boat, that ship.
D: Ja they were all shipped down the East Coast –
Em: And he said they were all starving, you know they made them starve hey –
D: Because those were British camps in Egypt –
Em: Ja
D: And they were terrible. That's why they thought Zonderwater was so great because they were treated quite well there.
Em: It was, it became better, not in the beginning –
D: Ja because he was one of the first ones there then hey?
Em: Possibly, 1941. He was yes –
D: That's right in the beginning they slept in tents –
Em: That's right. They slept in tents I think twelve. He said they had to overlap the legs to fit, how many there thirteen, fourteen in the tent and they had to overlap the legs. And then, he wanted to study in the camp, and he did study what he could, but they were sending them out to the near farms to work on the farm for nothing, fifteen cents a day –
En: Shilling a day.
Em: Ja, shilling a day, fifteen cent, what am I talking. Shilling a day, and he sent also, oh, different places. Some they were good to them they were feeding them, some they were getting him up early in the morning with no food, they were also the farmer some they were not very good.
Daughter: But didn't thirty two people share a loaf of bread because they'd cut the slices in half?
Em: Ja but where was that?
Daughter: It was on the ship. They would get half a slice of bread –
Em: Half a slice of bread and a black coffee with nothing in it –
Daughter: And then all the food was chucked overboard -

Em: Chucked overboard [] big buns and cakes, Italian panettone that they were too old, instead of feeding them, they were chucking this and they were seeing all this in the water and they were dying of hunger. And at one stage they were not giving them any salt, this was in Egypt, they were not giving them any salt, I don't know to punish them for something, something, I don't know what, and so they were going blind, no salt. Then they gave them salt. No then somebody said they must eat the skin of oranges, that will give them a little bit of, what you call it, vitamine or something ja. And then they, but they starved a lot hey. And he used to say, I'd rather die than starve. He'll never diet or anything, he'd rather die. Always said that, he suffered too much –
D: He's very thin here.
Em: Thin, look at that ja.
D: So these are the pictures, he was a driver –
Em: Ja, he was a driver. It was, you don't see it much, it was in the camp in Zonderwater.
D: Oh ja, look at that, ja.
Em: He was in a band, ooh I mustn't miss that, mustn't forget that he was in a band –
D: Oh really! []
Em: Flicorno tenore [I recall she pointed to the instrument on the wall]. Here's one of his cards sent to his family.
En: He was playing in Rome in the Campidoglio.
Em: In the Campidoglio yes, I've got a picture there too, ah, 1941, this is Tripoli 1941. **[00:20:21]** Can you see your father in this picture? Look.
D: Look at that hey, how much thinner he was in this picture after the
[]
Em: And here there's nothing written but here is all his troops it's nothing written, but he's in the back there.
Daughter: I can't see so well is that him there?
Em: Yes, ja, see.
D: So this is still in Italy?
Em: Yes it is.
[Discussion here a series of other pictures that he sent home while still in Italy after he was drafted. Bids daughter goodbye.]
[Then at **(00:22:15)** a bit about when Emilia first arrived and how they started their life together, no electricity etc]
[Then a bit about learning English]
[Then about changing citizenship Italian to South African and back to Italian in the 50s in order to claim a pension for the years as a prisoner]
[Learning English **[00:30:00]**]
[**[00:32:00]** Enrico says he won't tell his story but will give me the book, half tongue in cheek, he has a copy of Sani's book given to him by Colombo. Enrico arrived '56 in SA and then in '71 to Limpopo. Then explains how Enrico came to live in the cottage behind]
[At **[00:39:00]** starts to talk about the small Italian groups in Tzaneen and Mooketsi. An interesting vignette about how one naturalised Italian during the war tried to get Italians to work for the shilling a day on his farm]
[At **[00:43:00]** talks a bit about what her friends told her she could expect in Africa, hanging upside down from a banana tree]
[At **[00:45:00]** talks about failing to teach Italian to their children]
[At **[00:52:00]** speaks about how Giuseppe repeated his war stories over and over again in the last weeks of his life. That he was full of anger at a lot of people about the war: Hitler, Mussolini and his captain and those that split him and his cousin up **[00:58:00)**]

[**[00:59:00]** is where the Ebenezer dam is discussed and the fact that Pent built houses there. In town many people are sure the dam was built by them but it was being built in the 50s]

Interview 4

Interviewee: Nipper Thompson
In attendance: Sylvia, his wife, and three friends from Groot Mariko
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Magoebaskloof, Limpopo
Date: Tuesday 23 August 2011
Time: +-07:00
Topic: Italians in Haenertsburg/Magoebaskloof and Italians and South Africans

D: Ja, Stockholm Syndrome
N: Yes, Stockholm Syndrome, I think there was actually quite a lot of that in the area as well, because my old man was in an Italian prisoner of war camp, he loved Italians –
D: Oh, he was in an Italian prisoner of war camp there?
N: Ja, he says the best time of his life, is when they escaped from prisoner of war, out of the prison. Hell, it was actually quite hectic, they were in a, they built a prison in an old dry river bed, so it was quite sandy. You know, they didn't want to use up valuable, fertile land. And they actually would dig and the sand would sometimes collapse on their back and they would have to wait for their friends, he said –
D: They were tunnelling out?
N: Ja. And they actually didn't even have to use the tunnels, the Italians capitulated or whatever and they just left the gates open. And the guys just walked out. And so he went from one side of Italy and they walked right across and they heard no, no, no the Allies were the other side [laughs] –
D: And they had to walk back –
N: And he said it was the best –
D: Big adventure.
N: Well he said it was just so beautiful. He said, you know like they'd sleep with charcoal burners, the guys who made charcoal in the woods. And he said incredibly kind, incredibly poor, you know the whole of the whole family would sleep in one bed. He really loved Italians.
D: When he came back?
N: Ja, well he loved them there already, because they just looked after them you know, they had the clothes on that they had. Anyway, so when he got here there was a guy called **[00:01:51]**, I can't remember his name, but they used to go drinking together and one day they were coming back and they saw an ant bear, I don't know if you know what an ant bear looks like? It sort of looks like a pig. And my father said "Hey! There's an ant bear." And this Barney or whatever his name was said "A bear! A bear!" [All laugh] Look, he wasn't very sober at the time [all laugh].
D: His Italian bravery kicked in.
N: No, no but what was funny, I mean you see this thing it looks like a pig and this guy reckoned we're in mortal danger now.
D: Were there a lot of Italian POWs in this area?
N: Ja, have you been to –
D: Pent, Emilia, Ja.
N: Ja, there was Pent, he did a lot of the building around here, and then the Rechs –
D: Ja, I'm seeing her now –

N: Are you?
D: Ja, one of them but apparently there's like four different families –
N: There are.
D: And everyone goes, no not those Rechs, the other ones. [Nipper laughs] So I finally got someone to explain to me more or less, how many there are.
N: Ja well there's, unfortunately Jonny's not here he's fishing in Iceland at the moment but ah, Secondo [aside] he's, Secondo was up here and he did incredibly well, he was a good businessman.
D: But they were Italians here from before the war?
N: Yes, yes they were here. No they actually probably did quite well from the war because they were producing food and things like that. So ja there was Secondo, and this Augustino's not related as far as I –
D: No I think he's –
N: You must see him hey he's got hands like this.
D: Ja he's a carpenter, hey?
N: He's a carpenter ja. He does beautiful stuff, ja. I mean there's a story about **[00:04:05]** Augostino. He was shoeing a horse this was in Italy, he's shoeing a horse there. You know you work looking, you don't look where he horse is. And he's holding the hoof like this for the vet to actually knock on the shoe, and the horse bites him on the back. So he just turned round and he hits it and the horse collapses, just is out hey. So the owner of the horse is mad hey, but he saw those big hands of Augustino [all laugh] and he didn't know [all laugh] was in a bit of a tough position. And the, actually no, it wasn't the vet that was doing the shoeing. He asked the vet afterwards, and the vet said if you hit a horse just in the right place that is what actually –
D: It'll pass out.
N: Ja, they get knocked out.
D: But still that guy though he smacked him with those big hands.
N: Ja well he did, I think it's, it's not easy to do it. So he, ja –
D: And people in town about Italians because it seems to be that after the war a couple moved in, just as emigrants –
N: Yes, Enrico –
D: I met him.
N: And the Draghis, have you met them?
D: Ja, I'm actually running out of time because there are so many Italians here.
N: They're actually fun to go and see.
D: Aldo and them?
N: Ja, his wife's more Italian than **[00:05:38]** him almost.
D: Oh really?
N: Ja, she's Afrikaans.
D: I met his, that's Helen? I met Esther [Helen's sister] yesterday, she was the first person I met, apparently town rolls up on a Monday, so there was no-one there –
N: Ja.
D: And we had breakfast alone in our lodge so we were wondering if there was actually anyone living in this town [carry on talking about meeting Esther]. **[00:06:33]** But it seems that Italians are quite central, quite important families around here?
N: Oh ja.
S [Sylvia Thompson]: Also in Duiwelskloof that Artonis and the other Rechs living down there near Aldo.
D: Ok, where is that?
N: Duiwelskloof is Tzaneen so ja –

D: Closer to Tzaneen.
N: Are you doing a book on this?
D: I'm doing my PhD on it.
N: Is it.
D: Ja. And actually more than speaking to Italians I'm interested in speaking to South Africans about Italians in the area, I'm doing research here, Western Cape –
S: Joan Murray's helper – **[00:07:12]**
N: Yes, OK that's probably one that you would miss out on. Um, he was up at the Downs, and I think they were allowed to use prisoners, ah, Italians, as labour and he just stayed on forever –
D: Who's that?
N: Crumbs, I'm trying to think of his name now.
D: Oh, you're saying the ex-POW is still around?
N: Ja. I'm not to sure if he was also one?
S: I think he was –
N: Ja –
S: Or what did he come out? –
N: Ja, now the guys, you must chat to Peggy Murray about that.
D: Ok.
S: Or Bruce Murray.
N: Or Bruce Murray.
D: Are they husband and wife?
N: No, no that's the son –
D: OK, Bruce is the son?
[Others enter the room for breakfast]
N: He just sort of stayed on forever. The other guy to chat to is Robin Baragwanath about that Downs one, you know he, they stayed at the Downs. [long pause], Giuseppe!
[Omitted for confidentiality]
N: Can I give you Bruce's number because you might have to phone him [get's the number] OK, Bruce is 076164 4035. Actually but go to Peggy, she's in town, just ask anyone where Peggy Murray is, and she'll give you all the information you need.
D: She's staying in town?
N: Ja,
D: OK, well that's great. And then Robin Baragwanath's –
N: Ja, well you're going there just now.
D: I'll speak to them now.
N: **[00:10:09]** Because, Giuseppe, I mean he would do incredible things, apparently make like for each avo he would dig a huge hole and do a deep litter and, what do they call that Syl? That type of, where you put stuff –
S: Trench.
N: Trench, deep trenching. And he'd produce incredible avos. And subsequently we've heard that, if you don't want phytophthora in avos, you must actually get the other good, it's a fungus –
D: Good bacteria going –
N: And that's probably why his were so good. If you wanted to ask someone about that one that would be Robin Baragwanath.
S: Did you talk about your father being in Italy and –
N: Mmm. I said that's why he was, you know, about the Stockholm Syndrome whatever –
D: Ja, kind of got to like Italians –
S: He just loved Italians so much, he loved his years in Italy.

D: Do you know where he was in Italy?
S: He walked right through Italy from one end to the other and then walked back –
D: Across, or up and down?
N: No just back across –
D: Across between the two seas on either side?
N: Ja.
D: It'd be interesting to know where he was, that he thought it was so amazing –
N: Ok the person that would know that, jeez you know that's terrible that I don't know the name of the place –
D: It is crazy, it's a nice place to go for a holiday.
N: Ja.
D: If you have an excuse to go, and to know where he went.
N: Are you going as far as the Cape and all the rest? Doing all those mountain passes –
D: Ja. [describe some of the next planned field work]
N: **[00:12:23]** There was another interesting story. My old man was up in Zim, it was Rhodesia then, and um they were driving from um Fort Vic up to I don't know Umtali and there was a prison, you know they'd interred these guys there. And these guys escaped and were trying to walk through to Mozambique, which, apparently I think they would have been safe there –
D: It's a free port, ja.
N: And they went through lion territory and all that [laughs] and these, no he said it was near Lundi, Rundi River whatever it was, that they picked these guys up, and there's lion and elephant there. They picked these guys up and Clifford, you know, he said jeez, he said they said no, they want to go back to the camp where they've just escaped from. And he said no *kak* man, we'll help you, we'll –
D: Ja.
N: Um [chuckles] they reckon no, no that place is a lot, lot safer than being outside with the lions and everything [chuckles] they reckoned *Here* this is hectic. They hadn't slept for days, sort of hanging on to trees – [all laugh].
S: Did you tell the story of the ant bear?
N: Ja I did "The Bear! The Bear!" [All laugh] **[00:13:51]**. You know you think this huge, and this thing looks like a pig.
D: Ja so I'm looking all over the place, I'm going to Montagu as well they built some of the mountain passes there –
N: Yes, beautiful passes that Swartberg Pass.
D: There's Du Toitskloof and the Montagu one, the old one, because I think it's been –
N: Ja, didn't they do the one from Prince Albert to Oudtshoorn?
D: That rings a bell as well –
N: Swartberg Pass.
D: Ja, so that I'll do later, there's a lot to see that they built –
N: Ja. And then there's what's this place called down here the kloof, that beautiful house they built?
D: Ja, what is this house because a couple of people have spoken about it but no-one can actually tell me where it is?
N: OK. If you're going down **[00:14:39]** the pass –
S: Is it Casa Clavella?
N: Ja, Casa Clavella, um. As you're going down the pass, in Magoebaskloof –
S: It's the first entrance to the right.
N: Ja, it's the first entrance turn off you can take to the right –
S: After the Houtbosdorp turn-off you drive down –

N: As you start going down the first right, and it's got there 'Casa Clavella'
D: Oh it's signposted?
N: Ja, apparently it's beautifully built.
D: And it was POWs?
N: Look, there are other beautiful places they built here, there's ah I think it's mainly him that built it, that you'd have to find out from James' mother. Um, there's places they just cut, made bricks out of soapstone –
D: Oh ja?
N: Cut soapstone, even the, what you call it the thing on the bottom of the, that, skirting.
D: Ja.
N: All made with soapstone. It's actually, maybe worthwhile going down there and getting –
D: And you say um, Jamie's mother will know that?
N: Ja.
D: Or Gub?
N: Gub, ja Gub will know it. Hell I'm not very good on all their names.
D: No it's fine, what I'm looking for is what sticks in peoples' minds about them.
N: Ja.
D: And it's amazing, across a whole lot places I've seen that you know people feel the same way about Italians being around, they enjoyed having them around, they had a good laugh with them at them, you know, they were entertaining. And then also did, like, serious work, good work. [Go on about Dullstroom etc and discuss making a book or film].
S: **[00:16:58]** Nipper did you tell me once that the these, um, ah, they'd carved beautiful things or was it not you? These Italians carved beautiful things, not?
N: I don't think it was –
D: Decorative stuff, or functional stuff?
N: I don't know who told me about Italians carving beautiful wooden things.
N: **[00:17:21]** Look, I don't like all Italians. Enrico, gave me a thing for sharpening a scythe you a scythe –
D: A device?
N: No it looks like a *koevoet* the head of a *koevoet* I'll show it to you come have a quick look [get up to go] and then I said to Enrico, I said do you use a ball peen hammer to? "Oh! You should have been drowned at birth!" [Chuckles] How can I like the guy? [All laugh] [Outside, discuss Emilio selling up to go back to Italy at some point][Walk to the dairy].
N: **[00:19:15]** You see you sharpen those things.
D: Ja, a scythe.
N: Those blades. Which is quite interesting, you sharpen it by hammering.
D: On that, with the edge on that?
N: Ja, you're actually stretching it, you making it –
D: Ah, I see.
N: Um, so Enrico gives me, this is the one, I should have been drowned at birth, just because I suggested a ball peen hammer. [Both laugh] God. *Porco dio!*
D: Flew off the handle without warning. And these tools, these are yours, or you've acquired them over the years?
N: Ja [unclear]. All ours. **[00:19:54]** And we make cheese here. And it's actually Italians [unclear] it's actually old Helen and Aldo that um they're probably one of the best driving forces for us to go making cheese. They came, we were just doing a little bit in the kitchen, and they came one day, and they asked to see where we store our cheese. And they'd go and select out the ones that really looked dodgy. Old Helen would say *Here hierdie ding ruik soos poep!* you know. [This interview ends, the next is on a separate track and happens leaving the dairy]

Interview 4a.
N: … building the mountain club hut. I must find out all the names there, ja. Jeez, I'm not good on the history of things. And stocking the trout, ah, the streams with trout as well. The Rechs were involved there. That was Aldo's old man –
D: Ja.
N: Um, Elisio.
D: So they got, they just got stuck in with a whole lot of new enterprises –
N: Plenty, ja, like I don't know if you chat to Enrico about, um, you say to him jeez, you know, what about chestnuts. And he'll reckon jeez, he had to survive on chestnuts, he hates chestnuts –
D: He hates them.
N: Ja.
D: There's that huge orchard there in Black Forest –
N: There's someone I've forgotten as well, ja –
D: Ja. So they, but they're very new, they're ex-Zim, Barry and them, they've been here I think nine years or so –
N: Ja.
D: And he said they tried to make a go of it commercially of chestnuts but that South Africans aren't –
N: No, no.
D: They're not that interested in them.
N: There, look there's –
D: Do you think they were planted by Italians?
N: I think a lot of them were. Because there's um, who's the. Because up on what they call the dolomites, up on the top of the mountain there's ah those Italians there, I mean Sacco, you know the cheese guy **[00:01:23]** Old Secondo reckons he's going to butter this guy up, you know he wants to go walking over his farm and all this. So he speaks to him all lekker in Italian. Huh. And old Sacco just told him to fuck off in Italian. [Both laugh]
D: He saw it coming, he knew what he was after. Do you think they, do they stick together Italians? Or were they kind of all for their own –
N: Well, Sacco not. Not with old –
D: He wasn't prepared to be *schloud* by um –
N: No, no. Actually they did stick very much together, I think they were um, you know a lot of them, um, enjoyed the same sort of foods and the rest, or maybe the same type of wines, huh.
D: I reckon, ja.

Interview 5

Interviewee: Anita Rech and Joseph Unterpatinger
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Consolata Farm, Haenertsberg, Limpopo
Date: Tuesday 23 August 2011
Time: 09:00
Topic: The Rech family are of Italian descent and have been in the area since the 1920s

A: …Parents, you hear in conversation what, they say, you don't take it in really, you know. And I just said thank goodness this J Branson, my father actually called him and said you know, take my life history…
D: My story.
A: And you know we take this, we've got this bell here in the front, we don't know where that came from we've forgotten if he told us. Very sad.
D: Ja it's sad what gets lost as soon as someone passes away, when did he pass on?
A: 2005.
D: Ok, so it's not so long ago.
A: No not so long ago. My mother was in 2002.
D: You know, what I've been doing is working out who in the town is a POW, who was here before and then who came after as well. Because my, the PhD that I'm doing is not so much a history of Italian prisoners of war but their impact on the places that they lived and the interaction with South Africans. So I'm really interested in talking to South African families as well. You know, people who had POWs working on their farm, or building something, things like that as well. So it's been interesting to see how here in this town and in the surrounding areas how there were Italians here before, your family, you know they were here before the war, then there were those that arrived during the war, like Giuseppe Pent. And then those that came afterwards like Emilia. And how they've kind of integrated and worked together or done things separately and all that. So really what I'm looking for also is memories and things that come to mind about Italians here in this area, both your family and others like that. I mean was your father an Italian Italian, did he speak …
A: Yes, yes…
D: With an accent.
A: I would say so, I would say, I feel he wasn't Italian Italian as such because he married my mother who was Afrikaans you see and in this home we spoke English because of her not being able to speak Italian and my father not Afrikaans…
D: So you had that as a common language…
A: We had a common language as English and he actually, he didn't keep really the traditions so much of being an Italian funnily enough. I think the least of, not, I wouldn't say the least of the brothers but definitely not..
D: Ja, he was very South African.
A: He became very patriotic to the country and the fact that you know he emigrated here, this was his life. And he decided well he recalls himself South African. He had a few visits back to Italy and funny enough in '94 we went over with my father to Italy and um he decided never again would he ever go back. He said he just lost that whole contact that um…
D: Connection.
A: Connection there, he felt he was South African. This was his life.
D: And his father had naturalised?
A: Yes, they all naturalised.
D: So his father had come first with them all?
A: No, no, no, no as it says he came first, it's all in the history there.
D: [unclear]
A: And then they came afterwards. The three brothers. And uh, no first his brother Alesio [sic] and himself and then the older brother came later. But it's all written quite in detail exactly how it all went about.
D: And are the siblings still around? The area.
A: Just his sister.
D: His sister.
A: The sister now living only. The last living one in Johannesburg.

D: And the descendants have moved away from the area as well?
A: Yes.
D: [unclear]
A: You know it um well here it's only Bertie Rech that's was married to my uncle, that's living in Politsi [spelling]. She's got the one son. And then the other Mario that's down in the valley here, his wife passed away and ag, his children are Jonnie Rech, also down in the valley, you know, so. But I don't know if they would be of any interest to you because Mario never, he was never, he went to the Koffiefontein but you know the history thereafter of Mario I'm not hundred per cent sure. But I think he was naturalised. He was already naturalised so he didn't have to serve that time.
D: Ja, they were then released quite soon afterwards.
A: But my father and his, they stayed on. Yes.
D: And your father came here because of farming opportunities? **[00:04:38]**
A: Yes.
D: To this area?
A: Yes, yes.
D: And how did he find being in this area? Did he find acceptance among the locals or was there ever…
A: It seemed, no, not at all, it seemed very much because my father was a very people's person. Very, very much a people's person, he spoke easily to people, he wasn't, you know he um, ja, very much. So I think he was accepted very much here with the community very much.
D: But it seems like quite a, I mean even now, quite a cosmopolitan…
A: Area?
D: Community.
A: Ja, big time, big time.
D: People kind of come here from whatever background and find their place pretty easily.
A: Mmm, mmm.
D: You know I've been to places where it's very clear-cut between sort of Boer and Briton and other people, and then black people quite separate. But this town seems really integrated.
A: Very integrated, yes.
D: People kind of came here and found their place fairly easily.
A: No, it's interesting, it's a very interesting community. I think as you will speak now with the rest of them.
D: [unclear] Did your father interact with other Italians in the community?
A: Yes, yes. Not as much funnily enough as my uncle Alesio [sic Elisio] down, that also passed on some years ago. You know they used to get on with very much with the Moeketsi crowd. My father wasn't as much, you know they used to play cards and bocce and all that. But my father wasn't in that scene.
D: Where is Moeketsi from here?
A: Um, it's about a good hour drive.
D: Ok. And there were a lot of Italians there.
A: Yes, yes a lot. But also a lot have passed away. So I wonder if it also wouldn't be quite interesting to go and speak to auntie Bertie, because she was very involved with Italians there.
D: With that crowd.
A: Very much so.
D: Any idea why so many of them came north? As immigrants, as opposed to …
A: I think for farming. I think the farming opportunities here. Yes, I think so. Very fertile land, being farmers I suppose and feeling for the earth. I think that's what they saw. I think.

D: And um, where was he from, Seren dell Grappa, Belluno.
A: Belluno, yes.
D: Is it a mountainous area? It is, it's Piedmont hey?
A: It's Piedmont yes, but it's more pre-Dolomite, hey, yes? You know so it's a little bit low-lying where he is, where they grew up, but then you start about an hour, then you start really getting into the mountains. Yes, beautiful, it's absolutely stunning.
D: Ja it must be, I've never been to that part, it must be gorgeous…
A: Beautiful! Not, ooh no it's absolutely gorgeous. Yes, so, what can I else say about my father. I mean he was just an amazing man I think.
D: I mean he seems pretty driven, he did a lot.
A: He was very, he did a lot yes, you know when he moved up here of course there was no timber, so he had to plant a lot of cash crops to get some cash while he planted the timber, of course he saw the opportunity for timber here. **[00:07:55]**
D: So he was one of the first to spot that as an opportunity.
A: Yes, yes. Very much so. And I mean it's all recorded there, how he went about buying it…
D: Step by step
A: Step by step which is actually quite, you know when I got this from J I couldn't find my copy and in desperation I phoned him and then he said to me, you know he had it. And then I read it again and I mean it was quite amazing…
D: No it's an incredible story. The stories that they had of kind of coming to a place they didn't know, I mean Emilia Pent got on a plane to come here not knowing anything about the continent, let alone South Africa.
A: Nothing, nothing, nothing.
D: He must have done the same.
A: Well they did, you see…
D: It's a hell of a gamble.
A: A big gamble. You know, as you said, the father came first for a couple of years and then asked his sons to come and join him with the farming. So um…
D: There's a lot around here though that, because I do this research across the country, so all sorts of different places, different kinds of people as well that I've encountered, but there are signs here that Italians were here at a certain time in the 20th century. Things like prickly pears, the chestnuts all over the place. It's you know a sign, and that there's cheese industries here now which Nipper tells me was encouraged, not started, but encouraged by the Italians that were around here.
A: That's right. Now my mother, my mother had, she, she did cheeses for years and years we had our own cattle and she also used to make these round cheeses, they were fantastic.
D: Fantastic. Her recipes?
A: Yes, hers. No obviously Italian input, but I remember they were fantastic.
D: Delicious.
A: Delicious, delicious. So um…
D: It's a great community this actually, there's a lot going on here that's interesting as a researcher but also just [about places to live] **[00:10:00]**. Did he build this house?
A: Yes. With the prisoners of war.
D: With people like Giuseppe Pent.
A: No, I don't think Giuseppe was involved, he never mentioned Giuseppe, just the prisoners of war they used to come and visit.
D: So how many were there around here, because that's also what people are unclear, English speakers…
A: Unclear of.

D: Were there, so Rech, the Rechs were here. Is that the surname they came from Italy with.
A: Mm. His father was more Austrian, he came the more Austrian. His mother was true Italian.
D: Alright, oh I see, that's how he got that surname.
A: Yes, yes.
D: So they, um, were there Italian POWs here like more than one, because Emilia Pent seemed to think that there weren't that many?
A: Well what I could also gather from this, it didn't seem. They don't give numbers unfortunately. They don't give numbers, but I mean they used to visit and entertain. They used to …
D: Ok.
A: That was the first section of the house, that was built by the prisoners of war.
D: You mean the front part that we came through…
A: Yes, I actually, there's a little date here, a… [begin to walk toward the front of the house from the living rooms at the back]
D: A plaque
A: A little plaque. So this, as it mentions in that story, what it only existed of, this half of the house.
D: Ok.
A: And all this, I could gather, was built by the prisoners of war. Now you see this [points to bell outside of the house], I don't know the history of this, I mean, and I could kick myself. I mean and it's stunning.
D: It comes from somewhere. [she rings it]. Ja I heard it last night.
A: Oh, you heard it last night.
D: Have you ever taken it off the wall to see what's on the back?
A: I have taken it off the wall but I never really checked.
D: Because they usually signed something on the back.
A: Normally [walks round to the side of the house]. You see there it is "12, 10, 1944"
D: Oh, look at that.
A: Um, now, can you see what it says.
D: That says "P.D.G" "prigionieri di guerra".
A: Ja. "Landi"
D: "Landi, Giova". I don't know if that's another letter…
A: "Giova" aah, and then what is that, looks like a fork. I mean not a fork, ah, like a cone, can you see, it's a little, whatever that is.
D: I can't see what that is but let me, I can take a photo of that and I'll ask um, there's a guy who is an archivist in Pretoria who deals with just prisoners of war **[00:12:30]**. He's at the Zonderwater Prisoner of War Camp. All prisoners of war were sent there and then sent out to farms from there, all across the country.
A: I see.
D: So all their records are there, but I'll take a photo of it…
A: Yes, please.
D: And then we can zoom as well. And see what else it says. "Landi Giova" I don't know what that means.
A: You don't know what that means?
D: But "P.D.G" is definitely "prigionieri di guerra", prisoners of war.
A: Is that what it means, prisoners of war?
D: Look at that hey.
A: That's lovely, this is my husband, I thought father Jeffrey would be here…
D: Hi

J: Hi
D: How are you?
A: I forgot your name again.
D: Donato, nice to meet you.
J: Donato, Joseph. Are you getting somewhere? **[00:13:12]**
A: Well I, fortunately, I said to Donato , fortunately, what's his name? J got the whole…
D: Yes, those documents ja…
A: But let's take this off, there might be a history behind this…
J: I don't think so.
D: There's nothing behind it?
A: Let's take this off.
D: Is it heavy?
J: You can't get it out it's screwed into the wall…
…
A: No there, you can take it out.
J: Oh, there you are.
A: Just as a matter of interest, has it got at all, is it very heavy?
J: This is just the stud.
D: No, I can't see.
A: Can't you see anything? I must actually take it down and have it oiled. Put it down here. I think it's good, while we're here.
D: You know I see things like this all over the place, it could very well be made by a POW. It's in a style that you would get somewhere in Piedmont
A: It looks almost like that.
D: Decorative, Alpine stuff. That's very Italian, these kinds of things, so maybe by a POW or something. Nothing's written inside? They usually signed things. I mean like they signed the building, that's very usual
A: I know, very typical, very usual, that they signed it.
D: That they would have signed it.
J: [Unclear] **[00:14:40]**
D: It's a lovely thing though.
A: It is s a lovely thing.
D: And it's all, you know what else makes me think it was POW, is this kind of bell, because this would have been something they would have been able to get here. School bell, anything like that, fire bell, you know what I mean.
A: Yes.
D: It's something they would have been able to get hold of here and then carved a housing for it. What I'll do is if I find anything else like this I'll let you know and then you'll know that it's something that they could have made. Because sometimes you get, you know they had styles and then you'll get all over the country, the same sort of curios that they would make and sell, all across, from the Cape up to here. You know. So if I find anything else like this I'll let you know, and then you'll know that it's a…
A: Yes, I would love to.
D: Ja.
A: Of course you know so many people ask me and yes, this could be a little bit of a patch up here and oh I can kick myself. You know, it goes in here [points to ear] and phew!
D: Ja, and also, when it's you parents they go on and on about things you always think they'll be around to ask, and then one day they're not. And you've missed that opportunity. [we make our way back into the house]
A: You see, this was originally, these windows were originally all [gestures] all around.

D: Ok, ja.
A: So this wasn't a door, and when we moved in here in 2006, we actually made this the entrance. **[00:16:00]** Of course he had the door here, this was the entrance here which I [unclear]
D: Oh that's nice. Beautiful rooms hey? Nicely proportioned.
A: It's got incredible atmosphere, this part of the house. Um, you can just feel the spirits, not the spirits but the ja it's just amazing…
D: An approach.
A: Yes.
D: You know Italian craftsmanship is, you can see it anywhere in the world and the marquetry and the woodwork and that?
A: That was also done in the time obviously with the prisoners of war.
D: It's beautiful. Really gorgeous stuff.
A: And then this stuff, this part of the house my father built on. This was the end of the house, as we stand here looking now. That was the end of the house, and this he built on in 1960, round about 1964, '65 this wing he built on.
D: And also very of its time, very sixties as well.
A: Very sixties, ja.
D: Lovely, very lovely. [Refers to a sacred heart painting]. And is this by a POW? It's the right year
A: It looks like it hey.
D: '43.
A: Isn't it beautiful?
D: Ja, and they did a lot of these things.
A: Does it look Italian?
D: Oh ja, it is [tried to read name, there is a photo of the signature]… this kind of thing, I can also take a photo and if there is a kind of painter with a surname there will be a record of him.
A: Yes, please do.
D: You know I can find that out for you as well.
A: This he had in their room the whole time, I thought it's such a beautiful piece I would like to actually bring it forward.
D: [More thinking out loud about what it could say]
A:… I'd also love to find that out so you're welcome to take a picture of that, absolutely.
D: You know they helped each other a lot, so he gave, you know he would have made work for POWs as well, they did that a lot.
A: Oh yes.
D: You know and they also commissioned things, lots of people in Joburg had their portraits painted by Italians.
A: Is that so? **[00:18:29]**
D: Ja, because there were a lot of painters there, Eduardo Villa was one of them, are you the artist here, are you the painter? [In the back of the house is a long conservatory where an easel and brushes are set up. Most of the interview took place on one side of this space].
A: Well I am an artist as well myself, but I hide mine…
[both laugh].
D: That's not fair.
A: That's my daughter-in-law actually.
D: Oh very nice.
A: She's a very great little artist and she had this stuck in a room somewhere, and I picked it out and said well tough luck my girl it's now going up.
D: Really lovely. [discussion about Villa and POWs applying to return to SA]

A: But Joseph, I thought Father Jeffrey would be here?
J: No, no.
A: So while we had this interview you could have spoken to Father Jeffrey, but anyway. Father Jeffery apparently is very ill, he's sick?
D: Well he's got flu. **[00:19:56]**
J: You'd never say so.
A: They had this recurring [tangent about tea serving]
J: Tell me, are you in South Africa or are you from Italy?
D: No no I'm South African, born here. Ja ja my grandparents were Italian.
J: Oh, ok.
D: Not POW though. They came on the recommendation of POWs. Who went back to the village and said this was the place to go. And they made really good those POWs who came back. [Tangent about POWs returning].
J: But I mean there were prisoners of war here?
D: In this town. And that's also what I'm trying to work out because there were Italians here before the war, POWs, and then there were immigrants after who came here as well. A few, but I'm trying to work out what…
A: You see this is not very clear, and when I read it, it's not really mentioned how many were here. But, I think, as I said, I've made a copy for you and I mean you can…
D: You know what, those kinds of details are not um…
A: Not really important?
D: There's an Italian guy whose done the, he's crunched the numbers of who was where and how. Pretoria has fantastic records of every POW that was here. How long they were here…
A: Is that so?
D: Every time they were checked into hospital, every malady they had. Every letter they sent home. The records there are, kilometres of paperwork.
J: Is that so?
A: Good heavens! That's interesting.
D: So that history's done. That kind of work is done. I'm interested in stories about Italians around. That's why this is a great thing, you know.
A: Yes, yes. Like the farm, how it got the farm's name.
D: And I'm interested in, it's a study about South Africans more than Italians and how having Italians around changed things or created new industries, the kind of impact that Italians had in these communities. That's why it's been great to be here because I can see the signs of when Italians get stuck in. the kinds of things they plant, the kinds of industries they start and how they change the character slowly.
A: Yes.
D: Also, all of the inter-marrying they did. You know for them it was not a big deal to have affairs and [aside about scandals in small towns related to Italians, the national scope of the study and responding to questions about it]
A: **[00:23:55]** I was saying that auntie Bertie would be actually an interesting one to go and talk to, as well. Auntie Bertie?
J: I don't know what Bertie knows?
A: No, auntie Bertie because she integrated a lot with the Mooketsi Italians, where daddy wasn't really involved so much.
J: The Mooketsi Italians were all immigrants, they were not prisoners of war.
D: After the war?
A: Yes.
J: Or even before.
A: Oh I see.

J: Even before the war. No look here, Secondo came here, between the two wars, in 1925. And the other Italians, the Rechs came what 1918, 1919.
A: Now who're you talking about?
J: Your grandfather.
D: Your grandfather.
A: Oh my grandfather came 1921.
J: 1921, just after the First World War. **[00:24:32]** And the Mooketsi people were already, some of them were here already. Because they came from Maputo. And they travelled to Politsi [spelling] and Mooketsi to go and work for the farmers and they were already there.
A: Were they already there?
J: There were some who were there.
A: Can you remember daddy telling you that? But you see Bertie would be very good. She would know
J: Bertie would know.
D: But there's also lots of Piedmontese in this part of the country, which I think is quite interesting.
A: Yes, yes.
D: You know, because people emigrate along routes, especially when there is family, so, most of the people. I mean Emilia Pent is also Piedmontese, so is Enrico…
A: And did you see Enrico as well?
D: He came to visit as well.
[Short exchange about them]
A: And what about Augustino and Iris Rech, that's just down the valley? **[00:25:25]**
D: Well know I've heard of, someone else told me about…
J: Augustino and Iris. Ja. They are Rechs but they are not, they left the valley of the Belluno…about three hundred years ago. They are Rechs that emigrated somewhere else, they're not related to the Rechs of ours.
A: Going way back…But that could also be quite interesting.
J: That's what Augustino said…You see they come from the same area.
A; They're Lantiai?
J: From there, ja, you see Lantiai is only about what between Belluno and [unclear], it's not far away. You know three or two hundred years ago if you emigrated, you went thirty kilometres you were far wherever you were. I mean different valley, different people, different everything…
D: Dialects as well. It's almost easier to move to the other side of the world at that time.
A: Absolutely.
D: A lot of the Piedmontese came all the way down, a lot of them worked their way through North Africa, Congo and gradually came down to South Africa.
J: Abyssinia was very well, I mean where does *dingus* come from, ah…
A: Who?
J: The name, ah, Consolata?
A: Well it's here I…
J: It was a mission somewhere?…
A: It's in this one [refers to one of the documents]
D: That one.
A: Yes, the origin of the farm name "Consolata"
J: It comes from East Africa.
A: So you know that is quite interesting how they got about that. Um…
D: And, did I ask you this before? Locals here, there was never issue with Italians?
A: Not that I can recall.

D: They kind of moved in and very integrated.
A: Straight away.
J: This, here, there was a lot of Germans here…
A: Already…
J: Lot of British people **[00:27:20]** you know, in the Magoebaskloof area…
A: When, when daddy…
J: There were lots of British people here.
D: Now, ja.
A: Ah, when daddy moved up, was there already?
J: There were, the ones who'd been…
A: Of course the Germans…
D: Turners and…
A: Ja there were Germans, you're quite right, the [unclear] were here…
J: [Gives another surname but unclear]
A: Very much
J: A lot of German people settled in this area and a lot of British people were here.
D: Ja.
A: Already. I can never recall that ever being a problem, at all, not, what I …
J: No, they were all farmers here …
D: It's a very cosmopolitan area…
A: What I can remember of my youth, growing up here in this house, was incredible get-togethers of the community here with my mom and dad. It was an on-going party. It was incredible. And it was no problem for them to entertain them, so…
D: I mean your dad's success was quite gradual but by the time you were growing up here he was established and doing well?
A: He was doing alright yes, yes. I mean still struggling because it takes years for timber to grow. Ah you know…
D: So what was, you say he was doing cash crops in the mean time?...
A: Potatos…
D: Waiting for that …
J: Potatoes and tomatoes ja.
D: Close by here?
A: Where the dam is actually. **[00:28:33]**
D: Oh I see
J: [unclear] this side was a river
D: Ja, because the dam was only '57, or '56/'57?
A: Late, early sixties is when it was complete, but I'll actually show you, have you finished your coffee?
D: Ja, ja.
A: If you want to come out I'll show you where the potato lands were. And then he did a bit of um [unclear]
J: Cash crops, ja
[Discussion between the three of us on the shape of the river and the dam and the farm and that he tried grapes on another farm but they were eaten by birds]
A: **[00:31:11]** But do you know I must show you. I must actually try and get those photos to show him here the entrance, was so typical Italian with the arch and the little bar [?] and the little pond, it was actually delightful…
D: Ja, you can actually, I can now tell when I come up to buildings who, you know, whether there were Italians building, because they built a certain look…
A: Yes, absolutely.

D: Different kinds, I mean there's different styles but you can see when they've done something.
A: Can you see so it's like a peninsula here the dam goes right…
D: It's like fantastic and it's beautiful, really worked out beautifully
A: It worked out very well yes
J: But there was an old farmhouse here just a core …
A: Just a core…
J: Yes, just a core because the inside of the house where now you can show where the donkey used to be, that used to be a, do you remember that still or not anymore?
A: The donkey?
J: Ja.
A: Of course. I mean that was our bathroom, that's where the donkey was. So it worked out very well. Unfortunately , this we, nobody can understand [wind comes up and words are indistinct, but the two of them ask me why the stonework set in cement is in two styles, one with cement ridges and the other with the stone in relief and tracing in the cement. I responded that I had no idea]
D: **[00:33:05]** And these are newer, the rondavels?
A: Well that was also shortly after this was built, you can see from the photos
D: Are these not the rondavels that um, Pent , because Emilia was telling me he built rondavels for some Rechs, somewhere. Are these not those?
A: It could be.
J: It could be that Giuseppe built those.
D: That Giuseppe, one of the first things he built was rondavels on one of the Rech…
A: It could be
J: The only one is here, the other one could be down there by ah…
A: Where? Ooh, memory loss is here.
J: No, down at the kloof?
A: You mean Mario?
J: Mario. Mario stayed also at a rondavel, they had a main house and they had a rondavel, and they lived on the end. Ja.
A: Would you also say daddy didn't really follow tradition, Italian style of living?
J: No he became a South African [unclear] I'm now have to nationalise type of thing.
A: That's what I said.
J: And he said look now I'm living in this country so I must go and live in a country of my choice. He had is Italian roots, he had his Italian way of doing things. But he was then um, I think saying look I'm here, I'm not going to go back, so I must live in South Africa as a South African so to speak.
A: Yes, I would say so.
J: Which is actually a contradiction because he was very much South African but he was also very much rooted as an Italian, ja.
A: [Unclear] he did certain things but his style of eating was very much more South African, not really Italian…
J: [Unclear].
D: They also left, I mean someone your dad's age would have left because things were bad
J: No they were very bad in that area…
A: What was he fourteen, seventeen?
[all talk at the same time about his lack of nostalgia]
A: No nothing!
D: Did you find he got more Italian the older he got?
A: No, I think…

J: I don't know he watched much more television, RAI, than anything else.
[They dispute]
A: Well I think it was **[about 00:35:00]** …
J: Ok.
A: Well you don't know yes it was, [he was] very much tuned into RAI, very much toward the end.
J: Very much, so then in the end I think he got more, I think so. I think it, I think his working life was very living in South Africa…
D: Grounded in South Africa, doing what he had to do. Ja.
A: Here…
J: Ja, and ah, look his farming method was still practically: you utilise the land according to climate and whatever it is, so he says tomato, potato mm-mm, no good – timber, that's the one. On the other side where it's very dry, what you grow? Grapes? Grapes. Of course then he started prickly pears and he says because he used the land in its natural environment to grow what is suitable for that, it's no use to enforce, you can grow prickly pears here, okay, but I think it will be better there. And there is no timber, timber is here, don't try to force onto the land…
D: Artificial…
A: Yes.
J: Ja, cultivation which is actually difficult. You can't keep horses here Gary Player saw it, with his race-horses. Bad climate for Magoebaskloof , ja, for his race-horses, ja he moved them to Colesburg, whatever it was.
D: Although they breed Arabians up the road? I'm going to ride this afternoon with those people at…
A: Oh them.
D: Silver, Silver Mist.
J: Silver Mist up there, they got Arabians ja.
A: Silver Mist, who are these people?
J: That's ah, Mark I think his name.
D: So you're saying about his farming methods that's kind of something brought with him?
J: I think it was an inborn kind of thing **[00:36:46]**…
A: I think so.
D: But also very practical…
J: Ja, he was a very, very practical farmer, and he said look here, don't work against nature, work with it. Ok, and that was his way of farming, which was…
D: And the work that you do here now? I mean are you guys working her now?
A: We just continue, continue what he …
D: Forestry?
J: No, no forestry is a very small part, we do mainly cactus pears here now
D: Ok, alright.
A: That has become very successful.
D: The prickly pears?
A: Prickly pears, very successful, you know my son carried on and he just bettered it and just grew with it and got the knowledge and now it's big business now.
D: And that was something that Italians brought?
A: Yes.
D: I don't know to this area but certainly to the country they brought prickly pears…
A: Yes.
D: Before the war though.
J: And they eat them, you know it's a natural …

D: Fichi d'India.
A: That's it, that's it. Ja, when we export it on our boxes it's got fiche d'India on it. Yes. Are you getting cold?
D: No, no, I'm fine, I'm fine.
J: Fresh, very fresh.
A: This we also broke open and you know put the door in. You know this …
D: So were they all windows?
A: This was just a little glass door, it was…
J: It was an old glass door like ah, ja it was a little bit different.
A: But um…
J: So we didn't, when we changed the uh…
A:… the only structure we changed was the entrance here Joseph, we closed one side.
J: We just fixed it actually up to, look here a lot of the things were [unclear]…
D: Ja it's an old house…
J: The old brick walls and there were leakages and that type of thing, so we did a lot of restoration as such. But we changed the entrance from here…
A: Yes, I told that…
D: Broke out that stone it took them three days to break that stone and re-put it in here, because this stone is terribly hard [laughs].
D: Difficult stuff to work with.
J: Very difficult.
A: You can see the width of it, they cursed me, they cursed me when I asked them to do this.
D: That is solid hey?
A: [laughs] And it was solid stone, you know we didn't realise it was solid stone, we thought it was just the outside
J: We thought it was brick maybe inside, but it was solid…
A: Solid, solid stone. Even here in the bathroom when I set out, I'll just show you it was quite. I was not a very popular lady. I just want to show you here. This toilet here had no window. I actually asked them also thinking it was just a bit of brick.
D: Look at that!
J: Solid. Everywhere. It was a big job this one.
A: Can you see the workmanship here, ooh they were cross with me.
D: For that tiny window, ja.
A: Oh dear.
D: But it's a beautiful house, how many, when you were growing up how many were in the house?
A: Three, three, well the three siblings, three kids and my mom and dad. **[00:39:35]** Yes, so and you know even this work here to me, that's what I felt when we moved in; there's nothing that I wanted to change, just to leave it, just to zhoosh it up, paint it up and that. But this sort of thing is so, also… [unsure what she was gesturing to]
J: [Unclear]
D: That's also original?
A: Yes. All original.
J: Re-did the wiring, re-did some plumbing. Ja, all those type of things…
A: Those sort of things.
J: Which were more cosmetic type of things actually
D: Maintenance.
J: Maintenance type of things than re-building a character of the house, we didn't do anything of that sort…
A: Ja.

D: Well it's certainly got character, the flooring's beautiful as well.
A: Yes, look at this, the parquet.
D: Lovely stuff, Awesome. Can um, so you say that that copy is um, that I can take that copy of your story and…
A: Yes, please. Absolutely.
D: And use it in the research. So the recording and the copy and also whatever photos I take, if it's ok with you, I just need to have it on record that it's going to be for a PhD eventually and publications from that if that's ok.
A: Of course.
[continue discussing photos]

Interview 6

Interviewee: Gub Turner
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Magoebaskloof, Limpopo
Date: Wednesday 24 August 2011
Time: 09:00
Topic: Italian POWs and general oral history of the area.

G: … Tell you that my husband was also a prisoner of war in Italy and Germany?
D: Oh really!
G: So he knew the Italians very well. He worked on a farm in the Po Valley. And my, recently, well fairly recently. Well, first of all my daughter and son-in-law, after they were married, they did a tour of Europe and they went to see the family.
D: That he worked with?
G: Yes. Their names were Scaravaggi [chuckles], and ah, when they… And then ah about two years ago my grandchildren went to see them. Of course the old people were dead by then but they managed to find the farm, and the woman who was a young girl at university when my husband was there, ah, she was still alive and I think one of her daughters was still managing the farm but of course there were no Italian peasants any longer, mostly Indians and blacks working on the farm. You know the young people, it was an easier life in the vi-towns, so they left the farms after the war.
D: How long was your husband there for, how long was he in Italy for?
G: From Tobruk, you know a lot of South Africans were taken at Tobruk, until the end of the war. Because after that he walked the whole length of Italy on, and he was within 500 meters of the Allied lines when he was caught again by some German ski troops. And the sergeant in charge of the group came from Namibia, so he spoke English perfectly and he said to my husband, if you are Italian peasants, because by then they could all speak Italian, where did you get your army, British army boots from? [Laughs]
D: Ah, that's how they knew he was -
G: So that's, he was caught again, taken to Germany, because you know um, the Italians had ah, ah, what is the word they used? Well, they no longer were fighting.
D: Yes, ja. There was an armistice.
G: Mussolini was dead, no, well he wasn't dead then, he died later, or was killed later.
D: But they'd changed sides.
G: Yes. And he said the Italians were very good to them while they were escaping, because I mean it meant their lives as well if they were found harbouring escapees.
D: So he was fond of Italians then?
G: Oh yes, no, and he spoke Italian quite well. They used to work on the farm all day and get

taken back to the camp at night but each day. And of course I was a university student there, I was in the Cape at Stellenbos, and there were a lot of Italian prisoners working on the vineyards there.
D: Yes at Stellenbosch.
G: And very, very free. I mean on Sundays if we'd go for picture on the Eerste, picnic on the Eerste Rivier they used to come and chat to us. They were completely free. You know they didn't want to go back.
D: Ja, ja.
G: Not while the war was on anyway.
D: And what were you studying at Stellenbosch?
G: I did one of these PT course, it was four year course, a degree course. Which is most, we did a lot of BSc subjects so that we could teach biology as well.
D: Oh, I see.
G: I loved the course but I hated teaching PT. You know the kids, you know because I was so enthusiastic I thought everyone was [laughs]. [Laugh together] And girls especially teenage girls don't want -
D: Weren't interested.
G: Oh no, well let me tell you about, now there's a man here, a very kind and really lovely man called Dr MacNeill [spelling]. And he was in the army, and he was at Zonderwater during the war -
D: The prisoner of war camp, ja.
G: And his batman was a man by the name of Giuseppe Pent.
D: Yes, I spoke to his widow.
G: Oh, Emilia?
D: Yes, yes, lovely story, how he ended up here.
G: Well I'm glad you got his story because ah, and then after the war Giuseppe didn't want to go back to Italy. I believe he had been in the army when the Italians took Abyssinia, or Ethiopia as it's called now. And he and Dr MacNeill got on very well, Dr MacNeill always said that Giuseppe was a perfect gentleman. **[00:05:40]** And he got him out here.
D: Was Dr MacNeill, did he own land here?
G: Yes, it was called Merrick [spelling], it's still there. I don't know who owns it now, a person we seldom see. And he was there, had then retired after the war and came up here and got Giuseppe and he'd built a few buildings for him. And he wasn't a builder but these, this house over here across the dam was the first house he built, the others were alterations. And there's a cottage there they call the Pent House, and people [laugh together], because he was quite an independent chap, and that Dr MacNeill lived a little distance from here, so he wanted to be quite independent, and he built one room, and ah that later has been changed into a cottage.
D: Is that just across the dam wall -
G: The dam wall. First there was my sister's house, which Giuseppe built, and then below that is the Pent House. And everyone wants to know why it's the Pent House and they tell you that Giuseppe Pent built it [chuckles]. So it will be the Pent House forever and we just hope people will know why.
D: Will remember the story.
G: Ja, well and then I suppose Emilia told you the story, how her family -
D: Then moved here. Ja. Now the the Rechs were here before the war, hey?
G: Yes. Now I wanted to tell you about the Rechs, yes, they have been here a long time. Now, have you come across in the village a man by the name of J Branson?
D: No.
G: Because he has, he got Secondo Rech to tell his whole story how he came out from Italy

with his -
D: Ah yes, Anita gave me the document, she copied the document that he wrote?
G: Who? **[00:08:04]**
D: I think it must be Branson, because it's Secondo's whole story.
G: Oh yes, from how he was sent out with his young brother, the eldest brother was in the Italian army. And how he arrived in Lorenzo Marques, in Maputo, with a little bit of money. He gave it to his father and his father went and [gestures?]
D: Disappeared for a while [chuckle together].
G: Yes, I knew the father vaguely, he was a very, you know, and then Secondo's mother came out later, she was a very hard-working Italian woman. Whereas I think the men, you now once their work was done they used to go off to what they called *doppo lavori* [sic], after work. It was sort of a club that Mussolini established in Italy for all the communities. The men used to, after they used to work, their work, they used to go to the *doppo lavori* and the women would be working just as hard all day and would have to go home and see to the babies -
D: Children and, ja, ja.
G: And food and everything, so, no. My husband had a very high regard for the Italian women, he said really they were such hard-working people.
D: The backbone of their society.
G: Yes, certainly he said that. Whereas the men, they did what they had to do and then enjoyed themselves.
D: Enjoyed themselves. So there were, there are a lot of Italians both before and after the war in this area.
G: Well, they were more down at Mooketsi,
D: Ok, yes.
G: Now if you go, there's a lawyer in Tzaneen called Aldo Rech. I mean he as born here, his mother was a South African, but now more Italian than the Italians -
D: Yes, I've heard that she very much became Italian.
G: Yes. Now he **[00:10:15]**, his father was that young brother that Secondo brought, came out from Italy with. And they all bought farms. Did Secondo, in his, have you listened to his story?
D: I read parts of it and I met with his daughter, I spoke with his daughter, Anita.
G: Oh, Anita, yes, ja. I used to teach Anita, and her brother who was killed by a patient.
D: Killed by?
G: He was a psychiatrist working at one of these mental homes and he was killed by a patient.
D: That's terrible.
G: It really was very sad. Ja. **[00:11:00]**
D: So the Rechs had been here a long time, and then there were a few POWs. Was there more than just Giuseppe, were there others that came as well, as labourers?
G: Yeah, no not much. Well, there was a builder called Medado Ruggieri [spelling]. And he, now the owner of the hotel at the time was a person by the name of Colonel Dag, a South African. And is wife is also in the army, and South African. And he was the military governor of Rhodes as Kos [spelling] after the war. Now, Mrs Dag had a cook by the name of Ida Ruggieri, so when they came to run the hotel they got Ida out to be their cook at the hotel and of course her husband came, Medado came, but he was a good builder so he established himself very quickly. A lot of the buildings here were. And then he and Pent joined each other.
D: Where did you say that gentleman was military, you said that he was -
G: Colonel Dag, D-A-G.

D: And he was colonel of?
G: He was a South African and ah, after the war he was made the military governor of Rhodes, the island, and Kos, the other. And the Dags', well I suppose, their cook, was Mrs Ruggieri.
D: So Mrs Ruggieri and Medado were immigrants, they came -
G: Yes, after the war.
D: After the war.
G: And who else came after the war? **[00:13:05]** Then ah, you know, the farmers, not so much up here, Secondo yes, but not the others, employed prisoners of war to work on their farms. There were quite a few at The Downs, you know where The Downs is?
D: No.
G: It's ah, up in the mountains, above Ofcolaco And a few of them were working, yes. Because you see during the war the men were, the men joined the army. We didn't have conscription in this country, but they and, so the women were left on the farms alone. So they ah, and there was ah, now have you come across John Murray in the village?
D: I tried to find him yesterday.
G: His wife would probably be better.
D: Yes, Peggy I think?
G: Yes.
D: Peggy, I tried to find them but they weren't in, I've got their phone numbers I will contact them, because apparently they had a POW servant -
G: That's right -
D: In the home?
G: 'Til he died. His name was Giuseppe Mascata I think it was, well anyway. I mean he was like a brother to John.
D: Wow, ja.
G: And he, after the war when, you see a lot of these men, South Africans, who joined the army were in a brigade that was taken at Tobruk. So, most of The Downs people were prisoners of war.
D: Together?
G: Yes, well, I suppose so I don't know, and Giuseppe Mascato was a very, very good farmer. In fact The Downs, that was owned by the Baragwanath family, old man Baragwanath said that it's a pity his sons weren't as good as Giuseppe at farming **[00:15:16]**. Yes.
D: What kinds of things did he grow there?
G: Well he, typically Italian. He, all his own vegetables, and then he started avocados up there, which had never been grown before.
D: That was the first, ja?
G: Mmm. And he lived with John's family, and then The Downs was sold, I suppose it was a la-, it wasn't a lands claim but it was sold, and then there are no Europeans owning it now. And he went up to Louis Trichaardt, up in the mountains there he bought a farm and farmed very successfully until he died. I don't think he was ever very strong, at one stage, and that's why John's mother looked after him. He was working for a woman on The Downs called Mrs Cuflan [spelling] and, ah, I think he had TB, and ah the doctor on the Lowveld said to Joe, this man is going to die if he's not looked after and fed properly. So she, she took him over and they, she looked after him until he died. I don't think he ever went back to Italy **[00:16:40]**, but she did, on one of the trips that she went to her family in England, on the way back, she met Giuseppe, some uncles of his in Rome. No, he's a very fine man, old John will speak very highly of him. So that was that. And then the ones at, Aldo Rech, that's the young brother, eventually bought a farm at Politsi, which is down between Tzaneen and Duiwelskloof, and ah Elisio, the lawyer, his soon, still owns that farm. And the mother is

here, she'd be worth seeing.
D: Worth speaking to, ja.
G: Mmm, Bertie was, is her name.
D: Because apparently she also knew the bigger Italian community in Mooketsi.
G: In Mooketsi, yes, now I was asking a woman yesterday, who lived in Mooketsi, I said are there any Italians left, so she said no. She said there is one woman, she doesn't know where she is but she still is in the vicinity, Elisio would know. And Elisio still has the farm his father bought in Mooketsi, as well as the one in Politsi. So he'll know exactly who's there. But it must have been very recently, well recently in my life, that the Italians disappeared from there because I remember Secondo used to go and see them, often -
D: They would socialize together -
G: Yes, because Secondo also, when he first came out from Italy, worked in Mooketsi. If you read his story, J Branson has the version that I listened to. You know his, he was very proud of the fact that he had got somewhere from nowhere; he said he used to pick tomatoes when he had malaria and, you know, it was quite a sob story -
[Omitted for confidentiality]
D: Nothing, ja, ja. But a lot of Italians seem to have done very well in the area -
G: Yes, because they were hard-working. I know I have a granddaughter in Australia who is married to and Italian and his grandfather was (19:41)…
19:30-21:45 NOT TRANSCRIBED. About Sicilians in Australia.
21:50-22:36 NOT TRANSCRIBED. Repetition.
22:36-23:38 NOT TRANSCRIBED. Franco Gatto immigrant.
23:38-24:27 NOT TRANSCRIBED. ZZT, farmers, many Italians are renting to this company if they still own the land.
24:27-25:40 NOT TRANSCRIBED. Draghi.
Discussing their cosmopolitan nature of the area **[00:25:00]**
G: Did you see where the Pot & Plough was?
D: Yes.
G: Well almost before that, coming from this side. Before you get there, on the right hand side, there's a notice with a dragon on it, that's ah -
D: That's Aldo's -
G: No, that's my grandson-in-law's place. And his father bought the farm, he bought the, it was a farm that was already divided up, and he's bought plot by plot. And he is still there, the father and the mother who is an Afrikaner, and again, one more Italian than the Italians, and then their son is running the farm.
D: So they integrated quite easily into the -
G: Ag yes, you know someone, Aldo Dragi, he likes to be an Italian [chuckles] -
D: I see what you're saying -
G: And he, like every evening he goes over to the Pot & Plough, because there is another Italian there, the woodworker, did you come -
D: Oh, Enrico, is it Enrico?
G: Enrico, yes. Yes, he meets Enrico there and they chat to each other, it's just, I think they miss their own people.
D: And speaking Italian and things like that.
G: And then when I was at primary school there was a convent in Petersburg, and I was at primary school there, and I was in the same class as a girl from a family called Perichetti **[00:26:50]**. Now they, her father came out in either in the late twenties or early thirties, because I was at the convent in the early thirties. And ah, Gloria Perichetti was there and they had an Italian living with the family. What his name was I don't know, but they called him Napoli because he came from Naples [chuckles]. And he was always known as Napoli. Now

he did wonderful ironwork, and he used to make smart gates for people, now the old hospital in Petersburg has this gate made by Napoli and ah, the military place which was bought from the Catholic school, boy's school, its gate is made by that, in fact Dr MacNeill's gate at Merrick is one of them. And here at -
D: Oh, the one as you come in here?
G: Ja, that was also made by Napoli. Now Napoli, he eventually when ah, Mrs Perichetti, we never saw her ever, you know she was always in the home [chuckles]. But her children, the boys, there was Bruno and Italo, or, how would you pronounce it, Italo?
D: Italo, ja, ja.
G Their children are still in Petersburg, and you see, once the Catholic Boys and Girls schools were bought by a, then, then they sort of disappeared, because they all went to the Catholic schools. The Rechs who live down the *kloof*, see there was always a Catholic seminary in that vicinity, so of course that had a chapel and that, they all went. Now there's somebody who um, one of Secondo's nephews, John Rech. He's living down there, very intelligent chap. I think he, did anyone tell you about him?
D: No, no. **[00:29:13]**
Interlude about John Rech, loss of Italian as a language among the children. Isolation of the first Pent farm, the idea that Pent may have had a breakdown a few years ago. The difference between Emilia (happy) and Giuseppe's (serious) characters. Her grandchildren don't know of the Italian POWs at all. Discussed repatriation and application. Repetition of the POWs at Stellenbosch.
D: **[00:35:50]** Do you know, because this area obviously became prosperous with forestry -
G: Yes.
D: Oh, when I was young it was, I remember, well my parents, we had two farms here, my nephews on the one now, where the cheese is, that was our old home. And my parents grew apples, but so successfully. Just before the war there was an exhibit in England, on all the Dominion fruits, and somebody persuaded my mother to send over a consignment of apples. And they just took boxes from the consignment, unselected. And she came second in the Empire. I mean this is a consignment that had gone up the east coast, no refrigeration. And somebody in Kent had first prize, and my mother had second. I saw -
D: That's extraordinary -
G: Mmm, they but now where the climate has changed, people are growing avos up here, I mean we would never, when I was young, my mother would have laughed if anyone had told her you could grow avos up here -
D: How was the climate different when you were younger?
G: Mmm?
D: How was the climate different?
G: Well I don't know, we were seldom here, because we only came home to pack apples [laugh together].
D: Oh, because you were off at school and that kind of thing?
G: And university, yes. **[00:37:33]**
D: But your family, I mean people in town were telling me that your family has been here a very long time?
G: Now, my maternal grandfather, his surname was Eastwood, my mother was an only child, he came up here after the First, the Anglo-Boer War. And he had the job, he was the first forester up here, not that he was a forester in the least, but you know they pushed the English-speaking people. And he had been a midshipman in, I suppose it must have been the merchant navy, but they were still sailing ships.
D: Yes.
G: I remember he told me he had sailed round the world seven times.

D: Wow.
G: They used to leave Britain, and go round the Cape to Australia. Load up with wheat and when they were loaded up go from the Pacific, round Cape Horn and into the Atlantic and back to England.
D: That's amazing.
G: So he, yes he told me, you know he, they use dot take these midshipman, I suppose they were, well, were, did they become officers in the end? I don't know.
D: Well they obviously had, I mean being midshipman, they obviously had organizational skills and what we would call management skills?
G: Ja, but they were young boys still. He was in England on one of his trips and his elder brother, that was John Murray's
grandfather was there, and they asked how much do they pay him in the navy. And he said, good Lord, in South Africa I wouldn't pay my stable boy that amount. So he thought, well, South Africa is the place to come to. **[00:39:37]**
[Maid enters and they have an exchange in Sotho?] Anyway, so that's how he came out, and he joined a group called Hunt's Scouts [spelling] in the Anglo-Boer War, so that was involved with this Breaker Morant thing. And then he came up here, ah, why he was given the job was in the navy he was taught to survey. You see, the old wood choppers had come up from Knysna an exploited the forests and they's then out all the huge trees. Now if you want to see what the forest really looked like, you go into inaccessible places in the mountains; the Yellow Woods are, I can't tell you -
D: Enormous. Are there still some there?
G: Oh yes, that's why I know [laughs]. We, when our kids were little we used to go up the mountain often, you know we walked everywhere, now they go up in 4x4s. And ah, we walked down a stream to George's Valley, and to see these enormous trees. They couldn't get at them because of the rough terrain, but ah, this whole, you can see the remains of the forest here. I mean this bit of land that we're on now must have been forested at some stage, because every now and again you get a fresh tree coming up. And ah, he was sent to survey out all the forests, the remains, the primary canopy had been taken but they didn't want them to exploit them further. Because they were very wasteful too -
D: The old choppers coming up from Knysna? **[00:41:50]**
G: Yes, ja. Uh you know they would fell a tree over what they, they'd make a saw-pit, and then one would get inside, on the bottom and the other on top and they would saw it in planks. So, there was a terrific amount of waste. And the commercial centre was Houtbosdorp, Woodbush, have you been there?
D: No.
G: And ah, and it's funny you know at the time, this is before my day. Every now and again there would be a pogrom in Europe against Jews -
G: And we'd get a flood of Jews coming out.
D: Wow.
G: And that shop was owned by Jewish family after Jewish family. They'd come to Houtbosdorp and ah, they'd make a bit of money and go to Petersburg and from Petersburg they'd go to Johannesburg. But in the meantime they'd get another part of the family out of wherever -
D: Amazing.
G: Estonia or Latvia. Wherever they were being persecuted. Yes I, I -
D: There's great stories here in this area!
G: It is, but I, you know, there was a Jewish lawyer, that I, we knew quite well in Petersburg, he'd been at school with my brother, my husband, and also a prisoner of war with my husband, so we know him quite well. And I said to him one day, you know, why don't one of

you Jews write the story of this because it will be gone. So he said yes but we're all, you know everyone's so busy. and when I was teaching at Capricorn High School in Petersburg for only two years, there were any number of Jews there, you know, Jewish children and now, if there're two Jewish families left it's -
D: It's a lot, ja, ja.
G: They sold the synagogue to someone who started a preschool there.
D: Is there a synagogue?
G: There was a synagogue, I mean there is, it's still there but it's not a -
D: Not used, ja.
G: Mmm. You know they have to be so many families before they, and ah, they, there's just no-one left. And I said to a friend of mine, who was a Jewish person, who is in Joburg now, I said, what happened to all the Jews? She said most of them went to Australia and America but she says they've all gone to the cities.
D: Ja, ja. So they came out here working as shopkeepers?
G: Yes, yes, they were all trading. In fact my mother, I remember her once saying that every farmer, farm up here had gone through whoever was operating the shop in HoutB -
D: I see. **[00:44:56]**
G: You know because people, they were terribly poor. I mean it took you two, more than two days to get to Petersburg.
D: From here?
G: Ja, well they know they, and ah. If you produced anything up here there was no one to sell it to. My father was a doctor and he thought well after the First World War, he thought that he, he bought this farm and the one ne-, there're two farms. And he thought he'd ah, he was very keen on growing things, and he'd start farming, that's when he'd started the apples, and run a sort of a little practice as well. And ah, the manager of the neighbouring farm, Westphalia, he once told me, you know it was lonely there and in the evening they used to go up and speak to my parents, you know, chat to them. And one day they got there and my mother and father were an argument and she said, look I simply cannot bring up five children on what you are earning. So he said, well here are all the invoices of everyone I've treated this month, he said, you send the accounts to those that you know can pay; and there wasn't one.
D: Wow.
G: So eventually he got a job in Messina, you know working for the copper, you know the Messina -
D: Oh, he stopped practicing as a doctor?
G: No, he was in charge of the European hospital, in Messina.
D: Oh I see.
G: And then when the war broke out, the last war, he joined up again. And after the war he retired.
D: So it took a long time for a prosperous community to, people were just making it, just getting along?
G: Yes, you see when, after the war -
D: The First World War?
G: No, the second World War, people were still growing potatoes, Secondo was -
D: Yes, had potatoes in the valley where the dam is now?
G: Yes. **[00:47:09]** Ja, he was lucky he was paid out very well. Now the potatoes weren't used for eating, they were called seed potatoes. They used to be produced here in the summer, and then the Lowveld, which got no frost, they were bought by those farmers down in the Letsiteli [spelling] Valley and Mooketsi Valley, and ah grown as a crop for eating potatoes in the winter, when we had frost up here and they didn't have frost.

D: Yes, OK.
G: So, in fact there's a road from Houtbosdorp down to Mooketsi that they used to call the potato road because those Mooketsi farmers used to come up that way and buy them.
D: And chestnuts, there's a lot of chestnuts growing in the area as well. Who planted the orchards?
G: [Laughs] No I, I, there was a farm next door, a doctor but the name of Dr. Joubert, also retired, he came up here but he was already dying of cancer. And he loved trees and he had an arboretum of different trees which fortunately the present owner has kept going. And there was one chestnut tree there and I noticed this. So I used to run a, in-between teaching, a bit of a nursery here. And I remember I bought a pocket full of chestnuts and planted them. Of course, the Italians were here and they were interested, so I sold my plants [chuckles] -
D: Oh I see, is that how they got all over the place?
G: Ja, and then ah, there was a Polish chap, there was an agricultural place at Roodeplaats, near Pretoria. and he was very keen on getting chestnut going for the blacks, you know, to grow as a food crop.
D: Ja, ja.
G: But of course nothing ever happened, but they are, the blacks are terribly fond of them, but they don't, the just use them immediately for boiling, not like the Italians who used to make this meal out of chestnuts **[00:49:27]**.
D: Grind it, ja, ja.
G: Mmm.
D: So that's how the chestnuts got everywhere! [Laugh together]. Because there's a beautiful orchard in Black Forest Lodge.
G: Yes, yes. And those, the Zeederburgs own a farm there, they got them from me. and then there's an Italian by the name of Sacco [spelling], you know, the cheese people, that sell cheese, Sacco?
D: Sell cheese here in town?
G: No, no I mean it's country-wide.
D: Country-wide, OK.
G: And Sacco has a huge farm up in the mountains here and his manager came and got chestnuts from me and planted up there **[00:50:12]**. Now this ah Polish chap who was working at Roodeplaats, he went up there and he sent to me to you know and ah. Ja, that chap reckons along the escarpment people should be planting pecan nuts. He tried to get a lot going but then eventually he became very religious and a missionary and he went back to Poland so we haven't heard from him again. No -
D: So there seems to have been quite a big Catholic community other than the Italians, there were obviously Poles and were there Portuguese and?
G: Very few Portuguese, they enjoyed the hotter climates.
D: So, didn't come up here, ja. That's true because a lot of the Italians that are here were from mountainous regions, like from Piedmont -
G: Yes, the Dolomites.
D: The Dolomites, ja, that's right. Oh, I see what you're saying.
G: Mrs, Emilia came from Florence, near Florence.
D: Emilia Pent, she's also Piedmontese,
G: Yes.
D: Ja, she's also from Piedmont, further north than Florence.
G: Yes, I know when she says, when my Italian-Australian grandson was out, he wanted to know, when the, when the ch-, when there was mass in the village etcetera. So I asked her, and she said what part of Italy does he come from and I said no not the, he didn't come from, he's an Australian, but his grandfather came from Sicily. So she went like this [gestures]

[laugh together] **[00:51:52]**… But you know the prisoners of war who worked on the Italian farms came back with all the Italian ideas -
D: And biases. Ja, ja.
G: It was quite -
D: Those South Africans really enjoyed, they had a big adventure in Italy, I mean once they were out of the camps.
G: Mmm, well even the ones -
D: They loved being there.
G: Once they were in the camps but working on the farms they were alright.
D: Alright.
G: But before that I think they landed at Brindisi, is that?
D: That's right in the south, ja.
G: And I know for the first part they were on a peat bog bog, it was icy cold, they hadn't no organization as far as food was concerned. My husband said if it wasn't for Red Cross parcels many more would have died of starvation. I know my brother-in-law, his younger brother, he was a big man, he's well over six foot and a he was hauled out because he weighed 98 pounds. And the Red Cross wanted to repatriate him, but he wasn't lucky enough. They sent him out to a farm to work and he soon recovered **[00:53:32]**. But there were all sorts of funny, some really disgusting stories that [laughs] that -
D: Of their time there?
G: Mmm. I'll tell you one, now this is getting away from your -
D: No it doesn't matter! Go, please, speak, I don't mind what we talk about, it's very interesting.
G: [Laughs] You know, they were all starving in this ah, peat bog, and, ah, the most terrible crime to commit was to pinch food from a fellow prisoner. And ah, one day, there was a South African, by name of van Rensburg, who pinched food and the prisoners, they discovered who was pinching, you know the little bit they got from the Red Cross. And they threw him, you know the latrines, were just the trenches [laugh together]. And they threw poor old van Rensburg in that. And my brother-in-law who was also a prisoner of war there. He says he remembers actually pushing this chap down with a stick. And it was known as Van Rensburg's Drif after that [laugh together]. You see how you became absolutely inhuman.
D: Ja, it must have been very difficult, and scary, because they didn't know how long the war was going to last or how long they'd be there, they must have been terrified.
G: Or how their were going to be treated. I mean and until, from Tobruk until when they were landed in Italy. Their food wasn't even organized.
D: Ja.
G: No, I remember this same brother-in-law, the one that lost so much weight, he was a bit of a delinquent. And they were put into a cattle truck to be taken to wherever they were going and there was an Italian guard **[00:53:37]** there. And he had a bag of *pane*, you know these little -
D: Breads, ja.
G: And this, Robbie, my husband, he just felt someone nudging him, and he was handed a *pane* and he said, what's this? And his brother said, keep quiet. And ah, this brother-in-law, he pinched the whole bag of the *pane* while the guard was asleep -
D: Asleep [laugh together].
G: And then he jumped up, there was nothing there. He wanted to shoot all of them: "*Mamma mia!*" No they, and when Italy capitulated, that was the word I wanted. He said one day they came back to the camp, the gates were opened and they said leave! If the Germans come you'll be sent straight to Germany. They wherein the Po Valley, so they had a long way to

walk down to the South. And ah, he and his brother, and this other man who later married his sister, so. There was Robbie, my husband, Hector his brother and John, John Harmin [spelling] was the third one. And they went, a chap from the Eastern Cape named Ralph Galpin [spelling]. The four of them decided to go together. The idea was if any of them got hurt, they wouldn't be able to help him because they were walking in the mountains, they wouldn't be able to keep him, and they must not be held up by anyone. If anyone got hurt they would be left at a convenient place where they would be picked up by someone but not hold the others back. So, that was the thing. And one night they slept in a hayloft, and, next day, it was quite high, Ralph Galpin fell out of the hay, onto his feet, and broke his, the bones in his ankles. And you know, of course, they all wanted to help him. And he said look, we've made this plan. He said, they knew there was a German hospital fairly close by, he said just get me as far as that and leave me. Which they did, very reluctantly. And they went on. Now, years later **[00:58:25]**, when I was finished at university, I didn't feel like teaching and then, I think I must have been far too young, I joined the army. It was right at the end of the war but, and the only units that were being sent out of the country, women's ones, were the nurses, so I joined the nursing service. And unfortunately never got out of the country [giggles]. And ah, I was at Number One Military Hospital at Voortrekker Hoogte, I don't know what they call it now, do you? Do they still call it Voortrekker Hoogte?
D: I'm not sure.
G: And ah, Robbie, by then had been repatriated, he was back at Wits to get, you know he'd started before the war and he was doing BSc, and he was completing that. And it was my day off so I said I'd meet him, I'd go and chat to one of, some of the patients on one of the surgical wards it was. And I'd meet him then. And blow me down I was talking to this chap, who had a very bad injury, called Ralph Galpin. And Robbie walked into the ward, and that was the first time he'd seen him since he left him -
D: Wow, what are the chances?
G: Yes, certainly. Mind you, there were few people in those days, things like that did happen.
D: Could happen.
G: [Laughs] and the story about Ralph, he went back, his wife left him during the war. And he went back to his farm at Stutterheim. And ah, years later, my eldest daughter was in Joburg doing, at the College of Education doing a diploma in teaching, and she brought home, one long-weekend, a woman, a girl, friend of hers from Stutterheim. So I said, do you know a person by the name of Ralph Galpin there? So she said yes, Uncle Ralph, they know him very well. So I said, did they ever amputate his leg, because when he was at One Military hospital that's -
D: That's what they were threatening.
G: They were contemplating taking his foot off **[01:00:48]**. So I said did they ever amputate his foot? So she said what, is there something wrong with it? [Chuckle together]
D: Unbelievable.
G: And Robbie and I one time going back to the Cape we called, purposely called in at Stutterheim to see Ralph, but couldn't find him. And asked the police and they said no, he had sold his farm and gone to Cape Town. So, we never saw him again. But obviously, when they, when the Germans sent him to Germany, and um, he said he really suffered. Because there was an Australian doctor, a prisoner of war, and he reckoned Ralph was swinging the lead, that his foot was, and he said that he was, he used to have to walk to work on this injured foot. At least a kilometre and then. Eventually, the Red Cross repatriated him, and that's when I met him in the military hospital. And they didn't know what to do with his foot, whether to take it off or not, so I never discovered [laughs] but obviously, this girl didn't even know that there was anything wrong with him. **[01:02:03]**
D: Amazing story. OK.

G: You know I haven't even offered you some tea or coffee.
D: No, please don't worry, I'm actually so glad I got to speak with you because I'm going, I'm here with a professor of mine, she's visiting, and we're going back to Joburg today, so I'm so glad I got to see you this morning -
G: I've done nothing but talk!
D: Well that's exactly I'm looking for. Do you know that um, your nephew and his family, have you done a full kind of interview with someone about your story and your family and that kind of thing, have you down something like that?
G: You mean -
D: I mean Jamie said that he was keen to put us in touch because I had some specific questions about Italians in the area, but have you ever done, sat an interview and told your whole story?
G: No. But you know, there's a book.
D: It's great stuff, it could be a movie.
G: Well let me tell you there's somebody did my mother's, you know my mother -
D: I hear, your mother's story, well parts of it.
G: Ja, well, the books, I don't know whether Nipper Thompson, who's the cheese factory. He was selling these books, but ah -
D: Oh, he didn't have any yesterday, but he said the bookshop in town would have some.
G: Oh really. I think they're printed by Protea printers in Joburg.
D: What was her -
G: It was called *From Woodbush to the Wolkberg* and it's done by a German girl, what's her name, Brigit Wonchowsky [spelling].
D: And this was the story of your mother?
G: Yes, she used to come to my mother every Thursday, my mother you know was a really good story teller. You know I think some was exaggerated but you know -
D: That's good too. Ja, that's great for a book.
G: [Laughs] Otherwise it becomes very dull. [Laugh together]. She used to come to my mother every Thursday and spend the morning with her. And she had a thing under the table, and my mother, they used to just talk to each other. And my mother had the same trouble as I have, it must be genetic, I have an eye thing, and it's caused also by too much sun. And it's called macular degeneration. You never go completely blind, and thank goodness now they have, I went to an optometrist in Joburg **[01:05:03]**… [Finishes with a war story about her husband and Dan Pienaar. I took a picture and thanked her, confirmed permission for using the interview in eh research and publication.]

Interview 7

Interviewee: Rita van der Heever
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Johannesburg, Gauteng
Date: Tuesday 25 October 2011
Time: 14:00
Topic: Her memories of an Italian POW family friend.

D: Alright, so before we begin discussing your POW story, which I can't wait to hear -
R: [Giggles].
D: I love getting new ones, they're the most fun things, the most fun research.
R: I can imagine, <u>are you a descendant?</u>
D: No I'm not actually, but the reason my grandparents left Italy and came here, which was a

strange choice for Italians coming from that part of Italy, was on the recommendation of a returning POW. He said, if you want to make it big in a country full of opportunity, go to South Africa. Everyone else from that region kind of went to Argentina, places like that.
R: Where is that region?
D: Lucania, it's very far in the South, inland from Naples, yes.
R: OK.
D: So that's the story. Before I begin I just want to say that, on record, that if you at any point you want to withdraw the story or don't want me to publish from it or anything like that -
R: OK.
D: You're welcome to withdraw participation and it's all on your own terms, how I use the information. For you to know I'm only using it for research, and possible publications coming out of the research.
R: OK, and for you to know what I remember might not be that accurate -
D: That's fine.
R: That is your part of the problem [laughs].
D: That problem is what the whole thesis is about, it's not about ascertaining some kind of forensic truth about POWs, it's about memories -
R: You must have been up and down and through and all over Zonderwater?
D: Yes, and I know Emilio well, the kind of curator there.
R: Ja.
D: Ja, so for my MA I worked a lot on what they did as theatre productions -
R: Mmm, they did whole operas and things.
D: Mmm, they did amazing stuff. And then for the PhD I decided to change the camera angle and look at South Africans and what kind of impression they left. Ja, so tell me your story.
R: My story is sort of twofold: my father, as I told you the other day, was a forester. Um, now once again, I'm seeing my mom next week, she might be a far better source of actual information than I am. My dad unfortunately died a long time ago. Um, now as I understand the story, because they obviously made a huge impression on him, because he was always telling stories of the POWs who were under his charge, basically. There couldn't have been that many, I don't know. What I remember from him was that he had to build this mountain pass, and if I remember correctly it's somewhere near Bonnievale. It might be anywhere in the Southern Cape, but I remember Bonnievale. And how impressed he was with their engineering skills. I know that they worked on the Du Toits Kloof Pass, um, so these must have been either surplus or whatever, they he got to build this pass, which is just a forestry pass, it wasn't intended for public use.
D: Was it on his land?
R: Well state land, ah state forest. That on the one side, and on the other side he also used to tell how the guys would break out at night, and he had to go fetch them from the African location.
D: Oh wow, OK.
R: Where they were spending some good time. But they also had good times, he used to go to whatever camp they were in in the evenings and just have a great time with them, that I remember. But my own memory is I grew up, at that stage we were on a plantation near White River and, at the Longmere Dam -
D: White River in Mpumalanga?
R: Ja. My dad used to go fishing in Longmere Dam and I tagged along, always. And, there was a, I can sort of remember the house, now why he would have ended up there I have no idea, my mom might know, I don't know **[00:04:35]**. But there was an old man, I just knew him as Mr Giobello. Um, he was an ex-POW who did not go back to Italy after the war. As I understand it quite a few of them chose to stay?

D: Ja, and the numbers were really restricted but they allowed about 800 to stay.
R: OK, he stayed under very tragic circumstances because at the end of the war he got a Dear John letter from his wife. Now you must remember I was very small at this stage, so I wouldn't have really understood all of this. To say that he mustn't come home because she's got another husband, and he had a child as well. Um, and he never saw them again.
D: Shew.
R: And, I can very distinctly remember visiting with him, um, he made, he must have been some amazing craftsman, but he ended up making cement, concrete garden furniture and garden gnomes.
D: OK.
R: Um, we had the full collection [laugh together]. Snow White with all the dwarves.
D: You had a sample of each of his products.
R: Yup. And the table and the benches. And, whenever my dad went fishing there, he visited Mr Giobello, and we often had a meal there. I remember eating pasta there, it must have been bloody good pasta!
D: Ja, to remember it.
R: And, what I so remember, is he had an old wind-up gramophone, and he used to play the Neapolitan songs.
D: Wow. That's lovely.
R: And that is where I heard and totally fell in love with '*La Montanara*'.
D: OK.
R: To the extent that he gave me the sheet music, which I don't have anymore. Um, and it was a prized possession **[00:06:46]**. And I know that it's -
D: What a lovely story.
R: Yes. And then we moved away and, and he committed suicide in the end, um, but if you -
D: How old were you during those trips?
R: Um, sort of 5 to 8, thereabouts. Ja.
D: And he gave you sheet music, did he make music at all?
R: No, do you mean play actively? That I don't know -
D: But he had sheet music.
R: He had sheet music, so he must have been able to read music. Um, what I'm trying to remember and I can't remember was, and I think there were POWs, ex-POWs down there as well. A small community of some sort. I don't know, and I'll actually ask my mom when I see her.
D: At Ermelo there were, I've just done an interview with someone whose, a family member was involved with a POW, a very old spinster aunt on the farm involved with this twenty-something year old Italian POW and they had a suicide pact, because they couldn't get married. And she died and he didn't and two families found each other recently, one in Italy and one in South Africa kind of tracked each other down.
R: Why couldn't they get married?
D: They weren't allowed to, POWs were not allowed to marry South Africans -
R: Oh were they not allowed to -
D: To marry South African women during the war.
R: During the war? OK, OK. Oh that's sad -
D: So there certainly were in the Eastern Transvaal and also involved in forestry and that kind of thing.
R: Ja, um, there was a, but those were criminals. There was a colony, also on one of the plantations, but they weren't POWs, they were -
D: Prison labour.
R: Sort of, ja [draws the word out, sounds unsure].

D: South African prisoners?
R: Ja but my dad never took me there [laughs], I suppose for quite obvious reasons. Um he had some sort of business that he had to conduct there but um, that was, ja those weren't POWs. And I mean this was after the war obviously so um, they wouldn't have been in a colony of any sort anymore. But this old man I remember so well, and he must have spoken good English because I know that I understood him. There was never the problem of -
D: Oh he spoke English, he didn't speak Afrikaans?
R: No he spoke English. Yes, um, so that is about my story, if you -
D: He never remarried or -
R: No he didn't. No, um, I sort of remember my mom saying that he was a very, very lonely man and in the end he couldn't take it anymore and he shot himself. Ah, but I'll check those facts with her **[00:09:53]** and see if there's anything she remembers that might in some way add to your story.
D: It's amazing these friendships that developed between Afrikaans men and these Italian guys. They seemed to be, there was a kind of, ja, sympathy between them, because it happened all over the country **[00:10:17]** -
R: Mmm
D: You know, kind of patriarchs, family fathers and making great friends with the POWs and being kind of, um, ja, charmed by them.
R: That could be because they were also anti-British?
D: I think so, it must have been part of it, but also they were such different kinds of people -
R: They were Catholic -
D: They were Catholic, they were prisoners -
R: The Afrikaans people of that, that was just this side of the devil -
D: Exactly. Exactly.
R: But I know that there were these friendships.
D: And they were pretty solid ones, and the stories keep coming up of the, of guys like your dad's age being, making friends with Italian POWs -
R: Absolutely, I mean he obviously got on very well with the guys who were under his care -
D: During the building of that pass?
R: During the war ja. And then later on with Mr Giobello. I don't know what his name was.
D: So Mr Giobello was, he was just living there -
R: Mm, ja.
D: And your father then struck up a friendship after the war?
R: Ja.
D: OK.
R: We moved to White River, it must have been about 1955, and he was already living there.
D: Ja.
R: And that's obviously when they met, somewhere in that time. I have no idea how they met, or why they met.
D: And your mom, what does your mom remember about the? -
R: I don't know, my mom lives in an Old Aged home on the South Coast, I haven't spoken to her about it, I will now deliberately see how much she can remember; I've always thought that his story would make a beautiful movie, or even just a -
D: Giobello's story?
R: Ja, ja.
D: They do, they make great fiction. That's what people always say about it.
R: I would love to know more about him -
D: Because it's so intriguing, that they came half way across the world, in these strange circumstances, and kind of made a life, the ones that stayed. It's great stuff it's the stuff of

fiction.
R: Were they all captured in Africa, in North Africa?
D: Ja, and the reason they ended up here is, because, um, if you captured, if a group of soldiers, enemy soldiers surrendered to you as an Allied Forces army. It was your responsibility to house them as prisoners of war in your country of origin -
R: Ok and they surrendered to South Africans.
D: To stop a build-up thousands of surrendering Axis soldiers, Germans and Italians in North Africa.
R: Ja.
D: So our boys were there in North Africa and they would have groups of Italians surrendering or defeating them and taking POWs and they would have to ship them down to South Africa.
R: OK.
D: But there were thousands, there were about a hundred thousand total. **[00:13:16]**
R: I know, there was a vast number that came here.
D: And of course they all got sent back because the Nats after the war were worried about Italians as Catholics, potential communists etcetera, etcetera.
R: Ey, one should've been very worried [laughs].
D: Ja, *die Roomse gevaar.*
R: *Die Roomse gevaar*! [laughs out loud].
D: A big deal, big deal! So some of them snuck off like Eduardo Villa, and kind of hid themselves for a while, until it was, about, they allowed about 800 back in. Out of thousands that applied to come back as immigrants.
R: Did they have to leave the country and come back?
D: Ja, so there was, the Geneva Convention was, that you have to repatriate POWs, and they took years, some of them only got back in '47, and then they applied to come back.
R: But then I wonder if somebody like Mr Giobello, because as I understood it he never went back. He stayed because he got the letter -
D: He might have just escaped. You know they took them to Pretoria and kept them in the, when they decommissioned Zonderwater, closed it down, because no matter where you were in the country Zonderwater was there processing camp, you had to go through Zonderwater. When they closed that down everyone was back at Zonderwater. It took them years to get them all back **[00:14:28]**. But then they would take them to Pretoria and a couple of them would escape, in Pretoria.
R: I wonder if he escaped?
D: Probably. Ja. And it's sad that he doesn't have any descendants, well, that we know of, descendants or -
R: Well, in South Africa, ja -
D: That we could find out what happened to him.
R: In Italy, yes, there must be a descendant.
D: You see now where you are now is what Lou Jurrianse, she suddenly thought, what happened to that POW? And she went on this long thing to find him. And she did, she tracked down the family, they worked out his surname, well they didn't have his surname right, so they went through POW records and all of that, and they found the family there and kind of made contact, they now holiday together [laughs], they come to South Africa, then they go to Italy -
R: I must start looking for the Giobello [unclear must be 'family'][laughs].
D: She says when she arrived in Italy the first that they thought was that her boyfriend was the long lost son.
R: [Laughs].

D: And she said, but look how old we are, we can't possibly be your father's bastard child from South Africa -
R: Now I'm just thinking -
D: And they said sorry they not, they said there's a vineyard going begging there that's for his descendant.
R: I'm thinking that there's time-share to be had up there [chuckles].
D: Who knows, who knows. His family may be on the Italian riviera or something.
R: You know what he was not a refined man, he was an artisan.
D: That's probably why, if he did it the kind of legal route, a lot of them got to come back because the nationalists felt that if we could get some kind of infrastructural input **[00:16:11]**, like you say, the engineers. They were building a country and they wanted people who could do things. So artisans, particularly gifted ones or things like that, were allowed back in. You say he worked in concrete?
R: Well cement, concrete, what I know of -
D: Well, I don't know what the difference is either -
R: Ja.
D: So maybe he was -
R: He was probably repairing cathedrals in Italy.
D: Maybe he was a stone mason or something like that.
R: There he was turning out Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.
D: But they loved this country hey, the loved the sense of, um, possibility, you know Italy was finished after the war, in tatters.
R: They seem to be finished now again [laughs].
D: Well Italy lurches from one crisis of government to another, you know [laugh together]. And also, they were so young when they came here some of them were 17, so it was a big *jol*, a big adventure for them; they go to this foreign country that they would never have visited otherwise. Most of them had no attachments, they weren't married, didn't have kids. He did, so he might have actually been a bit older.
R: He might have been, I wouldn't know. When I was five, I promise you, anything over 20 looked ancient.
D: Was prehistoric. [Laugh together]. What a great story. What was the name of the farm that you stayed on?
R: Um, the plantation?
D: Were you on a farm or plantation?
R: A plantation. It was Bultfontein.
D: Bultfontein.
R: Bultfontein Plantation, it's a state forest. Um, and he was staying, it's not on the same plantation. Longemere Dam must have been, I don't know, ten miles away. I don't know. The dam is still there. And that's where his little house was and -
D: I'll find out, I'll take his surname and see if I can find out anything about him as a POW.
R: Ja, look, the spelling, I would imagine you know how to spell Giobello.
D: Well, Italian is quite phonetic, so Giobello would be G-I-O-B-E-L-L-O.
R: Ja, that's -
D: Giobella, Giobello, Giobelli, Giobella. You remember Giobello?
R: I remember Giobello. And that is what I can tell you.
D: Lovely, well that's great. I you speak to you mom and she is interested in speaking to me, I can give her a call, I can phone her and we can talk over the phone. If she is interested, I mean I don't want to push -
R: No, no, no. If she can remember anything, I'm sure that she would gladly speak to you. And as I say, she's very lucid, she's very together -

D: Tell her I'll phone her for a chat, you know often when I speak to older people they think they've got nothing to tell.
R: Ja.
D: My MA work was with a lot of ex-POWs but they've all passed on since I did my MA, which wasn't that long ago. The older people.
R: Ja well I mean the Second World War generation is dying.
D: Even the POWs would say I don't have anything to tell you. and you sit down and they've got great bits of detail. Tel your mom that even if he just wants to chat, I'll be happy to give her a call and we can chat over the phone.
R: I'll tell her. And as I say I'm sure if she can remember anything she'll gladly talk to you.
E: Lovely, thanks so much.
R: It's a pleasure!
D: That's great, it's great stuff. **[00:19:33]**

Interview 9

Interviewee: Franco Muraro
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Italian POW Church, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal
Date: Tuesday 13 December 2011
Time: 11:00
Topic: Italian POWs and Italian immigrants in South Africa. Franco is caretaker of the church.
Note: Franco Muraro is a first-language Italian speaker. This transcription is verbatim. Unless absolutely certain of what he meant to say, I have reproduced sentences that are not idiomatic, or not grammatically sound, or run across a number of undifferentiated clauses when written down in English. My aim has been to capture the essence of what was communicated as well as some of the texture of his language use. The interview is in three parts, conducted in succession during the same visit. The breaks were made in moving from one part of the property to another. Each part's timing starts from 00:00:00.

D: **[Part One]** -Ja, so you were saying there's no dates.
F: I can't see here, but you see this was a national monument. It was declared I think the, maybe during in the sixties, seventies, in that period of time. And as I say these stones here it, um, people **[00:00:20]** were amazed to see the skill of the *scapellino* [spelling], they call in Italian. How to work, to move, to get the stone and brought it here. And there's very little cement between here, where the stone -
D: It's beautifully dressed stone.
F: There was a new technique with these kinds of stone, the way they worked it. They were amazed with these kind of people with the skill that they have.
D: Ja, and when was it burnt?
F: Ah well you know, with time, a long time with the, after the, it was almost abandoned after the war, say, when everything ended. During the I think the seventies and that you know, there used to be, because it was all open here, there was no fence, no wall -
D: No suburb either.
F: No, there was no protection and it was used to used by the vagrant, they used to sleep here, and so on you see. And they only, it when the Italian government, the Ministry of Defence decided to move the cemetery from Hillary, the Italian military service from Hillary to here, that they took interest in this. That's how they restored the church, the wall around the perimeter of the property, and they built the *sacrario*, this one here. Here we have got thirty

five Italian soldiers that died during, here, in Natal [unclear], here from 1941 to 1945. And they moved them from there and they're buried here now.
D: And they were buried at Hillary?
F: Initially they were up at Hillary.
D: Was there a camp there? A transition camp?
F: No, it was just a military cemetery. Initially.
D: OK.
F: **[00:02:27]** Initially I think to start with they were buried here at Mountain Rise Cemetery [spelling], at ah, at Pietermaritzburg. From there they were exhumed and reburied at Hillary. And then from there it was decided to bring everything here. And considering the part of history of the prisoners of war building the church and one thing. They wanted to consolidate and build the *sacrario* with each one of these -
D: Oh they're all here, we know who they are, all thirty five?
F: Yes, yes **[00:03:02]**. With the name and everything, everything has been recorded.
D: Emilio assisted with this hey?
F: Ja.
D: Emilio Coccia, ja.
F: Ja. So we have all these and. It's been a major undertaking of the excavation to exhume the bodies from the actual Hillary cemetery there to bring it here, but it was done with such care -
D: I'm sure, ja.
F: We had the people from Italy as well, expert from there, and you know they all placed and all recorded. All the names, around [unclear]. And these -
D: And these are prisoners who were here?
F: And here. Now. This is um, you can see here the "memory of the Italians [unclear] by the ocean". This is the very sad story of the ship, the English ship, Nova Scotia, that was sunk along the Natal coast, at St Lucia, by the German submarine. And with on board the ship were about 700 Italian, also prisoners of war, and women and everybody, coming also from North Africa. They were on their way to Durban. And then it was a mistake but this ah German submarine because they didn't know who was on. The ship, the Nova Scotia had a 700, more or less, plus or minus, women and children. They were 150 returning soldier, South African returning soldier, from North Africa. Plus 118 crew members, they were coming to South Africa. And they were sunk about 50 ks off the coast of St Lucia, and that. And the ship, actually, the submarine, sent about three missiles ah, what do you call it, torpedo, and the ship sunk in about ten minutes. And ah, it was a very sad story because um. Many had gone down, you now they were suck in by the, what do you call it, by the ocean. And there were many survivors afloat and some of them were on the actual rescue boats and so on. And the story goes that they went after the ship sunk, the actual *kommandant* of the submarine came up to have a look and to find out the name of the ship. And when he got up, and would come on to the surface again, and he was horrified to see the people that were talking and screaming and that, they were talking in Italian. And he was horrified because I mean, Italians in those days were the allies of Germany, he didn't know. And then, he starts saying I'm sorry, I'm so sorry I didn't know, you know that ah -
D: Those survivors, did any of them come ashore?
F: No, ja some **[00:06:26]** went but, and he was saying look, see, rescue will come. And then but, some people tried to go on board of the submarine. But he couldn't take because he radioed Berlin and they told him no guys, I mean, you can't stay there, it's the tragedy of the war, you got to go. To go away. Meanwhile radio for S-, what do you call it, for assistance. But the assistance only came two days later, a ship, from a Portuguese ship. Meanwhile, the people, some people were on the rafters, some people were floating. The worst thing had to come for the people floating because there was a vicious sharks attack. That people from the,

when they were standing on the boat they could see their friends being taken down by sharks and eaten and so on. Of the whole lot, I mean only about 150 survived, were rescued by the actual Portuguese ship. And the gruesome part was that 120 bodies were washed ashore along the Durban beaches, piece. And those bodies were all brought and buried on a common grave [unclear]. And Emilio, these are the names, the list of the names that were on board of the ship, on this on here. And that was on the 28th of November, the ship sunk on the 28th of November 1942.
D: And it was an English ship?
F: It was an, the Nova Scotia, an English ship, Nova Scotia. You can see 1942, 28 of November. And you see there were 150, they were sheltered in Mozambique, [00:08:39] and so on -
D: Why did it have so many Italians on board.
F: Because they were the people coming from North Africa, they were going to be brought back to South Africa to go to put in the concentration camps.
D: Ja, ja.
F: And that was, and there were all women and children and that. That was the story you see. From the colonies there, the Italian colonies they were bringing the people down.
D: Down ja, I didn't know they brought from the colonies as well, I thought they were only bringing soldiers.
F: No, no, no, from the colony as well.
D: So is this also Emilio's work, putting together the names and that kind of thing -
F: Ja, this is, he's been the back researcher, you know on the, he has access to the military, what do you call it?
D: Archives.
F: Archives in Pretoria. And after many years of research eventually came across the list of the people on board of the ship. Because this, when all this was at, all this was down at Hillary, the Italian Military Cemetery at Hillary, this, there was none there, of this. There was just, there was this monument there that was made for them, for the remembrance of the sinking of that ship and this one came much later. When actually the cemetery was moved from Hillary to here in 2008, and then they found the names, the list [unclear]. [move to another part of the memorial]. And here we have all the thirty five soldiers. You can see, they were born and ah died -
D: It's the same format as in Zonderwater.
F: Sort of ja, more or less. I mean there they have them buried in the ground -
D: Ja.
F: Where we here we build the monument **[00:10:50]**
D: And it's the same kind of information you get -
F: Ja, ja.
D: They did name, where you're from -
F: They did the same, ja, they give the date of birth, died, the date, where, you know, there was a sergeant and the numbers, they give the numbers that they had you know. [Unclear] from Milan, from [unclear]. [We move on] This is Italian property, the Ministry of Defence, they are financing for the upkeep of the -
D: So the church itself wasn't used after the war?
F: No, it wasn't. I think, you see, the prisoners of war were here and they built the church because thy believing in, they're great believers in religions. And they thought at the time maybe to build a church and dedicate it to the madonna because, to grant them the grace to go back home, you know, with the faith. With a great belief in the faith. And it was built for that.
D: And also it's far outside of town so I suppose any Catholic, is there an Italian community today in Pietermaritzburg?

F: Ja, a small Italian community, not a big one, and so on, ja. Now we have got **[00:12:24]** [moves]. Strange enough hey, after seventy years the family of this guy, here, they request to take the body back. The remains back to Italy. But ah, we feel that ah it would be a great pity to damage [chuckles] -
D: Yes, ja. Are the remains in individual, they're in individual -
F: Ja, a little coffin. They were exhumed there, and all the bones were collected and everything, and put in a li-, in a galvanized little box, and so on, for each one. And here there is a compartment.
D: Oh I see, so does that family, I mean, are they going to push to have the remains?
F: Well now we'll see. They will get in touch with the *honore caduti*, in Italy. But we would like to discourage because we wouldn't like to break this, and then it will. Because to take the remain now in they *paese*, you know, on the cemetery there. Here at least, you know, is I think it's -
D: It's part of something -
F: He's laying here with his friends that were here, you know, after seventy years and ah -
D: And two, this will be the third time it's moved then?
F: Ja, the third time.
D: If they take it to Italy.
F: Ja, it will be the third time it moves. Ja at least I mean there is ah, we have a remembrance service every year, so we part -
D: Oh you do the same as Zonderwater?
F: Same as Zonderwater, we do it the first, the last week of October, ja, and they do it the first week of November. So they come down -
D: Ja, it would be a great pity if they -
F: No, I mean it's been here for so long we would just try to discourage **[00:14:19]** because I mean it -
D: And who are these people, *nipoti* of -
F: Most probably, you know, they must be *nipoti, pronipoti* because seventy years he's been here.
D: Ja.
F: You can see here he died in 1941.
D: '41 that's quite early as well.
F: Seventy years.
D: Are they all, OK, that's '44 and '45. OK so it's -
F: They don't go up, it was between, during the war. If they died in the war then they have a right to be here, after the war, not. And these were all soldiers, and this was built for them, in honour, and, in memory of them because they gave their lives to the country.
D: It's a lovely memorial.
F: Ja, so.
D: So the only time the church is used then is for the memorial.
F: **[00:15:15]** No we, ja we have the every last Sunday of the month at ten o'clock we have an Italian mass, every month.
D: That's lovely.
F: You have the Italian community, not very many but plus others who would like to come. There's an Italian mass with we have an Italian priest Father Sandro Capoferri [spelling] and we also have someone else from Cedara, when he's not here. And every last Sunday of the month we have church. Italian mass, ja.
D: And your interest in the, in this, how did you get involved in, in this memorial?
F: In this memorial **[00:16:00]**. Well, I been, we been, after the shall we say. Before the government took over here, in a way, we formed a trust, to try to save the church. Otherwise

the church was going to ruin and so on. And then to form the trust you had to have members of the trust and so on, and with the Italian community of course I got involved in that. And then from there we just moved on, requesting, asking the Italian government to, first of all we asked the Italian government if it was interested in, to the up keeping of the church, in the history of the church and so on. They were not interested to start because they reckon the Italian churches in the world there are millions -
D: Yes.
F: You know. But, because of the significance of the church, which is different, not a church that was built [unclear] by the Italian prisoners of war in the concentration camp -
D: For them, ja.
F: They built it themselves, not for the, and then there, um, this cemetery was down at Hillary, which was abandoned, the whole year. You know, the grass was tall, and that. And they decided to bring it here you. And then I been part of that process all along in a way, you know. And I'm responsible to do [unclear] through the Italian Consul and *onorcaduti* and so on. And we've just been doing this.
D: Let me see round the side **[00:17:48]**. So, the camp that they had, the transition camp was here?
F: Ja, ja.
D: Around where the church is, kind of stretched round.
F: Ja, all around here.
F: And then, you say there were about, up to 8000?
F: About 8000 ja. 8000, the maximum.
D: And what were they doing in Pietermaritzburg, were they working on farms, or on construction?
F: They were, ja, they were sent out. People that volunteer, they the co-operators they called and so on. They all farmers, they done a lots and lots of work. The same as they've done in Zonderwater, I mean, I believe there were about 5000 Italian prisoners of war that they volunteer to go out and work. Whatever was necessary, and so on. The same thing was here, even here they had the same organization, with, the same as Zonderwater had with ah sports fields -
D: The Blocks.
F: Blocks ja, there were post office and there was clinics and so on, for them, you know. For the main task was to prevent boredom and ah, with these soldiers. And they also had top organize concerts and so on, you know, same as they've done it at Zonderwater. One guy that was here, was, that became quite famous, was Marcello Fiasconaro, that he opened the opera house down in Cape Town.
D: Yes.
F: So he started here, he gave some concerts at City Hall, he was ah -
D: It's not ah Gregorio Fiasconaro?
F: Gregorio, the old man. Marcello was the son, the runner.
D: That's right. A runner. So he started off here?
F: He started off here.
D: Is there anything in Pietermaritzburg that they built? That I can see.
F: Ah.
D: Or anywhere near here? **[00:20:29]**
F: Ah, not really, that was the main thing here. There's various work done around here but the significance is really small to what they done here.
D: Small, ja.
[Airplane crosses overhead, unclear. Move to Franco's truck so he can show me some documents]

F: I got here the letters and so on of what [unclear] people written.
D: Oh look at that, ja.
F: Ja.
D: Can we look inside?
F; Ja, let's go inside.
D: Oh, this is a photocopy, great ja.
F: So I made it so you can have an idea.
D: Thank you so much that's great.
F: [Unclear] You can see the front here. [Entering the church]
D: Was there ah, um, what do you call it? A camp for the, was there a Block for the hardliners, the ones who -
F: There must have been divided in some sense. They don't mention much, but this is what the actual structure of the, what was here. The church and the sports fields and so on. And then you get the. There could have been a division between the hardliners, like the fascists and so on, you know.
D: It's amazing how similar it is to what they were doing in Zonderwater, the same -
F: Well it's exactly the same sort of thing you know -
D: Same idea.
F: And it could not be different from there. And the -
D: And this was the only church they built in -
F: Ja, ja. There is ah, another one at, they call it Saint Joseph. This one is at Escourt.
D: Oh, in Escourt.
F: Escourt, if you go to now for instance um. No it will be on Ladysmith, actually, Ladysmith. Is it before the Tugela Plaza?
D: Mm.
F: If you noticed the Engen filling station on the other side of the road ok, just beyond there, if you look on the left-hand side there's a church with two, with twin towers. **[00:23:06]**
D: Ok.
F: This is called Saint Joseph.
D: And that was built by them too?
F: Also the Italians, some Italians who were -
D: I must look on the way back.
F: You look on the way back.
D: Or, maybe I should take a drive up there now and see, is it open, or is it locked up?
F: It is open, no, no, I think there is still a mission there.
D: OK.
F: And um, still operating. They must have their schools and so on there.
D: Yes.
F: And ah, they call it Saint Joseph.
D: I must go and look.
F: We had a remembrance service there um, a number of years ago. Organized by the historical people from Ladysmith. That is one also that ah -
D: **[00:23:52]** Were there any POWs, there were a couple who came back to stay here?
F: There were many -
D: Pasqualotto.
F: Pasqualotto is here, his son -
D: Santoro.
F: The name, like Fardella, I believe, quite a number came back to stay, request to come back. Strange enough now you know, we had a group of the children of the prisoners of war from Italy, about fourteen, from Ravenna.

D: When was that?
F: That was on the ah, now in November, that was on the ten, on the twelfth of November this year.
D: This year?
F: Ja. And they came to have a look where their parents were, you know, where they were in the concentration camps. And they were saying that some of their fathers that were, when they went back to Italy, they spoke very little about it.
D: Yes, ja, but that's also what I found in my research. I started this research in about 2004.
F: Mm.
D: And then I was just writing about music, because that was my background, I was an opera student at Wits, singing. So I did research on the music in 2004, and there were still a few POWs around to talk to. Edoardo Villa, etcetera, etcetera. Then when I came back to do this new research, it's completely different. Because now most of the men have passed on, and now the children are interested.
F: Yes.
D: And they travel, and they write emails, and they want to do the research and they want to talk to people. So it's alive again -
F: They're taking an interest now, from the new generations. As I say this group of fourteen **[00:25:42]**. And there was the one from a America as well, she could hardly speak Italian. And they came down and they wanted to have a look at Zonderwater, and they attended to the service -
D: Service, ja.
F: There, on the sixth of November. And there, from there they proceed, they came down here, to have a look as well.
D: How many Americans we're there?
F: One.
D: Just the one, because I saw a group at the service this year, must have been them.
F: That must have been, ja. They came from everywhere -
D: Ja, it's very interesting, now all of a sudden people are interested, when the old men pass away -
F: Ja.
D: Then the children and grandchildren that become interested.
F: Ja, it draws and interest, like for instance that one guy there now, his parents died in 1941, they came to know, they ask me to please to, to make sure that the actual, that the tomb is there, you know [unclear] -
D: Yes.
F: It was because they wanted to take it back, to the *paese* in Italy, and so on. After seventy years. The new generation. But the old people that were here, very few ah -
D: Spoke about it or -
F: Because I remember my father, used to also, to be those days during the war, he lived in Eritrea and Ethiopia, he was there. And was also sent to a concentration camp, not here, in Nairobi. Then I also have an uncle that was there because he was in the Italian army, in that period of time and then. My dad never spoke very much about it.
D: Ja.
F: And well, yet my uncle as well, so -
D: It was just something that happened -
F: It was something that happened and we Italian, we are that type of people that ah, you know, that you suffer, you must because it was a place of suffering of course, to find yourself closed behind the barbed wire and so on -
D: And not know how long it was going to be.

F: Ja, and there was no news, you leave now, how long it's going to last and so on you know but. They never thought when they joined the army, or they were called to serve their nations, anyway. The war was in Europe, not down here.
D: Ja.
F: So, it must have been very hard for them.
D: Ja. Um, this, the art work, the stations of the cross and the paintings and that, is that from the -
F: Well, that painting is not the original painting. This is a new painting that [unclear] we say, they call it, but ah, the original painting is similar, but not that one, [omitted for confidentiality]. It was a, copy, I mean they must have, you know the Italians have the *santini*. You know they copy what, from Raphael, the madonna the, I can't remember the name **[00:28:58]**. And that was destroyed with vandalism and so on you see, and that was painted now, you know, from after the restoration of the church, 2008. But we have got, through Emilio has got someone in Italy, try to make a copy of Raffaell' and to bring it back here.
D: Ja.
F: [Unclear] This is dedicated to the *madonna delle grazie*.
D: So they had copied a little saint card and made it big.
F: Ja, ja.
D: Ok.
F: This building is represented a romanesque, a Roman building and that type of design.
D: And the Stations of the Cross you brought in from somewhere else?
F: Ja, mm.
D: And the piece of, the last -
F: That one there I'm not sure because here you have got a -
D: A picture.
F: Let me show you. [Pages through documents]. [Unclear]. Ja that was the original one -
D: Oh I see, ah yes. I've seen that before. **[00:30:45]**. [Unclear]. So that wasn't there, they obviously -
F: They had a different one there you see, they had a cross and so on, before they had a Last Supper there and now they introduce that.
D: They might have brought that in later.
F: Ja, made it later. Mm.
D: Amazing work. And that's also stone hey? The altar.
F: Ja, that's stone also made by them, and everything, everything was done.
D: Was there one, there must have been a master craftsman?
F: Oh yeah, there must have been a number of them. Because amongst them there were so many with so many skills you know, and so on.
D: That's great, would you mind if I took some photographs?
F: [Unclear] Sure. You can have this one.
D: Thank you so much, so this was printed here in the camp.
F: [Unclear] was the original and then printed you know the letters that were being written by the Italian prisoners of war themselves.
D: OK.
F: [Unclear] gives you an idea.
D: And you've got the original?
F: I also have a print.
D: You also have a print. Do you know where the original is?
F: I think I must find out.
D: Maybe Emilio has one?

F: No I don't think Emilio's got. So Emilio became interested here only much later. The main interest has been Zonderwater.
D: Zonderwater ja, ja.
F: He came here much later on after, in 2008. Actually Emilio became interested here only once the Ministry of Defence came, granted permission to move the cemetery from Hillary to here.
D: Then he became involved, ja -
F: Before that, I don't think he was aware. He was aware that of their being a cemetery, like there is one at Worcester, down at the Cape.
D: So there must be in the Natal archives, somewhere, in the National Archives things like this and photographs of them as well?
F: There could be.
D: I must see if I can find some of those. Because, this then, the original will be an important document. Must be in the archive somewhere.
F: Just to give you an idea.
D: Ja no, this is great for my information. Ok, let me get my camera **[00:33:20]**.
[Stopped recording to take pictures, recording starts again and we are in the church]
D: What was the other thing I wanted to check? The locals here in Pietermaritzburg, the English people and, like, do they know about, do they know there were POWs here?
F: Yes. Because this is well known.
D: Because it's well known.
F: They know the Italian prisoner of war church.
D: OK, so people know it as that.
F: Ja, everybody around here, they all know about it.
D: And obviously the families that had them on their farms and that, they would know about them?
F: They would know all about them.
D: And ah, do you know anything about the kind of relationship between them? Were there good relations between them, between South Africans and -
F: **[Part Two]** Very good, ja. The actual reports were very good **[00:00:42]** and they were very ah, even the local population were very appreciative.
D: The loc-, oh the locals.
F: Ja, ja. There are a story, two, you know, how that, from the letters they were saying how the prisoners of war, the one amazement they had was a thinking of the continuous arrival and departure of people from there. That when they arrived to the camp they all found a meal. They never went starving because you know they didn't know how many people were coming and so on, they didn't know, they must have had very good information, that was good structure. They got here, nobody went hungry, they got enough food for everybody regardless of their numbers they were arriving here. And afterwards someone was saying that ah they were coming by train from Durban to Pietermaritzburg, they were coming here and they were marched from the station to here. On the way, were the Afrikaans people, because they were against the English -
D: The English, ja.
F: They would go to the guy, they would taking him, and give hands, shaking his hand, and tapping him on the shoulders and so on, you know. To give encouragement to them and so on. There has been no I think with the actual rapport with people, the local, there have been an accident. And you never hear a single person, a local person here, that had to deal with they say anything ah, negative about them.
D: About them, ja.
F: They all been very positive and ah, very warm.

D: Because they also brought skills, and um, they brought -
F: Brought skill **[00:02:29]** and they showed something, that were, they never, the way that things were done, and the people prepared to work, people with not bitterness or anything. No they were here and, you know, -
D: They just started working.
F: Start working, and they were pleased to be out, of the concentration camp. And they were coming back. But actually, all what they did, what you hear, you know, has been a very positive -
D: Yes, ja. OK. Look at how great this is. So they must have got tools in Pietermaritzburg from a mason, they must have got tools and -
F: [Unclear]
D: Look at this work it's amazing.
F: Mind you I don't think they were in a position [unclear] a solid piece of rock here too.
D: Is this one piece?
F: It seems to be, you know. It's inscribe there and only one piece here.
D: Mm.
F: And one piece there you know, so they -
D: Ja, and this is like, um, a slate almost.
F: This is what I'm saying it's all been worked by them.
D: Incredible.
F: [Unclear]
D: I mean there's nothing, the other churches in Pietermaritzburg don't look anything like this, they're brick **[00:04:01]**, brick Victorian -
F: Ja.
D: Work. Incredible. And we don't know the names of the men who worked this stone?
F: No. Even on the book there, everything there I think there were a number of people but they were not named. But it says there were a number of artisans, you know, but no names.
D: Yes. Lovely, really really lovely. OK. Thanks very much for your time
F: [Unclear].
D: This recording, I'll only use it for publication, and anything that comes out of it I can let you know of.
F: Ja, [unclear], it's nice -
D: Um, and if I ever find where the original of this is I'll let you know.
F: Thank you, it's very nice -
[Break in recording at apparent end of interview. Then we began talking again inside the church]
D: **[Part Three]** - gaps.
F: No, they had a huge geographical area, empty geographical area and they needed people to come into develop that area. And their main thing was to develop the actual countryside, farming and so on, you see and. In South Africa it would have been a total different, because in the South Africa with the immigration, the Italian immigration started mainly just after the war. After the concentration camps here. And you could only enter South Africa with a skill, if you had, were requested from Italy and as you entered the country, the next day you got a job, you know. So it was a great advantage for South Africa to have these guys -
D: Artisans, ja.
F: Because ah they didn't have to train them or anything and then the first day, well the next day after arriving the contribution starts
D: You start work.
F: Plus, they were creating jobs, because they were paid **[00:01:05]**, and they were employing local people in their homes and so on. Right away they were creating jobs for the

local population. And so on, it has been a great benefit to the country, they didn't have to train anybody.
D: Ja, well I mean that must have been, my grandfather was a shop fitter -
F: Ja.
D: He must have come out like that -
F: He came and he worked and he produced right away, you know. And ah, that was a great thing. Where the other, immigration in the other part of the world, people there they had great suffering because they were promised land and so on **[00:01:51]**. And they found themselves given land, but they found trees as big as [chuckles] to get away, you know huge. It really, then it was great suffering, and so on.
D: To build up um, from nothing.
F: To build up, clearing [unclear] that was a great, great suffering, and so on. It wasn't the same here.
D: So the community here in Pietermaritzburg is an artisan community, most, most of which came after the war?
F: After the war.
D: In the fifties and sixties?
F: You can say, from 1945.
D: Ja.
F: I think the emigration from Italy to even, to come here. It ended in 1960.
D: Ja, ja, there weren't waves after that? Just one or two.
F: In 1960 in Italy, it started the actual economic take-off. And, because people left Italy in those days because things they were difficult, and unemployment and so on. But after the **[00:03:00]**, this is why, by 1960 the economic take-off started off and then it was no need to emigrate, these type of people anyway. Now you had a new emigration called the brain drain it goes up it never stop, but ah. This is why, this is why the Italians in South Africa are better off than many other people, emigrants in the world in a way, because of the skill and because they were able to ah create and to be able to work for themselves eventually. They have educated, they have had their children, with degree and diploma. And today you find them that they are they totally integrated. The sad thing about the Italian people is that they've lost the language. They don't, they speak the language with the, they really battle to speak. And then, but ah you find them in every field, industrial, civil, and commercial, they occupy the most important position in the country. And in the world also we have got, we found out, there are about seven hundred Italian politicians, I mean, in various governments, they are Italian people from origin, they occupy the very high position in the governments. So the influence of that in America -
D: Huge.
F: In the States and so on, in Australia and ah down in South America in, what you call it, area. So you know there's a great Italian influence in the, as they say.
D: Also, do you think that the, things are different for Italians after 1994? and ah -
F: Look, um, well 1994, I mean we all in the same boat really there's nothing different from then to now -
D: Because as you say Italians have their own business really.
F: They have, ja. They all, they work for themselves and so on, and so they're not affected, I mean, in that regard.
D: Except, but don't you think that culturally it's a little bit different, because the, you know, when my father was growing up it was not fashionable to be Italian, it wasn't easy to be **[00:05:44]** -
F: Ja, there was, in those days people didn't want to be Italian because um, the suffering that they had over there, you see. And they were forced in a way to come because they had.

These people that emigrated were the better Italian in a way, people that had some ambitions, people that they want to try live better. And they were people with courage. With initiative. Then they had the strength to do, to go out and to try. So they were, people were different, with spirits and you know. People that didn't have to stay where they were because they didn't know. It was very hard to go, to go to a new place and start a new life where you don't know anybody, you don't know the situation, another language to learn and all that, it takes courage -
D: And you also know you're probably not going to go back.
F: Apart from that. No Italian, we are big dreamer, nobody will leave the country if you think that you won't go back. It is, you go to hope to better your situation. And then in the olden day, in the old age you dream to go back to your *paese*, next to the shade of the *campanile* [laughs] [laugh together]. But that sort of. What does happen is this, that after a lifetime in this country or wherever, you know, you've built your life, your family has grown up here and so on, **[00:07:25]** and when the time comes to go back, you find that your family is here, your children, your grandchildren and they're all integrated and so on. Even if you have the financial position, ability, you know, the ability to go, you don't feel like going back because you don't know anybody there now, after so many years and your life is here. So, for the Italian like me, and that. It was a dream when we left and it's still a dream now, to be able to you cannot, it was just a dream in a way but you got you, for now, circumstances, you stay, you left behind, you made this country your country in a way, and that's how it works.
D: And where are you from in Italy?
F: From Italy, from the North in Vicenza -
D: Vicenza.
F: Ja, Veneto. **[00:08:27]**. But the P-, the Italian done very well here, we very proud and then we like, we Italian, we suffer in a way to see the Italian situation, the political situation. We very proud of what Italy have done themself, you get very able and capable people, that's made in Italy and so on and you see and we very proud of it and, but in the political side, we not. [Laughs]. And this why they say ag, not, they rubbish and all that -
D: Messing it up.
F: Messing it up.
D: But Europe is in big trouble.
F: Big trouble ja.
D: Suddenly it's not so bad to be in South Africa.
F: Well but you know -
D: Things are really dangerous there now. **[00:09:13]**
F: Not dangerous. I have great faith in Europe, because, if you really looking at history hey. Europe has been a battle ground for thousands of years, not hundreds of years. And the greatest wars, the First World War, they were fought in Europe, where great destruction were taking place. Yes, from Second World war, to give you an idea, they reckon about 55 million people died. Mainly civilian. The first war about 20 million soldiers, fought in the northern Italy, to, you know, to liberate the northern part of Italy, the Austrian occupation. And then I feel the adversity they had there was incredible, but they always came up, and then ah, it takes time. But they got the people with the brain and the will to come back. Because they have no chance, they have to come out of it because it's been an experiment, most probably, what they have done. And I saw it with America too hey, they find themselves in a [laughs], in a bad position themselves. And then ah, but I mean I have faith in Europe, Europe, is going to be alright. As I say, if you had seen the situation in Europe. That the ah, they overspent, the Italian and the Greeks also, because it's ah, I think they also they set up. They say, that they made the Eurozone and they should have not admit a different type of economy inside, they should have been able keep their strength, but they admit an economy that were far inferior of

some. You've got now, you see, Germany argue, they don't want to pay the debts of some of the -
D: Of the Eastern European ones and Greece and the -
F: Greece and that and you see, but they have to be together to um, to be strong enough, to be, to compete with America **[00:11:40]** or the emerging economy, China and ah, India.
D: What do they call them now? Um, BRICS.
F: The BRICS, ja.
D: Brazil, Russia, India, China, ja.
F: And they only by being the big, Europe is I think the population is about 450 million, they not, ah, the member states eh of the commonwealth. Of the EU, what they call it, the United Europe. And so they need, and people with ability, because the technology and everything comes from Europe, and I feel that ah, there's got to be a level, you know, for a while there's got to be a playing field and ah, but they will come up again -
D: Come up tops, ja.
F: I mean if you look Italy. I think Italy of the, the country in a way, that we had five renaissance. We had the Roman, then we had the Dark Age. Then we had Renaissance, then we went down. Then in the eighteen hundred -
D: The Enlightenment.
F: We had the Industrial Revolution. And then we fall down and then we had all kinds, I mean, of, and then the last one here has been after the Second World War, you know, we came up from nothing. We were a poor country and we came up the third wealthiest country in Europe, and we have got the industry in Italy. We're not that we, we're not. This is what makes me cross. They compare us Greek, Spain and Portugal and Ireland. We not! **[00:13:34]** We are industry we built after the Second World War.
D: Ja, no it's not like Greece at all.
F: There you don't find industry at all, you know, so we had a well established industry in Italy that produced, and you know we. And then if the government overspends it's not foreign debts hey, it's internal debts, and so on. But this is why I feel that we will be able to cope [unclear] -
D: That it will pull itself right.
F: It will you know it needed to slow down, and that you need to get sacrifices, like at the end of the Second World War. Italy came up because collectively, they worked together.
D: Together, ja, and they rebuild the country.
F: By very poor working-class. If your go there today you see my area, where I was born and what was there then and what is there now. There's not a comparison. You know there's buildings, see beautiful roads and buildings all well maintained and so on -
D: Ja, and that's all after the Second World War.
F: After the Second World War you know and ah, there's been incredible progress. People working.
D: Ja.
F: So no, I have faith, I mean it will take time, so like Ricca [spelling], good able people there and ah. Here, I don't know, ja we have a magnificent, beautiful country [chuckles] -
D: And a lot of work to do.
F: And lots of work to be done and we just hope that they are going to allow us to, to work.
D: Oh, are your kids all here?
F: No, one in England, I got a son in England and a daughter here.
D: Here in Pietermaritzburg?
F: No, Durban.
D: Oh in Durban, but she's close by.
F: Because I live, I don't live in Pietermaritzburg, I live forty-five ks from here, I'm, I live on

a farm.
D: Ja, and the work that you do?
F: I'm a farmer.
D: Oh a farmer, and that's what you did when you came -
F: We came -
D: When your father came?
F: No, I came by myself here.
D: Oh you came yourself?
F: I came by myself, but my dad, my father was a farmer in East Africa.
D: OK, and did he ever come here?
F: He came to visit, from time to time.
D: Came to visit but he was always East Africa. Thanks so -

Interview 10

Interviewee: Vincent Lamberti
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal
Date: Wednesday 14 December 2011
Time: 12:00
Topic: His father, inspector of Italian POWs' working conditions.

D: So the recording of the conversation is only used for my PhD and any publications that come out of that.
V: Ok, so you are doing your PhD.
D: Ja, I'm doing my doctorate.
V: In?
D: I'm looking at POWs and South Africans -
V: OK.
D: And how they kind of mixed, and what work they did, and what they thought of each other and that kind of part of the story. How they mixed with South Africans. So your dad was an immigrant here? And employed -
V: No. Oh sorry, let me explain to you.
D: Ja, so let me get the back story.
V: Round about nineteen hundred and ten, my father's parents came to South Africa. Um, they emigrated here and they. Um, they immigrated here I should say, and they went to Johannesburg, where they set up in ah, Braamfontein. Set up business. In fact, their business was diagonally opposite the Wits University and the SA Breweries on Jan Smuts Avenue.
D: OK, ja, that's where my office is now.
V: Oh, really.
D: Ja.
V: There was the University Gate Mansions was the name of it OK. Anyway, my father grew up and went, he was born here.
D: OK.
V: He was actually born here. He was born in 1912. So if they came in 1910 he was born shortly after coming. He went to school at Marist Brothers [spelling] Kokstad, ah Kok Street. And, um, he joined the South African Army. The peace time army. He was, he joined as a, what do you call it, part time, he joined the part time army.
D: Ja.
V: As a lot of people like doing, it was his hobby, because he was a good shotist [sic]. Um

and then war broke out and he actually had the rank. He had rank, he was an officer **[00:02:07]**. He at some point received the rank of captain, from the South African Army. Um, he had done training from quite a couple of years before the war broke out. And then he was sent up north, and he was involved in the Abyssinian campaign, OK. Then he was sent back here because there were lots of Italian prisoners, and because of his knowledge of the dialects, because his parents still all spoke Italian, they, his parents couldn't speak English, so Italian was the home language, so he knew a number of dialects. And so he was stationed at Zonderwater, I don't know if you know where that is?
D: Yes. Ja, that was the main camp.
V: Ja, I think it's near Cullinan somewhere.
D: Ja, it's kind of between Rayton and Cullinan.
V: **[00:03:10]** Right ja, and his job, I don't know what, he had the rank of captain, and what he gave me to understand was that he was in charge, or headed up, the inspectorate of prisoners. To make sure that wherever prisoners were employed, that they receive the treatment according to the Geneva Convention, or whatever.
D: So he was pretty central then?
V: Ja, he -
D: To operations -
V: Ja, he was, we lived up there. In fact he had a farm as well, and the Italian prisoners built our whole farm.
D: Oh really, what was the farm's name?
V: It was Riverglen Farm right near Lanseria Airport.
D: OK. I must look it up.
V: It's now called Terrabon, but it's on the land, on the map, that area is called Riverglen, it was named, his farm was Riverglen. And became very close to the Italian community, because when the war ended, a great many of those Italian prisoners stayed behind -
D: Ja.
V: And made their lives here. And I know a number of them. And my father's sister was about five kilometres from his farm, and that was also built by Italian prisoners, on the same basis, where they paid a fee and housed them and whatever. And my aunt landed up marrying one of the prisoners.
D: OK [laugh together]
V: **[00:04:38]** OK. And he was a chap named Fasanelli, surname. And then we just -
D: You know I think I've seen pictures of your dad actually, because I remember the name, Lamberti, and I remember seeing photographs with other South African -
V: Other members of my family have got the photographs, because he's got photographs of himself in various situations.
D: I'm sure.
V: But what happened, something of interest, was that the Italian prisoners that lived on our farm um, built up, helped him set up a cheese factory to make parmesan cheese.
D: Mm.
V: Which was a business he carried on for well over twenty years. And it was quite a successful business, so we had a cheese, our own dairy herd **[00:05:31]** and we even bought milk in from the other local farmers, and used to manufacture parmesan cheese.
D: What was the name of that company?
V: It was um, you mean the cheese making company?
D: Ja.
V: In those days it was just known as, it was just Riverglen, um ja. So he didn't have a branded product as such, but he used to supply Thrupps and various delicatessen stores in Johannesburg.

D: And he set up that business while he had POWs around?
V: Well -
D: Or was that afterwards?
V: Basically POWs stayed on after the war. He then came back and farmed, but he had the help of POWs and some of them stayed behind, some of them went back. **[00:06:20]** I remember Zambetti, he was another one he stayed behind, he became quite wealthy but he had a big farm.
D: So were there a group then who stayed then in that Lanseria area?
V: I wouldn't say -
D: Must have been because one married you're aunt.
V: There was Fasanelli and then there was another one. There was a bit of a problem during the way because my father's uncles were interned because they were Italian **[00:06:48]**. Because they could have been spies or whatever.
D: His uncles here, the ones living here?
V: Ja, because in fact, no, what had happened was all his uncles were, his whole family came out. But that was since 1910, as years went by all the members of the family came out. Because in Italy things were very tough in those days, there was a lot of poverty. And they came from the area fairly close to Naples, the area called Salerno.
D: Oh, OK.
V: Ja, so. They the family eventually all came -
D: As they did from the South. Lots of families kind of moved up one at a time -
V: Ja.
D: To a place.
V: **[00:07:31]** And then there was the Risis, on my grandmother's side. And you know they did fairly well. I mean there's townships like Mondeor was one, that Giulio Risi set up Mondeor, and then Risidale was another one.
D: OK, named for them.
V: Named after them ja. A number of townships, in those days, and ah, as you just come. My father was, he loved talking about it and he used to meet up with lots of Italians and talk about it.
D: Ja, they stayed in touch quite, all through their lives after this -
V: I think ja, my father was not a great one for keeping in contact but periodically Italians would get hold of him and say ja, you remember we were -
D: Ja, he must have known lots of them.
V: He said he had eleven thousand prisoners under his inspectorate.
D: Mm, ja, a lot.
V: So he used to travel to all, to farms all over the place where these people were employed. They got a rate per day, probably a shilling per day -
D: Ja, it was something like that, ja.
V: A shilling a day and they had to have lodgings at a certain level of standard and, I don't know they had to be, basically that's what they had to do, feed them and lodge them and pay them that per day.
D: A lot of the Italians that were here already employed them on farms and that -
V: Ja.
D: In Limpopo, I met a couple of families or Italians from, like you, a generation or two before -
V: Right.
D: As emigrants employing Italian prisoners who were around. So that was quite common. But I mean they were on all sorts of farms doing all sorts of things.
V: But I think that they brought amazing skills. Because, firstly, if I could say that the farm

they built for us, my grandparents were quite well off and they, during the years of the war they spent thirteen thousand Pounds -
D: Shew.
V: On building material. And the Italians put that up. Now that is like, probably, today -
D: An enormous amount.
V: Ja. And those Italian prisoners, whatever they built was of an incredible standard. Their construction work. Whatever they built just lasted.
D: I mean you in **[00:10:01]** know, everywhere that I go with this research you see that, things that they put up are still up, and are still working -
V: Ja.
D: Railway bridges, mountain passes -
V: Whatever they built, was built to last a lifetime.
D: Absolutely. Even on the drive down here I saw um, St Joseph's just past Ladysmith on the highway. It's a mission station, and I didn't know it was built by POWs. And I was driving past. It's just past the Tugela Toll, coming down.
V: Oh, I didn't know about that. Because you get St Joseph's at Cedara.
D: Ja.
V: That's where they train the priests.
D: But did POWs build that?
V: I couldn't tell you. I don't know.
D: There's a St Joseph's Mission up there, near Ladysmith. And I was driving down, I didn't know it was a POW-built thing. And I saw it from the highway and I thought, that's quite an impressive church, for the area, you know. Because they're either kind of red brick Victorian churches, and they're all quite small and this is pretty big. And then when I got here and met Franco at the POW Church, here in Maritzburg, he said they built St Joseph's too. So I went to see it.
V: Is that where you come, just by the Tugela Toll there on the right had side there's, you can see that building?
D: Ja.
V: Very nice building. Is that -
D: Ja. They've just fixed it up and put a plaque there, I think in 2008. Because they moved a whole lot of POW graves from Hillary to the POW Church. They exhumed the bodies and they put them at the POW Church. That was only 2008. So since then the committee for ex-POWs, which is still going, has been putting up plaques where they built things, and stuff like that, here round Pietermaritzburg -
V: And this Pietermaritzburg building this church on the other side of town.
D: Ja, it's quite something, I saw it yesterday. Also the, I mean those stones are beautifully dressed, it's all beautifully put together.
V: Ja.
D: Really solid stuff.
V: The sort of things I remember, we had this house they built, it was very solidly and well built. And then they put up a, because they were very strong in the Catholic tradition, as my father and his family were. They built a grotto with the Virgin Mary and -
D: In the garden [chuckle together]
J: Ja. **[00:12:23]** And a statue of Bernadette, and a statue, but beautifully made, I don't know how they made it.
D: They did a lot of concrete moulding because that was easily available then during the war, so a lot of their sculptures were concrete and that. But people like Edoardo Villa, and them, they, you know the artist Edoardo Villa?
V: No I don't.

D: His stuff is all over Joburg -
V: Oh really.
D: All over Jo-, he's like an abstract sculptor, big bronzes and that. He died a couple of years ago.
V: OK.
D: He's quite a famous artist in Gauteng. Um, he also did a hell of a lot of sculpture during those times.
V: Well today's the ah fourteenth, on Monday was my father's ninety-ninth birthday [laughs].
D: Oh shame [laugh].
V: But he died three years ago. He died five or six years ago, five years ago.
D: You know, when I did some of this research, I started some of it when I was doing my MA -
V: OK.
D: At Wits, and there were a lot more POWs then, that was like 2003, 4.
V: Ja, it's they now dying off.
D: Now there's about three left in the country.
V: Well.
D: But, since they've passed on the last, kind of, lot of them have passed on, there's a hell of a lot of interest in the subject of Italian POWs.
V: OK.
D: Their kids, grandkids, all of a sudden kids and grandkids are coming out from Italy to visit where the grandparents lived and -
V: Now, my father, would have known, I mean he was in charge of the entire inspectorate of the prisoners here, he went round making sure that they all had the correct conditions. So he would have known, he was known by all of them.
D: Ja, he must have been very well known. They must have known him very well. Did he ever write anything down?
V: He wrote very well. But I don't think -
D: Or did anyone ever interview him, or?
V: People had interviewed him but, [unclear]. Even my mother, I can't ask her because she's losing it.
D: Ja.
V: She ninety, and she can't remember anything.
D: Mm.
V: She hardly knows who I am **[00:14:25]**.
D: Shame, ja. So you should try, just for yourself, try and find out if he had a book somewhere, or journal, some writing.
V: There, I was with my one brother on Monday, and there was a picture on his wall of my father, painted by an Italian prisoner. And, he was in his captain's outfit. So he's got that picture of my father, as a young man, painted by an Italian prisoner.
D: That's fantastic, that. Did your dad know Tosi, there was an Italian captain called Tosi?
V: Could well have, I don't even know.
D: Because your dad must have been quite a central person there at Zonderwater.
V: You know, if you had come to us, because he loved talking about it. Give him half a chance he'd tell us everything.
D: Ja.
V: Ja, um. And so he got to know the whole country, wherever there were prisoners -
D: Oh, so he travelled around the whole country?
V: The whole country. Wherever they were his task was to go and make sure that everything complied with the Geneva Convention.

D: Ja, so he lived up there, Lanseria, his whole -
V: His whole life, well and then of course until 1961, we moved to Pietermaritzburg, we moved to Hilton. And then he was involved in the quarrying at Hilton quarries.
D: OK.
V: His elder brother was a mining engineer, also qualified at Wits with a BSc in mining engineering. And um, he ended up in the quarry game and then he got his two brothers to join him. Um, and they built that company which is now today Holson [spelling], it started off with Hippo Quarry Group and then it became Alpha, Alphus [spelling] and then Alphus Cement [spelling] and so on. So, that's where their involvement was.
D: Ja, and the South Africans, what did your father have to say about the South Africans during the war, what did he have to say about that, did he ever speak about that? Did he speak about the war to you guys?
V: A lot.
D: A lot.
V: Ja.
D: What was his sense of, um, South Africans and how they treated Italians during the war?
[00:16:36]
V: He found, he mentioned some people that were just shocking, that would just treat any fellow human being in the worst way they could get away with. But other than that I got the, I gathered that people really appreciated the Italians because they were. Firstly, they were very nice people, they were generally friendly people. Um, they had great skill, and so people that could get hold of them for their skills were thrilled. Can you imagine, I mean at that, a crucial time when the war ended, there would have been very little here. And that contribution of the Italian prisoners was very, very valuable.
D: I mean the picture, the photographs of that POW Church when they built it, there was nothing around there -
V: Ja.
D: Nothing around, I mean there was the POW camp but that was, at that stage, far outside of Maritzburg.
V: Ja, ja.
D: I mean unbelievable the kind of infrastructure that they put in wherever they were.
V: Ja, whatever they did, and ja, they put in. If they put in houses, then there was a decent sceptic tank system, proper functioning. Now, they built that for us and I know that twenty five years later it had never been touched because it never ever gave problems.
D: Incredible. I think I must go and see that farm if I can, um, I've got the name here on the recording -
V: It's called Terrabon -
D: Terrabon, T-E-R-R-A -
V: Ja, and if you look on the map, you'll find Riverglen.
D: Ja, that's the area that it's -
V: Ja but it was named after that farm, Riverglen. And it will be on the old maps you'll find Riverglen. And it's on the road if you're going to Lanseria, it will be about a kilometre before you turn into Lanseria -
D: OK.
V: I see they're putting up a big double highway there.
D: Yes, ja that's nearly finished already. Um, I'll go fish around there and see if it's -
V: And you'll see it's on the left hand side, and it's, it seems to have two homesteads. And the original farming buildings, it appears they've been demolished
D: OK.
V: Because it's, the place is not farmed it's, it's somebody just owns the land and lives there.

D: Ja, ja, but the farmhouse is still there?
V: Yes.
D: The house that they built?
V: You'll see the **[00:19:05]** that it's um, ja, they, it was subsequently thatched.
D: OK.
V: And there were extensions and additions made.
D: Mm, mm, ja, alright, I'll go have a look. Um, thanks so much for all of that. If there's anything you think of. I'm looking especially to speak to South Africans who had Italians on their farms. So if you think of, because sometimes -
V: [Unclear] that generation are virtually gone.
D: But I'm speaking to kids and grandkids.
V: OK, ja, ja.
D: I mean I'm not looking to speak to -
V: Well I don't know what value I've been able to give you.
D: No that's great, and also to make the kind of -
V: It's just a bit, anecdotal stuff -
D: It's all anecdotal. I'm looking for, to speak to people about what they remember, or what their parents told them about -
V: I'll tell you one farm that could be quite worthwhile, to help you to find the place is not that easy, it was my aunt's farm, because she was married to, um, a Genovesi [spelling], initially. And then he died and then she married this chap, guy who was the prisoner that was in charge of the building, all the buildings that went on there. But that farm -
D: Do you remember his name?
V: You mean the, Salvatore Genovesi -
D: No, you said Genovesi was the first husband -
V: The first husband, and he was the big finance, he was a very wealthy man. He was an importer, he was involved in importing fabrics, and so, ja.
D: And her second husband was the POW?
V: Her second husband was this POW chap and his name was Jozi Fasanelli. His two sons live in Joburg. You can find the Fasanellis in Joburg.
D: OK.
V: But Jozi, also, he's dead, also he died long ago. **[00:21:00]** But, what was built there was, it was like a piece of Italy.
D: Really.
V: As you approach the farm there were these huge pots, that, concrete pots **[00:21:10].** And you just, everything was just finished off, it was ah, um. They'd put in all these vineyards and fruit trees -
D: Ja, looks like Italy.
V: And it was a piece of Italy, but all the buildings, beautiful buildings and they had this huge swimming pool which served as a reservoir, so that the borehole pumped into this and this fed down to the irrigation [chuckles].
D: Ja, where was that farm?
V: Now, if you, do you know where Dainfern is?
D: Yes. ja.
V: If you take the road, not the one to Diepsloot, when you take the road past Dainfern which goes out to I think they call it Chartwell?
D: Yes, OK. Big horse area, a lot of horse farms there.
V: Ja. If you go down that hill, you cross the Jukskei river, you come up the other side and you come to a T-junction.
D: I know this, ja.

V: You know the T-junction?
D: Ja.
V: And that's the old Krugersdorp, Pretoria road. If you go left you got to the Lion Park.
D: That's right ja -
V: OK. If you turned left and then about fifty meters you turn right again, that takes you over the Krugersdorp freeway, after a kilometre, or so, and then, um, you'd come to a group of Farm Fare [spelling] chicken houses and if you turned right there and you turned right again, you would find this farm is in there.
D: Ja, and is it still there in more or less the same state.
V: It should be still there I doubt that they would have demolished, those buildings were so solid.
D: Fantastic. Shew, I'm going to go and see them.
V: I can tell you like, forty years later my aunt was still alive, and those buildings were immaculate [00:22:59].
D: Ja.
V: She kept it just like that.
D: Ja, I'm definitely going to see that.
V: And then Riverglen, if you got to Riverglen, it's a pity that the buildings, I haven't seen, but I mean they built a reservoir for irrigation. Because we had a borehole that was ah, a very strong borehole. And, it held seventy-two thousand gallons, so it was a big reservoir. But built so incredibly well. Their concrete work was immaculate.
D: Fantastic, ja.
V: **[00:23:40]** And I remember there was even a silo they built, that went underground and went right up. And there was milking sheds, which was a big, solid, solid building. Very well built. Concrete floors, sloping, for a dairy, um. Ja, the whole thing. There was a piggery for three hundred, a three hundred sow unit. Which was pretty big. And then, they had put irrigation in, um, from that reservoir, where it was piped to the fields below for flood irrigation. And the lands were even contoured and levelled and there was flood irrigation.
D: Amazing.
V: I wished I could -
D: And you say none of it's being used now? **[00:24:27] Now** that farm's not being farmed?
V: I think nothing will exist anymore because, if you don't, if you abandon stuff, but I mean I'm sure some of those old buildings and structures must still be there.
D: Ja, ja.
V: **[00:24:40]** But we used to, from the other side of the farm, of the road, there was a road going up the back. You could look back on our farm and that's a very dry sort of, arid area. But our farm stood out like a picture. It had all the flood irrigation so all the fields were green, produced huge crops. There was lots of livestock on the farm. It was intensive piggery, intensive dairy, intensive poultry. So it generated lots of compost and manure which all went into the lands.
D: Fantastic.
V: So that farm was and then, there was a beautiful river at the bottom that we pumped out for river sand, and it was quite a good place.
D: Why did you, um -
V: Sell.
D: Sell?
V: My father sold it in 1961 because his brother had started this big quarry at Hilton, and he needed help that he could rely on. So he roped his two brothers in to join him. And this became quite a significant quarry because it, it built um, all the roads from Durban through to Ladysmith. Um, well not all of them, but they then subsequently owned the quarries. Then

they owned a quarry at Estcourt, they owned a quarry at Ladysmith and at Newcastle. Plus they owned a quarry in Durban, and it became quite a big -
D: And it was quarrying bedrock for the roads?
V: It was quarrying dolerite for crushing.
D: OK.
V: And they sold crush stone, crush your own base for the roads, so all the freeways were built from there -
D: From there.
V: The original freeways were built all out of that Hilton quarry.
D: Shew.
V: It's a very big hole. So, they sold up, up there and came and joined the brother down here.
D: Shew.
V: That's how come we live in Maritzburg.
D: Do you have anything to do with the Italian community here? There seems to be a small -
V: It's very small.
D: Group of.
V: The problem with us was we grew up with our grandparents in the house and they couldn't speak English, so they only spoke Italian. And I'd imagine until I was about five or seven years old, we spoke Italian, because I used to, I didn't speak much but I knew everything that I was told by them and kind of got along with it.
D: And were they speaking Italian or Neapolitan?
V: Probably Neapolitan. They apparently spoke a dialect.
D: Yes, I'm sure, you say they were from Salerno?
V: Yes, Cava de' Tirreni, in those days, which I believe is today not a great area.
D: I don't, I know Salerno, like I've been there once or twice but I don't know it very well.
V: Anyway, they died when I was still quite young, and so, Italian was lost.
D: Ja.
V: My father went to South African schools. He was in the South African army, um -
D: And it wasn't fashionable then to be -
V: Ja, it wa-, to be Italian. Ja, no, he wanted to blend in as much as you could.
D: Ja, even my dad had that, his parents were immigrants in the fifties.
V: Right.
D: I mean he grew up as South African as **[00:28:11]** he could. Only later spoke Italian to us and that kind of thing.
V: Well. I know that my father didn't like to be called an Eyetie. And if people wanted to rub him up the wrong way they'd call him and Eyetie. But when I grew up, when they called me an Eyetie because of my surname, I thought it was great. I said ja, of course I'm an Eyetie.
D: Ja.
V: But in the day they lived, to be Italian wasn't a good idea.
D: Especially if you were successful.
V: Yes.
D: Which a lot of them were because, if they were coming with skills and -
V: Well, we've got other relatives, and I can tell you this is quite interesting. On my grandmother's side, she was a Risi, or Rizi, I don't know how you pronounce it.
D: I think it's Risi, there still are Risis in Joburg.
V: **[00:29:03]** No, no, there's quite a few, but they all related to my grandmother. Now, the one Risi girl married Dr Giuseppe Raimondo who came out, was the pioneer of paper-making in South Africa. He came out just during the war or after the war, Sappi brought him out. And he put up their first paper mill which was Enstra [spelling] in Springs.
D: OK, ja.

V: And he, but the very first paper mill was called Trans African Paper, was in Boksburg, and it made suitcase cardboard. Because you could buy blue, or green, or brown suitcases. So it made this cardboard out of wastepaper, and then it was spray-painted.
D: Spray-painted, ja.
V: So that's what they made suit cases with. So he was quite famous because, eventually what formed the basis of what Nampac do today is was their, the Roslin paper mill. Even, the Raimondos put up what is now known as Mondi, they put up portion of their business, and that was their paper mill at Felixton and the paper mill at Piet Retief. Which is what Hulletts employed him to do. And so paper making -
D: For packaging?
V: Ja, corrugated board and the Felixton mill made the fluting liner out of sugar cane bagasse. The Piet Retief mill made the board liner, which was made from gum and pine, a blend of those two, so that was the liner board for the corrugate, it was all for the corrugated industry.
D: But you were saying that those Risis, you started saying that they, that they also -
V: So that was one of them. **[00:30:54]** Then there was another one, the Cannato, I don't know if you've heard the name Cannato. then I don't know if you know Keeley [spelling] granite, it's quite famous?
D: Is Cannato the on that does grave stones?
V: Yes, Cannato grave stones, that was a cousin of my father's.
D: Shew, so your family's got like links with the whole community.
V: So many, ja no, links right across. Cannato then there was, well Keely Granite was the adopted son of Cannato. Because he lost his first wife, she died, and then he married a lady who had a son, and he was a Keeley, and he raised him as a Keely but he was raised in Cannato's house **[00:31:35]**. And Keely Granite which became eventually Gencor [spelling], part of Gencor, was a huge operation, he is still very big in gravestone production and so on. Um [laughs], gee there's a whole lot of them that did all sorts of things, it just evades my mind right now. But the links are quite strong. Risis, Cannato and Lamberti.
D: Very interesting. Um, there was another. I had another question about um. Ja, I started off asking um, I started that question with the Italian community here in Maritzburg. So you said you guys, your generation, did you have siblings?
V: Ja.
D: Um, you grew up South African?
V: Ja.
D: So that kind of link with the Italian community here was pretty thin?
V: It's pretty thin. [Gets up and moves to shelf] I had a book, my uncle wrote a book. He wrote about his family and what happened, with his community, and he mentions, I mean for example. **[00:33:02]** My father's brothers, younger brother, his son is Mark Lamberti, who heads up Massmart [spelling], executive chairman of Massmart. Which is Makro, Game, which is now [unclear] Walmart. And he pulled that deal together.
D: OK.
V: He started with Makro when it was just about three or four stores. And he built Makro, and then bought up Game, Dions and so it's a huge organization today.
D: Mm.
V: So what this uncle of mine wrote this book and I don't have it here, but it's about things that -
D: The family did
V: Family links.
D: From when they got here?
V: Ja.
D: It's very interesting.

V: It is, ja.
D: OK. Thanks so much for your time. As I said, if you think of anything, because sometimes I visit people and they're like, they've got some ideas, and then like three days later you remember something. Let me give you my email address.
V: Yes.
D: And I'll take yours as well. And then you can just drop me a line if you think of anything else, um. Ja, let me take yours.
V: Right. It's vincent@nandibev.co.za.
D: Perfect.
V: And I'll take yours.
D: [Give mine] Anything you remember, or, if you, you know, if you tell your siblings or someone that you spoke to me and they remember something, I'd appreciate.
V: Ja, I have two older brothers who might be able to help, because my one older brother, is, is six years older than me. So he was still around when the Italians were there [chuckles].
D: OK, cool. Tell him you spoke to me, and if he's interested I can always give him a call from Joburg and we can speak on the phone or something. Or he can write me an email. Thanks so much.
V: Pleasure.

Interview 11

Interviewee: Jill Ward
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Mountain Park Hotel, Bulwer, KwaZulu-Natal
Date: Thursday 15 December 2011
Time: 10:00
Topic: Italian POWs building part of the Mountain Park Hotel.

D:… Um, so I'm just looking for anything that people know about um, places built by POWs, or things that POWs did on farms, I'm visiting families whose, their parents remember POWs on the farm, and that kind of thing. So just whatever you know. Apparently this building was built by POWs?
J: You see, now when we, [chuckles] when we bought the place that's what we were told.
D: Mm.
J: And then as we started to find, sort of, investigate it looked like the bottom section wasn't and then halfway through they changed on to POWs.
D: OK.
J: But if you go to the archives, because we had a historian, a woman, similar to yourself, who had an interest in history. She went to the archives to find out exactly what the story was, in Maritzburg -
D: Oh Maritzburg.
J: Nothing.
D: Nothing, OK.
J: So whether it was a political, like, secrecy act or something because you weren't supposed to be having POWs here, I'm not sure.
D: Ja, ja. So do we know when the bottom section was built?
J: It was finished in 1942.
D: Oh, alright. So that's more or less when mo-, when a lot of them arrived. '41, end of '41.
J: Oh really hey?
D: Ja, so, and it wasn't illegal at all. They signed a little document saying that they, um,

what's the word, basically saying that they're not fascists. And if they signed that document they were allowed to go out and work, and they earned, like a shilling a day or something like that. But people grabbed them because they had building skills. You know, stone masonry skills and stuff like that.
J: You see that thing on the wall there? Let me show you this. [Walking to nearby wall]. We couldn't get any proof at all that there were pri-, Italians here at all -
D: OK.
J: And then the chap in the village here, he was doing his, the old hotel up and this was found in it. What it means or not -
D: Doing the, you mean doing the old hotel here?
J: No, there was two hotels.
D: Two hotels.
J: There was us and there was a hotel which is, now, shops. **[00:02:17]** I think it's still there for you to go have a look at.
D: [Reading the legend and photograph, sotto voce]. Fantastic.
J: And we looked up on the map and there's a place like that.
D: Ja, this is an address in Ravenna, Italy.
[reading omitted]
J: No, this was in 2006 that he was renovating it.
D: And he kind of came across that?
J: Ja, he pulled down a wall and behind that wall was this.
D: And that's in a hotel down the road?
J: Ja.
D: OK, maybe I should drive past there and have a look. So other than that you know that the top sections were kind of built on by POWs. And there's no inscriptions anywhere?
J: Nothing that we know of.
D: And who started off the hotel then?
J: It was a chap by the name of [unclear] um, jeez my mind's gone blank, wait hold on, um. No, I'm going to have to look, hold on. [laughs and moves to wall] My mind's gone blank. Um, Mac, MacNiggle [spelling].
D: OK.
J: He was a Canadian guy, and he built it originally, now this is also only hearsay. He built it originally for his friends, he wasn't going to open it up as a hotel. And when he got halfway up he ran out of money.
D: OK.
J: And then he bur-, he mysteriously burnt to death in his house just outside of, just across the way there.
D: And so it was left half built?
J: Ja. Well, sort of almost finished but not quite. And then it was finished off as a hotel, somebody must have bought it and decided to finish it off as a hotel.
D: I wonder who bought it? Because then they would know who, that lot would know who they got in to finish the work, so who owned it between MacNiggle and -
J: I don't know, we bought it, we've had it for twenty, nearly thirty years. And the chap before us he had it or about fifteen years.
D: M-hm.
J: His name was Summer. And I don't know who Summer bought it from **[00:05:08]**.
D: OK, would you mind if I looked around upstairs?
J: No, not at all. I'll show you around.
D: To see some of the building that happened upstairs.
J: Ja, because maybe there's some sort of building techniques that are similar to -

D: That's what I'm thinking, because you can actually spot stuff that they built.
J: Oh, really?
D: Ja, I mean now, even on the drive down here I saw a mission station off the highway at Ladysmith, near Ladysmith -
J: OK.
D: And I didn't know it was a POW thing, and I looked at it and thought that's unusual, you know the churches around there are either redbrick, Victorian, Anglican churches or, NG Kerk-type things. It was a very strange church. And it turned out when I spoke to the POW guy in Pietermaritzburg that it was built by POWs, so I went back there. You can kind of tell, because people build what they know -
J: Yeah, of course yes, ja.
D: So like the POW church in Maritzburg, um there's a little stone POW church there -
J: Are you only doing Italian prisoners, or are you doing prisoners of war generally?
D: Italian POWs, I'm interested in Italian POWs. I'm kind of doing a national bit of research to see across the country what they did and what people remember about what they did. So for example in Maritzburg everyone knows the POW church and a lot of people knew their parents or grandparents remembered or knew POWs on their farms and that kind of thing. Ja, so I'm just sussing out things that have been, like this, I will then, when I get back to Joburg there's an archive outside of Pretoria where a lot of the POWs who died here are buried.
J: OK.
D: And there's a little museum and that, I will let the archive know that this hotel had part of it built by POWs, you just add to what people know about what POWs did.
J: And eventually it might make sense you know.
D: Oh ja, it will. Because there's a guy there, oh I'll tell you for nothing, I'll give that guy that address -
J: Oh yeah.
D: And he'll find out who those POWs were. He'll get their prisoner number, the records are fantastic in Pretoria.
J: Oh really! [Laughs]
D: They are fantastic, he's got boxes and boxes and boxes of medical records. Everything from if they had a tooth pulled to if they went mad, is on record. He'll take that address and he'll fish around until he finds out who those guys were and then I'll let you know and you can stick it on your wall, you know what I mean?
J: Ja, then I'll put a bit more info.
D: You could know that Giovanni whoever was here and did some building. And then I guarantee you, his family in Italy will at some stage want to know where he was -
J: OK.
D: And they will come to your hotel. [Laugh together]
J: As a spin off!
D: I'll tell you that for nothing! There's a big move now in Italy, finding out where their fathers and grandfathers were, during the war. And if we find out that guy, who he was, at some stage his grandkids will get hold of the archive and they'll come and visit, it's amazing how it kind of -
J: Were there a lot of Italian prisoners of war in South Africa?
D: Shew! **[00:08:14]** Lots, there were up to a hundred thousand [explanation of how they were captured and arrived, and the applications to come back as immigrants, following from questions]**[00:10:20]**
J: I've got a friend in Chreighton who I might, while you're looking at the rooms, I might phone him and ask him if he knows anything about Italian POWs. Because he, he's very much into the Catholic missionaries and he's been, he's done a study on all the missions

within this area.
D: OK. That'd be great if you could give him a call or you, ja, I can also call him.
J: Ja, you can call him actually, he'd love it. But he's a bit of a talker hey so put yourself down with a cup of tea.
D: No well that's fine, let me get his number and I'll go look at the rooms then I'll sit down to have a talk to him. You know seeing as I'm here I can either meet him, or -
J: He'd love to, and he's very interesting, he's a lovely guy actually, his name's Dudley Smith.
D: OK, let me get his number first.
J: 079 495 6434, his name is Dudley Smith, ja he'd be the best person I think you could get.
D: Ja.
J: As I say he would have looked into it too so, and maybe some of those missions are made by Italians.
D: Maybe. **[00:11:37]** Ja. It seems they built a lot of churches around here.
J: Because when you said they were Catholic I just thought it might be [unclear].
D: Ja. They didn't build a lot of churches around the country but for some reason here they built a lot. Um -
J: I'd love to know more information about it because, a lot are, you know we [chuckles] we've actually got some ghosts here and some of them they thought were some of the Italian prisoners of war, so -
D: OK, tell me the ghost story, that's great to have on record, ja.
J: [Laughs] Well we've got **[00:12:11]** oh, how many ghosts we got, we've got about eight or nine ghosts. We've got a lady with long, dark hair -
D: Mhm.
J: We've got three guys, and we think that some of them might be the Ita-, because they're on the third floor.
D: Oh, that was built by them?
J: Ja.
D: OK.
J: And they cause a bit of havoc from time to time. We've got a little girl which isn't an Italian girl. She was only killed a little while later, and she's here with her dog.
D: Aha.
J: Who else have we got, oh, we've got a couple in the bar, we've got a man and a wife in the bar -
D: And so the staff and guests have encounters?
J: Yeah! I've been here, as I say, twenty eight years and I've never seen a thing, but I don't want to see a thing. You know if I feel something funny I get the hell out of there -
D: You get the hell out -
J: [Laughs]. I don't want to ask -
D: And do the staff see them?
J: Um, some of them, none of these have, but some of our previous staff have and our guests see them all the time.
D: Oh really?
J: All the time, it's quite funny actually. The funniest one, I just laughed the other day. We had a group of rugby players in and of course they're down at the bar and they're getting drunk and everything.
D: Ja, ja.
J: So the one, the three guys they didn't go on the ghost tour, they were laughing and joking and anyway, they go up the stairs here and you'll see there's no sound proof in this room at all. They go up the stairs and as they get onto the first landing the chap in the room heard them say, hello, hello, hello [in a sing-song voice] to this little girl and walked into their room

and they said, you nearly, you know what rugby players, you nearly knocked that little girl over. So the chap comes out the door and knocks on their door and says to them, have you just seen a little girl? So these three guys said yes, yeah we've seen a little girl.
D: [Laughs].
J: He said we don't have a little girl in the hotel. [Laughs] [unclear]. It was hysterical, especially these huge rugby players you know.
D: Ja, they're always the ones who kind of get more *pieperig* than anyone else. Tell me, do you do a ghost tour then **[00:14:09]** with the guests?
J: We do, we do.
D: Oh, how lekker.
J: Ja, it's very, very cute.
D: Oh fun.
J: It lasts about an hour and a half and ah, oh we have a couple of, you know, jump out and get yourself scared.
D: Ja.
J: But most of it's information about ghosts and specifically the prisoners of war and that sort of thing.
D: Oh what fun man! So now the ghosts is a, one of the POWs is a ghost, did one of the POWs die here? Do we know that?
J: I don't know, I'd like to know.
D: OK well cool, can I take some pictures of that?
J: Absolutely, I think I've got it on my email. But take the picture.
D: Ja, and I'll get, I'll leave my email as well, because what happens often is that um, if you mention that I've visited to someone, they will know someone who knew someone. So if you can pass that back on to me, if you ever hear anything -
J: Ja, do that, do that.
D: And then, of course, it's reciprocal, whatever I find out to do with your hotel I'll send back to you.
J: Cool. What are trying to achieve in the long term, I mean with your info?
D: A PhD [laugh]. It's a doctorate, adding to what people know about POWs.
J: OK.
D: It's got one kind of twist to it, I'm looking at the, the title of the PhD is "Italian POWs in the South African Imagination".
J: Oh OK.
D: So that's why stuff like the ghost story is great.
J: Mmm.
D: Most people alive now never knew them. The last generation of ex-POWs, there's about three left of them in the whole country, POWs who came back here. Very few left in Italy as well.
J: Sure.
D: But people know, POWs built that, POWs built this chair, that painting on the wall from my gran is, was done by a POW.
J: OK.
D: So they kind of, they're like a bit of mythology that's woven through South African history -
J: Indeed.
D: And that's what I'm interested in.
J: Indeed. **[00:16:04]**[Continue about the project "Italian POWs linger", prisoners talking about their experiences] Come look around.
D: Could you show me around upstairs? [Move upstairs]

J: **[00:18:18]** Ja, I'd love to. [aside to staff]. Let's walk. I'll take you through everywhere as well, and as I say it could have- the story is that they finished off the third floor. But, all we know is that these set of stairs don't creak, the third floor's set of **[00:18:46]** stairs, staircase creaks. And everything's crooked and -
D: Oh look at that!
J: [Chuckles]
D: Jeez, but these are great rooms hey!
J: Well they're just so different!
D: Ja.
J: You know we get people coming to stay here where, they've come for the experience, they've come for this experience. They can easily go to the, the, what do you call it? The Formula Ones and those sort of things. But, that's not an experience that's a stay. You know you go and -
D: Exactly. Ja.
J: I'll take you to a couple. Just shout if you want to. I mean you got most of the rooms look a bit like this.
D: This kind of layout, ja.
J: Well, smaller, that was the honeymoon suite you saw there.
D: It's lovely.
J: And all this timber apparently came from Knysna.
D: Oh really?
J: Ja, it's hardwood or blackwood or something. **[00:19:48]**. Ja the ghosts they sort of lock bedrooms, we actually had one where we had to break the door down, because it had completely locked itself. Ja, now this is the second floor, and all the walls here are done with shuttering, they're not bricks, so -
D: Oh, what does that mean?
J: Ah, it means that you got two pieces of wood and you fill it up with rubble in the middle.
D: O I see, OK.
J: Ja, so it's not conventional, well what I call conventional **[00:20:24]**. Hard as heck! Because some of this stuff is actual rock.
D: Mm.
J: And this is the third floor. **[00:20:34]**. People specifically ask for it because um [unclear] these are the rooms here that are the most haunted.
D: OK.
J: So they say, this is all the sort of dormer -
D: It's a great building, what fun.
J: People say, what's your hotel like? I say, one word: bizarre.
D: It is totally, I mean this bathroom is something else. [Laugh together]
J: It's as weird as heck.
D: Strange hey.
J: And also the funny thing about this place, you'll get people arrive, and they're stressed out and they rude and they grumpy and they go up to their room. Give them an hour or two they come down, they're calm, they relax, they say it's like home from home. I think it's because it's not perfect.
D: Mm.
J: You know. All these rooms don't have bathrooms, it's these bathrooms here. So it's more like a backpackers on the third floor.
D: Ja, I can tell how it must be hard to explain to people what to –
J: [Laughs]
D: But it's a very solid building?

J: **[00:21:58]** Well we were hit, about fifteen years ago, we were hit direct with a tornado, a huge bugger.
D: Shew.
J: And I was standing just in the car park then you saw it come down here and hit it dead on. And the whole building went like this and the -
D: There goes the hotel.
J: Nothing, just a couple of cracks and that was it -
D: Shew.
J: I was woo, that's scary. Ja most of the little, oh, they're not made up, the bedrooms –
D: It's lovely. I love these little windows, the way the windows stick out.
J: It's really, as I say, different.
D: Awesome.
J: And the floors move and creak and groan and, these aren't very often used, we normally, like this weekend we'll use them and from now, until January we'll use them.
D: A-ha.
J: Because they are, um, there's something going on there. These get a spring clean and then people move in.
D: I'm sure you have a lot of repeat business too?
J: We do.
D: Once people have been?
J: Yes. I think, we prefer that, because some people. Look, you do get the odd person that will come in, they'll book in and they'll walk straight out. And they'll say no, this is not for me. And you know they want the Sun City type accommodation.
D: Mm.
J: And you can understand that because this is a specific place. [move back to the ground floor] **[00:23:45]** There was also told there, because of the war at the time, there was a, from the bar downstairs, there was a tunnel that led out, an escape tunnel.
D: Mhm.
J: But we've done a lot of renovation, we've never found it. So whether it was filled up before we got here or not, I don't know. Or whether it was just one of those -
D: Why would people want, have to escape from here during [chuckle] -
J: To where and why? Yes.
D: Ja, and why? But that's something you got as the kind of received lore about the building, that they said there was this tunnel out from the bar?
J: I'll take you down there now. I'll take you to the kitchen, because the kitchen hasn't changed since 1942. [Arrive in the kitchen].
D: Jeez, look at that.
J: It works too. We use mainly that when we're cooking. We'll only use this little electric stove when it's quiet.
D: Oh, you use the, is that a wood stove?
J: A coal stove **[00:25:00]**[More about the kitchen and older parts of the building][Walk to the exterior]

Interview 12

Interviewee: Rosa nee Fardella
In attendance: her brother Zeppe
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: F & S Hardware, Howick, KwaZulu-Natal
Date: Thursday 15 December 2011

Time: 14:00
Topic: Her ex-POW father Salvatore Fardella

R: … I don't know if you ever saw this? But it's all ah, oh there, I've got this copy you can take, it's the story of the Italians -
D: Oh OK. Thanks.
R: I hope you can read it.
D: Ja, is this, was this printed -
R: It was in a magazine.
D: Here?
R: In South Africa.
D: Is that your dad?
R: No, no, no. He wasn't in these pictures. Now, you should be able to read this?
D: Ja. No it's clear enough. And what ah, let me just write here what magazine this was in. Do you know what magazine it was in?
R: I'm hoping it tells me here because this was ages ago that I got this [unclear].
D: What does the print look like? Do you recognize the print of how they. [Unclear] story by Prendini-Toffoli, I'll find her. It's fine.
R: Ja, maybe if you look up on the internet.
D: Ja I'll find it **[00:01:00]**[Continue to sort out the pages of the article, a mix of short stories and pics by Prendini-Toffoli].
D: **[00:01:56]**. So tell me now about your dad?
R: No, how can, [unclear]. This is a picture of my dad but you're going to have to make copies of this because I -
D: I'll take a photo of it.
R: That's my dad there.
D: OK.
R: OK. And this was when they restored the church and it was in 1995.
D: Oh, OK, that was the first time they restored it.
R: The fifty-first anniversary of the consecration [Unclear, reading off the page]. And that's my dad.
D: OK.
R: Salvatore.
D: Oh he helped build the church?
R: He built the church, in the beginning, right when they came -
D: Is he the one who did the stonework?
R: One of them, ja. Part of those -
D: How fantastic. You know they don't know that there at the church now?
R: Well I -
D: I asked if anyone, I spoke to, um, Franco Muraro -
R: And he didn't know that my dad was -
D: No, he said that we don't know the names of the people who -
R: Well my dad was definitely one of them.
D: Definitely one of them, OK.
R: And he actually, there it tells you, um, that he actually restored it to its present, because it was totally derelict.
D: Ja, they say it was abandoned and there were vagrants living in it and stuff **[00:03:11]**
R: Ja, and he um -
D: He did some of that, is he still alive?
R: No, no, no he died in '96. Ja, if he was, you know, you could have spoken to him.

D: Ja.
R: My uncle, and he should have come with me now, he knows quite a lot. My dad's brother.
D: So your dad came out as a POW, from North Africa -
R: Yes. And um, when the war ended, um, they were given a choice. There were so many they allowed to stay, and he was one of those that they said that he could.
D: And then did he, because you say his brother was here, did his brother -
R: No his brother only came out after, afterwards. His brother's quite a lot younger than him about ten or eleven years younger.
D: But followed him I suppose.
R: Yes, well when my dad started this building contractors, then he called his brother to come help him in the building.
D: And then lived in Howick.
R: Ja, always in Howick.
D: Always in Howick, since then.
R: Ja, since his -
D: And married a South African woman?
R: A South African, but my mom's parent, ah dad, was Italian, so she was, she was an Osselli.
D: And, um, where was your dad from in Italy?
R: Sicily.
D: Oh Sicily, OK, close by me.
R: A little town, oh are you also Sicilian?
D: No, not Sicilian but close enough.
R: Ja, it was a town called Capo d'Orlando.
D: OK. So he obviously fell in love with the country, he liked living here.
R: No he did, he didn't want to go back. He never ever, he settled here, he only went back to visit after that. Ja, he never went to go back to live.
D: And he, presumably he came with skills already, he must have been trained already as a builder?
R: As a builder.
D: Or a mason?
R: Well he was, he was born in 1920 and this was in 19- so he was twenty-something.
D: Ja, so he'd already done like an apprenticeship or something.
R: Ja, well he did building, the family were builders, so. And, I don't know if it says it here but somewhere I know they used to work for like a cigarette a day.
D: Ja. Ja. They had to sign um, as far as I know, when they landed here, they had a choice. They could sign a document saying they rescinded being part of the Italian army and fascism and all of that, and then they could go out and work.
R: Mm.
D: And a lot of them did precisely because of that, that they wanted to do something.
R: "Because there it says, a builder by trade Fardella became part of the team that built the church, he recalls being paid -
D&R: "A cigarette a day for his labours."
D: Ja. So when you guys were growing up here, did you grow up speaking Italian.
R: No, that's what I'm so upset about because they should have spoken to us in Italian **[00:05:52]** and they only spoke to us in English.
D: Well, you know I had the same thing but I, my father's parents came out in the fifties, so there was even less of an excuse -
R: Yes [chuckles].
D: To not, but it wasn't fashionable -

R: I know it wasn't -
D: To be Italian.
R: But now today -
F: And now I think you would if you had -
R: Then my uncle and his wife came over and my aunt never ever got used to speaking English, she always spoke to us in Italian, and that's how I learnt my Italian.
D: Ja.
R: Was from her talking -
D: And do you guys speak dialect?
R: No, no.
D: They speak Italian.
R: I still battle with my Italian, I've done lessons and I can speak but I'm conscious of making mistakes. Because I've been to lessons I know when I've made mistakes, so I'm conscious.
D: Did you ever, did your dad speak Italian to you guys?
R: Only spoke English.
D: Only spoke English. And not with you mom, he didn't speak Italian with your mom?
R: No, English, we only spoke English.
D: How strange hey.
R: And then in 1970 he took us all one, because my gran was still alive and we were the only grandchildren, because she had nine children, and we were the only grandchildren she hadn't met. So he took us over -
D: To meet her. Ja, you know I wondered why the church was in such good ah condition.
R: There was a lot fixed already. This tells you a lot, because it says "Fardella arrived in Durban on September the first and was behind wire in Pietermaritzburg four days later. He was taken prisoner after being wounded in North Africa." And so this tells you quite a lot [unclear].
D: And ah, growing up did you guys have a lot to do with the Italian community here?
R: Um, they did have an Italian club -
D: Here in Howick?
R: No, in Maritzburg. But, it like, it would take off and there'd be in-fighting, and then it would stop, and then somebody would revive it again. And now, there's a Dante Alighieri [unclear].
D: Oh yes, someone from the Dante contacted me -
R: Ah, Graziella?
D: Ja. Graziella, by email contacted me -
R: Ja, because she started it up, now we get together once a month **[0:08:08]**
D: Oh once a month, that's pretty good.
R: Ja.
D: That's pretty good. That's more than the Italian community in Johannesburg.
R: Italian church, we have church once a month.
D: They said, and you have, you've got an Italian priest that comes.
R: Ja.
D: So it's actually quite an active community?
R: Well, yes, for the few people that are -
D: Because you see each other -
R: But I must say that the Dante Alighieri, there are more English-speaking people than Italians [laughs].
D: But there always is at the Dante.
R: Is that where you went for lessons?
R: Yes, but I had been for lessons before that because Durban consulate organize lessons in

Maritzburg, so I went there, I think I've been three times to lessons, and then I did fail the one -
D: The best is going to have a very long holiday in Italy.
R: I know, I know. [Laugh together]
D: You should do it.
R: That is the best, you go there for six months and you come back speaking.
D: You'll be fine. And, have you got kids?
R: Yes, I've got three daughters.
D: And do they speak Italian?
R: When the were small I sent them for lessons.
D: For lessons.
R: [Laugh together] You know what it's like, you young and you so sick of school, and you don't want to learn.
D: And anything your parents do isn't cool.
R: And now they're sorry. Now they're sorry that they didn't.
D: They're all grown up now?
R: Yes, ja.
D: So, another question I had was, what is, so, you've obviously lived here in Howick your whole life?
R: Most of my life.
D: Most of your life.
R: Ja, I moved to a, but close, always in the area.
D: And um, what do people in and around Howick think of the Italians that live here? What do you hear them say and are they, is it very integrated into the community?
R: Not really, not, no and I know that in the retirement villages there's quite a few Italians that have moved, but we don't, they don't really, well I don't have much contact with them. I don't know if Zeppe and them through the shop.
D: Through, with the other Italians?
R: Mm.
D: So everyone kind of gets **[00:10:00]** on, everyone is completely integrated into their, into the places that they live?
R: Ja, so this does give quite a bit of a story, because this is as he would have told this person that interviewed him, the whole story about **[00:10:27]** [discuss the book *In Attesa*, the booklet that was re-issued for the fundraising to redo the church, written by padre Giacomo Conte and where the original might be].
D: **[00:12:50]** I went also to the, there's a mission station near the Tugela Toll Plaza that was built by them, do you know if your dad had anything to do with that?
R: No, not that I remember him talking about.
D: If you're driving towards Ladysmith on the highway you can actually see it on the left from the highway.
R: Oh, OK, I know there are a lot of Italians in Ladysmith.
D: Oh are there? **[00:13:11]**
R: Yes.
D: On the drive down from Joburg I noticed the church and I thought it doesn't look like either an NG Kerk or like the Anglican churches are like redbrick Victorian -
R: Ja.
D: I noticed it and forgot about it, and then Franco said to me that Italian POWs built that too.
R: OK. There are a lot -
D: I wonder if your dad had anything to do with that.
R: No, I know he was in Zonderwater and then they brought him down. He never ever

mentioned Ladysmith.
D: Oh, so your dad went all the way to Zonderwater?
R: He went, when he was captured he was captured and they put in Zonderwater. I don't know if it said that here.
D: Because they got shipped down they came through Durban and then they went on trains up to Zonderwater and then they sent him, they must have sent him back here.
R: [Reads sotto voce, unclear] "Former prisoner -
D: Let me take a photograph of this.
R: You saw the lion there, hey?
D: Ja, was that him too?
R: Ja.
D: Oh wow, you know you've got to have a talk to old Franco there because he doesn't -
R: "Recalls how the lion was made. I came out one morning and there was a fellow prisoner making the body shape from fence standards, he criss-crossed them for the legs, he then covered them with wire and added some grass to the get the basic shape, he then put on the cement." So there, I mean, this article, this story it's like you're talking to my dad here because he's telling this guy.
D: Let me take a photograph of this. And then I'll enlarge it to read it.
R: Because you can actually make a copy here if you want, we can make a -
D: Oh can you, on the machine? Ok, let's do that.
R: It might be clearer for you.
D: Ja.
R: I'm not sure what this part here is, to do with this -
D: No, that's [unclear] -
R: This here.
D: You know I can always enlarge it on the computer to read. But also with these um, I mean this is the *Natal Witness*, I can always get hold of them and get an original bit of copy.
R: Ja.
D: Let's get the date **[00:15:16]**[Unclear reading]
R; Ja, if you get I'm sure they'll be able to give you a -
D: So your dad then had a, after the war he started his business here in Howick -
R: Ja it, I'm trying to work out when he met, because he met my mom, maybe he had already started his business before that, I'm not sure. I must actually phone my mom.
D: And your mom's family had come out here before the war?
R: Yes. But my mom was an only child but her father, her grandfather were here.
D: For some time, because there seem to be a lot of Italians here -
R: I think they might have come out in the First World War.
D: I met, a couple of days ago I met Lamberti, do you know Lamberti?
R: Oh, yes, yes, there are quite a few Lambertis around here.
D: Ja, and I mean his family seem to have married just about every Italian family in the whole country.
R: Because I know we were friends with the Lambertis in Hilton and they had thirteen children, thirteen children.
D: Also from the South I think, Salerno or something. So there's quite a few Southerners in this part of the world. [Discussion about her mother's family, immigrants. No knowledge if the padre Conte stayed.]
R: **[00:19:14]** My sister's got a thing that my dad made while he was in, with wire.
D: OK, barbed wire?
R: I don't know if it's, I actually haven't seen it myself. Actually somebody gave it to her, because she moved to Richmond [unclear], just here. And when the person heard who she

was, this person said, I've got something that your dad made in the camp.
D: Wow.
R: And I've seen it once and I can't really -
D: Do you know if your dad ever did any work in, um, what is it called, I was there this morning, ah, sorry, I've got to get the name of this town because I can't remember it. Because a lot of the stone masons went there as well, and the builders went there as well. [paging through notes] That's not going to help, that's the Western Cape. Bulwer. Do you know if he did any work at Bulwer?
R: Might have.
D: Because there's a hotel there that a couple of the builders went and built the third storey of Garden Park Hotel, or something like that, Park something Hotel. I'll get the name.
R: No, it's called, I know which one you're talking about.
D: There's work there and they also did work, um, Mountain Park Hotel.
R: Mountain Park Hotel.
D: And then down the road they also were renovating stuff and found a stone that some POWs had carved on and said, you know, we built this -
[omitted as I recount the story]
D: Um, so we don't know who it was, but your dad might have been part of that team.
R: He could have, because Howick and Bulwer are not that far away from each other.
D: Ja, absolutely. And how many builder could there have been?
R: Ja.
D: There must have been a group that did various things together.
R: He might have, you only when you older think of all these things too [laughs].
D: But you know what will happen, now that you've spoken to me the next time that you speak to your sister or something, or even your brother might remember something, just send me an email.
R: OK.
D: Because you'll find, you won't think of it for a week and you'll wake up at three in the morning and think, you know what I've got to tell Donato.
R: Suddenly [Laughs]. Ja. **[00:21:39]**
D: Did he speak about the war?
R: He spoke some, but he used to speak in hang of a, very broken English, so you always battled to understand really what he was saying.
[Discuss various bits in the writing and some of the other interviews. refers to Pepe Gallus, ex-chairman of the POW trust. Santoro, son of a POW. Pasqualotto, member of the community. Refers to the Italians in Estcourt. Isabella Quattriocchi the daughter of a POW and painter of the new painting in the church].

Interview 14

Interviewee: Professor Mino Caira
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Cape Town, Western Cape.
Date: Friday 6 January 2012
Time: 14:00
Topic: Cape Town branch of Zonderwater Block association. His father was an ex-POW.

D: Ok, so the research that I'm doing now came out of the, my MA work, I was an opera major as an undergraduate at Wits. And from there I discovered that these POWs had put on these great operas and put on these shows, and made music and built instruments and all that

kind of thing. And so I started writing about that and that turned into an MA and so I ended up doing a research postgraduate degree and from there I got more interested in the kind of impact of these prisoners on the country at large, and not just their creative work but their engineering work and that kind of thing. And more particularly, how people remember them. How they've got this kind of um, they've got a kind of shadow presence on the South African imagination. Small towns have all got a story about, you know, when the Italians came. There's a whole body of Afrikaans literature that has fictional Italian POWs arriving on farms and that kind of thing.
M: Right.
D: So that's what I'm doing no, I'm going around the country collecting basically folklore about these Italians.
M: Fantastic.
D: And um, ja, then I came across you as, as I understand it, you're kind of caretaker for matters pertaining to Italian POWs here?
M: Yes. Um the situation is that, well look you know historically, the person who founded the association here in Cape Town was, actually had the surname Armelin.
D: Armelin, OK.
M: And he was actually a POW initially in East Africa and then he came down to Zonderwater. So he founded this association way back, and then, I think it was 1993, or was it '96, that he handed over to me.
D: OK.
M: His concept, at that stage there was something like a dozen of the ex-POWs, including my father -
D: Your dad.
M: Still alive, in the Cape Town area. Cape Town and the so-called environs, meaning Paarl mainly, Worcester area. And then, so I took over then. You know this Armelin conception was he wanted to ensure you know that there was going to be continuity, and so he wanted a son or a daughter to take over, as it were, which I duly did. Um, so that how my involvement came about. And so you know my wife has always been very helpful in assisting with - Prior to that I may just mention, my father had been a sort of a *consigliere* in, you know with the previous sort of executive committee. Then it was still a fairly formal structure **[00:03:05]**. Where they would have meetings occasionally and they would get together. And then the Worcester ceremony on the, you know during the first week of November, first Sunday of November, was the highlight of the year.
D: Oh they used to have that one at Worcester.
M: At Worcester.
D: OK.
M: Which we still have today.
D: Oh really?
M: So we've continued that tradition right up 'til last year. So that's a very important event for us. In fact that is effectively, look, you know I subsequently dropped all this formality of, you know having, well because the ex-POWs were gradually fading out of the picture, to the extent that today we've got one surviving ex-POW.
D: Here in this area?
M: That we know, look there may be one or two hidden away in some corner, but as far as we know -
D: Who've never been active in the Block Association -
M: Precisely. Um, and as a matter of fact for the last, prior to last year, whatever we are in, 2012. Prior to 2011 for about three or four years we saw none of the ex-POWs coming along. I knew however that one of them was still alive, and that was Giuseppe Chisin, living in

Somerset West. And then it turned out this year in November, when we had our ceremony, I was absolutely delighted to discover that he had been brought along with his wife, by his son Mike Chisin. And this was a big event, and I announced this during my little spiel you know before we had all the, after we have our deposition of the wreaths and all that. Then um, we had other people, including the consul of Cape Town, and Major Archer representing the South African forces. Both in their speeches acknowledging the presence of this, it was wonderful to see him after such a long time. And it was very touching because this major went up to him and saluted him, you know. He of course, he is very doddery and is getting on in years, obviously. His speech is somewhat impaired. But I got to know the son, Mike, who is about my age. Probably late fifties or, well I'm over sixty, but I thought I would give you this contact, because -
D: Oh, this is him?
M: This is Mike Chisin, who's really very, very interested in the association, and was of course instrumental in bringing his parent along.
D: And he's in Somerset West?
M: Well I, um -
D: Or the father was?
M: The father still lives there, but I would, if you're interested -
D: This is a Cape Town number.
M: Ja. I would certainly strongly recommend that you contact him because you may, it may be in your interest to have an interview.
D: Definitely.
M: You see I think even if his speech is impaired, his wife speaks perfect English, and Italian, and you know she could -
D: You know since I did my MA **[00:06:23]** work in about 2004, 5 there were still quite a few alive and active in Joburg, among them Edoardo Villa -
M: Yes!
D: You know that lot, since then of course most of them are gone, but there's been an explosion in terms of research and publication on them, it's what always happens. It's like when the First World War vets finally all passed away there was an explosion in interest in what they did, including in Italy. Now Emilio Coccia deals much more with descendants in Italy coming out to see where their father was and that kind of thing. So it's a different, it's very much a different thing. You know when they were alive it was theirs, it was their lives it was their stories, it belonged to them, what they wanted to say or didn't say was up to them. And then as they pass away it becomes more of a historical subject, things that people are interested in.
M: I'm very aware of this because I noticed in the last few years an escalation in the number of requests to myself, for information about individuals from Italians, family members abroad you know. And of course I've always referred them to Emilio Coccia because he has access to the record -
D: He's got the archive.
M: He's got the archive, I've got nothing here you know. Um, so that is the state of affairs and you know again I've necessarily had to drop all the formalities that the previous association had, you know they would talk about election of a thing and so forth, and you know, new presidents -
D: Also a very Italian thing as well, kind of standing on ceremony -
M: Ja, ja, ja but I've just, I've simply taken the liberty of dropping this formality, there's no point. I mean there are no other. And you know it had actually been difficult, strangely enough, to enlist interest from my sort of contemporaries to continue with this.
D: Ja.

M: I foresee, for example, my approaching somebody like Mike Chisin, as an appropriate successor if you like, you know, if I decide I can't -
D: I think the smaller associations just become a kind of touchstone in the city -
M: Yes.
D: I don't know if you've had Italian families come out here to see, either the pass, or things like that.
M: Not that I can recall.
D: But you know if they did they would come, they would speak to you, when they're in Cape Town.
M: Yes.
D: So it becomes a kind of touchstone for people moving around doing that kind of research. So your dad was a prisoner, obviously went to Zonderwater first and then was sent out to the Cape? **[00:09:08]**
M: That is correct, he was in fact the youngest among this particular contingent um, and yes, he was captured in Bardia. And then brought the usual route, via Durban, you know, to Zonderwater. And then, at the end of his stay at Zonderwater, he befriended a colonel, Colonel Cunningham, who was up there, who had a farm in Elgin, in Grabouw actually. And this colonel, um acted as a sponsor for my father and arranged the necessaries to enable him to go work on the farm there.
D: Still during the war or after?
M: After, ja.
D: So your dad wasn't repatriated?
M: He was not. He was one of about six hundred or so -
D: There were very few.
M: Who were permitted to stay. Um, you know, then, as I say, he was working on the farm doing menial jobs you know. And um, in his excursions to Cape Town he met my mother and then got married and, in fact I mean, his home town was pretty-well severely damaged during bombardment, because he comes from a little town called Atina, which is ten kilometres north of Cassino -
D: OK.
M: The *abbazzia* [spelling], the great abbey is, which was totally destroyed as you well know. And so that entire corridor, that valley going up the country, up north, you know was, there were a lot of the towns that were badly destroyed there and so on. So in fact, I mean, you know at the end of the war there was nothing to go back to, there was no work there was [unclear] -
D: And there was one of the very young soldiers?
M: He was very young he was one of the, he enlisted, enlisted, he was told to go to Africa at the tender age of nineteen.
D: Ja.
M: He was actually interviewed by, what magazine was it? **[00:11:20]** Something like, I can't remember, one of these *Fair Lady* or something of that sort -
D: By Prendini-Toffolli? That, Hillary Prendini-Toffolli?
M: No.
D: Not her?
M: No I don't think so. However, that was some years ago. He passed away about ten years ago now, already.
D: OK.
M: But a couple of years just before he did pass away as I say he was interviewed and he gave a bit of the story, background, ja.
M: I've got this article which I could send to you.

D: Ja, that would be great.
M: Interesting.
D: And his then, your mom, was she Italian too?
M: No, no, she's from Cape Town.
D: From Cape Town, alright. So then, you grew up on the farm or you grew up here in Cape Town?
M: No, no, no well then, ja look when they married they then moved into Cape Town suburbs and ah, where I was born, and um. And he then got work with a construction company, you see he'd done a bit of carpentry and he started out as a simple carpenter and gradually worked his way through to becoming a foreman in the building industry. And then eventually he um, when you know he, manual labour got a bit heavy for him, he was getting on in years, he became a manager up in Cape Town, you those three towers on the mountain called Disa [spelling] Park?
D: Yes.
M: He actually managed that for over ten years, and then he retired, and ah -
D: So many of them were able to leverage a very little bit of like apprenticeship in a trade -
M: Yes.
D: Into these huge ah, well when I say huge I mean successful careers, they made a real, they made a good go of it here in Africa with those trades that they had -
M: Precisely.
D: Builders, masonry, carpentry, you know -
M: Precisely. In fact the first company that he joined was run by an Italian, a chap called Rumpi [spelling][unclear] I think he was.
D: An emigrant hey?
M: Ja.
D: One of those, it also happened a lot, that they found employment with the kind of generation before -
M: That's it.
D: Of emigrants **[00:13:34]** ja, very common.
M: There was obviously some sort of grapevine.
D: Ja, and they also sought them out -
M: Ja.
D: That generation before because they wanted Italian tradesmen. Or Italian skill or whatever you want to call them.
M: Yes. Anyway, on this farm that he worked, there were several prisoners of war there, working there.
D: All kind of sponsored by Cunningham?
M: Yes, in effect, ja.
D: They were picked and brought to his farm?
M: That's correct, so you know I, even as a child I got to know several of them.
D: Where is that farm? You said it was in Grabouw.
M: It's in Grabouw, the name of the farm is actually, well it was I think it is still called Morning Star. Now I've been in touch with the son of the late colonel who himself has passed away by now.
D: The colonel or the son?
M: Both.
D: Oh, OK.
M: Because the son had a daughter who graduated here at UCT and we bumped into each other and had extensive chats.
D: Ja, what was your dad's first name?

M: Ah, Giuseppe.
D: Giuseppe, OK. So the granddaughter is still around? The granddaughter's how you met the father of, Cunningham's son. Who was the granddaughter?
M: Yes, why did you mention granddaughter now, I didn't?
D: No, you just said that she graduated here.
M: Oh I see!
D: Ja.
M: That one.
D: So she's the granddaughter of Cunningham?
M: She's the granddaughter of Cunningham, well actually it was another daughter I think, it was another -
D: OK.
M: Anyway, I can't remember exactly. **[00:15:30]**
D: You don't have her name or contact?
M: No.
D: Well that Morning Star I'll see if I can get -
M: Yes, yes.
D: Find out something more about it. You know they often left bits of things on the farms that they worked on. They'd build a fountain or a they'd build a pergola that they left there or something that they left there, or something like that.
M: Yes.
D: You can often spot them on these farms when you go there.
M: Correct.
D: You can see whist the Italian POWs built.
M: Well that's right.
D: See if I can get hold of someone there. What was his rank? Cunningham.
M: Colonel.
D: He was a colonel, OK. And there were a group of POWs on that, you say?
M: Yes, yes. I'm trying to remember, one was, had a surname Marcovecchio [unclear, trying to recall, recalls a first name 'Gino'].
D: So, there were a group working on the pass at Du Toitskloof.
M: Yes.
D: And they were based at a farm which I saw was called Keerweder -
M: Yes.
D: A farm called Keerweder, unfortunately there's three or four farms with that name, because it's actually something that those on the trek did, to turn around, so there are about four farms called 'turn around' at that area, because they couldn't get over the mountains.
M: [laughs] OK.
D: So I battled to find that farm, so that was one group.
M: Yes.
D: And in Worcester, was there a group in Worcester, that you know of?
M: Well yes. Well I don't know personally which farms they were on but, at the Worcester cemetery there are something like, I think it's twenty two ex-POWs buried there.
D: OK.
M: And if you wanted to gain access to the cemetery um, the only way I think you could do that is to go via the consul -
D: Ja.
M: Um, what has happened there, it's, it will be of interest to you to know that this cemetery is a very small cemetery, it, it's joined to a Jewish cemetery and then a Protestant cemetery and so on. So it's sort of a complex there, but in recent years there has been a huge level of

damage created there by vandals. I can't begin to describe how awful it has been -
D: Just in that section because there's no one going to it?
M: Ja. Now you know when this first began to occur, the consul went to some lengths, that is the previous consul, the lady, who was here before. She went to considerable lengths to beef up the security there, they put up big fences, you know, barbed wire, the works, I mean it was another Zonderwater, another prison enclosing [laughs].
D: Ja, *tra i reticolati.*
M: *Tra i reticolati* the tombs you know. Because these you know, people who came in there **[00:19:05]** they ripped of the metal plates, identification from the tombs -
D: The soldier numbers.
M: All those things I mean we had to go through the process with the consul of trying to reconstruct it you know from old pictures and -
D: So, just a second, so did they die as POWs there?
M: They died as POWs there.
D: So that's why they had their soldier numbers and that on the graves. So they were war graves actually?
M: Yes.
D: Meaning the consul should, is supposed to be looking after them.
M: Well, the consul does in fact. Interestingly, you know it was only about five or so years ago when, we had a consul this lady, whose name I will remember just now, as our new consul. She became very proactive, she became very interested in the whole story of the Italian POWs here. And she appealed to Italy to get funding, to you know, maintain better. And to employ somebody up there to keep an eye on the place, or at least to drop in and keep it clean and so on and so forth. Um, but as I say, despite that, all those good intentions, these so-and-sos still managed to get in, and it was periodic, I mean they would wreck the place. They would saw through metal statues that were there, flagpoles, all these things would disappear. I mean every time we wanted to prepare for the November ceremony, we had to go up there, or the consul would go up there, people go and check. And you know, then have to engage construction people. I mean even to the extent of cement benches, huge things weighing tens of kilograms, these people tried to haul away. It was horrific. Last year in particular 2011 was a record, I mean it was terrible what they did there, we didn't recognize the place. All the copper wire, you know, from the electrical installations was ripped out and so on -
D: So is it a fenced in little complex with the graves and what, is there a chapel there or a?
M: No, just the graves and a little altar where you know mass is said.
D: And those in Worcester were, they were working on farms I think?
M: Yes, ja.
D: And the ones in Paarl were working on Du Toitskloof, I would imagine?
M: Yes. You know I don't know -
D: Was there a camp in Cape Town itself?
M: Not that I'm aware of.
D: I didn't think there was.
M: But of those buried in the Worcester cemetery I'm not sure to what extent some of them may have been from Paarl and some from Worcester if you know what I mean. The supposition has been that they were generally from Worcester, the Worcester area. **[00:22:16]** And um, again there's been some errors in identification such that outside the perimeter of this fenced area there are several graves which are labelled with Italian names which subsequently turned out to be also ex-POWs. And so now, only last year did we finally manage to identify all of these and now we have a complete list of these POWs.
D: Well I mean they had the same thing in Pietermaritzburg.

M: Did they?
D: Huge exhumation process, moving a few who were in Hillary to the -
M: Oh yes.
D: And some who were in Howick I think, to the POW church, there's a little church built in Maritzburg.
M: [Unclear]
D: Now they have their ceremony a week before.
M: Aah.
D: So that some people come down from Joburg and have the ceremony there -
M: Oh that's very nice.
D: And one November they all go to Zonderwater.
M: OK.
D: Whatever, that first Sunday in November.
M: OK, ja, ja.
D: But they, it was a huge story then to identify them and they interred them with the remains also of the, or next to the remains of the, those from the Nova Scotia.
M: Oh.
D: Which was a civilian vessel that was shot down -
M: It was sunk or whatever.
D: By the Germans and it was filled with Italians. But it became a huge thing then to make sure all of those graves were then in the property that the consul could manage -
M: Right.
D: Because it's a, it's a big business everywhere, war graves and prisoners' graves, there was a huge thing in India recently with the Boer prisoners, from the Boer War -
M: Oh really.
D: Lots of Afrikaans guys buried in India -
M: Is that so?
D: And having to look after those things. **[00:24:14]**
M: Mm.
D: OK, and so that's where you have the ceremony every year?
M: That's correct.
D: And who comes, descendants of POWs, ex-POWs?
M: Primarily, primarily. You know number-wise it's a relatively small thing. But I would say on average we have about a hundred and fifty people attending, and that as I say includes the consul, the representatives of the defence force, typically we have about four or five such people. You know, ex-brigadiers and what have you. And people representing, for example, the MOTHS. We have a representative at least one or two from there. We also have these um, the Heritage Group, they sometimes visit. Do you know about the Heritage Group?
D: No, which -
M: This is a group of sort of volunteers who wish to preserve the traditions, the old army traditions. So they've acquired the uniforms, even German uniforms, Italian uniforms -
D: Oh, they're like historical re-enactors.
M: Historical re-enactors exactly, and they've come along and they rock up in their jeep.
D: Oh I see.
M: You know and people enjoy this kind of ah. Um. Yes.
D: Are there representatives from the Italian military or just um?
M: Normally not.
D: They, I think they send some *carabinieri* to Zonderwater.
M: To Zonderwater yes.
D: From the embassy or something.

M: They normally do, ja.
D: And then of course you know all the, several of the Italian associations then have representatives attending who lay wreaths on their behalf.
D: Who I battled to get hold of. The Dante in -
M: But you know the -
D: The Dante in Cape Town is at an address that doesn't exist and the phone number doesn't exist.
M: No, I can tell you where it is.
D: Do you know where it is?
M: Ja.
D: Where is it?
M: It's near **[00:26:25][**Discuss directions to the Dante, the COMITES, the consul, some about collecting stories. Suggest to Mino that CT might have less stories per se because they were worried about escape via ports. Discuss the literature, Sani, Gazzini, Carlesso, the sport book, Moni documentary]
M: And this, I think when we spoke on the phone we talked about Martinaglia? **[00:35:30]**
D: Yes, well I got hold of him -
M: Because I mean he would be a very, very good source of information.
D: I got hold of him and he seemed loathe to have an interview, I don't know if I got him on a bad day or, I sent him an interview, an email -
M: Yes.
D: And he redirected me back to Emilio, with the kind of apology saying that it's sensitive stuff and Emilio should deal with it, but I mean it's now seventy odd years on, I'm not dealing with an at-risk group anymore. Um, but he didn't want to speak which is fine.
M: Which is, I would say it's a great pity because I mean obviously he had similar interests to yours and he must have done a lot of reading and research -
D: It's Andrea Martinaglia?
M: Yes.
D: Look, I'll try him again and see if, maybe I got him on a bad day but the other one I'm going to do is I'm going to go to that Wederom, the Robertson Valley -
M: Sorry, I think, is it not Andre, I think he's Afrikaans -
D: [Unclear]
M: He speaks with an Afrikaans accent.
D: Ja it is Andre.
M: Ja, Andre.
D: There's some stuff online that he's written -
M: That's correct.
D: That kind of comes up again and again that he's written about the pass and about things like that. Um, Wederom's got some paintings in their, it's a wine estate -
M: Yes, I wanted to mention that, their, good, I'm glad you've got that. I saw that, it was sort of a canvas painting by the ex-POWs.
D: And they kind of bullshitted it a bit into their marketing -
M: Ja, they've exploited this.
D: It incenses people like Emilio, but that's what people do.
M: Ja.
D: If you've got something interesting on your farm you put it on your label, it's business. And I'm going to interview them because I think that's really interesting.
M: Good, I think it would be very good. **[00:37:40]**
D: There's a place in Natal [discuss the Bulwer hotel, van Heerden's novel etc, Giulio Biccari and the film script, discuss the *Tra i reticolati* and that Mario Gazzini had continued

producing from Milan after the war, gives contact information for Mrs Ferrucci, tracking Giuseppe Caira's own record, pass on Lou Juriaanse's story, my own family's story].

Interview 15

Interviewee: Mike Chisin
In attendance: Zeppe and Paola Chisin
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Somerset West, Western Cape
Date: Monday 9 January 2012
Time: 15:00
Topic: Zeppe Chisin, ex-POW
Note: this was a bilingual interview with portions in Italian and others in English.

P: But now I don't know the dates and things, I can't remember -
D: That doesn't matter, I'm not writing statistics down, I'm not writing facts down about it, I just want the story. However you remember it or whatever parts of it you remember and then maybe later we'll speak to Giuseppe and I'll speak to your son as well but I don't need facts -
P: Yeah.
D: Would you tell me the story as you know it?
P: Well you see he, he was at Tobruk, he was taken at Tobruk and then he came down with the other prisoners. But when he was supposed to board a certain ship, and he was in line waiting, they suddenly stopped and said no, you're the last one. I mean you can't come on we've already taken a full consignment. And you know that ship went down. He would have been on the ship if he had -
D: Wow, was that the Nova Scotia, or one of those ships that went down?
P: Yes.
D: Ja so which ship did he come on?
P: Oh I don't know, I don't remember.
D: And then do you know what year he arrived here?
P: Oh no, I don't remember, I don't remember anything.
D: You don't remember [laugh together].
P: I don't remember names or dates or ooh -
D: Was he in Cape Town while he was a prisoner?
P: No, he went to Johannesburg, to the prisoner of war camp.
D: To Zonderwater.
P: Ja, the camp, what was it called? Oh I don't remember.
D: Was it Zonderwater?
P: Hmm?
D: Zonderwater, Sonderwater Camp.
P: Zonderwater, that's right.
D: And then did he, was he in Johannesburg for the whole war?
P: No he came down to the Cape to work at various farms and things.
D: OK.
P: And then he liked the Cape so he wanted to stay here. He got them to let him stay.
D: So he didn't have to go back to Italy after the war?
P: Huh?
D: Did he have to go back to Italy after the war?
P: No, no.
D: He stayed here.

P: But he did go back eventually to visit people, but we stayed here and he got employment with Saporetti, at the Lemoenkloof poultry farm. It's the biggest farm in the area, and he worked here for a long time, and then I was working at the Italian Consulate.
D: OK.
P: I was the secretary there, and ah, Giuseppe used to come in every now and then so I met him.
D: Ja.
P: And that's how I met him.
D: Were your parents here or were you here on your own?
P: No, I'm, because my sister married a South African during the war, who came to fight in Italy.
D: OK. **[00:03:02]**
P: She met him -
D: Oh I see, that way.
P: He met her in Florence, they got married in Florence and then they came out to South Africa, and so -
D: And you came, you followed -
P: It was only my sister and me.
D: Mm.
P: And my parents, so we [unclear]
D: And then did you stay here, you've stayed here in Somerset West since?
[Mike enters]
P: Com'é va?
[They discuss the gate that needs repairs]
[00:04:18]
D: What do you know of your dad's story?
M: Shew, ah, bits and pieces. We had ah, we obviously tried to keep some of his stories that we, that he used to tell when we were kids and so on -
D: Ja.
M: And at one stage I actually recorded a few of them as well.
D: Oh you did?
M: Actually family conversations when we all got together and he would start talking about the old days, what it was like in his childhood. And a lot about the war because that was a big part of his life.
D: Ja.
M: As a conscript and as a POW. And the the aftermath as well of the war, you know obviously that was a big thing in Europe, with everyone sort of needing to create futures for themselves an the economies not being all that fantastic.
D: Ja.
M: A lot of Italians I know were actually applying for postings, well not postings, but immigration. And he actually applied for America and for Argentina, no Brazil, Brazil because his family was also there.
D: Where does the family come from in Italy?
M: Well my dad's is from Sarcedo.
D: And where is that?
M: It's provincia di Vicenza.
D: OK.
M: So that's ah, ja. And then my mother is obviously a dual-national.
P: I'm very deaf, I'm very deaf.
D: That's OK, it's fine.

P: It's terrible, isn't it terrible. Why must I be so deaf? I don't like being deaf.
M: [Unclear]
M: Her mother's English but her father was Italian, so **[00:06:03]** quite interesting.
P: I was six years at the Italian Consulate.
D: Mhm. The same one here at Cape Town?
P: In Cape Town. And there was a nice Dottor Barole. In Italy, we were, our relations are friends of his relations and oh, it was quite a story.
D: Ja.
P: And then ah, so when Giuseppe, I met him at the consulate, because he came on business. And then he said, oh I'm working on Lemoenkloof poultry farm, and why don't you come and see us? And I came, I went with a friend, and um, I met everybody there and the end he decided no, I don't know how it happened -
M: I don't know if you read Afrikaans?
D: Aha.
M: But that's um, my dad.
D: Which one's your dad?
M: [Unclear]
P: There's Giuseppe, and that's one of the three managers on the farm, it's a big poultry farm.
D: Ja it looks huge.
M: It was actually one of, of the biggest all-round farm in the country, ja.
D: Mm.
M: The K- Elsenberg [spelling] students, the agricultural college in Stellenbosch -
D: Would come -
M: Would be sent there for their prac, because there was everything, basically, they could experience.
D: So was your dad's working life all on this farm?
M: Ja, most of it after the war.
D: And kind of moved up the ranks. Ja, and what work was he doing during the war?
M: Well he was actually in the military police as far as I can gather. I don't know if it was during the war, but certainly before the war, when he was called up, as a conscript. And he actually just finished his national service when war broke out. So he was like really stuck in there for a long time.
D: So he was a little bit older than most soldiers that were here actually?
M: Um, I don't think so, I'm not sure, you know he was born 1918. **[00:08:12]**
D: OK.
P: Isn't he going to come here now?
M: I don't know, I'll go and see. He said he wants to stay in bed.
D: Don't push him.
P: No, he must come, he knew you were coming.
D: No, non insista, if he's tired then that's fine, that's OK. See if he feels like it. Don't push him though, I don't want to disturb him.
P: No.
D: And so what year did you get married?
P: Oh, it's on a piece of paper I've got it written down.
D: OK, but it was quite soon after the war?
P: Ja.
D: A few years after the war?
P: Ja.
D: And children, have you got other children?
P: I've got Mike, is my first, and then Luigi, who is the Pasta Regallo [spelling] man.

D: Oh really.
P: Have you seen this pasta in all the shops?
D: Mm, Pasta Gallo?
P: Pasta Regallo.
D: OK, yes, is that him, is that your son?
P: Yes, he's got a factory and he runs it.
D: OK.
P: And then I've got a girl Ilaria, who's married to someone she met here, and she's very artistic, she and her husband they do the decorating -
D: OK.
P: In places all over.
D: Nipoti? C'é sono nipoti?
P: They live in Cape Town.
M: Would you like something to drink, Donato? Something cold?
D: Nothing, thanks, I just came from a coffee shop, so I'm fine.
M: Oh, OK. No problem.
D: I'm good, thanks.
P: Did you come here in a car?
D: Yes, yes, I drove here.
P: Is it outside?
D: It's outside, yes.
[some exchange about the cars][Zeppe Chisin enters, with the nurse/maid]
M: Questo é Donato Somma, da Joburg, da Johannesburg.
P: This is Giuseppe, my husband.
D: Piacere, Donato.
Z: Piacere.
D: Nice to meet you. **[00:10:19]**
[Zeppe asks if his other son is there, getting his bearings]
M: Allora, qualcosa di fresco?
Z: Huh?
M: Qualcosa di fresco da bere?
Z: Oh.
M: Si o no?
Z: [unclear] l'abbiamo fare -
M: Oh, OK.
P: Do you want a cappuccino or something?
M: No, no, no, I'm fine, don't worry about me thanks.
D: Have a seat here. Does your dad speak English?
M: Ja, he speaks English.
D: Can we speak in English?
Z: Huh?
D: Can we speak in English?
P: Yes.
D: It's OK to speak in English?
P: Yes, but he likes speaking Italian.
M: You're actually on his bad side because -
D: Should I come round -
M: No, no, not interns of hearing, just that growth on his face needs to be cut out next week.
D: No, no. Shame. Are you in good health? Are you in good health, Giuseppe, you feeling well? Thank you for seeing me this afternoon.

Z: I get up when I feel like.
D: Of course.
Z: [Unclear]
D: Can you tell me some of your, um, stories from when you were a prisoner of war?
M: Non toccare, non toccare.
Z: I was caught out with um - where's he coming from the cat?
M: É sempre qui, lo sai.
Z: Eh?
M: É sempre qui.
P: Il gatto!
Z: Non so.
P: Il gatto.
M: Hai una storia per Donato della prigionia?
Z: Eh?
M: Hai una storia di raccontare della tua prigionia?
Z: Si, tante.
M: Tante.
D: Tante? Dimmi qualcosa, della prigionia.
Z: Ero prigioniero di guerra.
D: Mhm.
Z: Ma un libero. Andavo vuole volevo.
D: Mhm.
Z: Facevo che voglio volevo. E fine [unclear] E al fino, ho rimasto. And mi sono sposato [unclear].
D: And at Zonderwater, do you remember Zonderwater?
Z: Zonderwater is still there, but I don't go anymore.
D: Mm. But do you remember Zonderwater?
Z: Ooh yes.
D: You remember it well?
Z: Zonderwater, is a place in the Transvaal. [Unclear] there I spent five years.
D: You were there five years? **[00:14:19]**
Z: Ja.
D: And then you came, did you come to the Cape then, afterwards?
Z: No.
D: After the war?
Z: I come to the Cape after the war, yes.
D: Mhm.
M: And during the war. Du Toitskloof Pass.
Z: I come to the Cape because I meet [points to Paola with walking cane, smiles]
[All laugh]
P: Che c'é?
Z: We got married, and I'm still here.
D: And you're still here. Did you work on Du Toitskloof Pass?
Z: Yes.
D: And what work were you doing there, labour, manual labour?
Z: I was a manager there.
D: Oh, you were managing there?
Z: Yes.
M: He was actually the interpreter.
Z: Yes.

D: Oh, OK.
M: The camp interpreter, and I think he got selected because he knew about three words in English.
P: Tell Donato how many chickens they had in the end.
M: So he was the interpreter. **[00:15:26]**
D: So, he did the interpreting.
M: Ja.
P: A million chickens.
D: Oh is this at Lemoens-
M: Lemoenkloof ja.
D: Lemoenkloof. So you did work then after the war at Lemoenkloof.
Z: At Lemoenkloof yes, slowly slowly it's coming up. And ah, it was a big business. Saporetti, he was in charge.
D: Was he the owner?
M: Ja, he was the owner, Cleto Saporetti. He's the same guy who started the Hy- Rustenburg Hydro at Stellenbosch.
D: OK.
M: And then a number of other businesses in Cape Town.
D: They were immigrant Italians?
M: Yes, ja.
D: OK. They were immigrants.
M: And Saporetti married into the Godfrey [spelling] family, an old Cape family. So the farm was kind of a bit of a dowry situation, it belonged to the Godfreys.
Z: Otherwise, you know, I've forgotten everything. You know I don't want to remember -
M: Too much.
Z: When I was prisoner of war, much of that, not that, so.
D: Mm.
M: And tell Donato about the grappa. Tell him about the grappa.
Z: Eh?
M: Tell him about the grappa.
Z: Well, you can make anywhere.
D: What is the grappa story?
Z: You want to eat, to take some -
M: [Laughs] There's actually a classic prisoner of war story -
Z: Paola, bring the grappa.
M: There were some of these ah - non ti sente [unclear]. Some of these Italians were actually selling this very raw -
D: Contraband, ja.
M: Alcohol. Ja, and even the camp guards and them, you know, the staff, were buying it from them.
D: Were they making it in their camp?
M: Well, because sometimes people would distil from the offcuts, the rejects from the kitchen, you know all the peelings and all that sort of stuff.
D: Ja. **[00:17:37]**
M: Which is fair enough, you ferment it and you make a raw spirit.
P: Cos'é possiamo offrire, a Donato?
D: Niente.
M: Ho già chiesto.
P: Cos'é?
M: Ho già chiesto.

P: Cosa?
M: Ha detto di no.
P: Neanche gelato, c'é gelato?
D: No, grazie signora, sono contento, I'm absolutely happy.
P: Have you had lunch?
D: Yes, ho già mangiato. Ho già mangiato.
M: So, ja, basically, there were these two, and nobody could figure out where they were distilling, because they weren't using the kitchen off- scraps an so on. But they had this fantastic, this potent alcohol, and eventually many months later, it was discovered, it was connected up with pipes to the latrines, to the sewerage pit. And they were actually, at night, this methanol was actually dripping down into this bottle they put there.
D: And that's what they were selling to the guards [both laugh]. Is this the guys at Du Toitskloof.
M: No, this I think this was still at Zonderwater. [Both laugh]. I mean that's a classic story -
D: A classic of the kind of thing that they did.
M: Absolutely.
D: How many, does your dad know how many prisoners there were at, in Du Toitskloof? It doesn't seem like there were that many.
M: No, it wasn't a big camp - non toccare. Non toccare la faccia.
Z: É la mia eh!
M: Lo so che la tua ma [laughs].
D: Is he, are we keeping them up, I think -
M: No, no. It's fine, oio lasciarlo, devi lasciarlo. É cattivo quell'cosa li.
Z: Ue, ue, ue.
M: Ti ricordi quanti prigionieri c'erano a Du Toitskloof? La squadra li? **[00:19:25]**
Z: A Du Toitskloof?
M: Ja.
Z: Oh, c'éra tanti.
M: Tanti, una centinaio o meno?
Z: Era migliaia.
M: Miglaia! Così tanti?
Z: Mm, la squadra.
M: OK.
D: Was it only Italians working on that pass?
M: I think so ja, because they first worked on the pass at Blanco, George -
D: The same team?
M: I think, ja. I think, I mean it's hard to tell, I don't think he would remember. Maybe, some of them.
D: Ja. You know this stuff, Mino doesn't know this stuff, there's a bit of a, like, gap, with Western Cape stuff, you know who did what and where.
M: Oh, OK.
D: We have to try and find some more, I'm not writing the history.
M: Ja, ja.
D: I'm collecting stories -
M: What is your field?
D: Mainly because people have already written the history, but the Western Cape stuff is like a -
M: What's your field?
D: Cultural studies, I was an opera student at ah Wits.
M: OK.

D: And it's ah, I'm collecting folk-stories.
M: And for?
D: For a PhD. My topic is Italian Prisoners of War in the South African Imagination.
M: Oh, OK.
D: So I'm interviewing Ettienne van Heerden tomorrow, because he wrote that novel.
M: Ja. **[00:20:56]**
[Continue explaining the project]
M: That's quite interesting, because the two of them are a marriage, pardon the pun, of two cultures as well. I mean my dad is more from sort of peasant stock and Paul is from more aristocratic stock, so they would never have met in Italy.
D: In Italy, ja.
M: Or got married, it had to happen here. But what was interesting is now, with his whole involvement as an Italian POW in Africa -
Z: [Unclear, offers food]
M: My mom -
D: Niente signore, grazie.
Z: [Offers again]
M: Was in Florence, during the war - ho già offerto. Per me niente, grazie. Um, so they were actually hosting a lot of Allied soldiers in their home, ja.
D: Ja, she said, she told me.
M: And she's actually got a visitor's book with hoards of people in it and people that still nowadays they continue meeting and totally by coincidence.
D: That is amazing.
M: So there's a very rich fabric of ah -
D: It's a very important document -
M: Connections -
D: She must -
M: Very important.
D: Ja, I mean, and also she came here because her sister married a South African -
M: That's right.
D: She met there.
M: That's right.
D: Ja, these swap over things are very interesting. Most Italian POWs who where here also know a family who had someone there and they kind of stay connected and -
M: Ja, what's quite interesting as well, the other thing I was going to mention ah, huh, memory, my goodness hey
[Both laugh]**[00:22:30]**. Ja, no, we had actually quite a day on, in I think it was November -
P: Are you from the famous Motta family?
D: Motta, io? No mio cognome é Somma.
P: Ah Somma, I thought it was Motta.
D: No, not Motta, Somma.
Z: Com'é si chiama lo?
D: Donato Somma.
Z: Ooo!
D: Dal Sud.
Z: Strano nome.
[Omitted, off-topic]
D: When you're in Natal, ask anyone in Pietermaritzburg where the POW church is, it's beautiful, and they've turned it into a memorial thing. And so he's bought a plot?
M: No, he's got his little niche there and that's where he's going to be one day.

D: OK.
M: I mean 93 years and still kicking. Eh! Lascia la faccia, non toccare.
D: Still walking -
Z: E questo -
M: É per quello é così grande.
D: Is he going to have it seen to?
M: Ja no, I've booked an operation for him already. Ja, because that's quite interesting because it brings me to the point of saying that there's this gap. Now, they all -
D: In the Western Cape, ja.
M: Now, they all, they landed by ship, most of them landed at Durban.
D: They all did.
M: And they were sent up to Zonderwater.
D: Ja, they all landed at Durban.
M: And then they were sent out from there?
D: Yes.
M: So I think that's probably your gap.
D: And it's usually, when it's this far out from Zonderwater it was usually at the request of someone, had requested them. So either Italian company, knew there were some around and requested them, or there was a captain in the army who had a farm, like Caira's dad, was a captain who had a farm here and he brought out some of the prisoners. But there's not the kind of imprint on Cape Town as there is on Pietermaritzburg, because they all moved through Pietermaritzburg. They were all at Zonderwater. Although for some reason in Limpopo they had a huge impact and there weren't a lot of them. **[00:25:38]** in the forestry industry. Also because they made a lot of money, they stayed and kind of became entrenched. But the Western Cape stuff on, I must check if there's- just so that it doesn't all disappear one day. Because as it is, everyone refers me to signora Ferucci, Mino Caira and then kind of superfluous ones. At the Dante there's no older people, they're all kind of younger people, fairly young. The Italian Club, is basically the restaurant, as far as I can make out, people gather at -
M: Yes.
D: I met the anziani association, Berucci, Berecci, something like that, but also they're younger, they are much younger than your dad.
M: Now his particular contingent was really the Paarl contingent, and there are a lot of Italians in Paarl, or there were certainly in my childhood.
D: OK.
M: And they're all stuck together almost like a little off-shoot, you know -
D: So, Ferucci's going to know -
M: Ferucci's going to know, yes, yes definitely, she's got that Lion Park now I think.
D: Is it a Lion Park, because everyone refers to her as the chicken-farm lady. She also had a, was in poultry?
M: Yes, ja.
D: Or her family, her husband or?
M: Yes.
D: Or whoever it was.
M: Were they prisoners of war, the father or the husband?
M: I don't know. Ferucci, il marito della Ferucci, era anche uno prigioniero?
Z: Ja, ma non era uno prigioniero come noi, perché stava qui, hai capito?
M: Era già qui prima della guerra?
Z: No, ha venuta durante la guerra, ma [unclear something about a small business]. Quando noi abbiamo la farm. Paola, non ha offerta niente di bere?

M: This is normal.
D: Was he, maybe Ferucci was from Africa Orientale or one of those, from one of the colonies or something like that.
M: Could be. Could be.
D: I'll find out from her.
M: But another good contact would be ah, Rosanna at the consulate **[00:28:25]** -
D: OK.
M: She's the secretaria.
M: And she obviously has had contact with most of the Italian families in the Cape. So you might actually be able to pick up quite a lot of threads there.
D: Alright.
M: You know people that I don't even know of.
D: The consulate, I'm battling, they're renovating it at the moment -
M: Oh are they, I didn't know that.
D: Ja, it's shelled. But there's apparently services are carrying on but they're still Italian consular services so they close at like half past eleven in the morning.
M: Ja.
D: So I think I'm just going to email them when I'm back in Joburg and see what I can do. Rosanna who?
M: Rosanna, um, I trying to remember her surname now.
D: But I mean I'm sure if I ask for Rosanna -
M: I think her email is "secretaria at" -
D: Whatever their suffix is.
M: Ja.
D: Ja, OK. And is she a Cape Town Italian.
M: She's a Cape Town Italian. But now interestingly her, when he came back after the war, her family was on the same ship with him, so that's how they connected or got to know each other.
D: Ja. So your dad was repatriated -
M: He was, all of them, I think all of them had to go back.
D: Ja. I think there were a few who kind of went, Edoardo Villa did -
M: Oh yes.
D: Just kind of went, hid out until they naturalized.
M: Oh, so have you spoken to him?
D: Well, ja, he's passed on now, um, not so long ago, last year sometime actually. But I spoke to him about four years ago when I first started looking at POWs. And he, again, was taken under the wing of one of the captains and given work. **[00:30:19]**[Another offer for something to drink from Z]
M: And what about the Free State, because I know of quite a lot of Italians that were working on farms particularly in the Free State?
D: Ja, I'm going to do a trip to Koffiefontein.
M: OK.
D: But that's a completely different camp though because that's where they kept the hard-liners actually.
M: Ja, ah -
D: So the ones who didn't, your dad would have signed a document rescinding his kind of allegiance to the fascist state and all of that in order to work.
M: OK. So all the clever ones did that?
D: Ja, I mean almost all of them did, because they were bored out of their minds. And also they felt betrayed, because Italy changed sides, there was a lot of that kind of well, let's just

carry on then. But the hard-liners were sent to Koffiefontein and they kind of fomented with the Nats and all that, because they were also being held there. German soldiers and Afrikaner nationalists.
M: OK, ja.
D: So that's a very different camp, that's the only one I haven't been to so far, I'm going to have to come back to do Worcester and that, because I've run out of time now, but we can stay in contact too -
M: Ja, sure.
D: If you hear of um, I mean you know what I'm collecting, little bits of stories and things like that.
M: Well ja, absolutely, I mean there are lots of stories.
D: And you'll also remember them now that we've spoken, like in a week's time you're going to remember something that your dad used to say or he might mention something, or your mom might mention something -
M: Mm.
D: Just drop me a line.
M: Will do, you must leave me your details.
D: Ja, I will. I'll give you my card, it's just in the car.
[Someone reaches for the recording device]
D: It can stay like that. Alright. Let me make a move, I feel bad I'm keeping your dad up.
M: No, no it's fine I mean he rests all day long anyway, so it's not that he's going to be tired it's just that he didn't feel like getting up.
D: And your mom's in the kitchen, what's your mom doing in the kitchen?
M: No, no, no she's not really in the kitchen, she wears the apron, but Joey, who's the temporary carer now is here every day and their regular carer is here she's just off this week.
D: Oh, OK.
M: So, they have someone looking after them.
D: In their big house.
M: In their big house. I'm actually just busy organizing a painter to just come and scrape, the maintenance on a place like this.
D: And they don't want to leave.
M: They didn't want to leave when they were young enough to make the change and now obviously it's just, gets more and more difficult.
D: Ja.
M: Ja.
D: I know that story.
M: So ja, that's, I'm unlucky enough, in a sense, lucky enough and unlucky enough -
D: You're the closest son.
M: To live within a kilometre radius from here.
D: Have you still got those recordings you made of your dad?
M: Ja, they're tape though, so they're not digital.
D: If want to, I mean if you're so inclined, if there's something in there of interest for me. When next you listen to them or fish them out or whatever, I'll leave you my contact details.
M: Ja, ja, ja. OK.
D: There might just be something in there that triggers your -
[Exchange with Z about the gate]**[00:33:55]**
[Final farewells, gives a bottle of grappa as a parting gift, made by him and his friend Boschi]

Interview 16

Interviewee: Domenica Ferucci
In attendance: David, her driver and assistant.
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Paarl, Western Cape
Date: Tuesday 10 January
Time: 10:00
Topic: Her brother was a POW and she has been very involved in the Italian community and memorial service.
Note: this was a multi-lingual interview that switched between English Afrikaans and Italian.

D: So your brother was a POW?
F: Yes.
D: He was a POW here in Paarl?
F: He was also in Paarl. I was not seen him for a long time, many years. Because he was not here, you see? For two, three years was not see.
D: And was he captured in North Africa? Where was he captured?
F: No, not in North Africa, in Egitto.
D: In Egitto.
F: Then he was coming from Egitto here.
D: To here, OK.
F: Yes.
D: And did he work on the pass at Du Toitskloof?
F: Me?
D: No, your brother.
F: No, not working.
D: He was not working?
F: No.
D: OK.
F: No, I got another friend working, to talk, I got a lot of friend, yes, because the pass, that Du Toitskloof, Italian people make.
D: They made it, yes.
F: Where you come from?
D: Johannesburg.
F: Ma, in Johannesburg or from Italy, no?
D: No, I come from Johannesburg, my grandparents, came from Italy, they were immigrants. My grandparents, i miei nonni hanno nato in Italia, a Potenza.
F: I nonni, a Potenza!
D: A Potenza, in Basilicata.
F: Beautiful.
D: It's very beautiful, very beautiful. But they were not prisoners of war, they were emigrants coming afterwards.
F: Yes, I understand.
D: So did you come after your brother to South Africa?
F: Yes, because I got a letter, something, maybe I'm collect for you, I'm looking. Because this was in Italy my brother coming for um, young, seventeen years or eighteen years na army in Italy en dan Italy send in Sud Africa, Tripoli.
D: Yes.
F: Tripoli.

D: In Libya?
F: Libya. Yes. And I got another friend in Italy very involved, in Italy, lovely person, 92 now, years. Lovely person.
D: And you brother then decided to come back to South Africa after the war?
F: Yes, he come back and he work in the the farm in Wellington, Olivenhout [spelling].
D: OK.
F: Olivenhout something like that, yes.
D: And what was he doing on the farm? Just, a labourer, was he -
F: Libero? Si, si, work on the farm yes.
D: And was he -
F: En dan, sorry, and then she write the letter in Italy, and I write for my family, my father and my mother saying, will you coming, I keep it for you here it's good. I not come no more in Italy. Ask like this, you see. And only me in the family girl, and my father and my mother say now you come with me, alright, you not coming or stay in Italy. Ons try for a paar jare and dan ons coming. This is my story.
D: That's your story, and then when you got here did you meet a husband, did you get married here?
F: Yes, I got married, I got a child, eight years old daai time.
D: Oh there?
F: Yes. I got here, my son here, in.
D: And you lived your whole life here in South Africa then, since then?
F: And another son in South Africa then on that time. And my brother's there Olivenhout, in Wellington. **[00:03:46]** In the farm, in one farm working there eh. En dan sy call in they family, from Italy.
D: Da dové in Italia?
F: Da provincia di Ravenna, Faenza.
D: Faenza.
F: Faenza, ceramica.
D: Alright, yes, yes. OK. And did your brother used to tell stories about when he was a prisoner?
F: Yes.
D: Did he have lots of stories?
F: Yes.
D: Do you remember any of them, things he used to say?
F: I got one. I got a good man in Italy and once he saw this he's 92, 93 years old, friend, and he write to me any time in the book. I got a book. This man, "*Diario"* [points to book].
D: Oh. look at that.
F: [Unclear].
D: [Unclear] Salvagno, "*Storia di un alpino prigioniero in Africa durante la -*
F: I got a lot, looking. This is also the family I got here.
D: OK.
F: The old family sent to me from Italy.
D: Ja.
F: All Alpini hey?
F: You want to write a book? You busy for a book?
D: Ja, I'm just collecting stories, I'm not writing a big history book. I'm not writing a big book I'm just collecting small stories about Italian POWs. Was your brother in the Alpini as well?
F: [Unclear] no not this one, this is friend, ma I got my brother I looking, I don't know where, ma here, I got in the book also. You lees Italian?
D: Yes.

[F shuffles through some books]
D: Posso leggo?
F: Leggi, si. [To David]. David waar's Ruggiero? Wat is die naam di familie, where now, do you know where, family from Donatino?
Dav: What's their name?
F: Daai people?
Dav: Oh Donato hulle?
F: Donato, waar?
Dav: Hulle is in Malmesbury?
F & Dav: [Unclear exchange].
D: Oh yes I've seen this one, Ilse Ferreira -
F: You got this book? **[00:07:19]**
D: I got this one, yes, this very good. Very good. Who is the Donato in Malmesbury?
F: I was [unclear] Donato's friend, friend for Ross.
D: Also prigioniero di guerra?
F: No, no.
D: Italiani.
F: Wie is die prigionieri di guerra now? Forty years' worth. Wie?
Dav: Ja. Valacchi [spelling]?
F: Valacchi. Valacchi very good -
Dav: Ja, Valacchi.
D: Also a prisoner of war?
F: Ja, talking good.
Dav: Every good story.
D: Oh he's got good stories? Does he live nearby?
Dav: No he's in Cape Town, in Sea Point.
F: [Unclear]
D: Do you know how I can get hold of him maybe?
F: Um she knows very well. [Gesturing to David and laughs]. Lovely man.
D: But he must also be very old now?
F: Me?
D: No, no, Valacchi.
F: Valacchi.
Dav: Valacchi's 92.
D: 92.
Dav: Something something.
F: Ma, she's so. Looking [gestures to me to look through the book], looking, looking, looking. Because very important book this one.
Dav: Daai man.
F: This one also very nice, lovely. This last one in South Africa, it's in the the sleeve the book. This one was sent to me, was a prisoner of war also.
Dav: [Unclear]
D: "*Memorie di un emigrante*"
F: You want koffie?
D: No, no thank you, I'm fine.
Dav: [Unclear, brings something to me]
D: Oh look at that, ja, ja.
Dav: [Unclear] it's an Italian phone number.
D: Ja, it's an Italian phone number, this is in ah -
Dav: But she's got the number vir Valacchi in die book. For Cape Town.

D: The phone book, he'll be in the phone book, hey?
Dav: For Cape Town.
F: No, no. But he not in the book? Probably in [unclear].
D: This is great stuff.
F: He will know everything, because he was four, five years in Paarl, prigioniero lo.
D: Mm. [Unclear, reading titles]**[00:10:27]**
F: This is my president ne, now in Italy, lovely person? [Points to picture in a newspaper article]
D: Yes.
F: Nice person I think, better than Berlusconi.
D: Well he's going to be much better than Berlusconi I think.
F: Yes.
D: He's the new one.
F: Yes. Lovely person, slowly talking, professore. He say nie speak to me professore because, this president ne, he say presidente no, no, no presidente, ask professore, I want to stay [unclear] professore.
D: Yes, yes.
F: Lovely person.
D: Molto simpatico, penso che -
F: [Pointing to a picture] Me.
D: Is that you? Look at that.
F: Yes. I got a lot.
D: I see you're very involved in the Catholic community here.
F: Yes. It's the pope. The other one that died, the good one.
D: Yes.
F: Lovely.
D: Was that in Italy.
F: In Italy, Roma, il vaticano.
D: In vaticano, ja.
Dav: He's not in the phone book.
D: He's not in the phone book.
[Continue to look for Valacchi's number, is an ex-POW who visits Cape Town, could be traced through Lions, and Friulani]**[00:15:52]**
D: And tell me, why did your brother want to stay here after the war?
F: Ah, look. Big story co for my brother, because my brother was [unclear] from Italy, was young, seventeen, militare, militare, en dan vir one year write, and then two, three years not write for us. Ons was looking everywhere, ons was crying. En dan later again, phone. He stay in the farm, Olivenhout. The Olivenhout farm is no more. And eh, was come to Sud Africa, me, my husband, my mother, my son. And ons live in the farm Olivenhout.
D: But why did you leave Italy? Why did you leave Italy?
F: In Faenza, provincia di Ravenna.
D: Ja. Ma perché hai lasciato l'Italia, dopo la guerra?
F: For mio fratello. I don't want to leave my father and my mother -
D: Didn't want to be separate.
F: My mother and my father and ons kom all together. **[00:17:03]** My husband also, everybody. Ons sell the house for pay the ticket.
D: Ja, but you did well here in South Africa -
F: Yes.
D: You had a poultry farm?
F: Yes. Me. I start, we had three chicken.

D: That was you, brava. I got a good man you want to talk one day, coloured man, fantastic good. Start to me in that time, we start all together, yes.
D: Fantastic, un gran' successo.
F: Si.
D: Because everyone knows you around here, everyone, even in Cape Town, all the Italians say you must speak to Mrs Ferucci.
F: Yes. Ja, I got good name -
D: Yes.
F: And when I come to my brother, not write for two years in Italy for my family, un prisoner la, over here eh, and it was problem for write, for this one, for this one. And later to start write, and one night, one day write say my father and my mother want to come in to me, I'm happy. OK. And that time in Huguenot, in Olivenhout farm, Olivenhout farm, were in Olivenhout farm and they say OK, you want to come everyone, my father no want to leave me and my mother also in Italy. Was come everybody -
D: Ja, all together.
F: And I was stay little bit in the farm, Olivenhout in the farm. And my brother work in the farm, my mother. My brother buy chicken for my mother and father, for keep it little bit, fed the chicken for looking eggs and something, you see?
D: Ja, and from there you started the business, or later?
F: Later. En dan I buy in Paarl.
D: That was you?
F: Only me, yes. Buy, me and my husband a small farm. En dan little bit vegetables. And send the vegetables in the market in Cape Town.
D: Yes. Shew. **[00:19:24]**
F: Old bakkie, very old bakkie, lovely, nice.
D: A good life?
F: Yes, it was good.
D: And ah, the South Africans that you worked with, what, there were other Italians here in Cape Town and Paarl. There were lots of Italians in Paarl?
F: Yes, yes.
D: And the South Africans and Italians always worked well together?
F: Sometimes.
D: Sometimes. Did the South Africans like having Italians here?
F: Yes, yes. I know, was good, was no trouble.
D: No trouble.
F: Because they give a work.
D: Because Italians work hard hey?
F: Mm. Excuse me, you job? Giornalista?
D: Sono un docente, al università. Lecturer, at the university, at Wits in Johannesburg. University of the Witwatersrand.
F: What you want to leer?
D: I actually teach music history. **[00:20:26]**
F: Music?
D: Ja, storia della musica.
F: Storia della musica -
D: Dell' opera.
F: Oh bello.
D: Sono un docente, ma questa é un' altra cosa. É uno pezzo di ricerca.
F: You know Professor Gobbato?
D: Angelo Gobbato, yes.

F: [gestures that they are close]
D: Fianco a fianco.
F: Good friends. Like this. Good friend.
D: Ja, OK. I'm still trying to get hold of Angelo Gobbato -
F: Lovely man. Lovely person, good. Better than me [laughs].
D: But he also worked with, um, Gobbato also worked with Gregorio Fiasconaro.
F: Si, si.
D: Anche uno prigioniero di guerra.
F: Si, si, si.
D: Ja.
F: You looking for prisoner di guerra?
D: Ja.
F: Only my brother, everybody died. Only him, what's his name just now?
D: Chisin.
F: Chisin. No more.
D: What was your brother's name?
F: Borzacchi [spelling], Antonio.
D: Antonio Borzacchi, OK.
F: I got a photo somewhere, I never thought he come again.
D: Let's see.
F: You looking for somebody Davi?
D: Ja, I'm looking for your brother -
F: David.
Dav: [Unclear] looking for Vallacchi.
[Another conversation about Vallacchi's number and took a photo of his sister's number in a contact book].
[00:22:40]
F: Vallacchi very, very good man. One day, in Wellington, was prisoner of war alone. Very hungry everybody very hungry. She, steal een pigs ne. And put in a bicycle and go to Stellenbosch and kill and eat, party in Stellenbosch. [Both laugh]
D: They took them on a bicycle from Wellington to Stellenbosch?
F: You know daai time i prigionieri was -
D: Ja.
F: And also a little bit um -
D: And also, giovane -
F: Si.
D: Forte -
F: You married?
D: Soldati, no, no, ho una ragazza.
…
[00:23:44]
D: Those little stories, about taking the pigs to Stellenbosch, that's what I'm collecting.
F: [Laughs]
D: Piccole racconte, piccolo racconte. just to put them all together in a book.
F: Yes, it's nice.
D: Yes.
F: But Vallacchi is good. You must try [unclear] before Vallachi's coming.
D: Ja, ja. OK. Let me take a picture also of this book, because I must try and find this book.
F: This one?
D: Mm.

F: You want, you bring for me again?
D: I'm going back to Johannesburg, I'm, you know if I take it then I don't know if, when I can get it back to you. Let me take a photo of this one as well. And this man here was here in Worcester?
F: Si. This man not in Worcester, from the book, wrote the book in Italy -
D: Mm.
F: Is in Italy now. Was stay in Paarl, in Worcester and these place yes. Wait a minute. Look, this man, important man -
D: Ja, oh that's him there.
F: Dankie, thank you. [pointing to a dedication in the book?]
D: Mm.
F: Vicenza. This my municipality from town, provincia di Ravenna.
D: Yes.
F: Give me gold medaglia.
D: Oh really.
F: I got three!
[Laugh together]
D: From provincia di Ravenna?
F: One from there and one from Ravenna.
D: Yes.
F: You like Mussolini? **[00:25:43]**
D: No.
F: You like Alessandro the doctor, who's the small doctor for Mussolini? [Makes a noise imitating high-pitched chatter]
D: No. But he fixed lots of things in the South, where my grandparents were from, but obviously he was a bad man.
F: [Laughs]
D: Hang on a second, I think I know these.
F: All prigionier these.
D: Ja, just turn this page, let me see this, I think I know some of these, um -
F: Music.
D: I met some of these in Limpopo. I met some Italian prisoners of war that were in a band together. Ja, but there were lots. Ma dové Cogollo? [Cogolla is a place in N Italy]
F: Nel Nord.
D: Oh, that's all there at Zonderwater.
F: [Unclear] sorry. [Unclear]. There's my brother, there's my brother.
Dav: [Unclear]
D: Is that him, let's see. Oh here we go "*prigionieri di guerra in Egitto, da gennaio a settembre, mille novecento quaranta due, al Geneifa, zona laghi amari sul canali Suez*". [Unclear] Wellington.
F: Um, in ah Franschoek staan 'n little bit, lady, good friend for the prisoner di guerra but I no know the naam. Ma you come to me again -
D: Una Sud Africana?
F: Una Sud Africana ma speak English, Fisher [spelling], is good people.
D: Ja.
F: And one day you want to talk, she know very well for this prisoner because stay in the farm.
D: And non ti ricordi il nome?
F: No, non adesso. Non adesso.
[Laugh together]

D: No problem.
F: I got too many [gestures] -
D: Things in your head. That's great, OK, thank you for -
F: You go?
D: Yes, I don't want to keep you, I know you fell this morning.
[Indicates she's fine]
D: You OK, you going to be alright, where is your son?
F: Cape Town.
D: Cape Town. He's close in Cape Town, he knows you fell this morning, you spoke to him already, your son.
F: Yes.
D: He'll come see you and look after you?
F: [Unclear] the doctor. But I got only one son.
D: One son, and nipotini?
F: Belli, belli, belli, belli. One has got my name. Domenico, the son, Domenico.
D: Very nice. Oh, Domenica is your firs name, and you've got a grandson Domenico?
F: Si. Beautiful.
D: How old?
F: Well the, two years, nearly three. My son is very clever.
D: Very clever.
F: Very clever.
D: What does he do?
F: Many things, for the radio, for the things in the house. **[00:30:07]**. Many things, he's got many house, got many farm. Good.
D: Done well.
F: Hy verstaan baie. Ons buy one farm, first, en dan another one and another one -
D: It's grown ja. Do you think if you had stayed in Italy you would have had a different life?
F: Yes.
D: Very different.
F: Yes.
D: Ja. It's a good life here in South Africa?
F: Yes, also coming from Bologna, Ravenna. I got one lady in Bologna, procheria -
D: Mhm.
F: Borzacchi, my name is Borzacchi. Ma now people say Ferucci, Ferucci.
D: You not come some time in Italian club?
F: Yes, I went there for the pranzo, domenica scorsa.
[Discuss that I met the head of the Associazione Anziani, Borsero, she knew him well. Tell her of Mr Olsen on La Vinette farm, they decide to come with to show Mrs Basson's descendant's farm, she is related to Olsen, Mrs Ferucci came with. Mrs Basson was in a sick bay at a local retirement village. I met and spoke with her there.]

Interview 17

Interviewee: Nellie Basson
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Paarl, Western Cape.
Date: Tuesday 10 January
Time: 14:00
Topic: Mrs Basson had written a history of Klein Drakenstein.
Note: this was a bilingual interview, switching between English and Afrikaans.

D:… maar ek kan verstaan, jy kan Afrikaans praat.
B: Ja.
D: Ja. Um, Mrs Ferucci said to me that you, that you knew a lot of the Italian prisoners of war that were on that farm?
B: Yes.
D: You did.
B: Ah.
D: Do you remember them?
B: Yes I remember them.
D: You remember them. So I'm collecting stories about them, stories about the things that they did and what they did while they were staying there and I'm going to put it in a book.
B: [Reaches for the book]. I haven't hands.
D: Ja. Can I help? This one?
B: This one.
D: Ja.
B: This is the book I wrote about the Italians.
D: You have already written about them?
B: Yes. [Opens the book] This is Klein Drakenstein.
D: Ja.
B: And we are living, I am living there [points]. The Huguenot Tunnel. I can let you have this book.
D: Can I see it?
B: Ja. **[00:01:42]**
D: Let's have a look.
B: "Du Toitsklooftonnel".
D: Ja, that's the one they were working on hey?
B: "Die Hooftonnel".
D: Mm.
B: "Rosendal Pluimveeplaas and the Feruccis, Die herkoms en vestiging van die Feruccis in Suid-Afrika". En dan "Mevrou Demonica [sic] Ferucci is a Italian matriargaal in Klein Drakenstein" "Diere op Rosendal", that was the Ferucci's place. En dan we've got Breugem, a family, but they from the Netherlands.
D: The Netherlands, ja.
B: Mm.
D: So you've lived in the area your whole life?
B: Huh?
D: You've lived in this area your whole life?
B: Ja. But it's everything about Klein Drakenstein and all the people, but you can take, you can have a look in there.
D: Is Klein Drakenstein the area on that side of Paarl?
B: It's near the Huguenot Tunnel.
D: Near the Huguenot Tunnel, OK.
B: Our farm is nearest to the Huguenot Tunnel. "Die berge die klowe, die poorte en die riviere" en um "Limiet Natuurreservaat", "plantegroei, fynbos, ander plante, indringerplante", "Interessante plekke om te besoek, die Mangaanmyn in Du Toitskloof -
D: Ja.
B: "Donkerkloof met sy disas, nuwejaarsblomme en slange", "Die Limietberg", "Op in Kromrivier", "Rooikoppie". "Die Italiaanse kruis op Hugenotekop".
D: Mm, that's the one they put up after they built the road?

B: Ja, "Die Italiaanse kruis op Hugenotekop en Hugenotetonnel", "Die Nederburg Wynplaas", "Rosendal en die Feruccis" en dan het ek die the agriculture "Die Landbou" **[00:03:47]** "Die wynbedryf en die wingerdbou", en die "Koejawel", en die "Sitrusvrugte". En "Blommekwekery" almal wat blomme gekweek het. Druiwe [unclear]. All about our church.
D: Yes, that's the one in town or the one in -
B: In Drakenstein.
D: In Drakenstein.
B: In Drakenstein. And then something about the politics [chuckles]. All the people who were in, living in Drakenstein en het politiek gedoen.
D: Mm.
B: "Paul Malherbe Waterkloof, Senator Gawie Malherbe, Meneer Wynand Malan, Willem Basson, Guillaume Malherbe en Francois Joubert". En dan ons het skrywers in Klein Drakenstein.
D: Mm.
B: Writers.
D: Yes.
B: Onder andere Meneer W. A. De Klerk, but he died -
D: And the people who were at the taal museum
B: The what?
D: Those men who worked on the Afrikaans bible and that kind of thing, they were also here weren't they?
B: [Gestures she cannot hear]
D: The men who worked on Afrikaans, developing Afrikaans, they were also here in the area, wasn't it?
B: Ja. W. A. De Klerk en Ronald Belcher het ook daar gewoon. En dan, oh ja die Therons het ook baie geskryf. En "Stephanus Malherbe, Bobby de Villiers en Rita de Manielle" sy leef ook nog.
D: Mm.
B: Sy het baie geskryf. En dan a bietjie skole in Klein Drakenstein. Die blankes skole wat oor a honderd jaar oud is. Hulle het nou die skool gesluit. En dan die Engelse kerkskool, dit was 'n kleurling skool. Sonop Primêr en ons het die Ronwe Primêr, dis almal kleurling skole, maar daar's drie sulke skole in Klein Drakenstein. En dan die "Interessante Mededelings". Die kwarteeufees van die Voortrekker beweging word op Keerweder gestig in 1956. Dan die Louw Wepener-medalje vir dapperheid het die vorige regering vir 'n, ek het nou sy naam vergeet maar dit staan nou hier, by sy dinges. Die "Invoer van Percheron perde" -
D: Really? Die -
B: Invoer van Percheron perde, dit was uit America uit.
D: Ja.
B: Ja, en dan **[00:06:45]** huisrate dit is nou wat hulle meen mense wat gedokter het in Klein Drakenstein. En dan "'n Onvoorsiene verrassing vir die boeren op La Valle" wat is die meneer, is sy Godfrey? Nee. Hy is ook 'n Italianer, hulle plant so olywe, op die plas. En hy het en keer die boere onthaal op sy plaas. Maar hy het sy eie vliegvel, en hy het sy eie vliegtuig. En sy het 'n baie mooi dam op sy plaas.
D: Was he a prisoner of war or was he just an immigrant?
B: Ja, dan ons het ook 'n wynboer wat op die Amerikaanse televisie was in 1984, Jannie Leroux.
D: OK.
B: En dan het ek geskryf oor ons bruin- ons plaas mense, wat op ons plase werk. "Die lied van die wyn op ons plase", "Jakob Swartland, Skilpad van Keerweder", "Piet Piedt, van Saffier" en 'n plaaskoor, begrafnisse en ons het. Ek het agt paartjies lat trou, wat ah, they

lived in sin -
D: Ja.
B: Toe het ek vir hulle trou in die Afrikaanse kerk, op een dag, almal.
D: Ja, ja.
B: Dan the "Humoristiese Staaltjies". "Dial en die oorlogsmonumente". Dis een van die kleurlinge wat 'n hele vrag mense Kaap toe geneem het. Maar toe hy in die Kaap kom toe sien hy Jan van Riebeek's se standbeeld. En hy los net so die wiel en hy spring uit en hy hardloop terug Paarl toe en hy sê "Hier skiet die boere op". Maar daar is sulke monumente, maar toe het die polisie vir hulle gekalmeer en [unclear] Adderly straat begelei tot by die dokke en hulle het die dokke gat kyk. Dis nou die bruin mense. Daar is a opstel oor 'n koei. Wat is hier. "Sport en Sportbelangstellings" dis almal wat aan sport deel geneem het, by voorbeeld Danie Malan was 'n atletiek, wat was hy, koejawelboer. Hy het 'n middel afstand, hy't 'n wêreld trofeë gewen vir sy hardloop -
D: He broke a record?
B: Ja.
D: He broke the record.
B: Hy boer nog daar op Salomonsvlei. **[00:09:37]**. "Comrades Marathon, Tennis, Swem, Driekamp", dit is al die verenigings in die Paarl, Klein Drakenstein wat daar was. Dan het ons 'n meek afgegaan [unclear] en alles oor kinders geskrywe, kinders wat dood is en hoe die ouers daroor gevoel het.
D: Shew.
B: "Verhaal oor vertroosting" en al die kinders se name.
D: Ja.
B: En ons het a kerkhof wat dateer uit 1817. En net alle Klein Drakenstein mense kan daar begrawe word, en hulle het trustees en aller ander goed wat hulle help. Ja. Ek weet nie wat ek meer vir jou kan sê nie.
D: Do you remember Mrs Ferucci's brother?
B: She used to visit me regularly. **[00:10:48]**
D: Regularly, ja.
B: But she don't know at the moment I am at the moment an invalid.
D: No, she doesn't I spoke to her this morning, she only found out today.
B: She'd come and visit me on the farm.
D: Ja, I must tell her -
B: She has her own chauffeur.
D: I told her chauffeur that he must bring her to come and see you.
B: Huh?
D: I told the driver that he must bring her to come and see you here.
B: Ja.
D: Because she didn't know you were here.
B: Huh?
D: She didn't know you were here.
B: Ja, she didn't know I was here.
D: Shew this is amazing, [reading to myself]
B: Dis 'n ou boek, dis 1996 geskryf, maar ah -
D: It's got everything.
B: Alles oor daardie area.
D: And you wrote all of these articles?
B: I got some people to wrote for me.
D: Yes. Ja. It's amazing. And they've got this in the local library as well?
B: Are you a journalist?

D: No, I'm an academic. I'm an academic at the university, I'm collecting small stories about Italian prisoners of war. The history, someone else has already written up the history -
B: Ja.
D: I'm just collecting folk stories, you know, little stories about them.
B: Ja. But I want your name.
D: Ja, I will give you a card, OK.
B: Write it in my diary.
D: Ja, ja.
B: Are you at a university?
[Continue to discuss the project and my studies, insists I write all the details in her diary]
[00:13:45]
D: Did the prisoners work, were they working on your farm?
B: On the what?
D: Were the Italian prisoners working on your farm?
B: Did I work on the farm?
D: No, the prisoners, Italian prisoners.
B: But they no more.
D: No, I know there's no more.
B: You can't have them anymore, I tell somewhere. That the minister of the ANC stopped that.
D: Stopped what?
B: The prisoners for working on the farm. I tell of them, what they did on the farm.
D: And it's in here, it's in this book?
B: Ja. Somewhere. **[00:14:27]**
D: Is this book in the library in Paarl? It's not in the library in Paarl. Where can I get a copy of this book?
B: You can have that one.
D: Are you sure?
B: I've got only five. But I'm now finished with them.
D: Are you sure Mrs Basson? Because I don't want to disappear with your book and then you don't have a copy left. You've got a copy already?
B: No, you can have this one.
D: Ah, thank you very much, I appreciate that very much. That's great, thank you so much.
B: But always look in the index, then you know where it is.
D: Ja, ja. Then I can find that part.
B: Ja.
D: Thanks you so much for that, that's great. And very nice meeting you.
B: Who tell you to come here?
D: Your son.
B: Oh, Piet?
D: Piet, ja, ja. This morning I was in Cape Town, and everyone there, the Italians there in Cape Town said I must speak to Mrs Ferucci, in Paarl, so I came here, I found Mrs Ferucci and I spoke with her this morning and she said I must find you as well and speak to you.
B: Ja.
D: So then we went, with her driver out to the farm and Piet said that you were here. So that's how I found you today.
B: Ja.
D: That's wonderful, thank you so much I appreciate this very much.
B: No, it's something I can deliver for the future.
D: Yes, it's a treasure this. This is a treasure because this is the kind of history that um, is

always important to know, local history.
B: Ja.
D: You must tell, ah give a copy to a library here in Paarl, to one of the libraries. **[00:16:15]**
[Mentions that there are some copies in Port Elizabeth]

Interview 18

Interviewee: Armand Botha
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: 7 Keerweder, La Vinette Farm, Olsen Winery, Paarl, Western Cape.
Date: Tuesday10 January 2012
Time: 15:30
Topic: Italian POWs were billeted on the farm and there are some ruins there.

A:…But it gets hot there as well?
D: Ja, ja it does. But I don't know, I think it's just a bit more humid here as well.
A: Ja, up on the cross that's something else to see, that's nice.
D: Ja, it must be an unbelievable view, I mean I saw the cross from the pass.
A: Ja. I've, it's a nice experience. It's not that bad to climb it though.
D: The climb is not that bad?
A: No.
D: Where do you climb it from?
A: From the old pass, you go up in that valley.
D: Off the road?
A: Off the road ja, up in that valley. The green -
D: Oh I see there ja.
A: And then you go into that little neck.
D: Yes.
A: And you actually climb -
D: From behind.
A: From behind there.
D: Ja.
A: It's about four hours very, very slow hike.
D: Ja.
A: Four hours up, four hours down, but then you're taking it very -
D: Slow.
A: But they say, have you driven on the old pass?
D: Yes.
A: There's that one little monument thingy.
D: Yes, I saw that, the plaque that they put up. I think they put that up in the seventies. Just to commemorate them-, so as far as you-, are you from the area?
A: No, I'm from Namibia.
D: Oh, you from Namibia, OK. So you just work on the farm here, have you been here for a while?
A: Eleven years.
D: Eleven years, OK. So they worked, as far as I understand, they worked on the road and then the tunnel was done -
A: Ja, the tunnel was far after. Ja, the POWs were used to do the old pass, and the-, I don't know where the offices, and housing and stuff was, the main house.
D: Ag there weren't offices, they were on people's farms and, you know, there was some

paperwork but there was no, there weren't a lot of them here.
A: Way back then this was all one farm. **[00:01:47]**
D: Yes, ja.
A: Cut up in seven portions, Keerweder portions one to seven.
D: Oh OK.
A: This bottom part of this part is called Keerweder Seven, our La Vinette wine. And then you get Modderkloof and Bergkloof and -
D: And they were all one farm?
A: Waterkloof, ja, all of them are long, straight farms, we call it like that.
D: And they're the last set of farms before the pass.
A: Ja. The names, the name Keerweder, I don't know -
D: Isn't the voortrekkers stopped here?
A: Every time they get somewhere they would stopped again, keerweder.
D: What does it mean, to turn around?
A: Ons is weer gekeer, we are stopped again.
D: Stopped again, OK.
A: Keerweder, it sounds like that. Sounds like that, it's not confirmed somewhere.
D: So they kept pushing up to here and then realizing they couldn't get through.
A: Ja. I think that's, and then go around Wellington, where Baineskloof [spelling] is. But Olsen bought the farm 2002 **[00:03:26]** That's how he got [unclear]. There was another guy that was very knowledgable but he died last year. Our neighbour's father.
D: Local guy.
A: Ja, he knew everybody, everything, he was just a book of knowledge. Even Tannie Nellie, the old lady that you saw today.
D: Yes, well I mean she wrote a book, she gave me a copy of it.
A: Ja, just a little pamphlet, well no, a book ja. It's quite substantial.
D: It's quite, I mean for a small place, because she only wrote about Klein Drakenstein.
A: Yes.
D: So for a small place she really she's made a big book. Are these horses [discussion about horses, the vehicle and the grapes]
A: **[00:05:40]** You see it's all been planted with vines but there's a piece, and there's some pieces lying there -
D: Through there. Aha.
A: In the vines.
D: Oh I see, those concrete blocks.
A: Ja.
D:And they were in those um, concrete block houses, ja.
A: Ja, what was abandoned or something. [We exit the vehicle to inspect them]. I think in there and in the next one.
D: Do you have any idea how many of them were here?
A: No, I've got no idea.
D: OK. This is the foundation for the block houses. They built these concrete things for them all over the place. Oh, there's an inscription on that one.
A: A, R, E. But you know, I don't know if this is new or old or whatever, it looks like ARE.
D: Ja, they kept them in these, they made these concrete things for them all over the place, there are very similar ones in Ermelo and Zonderwater, outside Pretoria as well. And there were more in this one. [Move to next row of vines].
A: There is a couple more in the next block as well.
D: Oh, you said this one was one as well.
A: Ja.

D: Are they foundation stones?
A: According to me it must be foundation stones. Because when they prepared the soil for the vines it was before my time.
D: Ja.
A: They should have ripped them out. If it was me I wouldn't have done it, but the wasn't here.
D: Ja, but also they're not the most glamorous buildings in the world, they're never going to -
A: As well.
D: Ja. [Back in the vehicle] So when did they prepare the soil then for vines? How long have there been vines here?
A: Oh, '96.
D: Oh that's not that long ago hey?
A: No. **[00:09:00]**
[More discussion about the grapes]
A: See, there's a whole bunch.
D: OK. There's a whole lot of them.
A: See what's flooring and whatever the case may be.
D: Ja. Let's take a picture [unclear]. [Exit the vehicle]. OK. So here's the bulk of them. They must have pulled them all out from here.
A: [Unclear]
D: Piled them up. Ja, oh, they're all the way along here.
A: Ja.
D: Bits and pieces.
A: I'm going to come down in any case.
D: OK.
A: [Unclear]
D: Ja, I'm just going to take a picture up so you can see all of them. And just for reference one. OK, cool. **[00:12:00]**
A: [Unclear] little pieces I don't know what for. I don't know.
D: Ja. Give it some structure.
A: Structure, or a window or, I don't know.
D: So, there's quite a lot here. I mean that means there was a whole work crew here to make this much. Then you said they built a dam as well.
A: No, just small one, a reservoir of water or whatever. It wasn't done by the previous owners or nobody. [Back in the vehicle]. Check your door I think it's open. There's a piece, there's a piece.
D: Ja, all the way down. **[00:13:39]** OK, so it's quite a lot of stuff. And the pine stands, were they here already?
A: I think this is planted. This was all done for wind, as we get heat, we get wind here as well.
D: Coming up or going- both I suppose?
A: The wind?
D: Ja.
A: The south-easter, from the mountain.
D: From the mountain down.
[Exit vehicle]
[00:16:00]
A: This is all [unclear], the old -
D: This is the one they did.
A: Ja. [Unclear] There's no neighbour that say they build it.

D: Ja, ja. You've never found any inscription on it hey?
A: No.
D: Sometimes they put, some of them, reservoirs and concrete stuff they build, they put their street address in Italy on them.
A: Oh really?
D: Ja.
A: There's a flow in pipe coming in from somewhere they would-. I mean it's a strong dam, here's something. What?
D: R.
A: Is that a F, right?
D: Ja. R, no, P. No that's not an R. P. P. Oh. This is um, Prigionieri Di Guerra Italiani. P.D.G.I. Prisoners, Di Guerra, is that a D though? It's a P, prigionieri, and it's another P, I don't know what that is. This is a G, Guerra Italiani. Prisoners of War Italians. So there's a little whatsitsname there. I'll take some pictures and -
A: I never saw it, because we cleaned it up.
D: Ja, they always signed things that they did. What I'll do is in Photoshop I'll -
A: Probably -
D: Clean up the picture and find-, but what they usually did. Because that P.D.G.I. they put on everything. Pity they didn't put a date hey. But if there is a P, unless that's an R hey. I think it might be. Let me take them individually.
A: Maybe there is something else that is lower on the dam [unclear].
D: Ja. I. R. P. G. Ja, oh cool. **[00:20:20]**
A: This was definitely giving water for planting vegetables or whatever is the case should be involved.
D: Ja. Cool. I'll try and fix that up on Photoshop and work out what it stood for.
A: Ja. Unfortunately that's about all I have.
D: Ja well that's cool.
A: Nothing more that I know of.
D: That's awesome, they go into the archive and, um, they just become part of what we know about what they did. Let me get a picture here with the mountains, and the dam. Oh, is that the cross up there?
A: Ja.
D: Ja. Lekker.
A: I've got a photo of the cross, but I think there's people in it.
D: It doesn't matter. I'll leave my contact details with you, if you, if ever you hear of the locals or something, mention anything in passing. [Back into vehicle]
A: I wonder how many they were?
D: Ja, I'll have to try and see what's in the archive of how many they sent here, because they all went to Pretoria first -
A: Mhm.
D: And then they sent them out from there. And they've got pretty good records of who they sent where and -
A: But as I understand it Feruccis were the first, or some of the first that had a choice to stay or go back to Italy -
D: Oh really, is that what you've heard?
A: Families.
D: They got to choose? Those ones.
A: Ja. **[00:23:13]** Or you can stay here, or you can go back to Italy. And that's the hearsay. And then, four, five stayed and grandmother started with chickens and eggs and look at it now.

D: Ja, whereas if they'd gone back to Italy, I mean there was nothing in Italy.
A: Ja, they would never have been where they are now.
D: It was finished, never. They made good here.
A: Really, really good.
D: Ja, the two I met were both in poultry, Ferucci's, and that was her thing as far as I understood. She started that poultry thing, and then the other guy I met, Chisin, he was involved in Lemoen, what was it. Lemoenkop, or something. Lemoen something, I don't know where it was but it was a very big chicken farm. And, I mean, if they had stayed in Italy they would never have made money. Do your staff stay here or do they come in seasonally?
A: Most of them stay in the surroundings so ja, they stay around. I don't need too much so -
D: Ja.
A: Just wait for the grapes to colour, probably start housing end of the month.
D: What does that mean, bringing them in?
A: Yes, so it's not that far before they ready but it turns quickly.
D: Ja. And is the bunch about the size, they get a bit bigger?
A: Your berries get a little bit bigger, I mean it's a wine grape so, they don't get as big as eating grapes.
D: And have you had enough rain and all of that kind of thing?
A: Ja, we had enough rain and nice cool weather. Just now we get all this heat and then things could get messy. You get all of this heat for two, three weeks and everything is ready at the same time, and you get sunburn and wilted leaves and all that. You get less quality, so if you can stay moderate it's fine, I don't mind two, three, four days of heat -
D: Of this.
A: But then after let it must cool down a bit, maybe some light rain would be perfect.
D: And then it's a big rush to get them all off the vines?
A: Ja.
D: And that's one of your busiest -
A: Yes.
D: Busiest times.
A: That's when we don't sleep. [Chuckles]
D: Ja. Serious? Round the clock stuff.
A: Ja, not the harvest so much but when I'm busy in the cellar with the wine, ooh, then you're busy. But it's fun you know.
D: Ja. And have you got a family, a wife and kids here?
A: A wife and dogs.
D: OK. [Laugh together]
A: Dogs and horses and chickens.
D: Dogs and horses and chickens.
A: That kind of stuff. But didn't Mrs Ferucci have a lot of old photos, of her grandparents?
D: She had ah, you know it was her um, brother-in-law that was a POW -
A: Oh OK.
D: Actually. Ja. Oh, sorry, no, her brother. Her brother that was a POW. So she had a few and I took pictures of the photos and, she had that kind of thing. That's great, I'll add those pictures to that archive in Pretoria. So that they know where they are, because we actually battle to find the farm.
A: Oh.
D: I was in one of the museums in Paarl and it took them a while to work out which farm it was, so I'll just add this to the whatsitsname. Do you make daily inspections of the grapes then?
A: Ja, you should, you must.

D: Especially now, as you say, you've got a couple of weeks until they -
A: Ja, we've got about three, four weeks, four weeks at the most left, so we've got to run through all of this and ah, check that we start make them a bit neat and so forth. And the wine blocks we give them some extra attention, we don't make wine from all the blocks, only use a certain -
D: Are the rest table grapes or just?
A: No, all of them are wine grapes I just deliver them to the co-op.
D: Oh, to the co-op. OK. Awesome, thanks so much for your time.
A: It's all a pleasure.

Interview 20

Interviewee: Ruth Prinsloo
In attendance: Javier Lorca
Interviewer: Donato Somma
Place: Lake Banagher, Mpumalanga
Date: 6 September 2012
Time: +-16:00
Topic: This is the family home of Commandant H.F. Prinsloo. Ruth is his daughter-in-law.

[Interview begins a few minutes after recording begins as we were left to peruse the albums, cut-outs and pamphlets that were part of the family's collection]**[00:17:50]**.

D: This is really great stuff. Some of it I've seen at the Military History Museum but some of it's brand new to me.
R: Oh good.
D: Do you mind if I take some photographs of it for the research?
R: Please help yourself, help yourself, help yourself. Oh, so you have been to the ah -
D: Ja. I've been working on it for some time, so some of the things I've seen reproduced, but some of it's brand new, especially the stuff to do with the St Joseph's um, the St Joseph's Mission Station, which I visited, but there was no-one there who could tell me anything, so this pamphlet is really useful -
R: Oh great, I'm glad, because I just took out everything, I thought it's really deurmekaar, and I don't know what's pertinent and what is not.
D: I can't believe I've stumbled on the Prinsloo home. I didn't think I would -
R: That's amazing hey.
D: Find it, ja. Because Ton Sanders kept saying Pretorius and then he said oh no it's not Pretorius, it's Prinsloo, sorry.
R: Oh, silly man.
D: And I thought no, it can't be the Prinsloos, so I'm so glad to be seeing this place finally.
R: Yes, I'm glad too, and yes, I must show you the, they painted a portrait of him as well, the original is here, as well.
D: How fantastic, and they did the work on the outside of the building?
R: Actually inside as well, it was just a small house, all stained-glass in the windows and things. And then when they came they broke out, you know, made the rooms big, and they hand-carved the doors -
D: Oh wonderful.
R: Of Rhodesian Teak. And of course the lovely carvings outside all by hand.
D: Is all them. Ja.
R: Yes. And so they, I think they housed them in this cottage here now, while they were here.

And they actually had a little school in the back of the garage there. Where they taught them to read and write, a lot of them [unclear].
D: Oh fantastic. OK, that's great.
R: But they really revered my father in law, absolutely -
D: Ja.
R: After his death his wife as well.
D: Yes.
R: Which was absolutely great.
D: And she helped with some of the books that were written, I think, someone called Gazzini wrote a book that she helped with, it was Grace, hey?
R: Yes. She was quite active, she was very active, in fact she took, studied Italian when she was about eighty-five. [Laugh together]. She was a Sedgwick you know, from Sedgwick Wineries, and ah, she phoned me and said, oh my dear I'm so disappointed. I said what, you've studies so hard, she said, I only got ninety five. [Laugh together]
D: Fantastic.
R: I'm going to go and fetch that tea, I made it.
D: Great. Thank you.
R: Just relax and take -
D: Would you mind if I took some photos of the outside of the building?
R: You can do anything you like.
D: And then I'll come and have tea and we can talk.
R: Let me just show you this one [unclear] come see the portrait.
D: OK. **[00:20:51]** So they did the doorways and that kind of thing as well?
R: Yes.
D: Javier, would you just pass me the -
J: Recorder?
D: Whatitsname, the recorder. Thank you.
R: [Unclear, about the dogs being nuisance]
D: Jeez, this is such a lovely place.
R: Yes.
D: It's beautiful. Oh there's the original, look at that.
R: That's the original, yeah.
D: That's fantastic. Lovely.
R: Look just make yourself at home.
D: This is great, all fantastic stuff. Let me take photos of some of the details of the -
R: Yes, help yourself.
D: Things that they did.
R: Do you know Emilio Coccia?
D: I do, yes.
R: You do.
D: No I'm in contact with him often and ah. So you know what I'm actually doing at this stage, I'm not cataloguing things, you know I'm not writing a history per se -
R: Obviously, ja.
D: I'm collecting folklore -
R: Oh I see.
D: In the local communities, people whose parents or grandparents had Italians on their farms and told them stories. I'm collecting those kind of anecdotal things and that's really what I -
R: Yes, sort of a -
D: Am interested in. Um, do you know anything about the POWs who were at Jessievale?
R: No, I've never heard of it, never heard of it, until Ton mentioned it now.

D: Ja. And those that, there were some kept in a hospital in or near Carolina. I don't know if you know anything about that?
R: [Indicates that she doesn't]
D: Anyway, I just thought if, I wondered if anyone knew something about that. Let me take some pictures outside.
R: Yes, carry on, let me open this door for you. It's a special door, not everybody knows how.
D: It's got a trick. [Chuckle]
R: Yes, I'll tell you. In fact it's got a special key made with a 'S' and a 'P' for Sedgwick and Prinsloo.
D: Oh look at that.
R: Ja. I'll show you the key.
D: [To Javier] The door, the door's got the initials of the two families Sedgwick and Prinsloo. That is so clever.
R: There's the key.
D: That's lovely.
R: Prinsloo and Sedgwick.
D: Look at that. Would you hold that and then I can get a picture of it. **[00:23:27]**
R: Sure. You see 'P' and 'S', which is the best way to have it?
D: That's fine.
R: There's not too much light there.
D: It can always be turned around. Ja, let's have a look at it like this.
R: It hasn't been locked for years. [Laugh together]. I don't think it would get in anyway.
D: Could you just hold it like that? Ja, so I can get the, that's fantastic. And presumably that was done, put together by them?
R: Yes. Yes.
D: The same who built the door?
R: Yes, they made it. They made the door and they made the key.
D: Clever. Ah that's lovely. Brr. [Stepping outside]
R: [Unclear] you tea.
D: Thanks. [Taking pictures of the veranda]
[00:26:15]
D: [To J] Can you see any signatures, inscriptions? Let's go and see if she knows of any. [Return indoors] Great stuff. Ruth, do you know of any place where prisoners inscribed or signed any of the stone-work that they did, or anything like that? On the building?
R: No.
D: There's nothing like that that you can think of?
R: [Indicates that she doesn't]
D: That, is that, down there the school building? Or the place where they stayed?
R: No it was a cottage, they just stayed there. But it was there.
D: It was there already?
R: Yes.
D: And then they had a little school you said -
R: Right at the back of the garage there.
D: At the back of the garage, behind this stone building?
R: Yes, let me go and show you where.
D: Oh no, I don't want to take you out into the cold.
R: No, it's no problem.
[Stepping outside again]
D: I must tell you that this, the workmanship is very familiar. I've been to places now in Limpopo and in Natal -

R: Yes.
D: You start to get a sense of their kind of style of doing things. The way the parquet is done -
R: Yes.
D: It's very distinctive.
R: Yes.
D: I know what you mean.
D: I mean I came down the driveway and you can tell instantly that it's the kind of things that they did.
R: That they did. Ja, ja. The carving alone. All the stone was brought up from the lake, you know.
D: From? Oh really.
R: Ja, sandstone, yes. We had 20mils last night, it's been so dry.
D: Ja, everything's going to spring into life now.
R: Oh yes.
D: Just waiting for this. I drove down from Johannesburg early yesterday morning -
R: Oh my goodness me -
D: And it was cloudy all the way, so apparently it's storming all the way through. **[00:28:40]**
R: Unused, and now still unused, but this was their -
D: Schoolroom.
R: In fact you can still see some writing on the walls.
D: Oh look at that, that's brilliant.
R: Ja, it's very, they just weren't written by anyone-, What it says I don't know?
D: What I'll do is I'll take some pictures with a flash, and then I will, kind of, work with it on the computer, and see if I can get up any clarity. And I'll send you whatever I find.
R: OK, yes.
D: So that you know. Whatever I discover I will. Let me get some photos from the back here.
R: In the middle. We don't farm much here anymore.
D: Ja.
R: Um.
D: OK, now let me get the flash.
R: If you come here you can see more, brighter.
D: Ja. Let's see if the flash helps or makes it worse. Um, no, that's too much. What I'll do is I'll take a video of it. Um. **[00:30:30]**
R: That's really very old hey?
D: Ja.
R: Really really old.
D: And there's no other writing that you know of in the building?
R: No.
D: Javier, wave for the research. [Laugh together] Hi.
J: Here is something and here.
R: Now that I can't even see.
D: Ja, it's really faint. Sometimes if you fiddle with it you will, on the computer, you will be able to -
R: Computer's fantastic.
D: To get a whatitsname. OK, let me stop there. Great. Back to. [Reading] Ogni cosa, each thing, ha un, has a. Ja. Ogni cos a ha un, is that a 'P'? Posto, place, maybe. [Unclear], no I can't read that at all.
J: [Unclear]
D: I don't know, I think that's a 'Q'

J: This one here, the second. In una e -
D: Questa
J: Questa edificatione, or edifi- something.
D: Edificio
J: Per motivi di, I don't know what -
D: I'll have to work them out. **[00:33:23]**
R: [Unclear]
D: That's very cool, lovely.
R: Okeydokey.
D: Here's also something. Salami, that just says salami. [All laugh together].
R: They were hungry [laughing].
D: Perhaps, ja.
J: Here you have a name or something [unclear]
D: OK, that's going to need the flash. Ja. It's definitely a name.
R: Do you need me to bring a torch?
D: No, I think I caught most of it, if I have any questions I might contact you and ask you to send in someone with a camera or something, if you wouldn't mind?
R: No, I don't mind.
J: [Unclear]
D: Is there another?
J: Looks like a date, and there is this if you want.
D: 16-
J: I don't know, numbers.
D: I must take the flash off.
R: I'm going in so long, I left the fire on.
D: OK.
R: You just take your time.
D: OK, thanks.
R: Come when you're ready. When you come just close the gate.
D: OK, just push it shut?
R: No, not the door, the gate.
D: Alright. OK. **[00:35:35]** This is great. I'm sure there is stuff tucked away here somewhere.
J: Sorry?
D: I'm sure there is stuff tucked away here somewhere in the roof, because they did, they left shoes in places and ah, all sorts of things. Let me just put this flash on. I think there was a fire in here, at some stage, something's burnt. [Move outside]. **[00:43:45]**
D: Um, Ruth. Did you ever have POWs' children or grandchildren come and see the farm, or come and visit? Not really?
R: No, not really, not really. When my mother-in-law was still alive she used to have lots of children for holidays and things -
D: Oh OK, they used to come and visit?
R: Ja, [unclear].
J: [Unclear]
R: Icy.
D: Ja, it's gone cold, it was OK this morning. Oopsie.
R: [Unclear]. Are you still going back today or are you staying over?
D: No, we actually. I actually am supposed to be on holiday, I'm not supposed to be doing research at all. I'm supposed to be taking a break. Um, ja, it's in between the terms at the university, so I thought I would take a couple of days and stay with a friend of mine, Dave, who owns the stables at Dullstroom.

R: Oh.
D: So we actually drove from Dullstroom this morning.
R: Oh you did?
D: Ja. Kind of went to Carolina because I had heard there was something there. They sent me on to Chrissiesmeer.
R: And you didn't find anything at Carolina?
D: Um no, well what Ton suggested is that I speak to Mondi or Sappi.
R: I don't think that any of those people would know anything.
D: So what I'll do is I'll email the company branch. I will contact them via email, there's no point kind of going there, in the middle of a work day and saying, can you tell me anything about -
R: I mean really, we are trying to get these orders out we've got no time to talk about 1940s.
D: Yes, there's no time to talk about the 1940s, so I'll contact them by email, you know.
R: Yes, I think that will probably be the best. **[00:46:05]**
D: The best.
R: I'm just wondering, I know some Italian people in Ermelo. I sometimes see them, you know, at that November -
D: Is this Enzo -
R: Enzo.
D: Raciti.
R: Raciti, that's right. No thanks for me. OK, so I'll look him up then, when I'm back in Johannesburg and see if I can contact him. I met a very interesting woman [recount the story of Lou Jurriaanse, relating meeting the POWs and descendants, we discuss the dogs. Discuss a route home]
[00:51:25]
D: So how long have you lived in this home?
R: In this house, I've lived since 1970.
D: OK.
R: But I've been here for forty eight [unclear] years now, I came here as a bride of nineteen.
D: It's a beautiful area.
R: It is beautiful.
D: Absolutely gorgeous.
R: Ja, it's really, really nice.
D: Chrissiesmeer is a gorgeous little town.
R: Yes. Very touristy these days.
D: It seems like that, it seems like it's building up into a -
R: Please have more tea. [Offers tea around]
D: So Chrissiesmeer is becoming more touristy?
R: Very much so, yes, very much so. Yes, they want to you know, this is a sort of lake area and they want to claim it a wildlife area.
D: A heritage site, ja.
R: A heritage site.
D: And are they lakes, I mean, naturally occurring -
R: Yes.
D: Oh fantastic.
R: Apparently they were all one lake, if you look from the air, it's just lakes, strings of lakes. And apparently, in the beginning, it was all just one big -
D: One big lake.
R: It gets its water from rain, big catchment areas.
D: And it must drain quite a large area to build up lakes, it must drain quite a large area, quite

a big, is it in a valley?
R: No it's flat, completely flat. Mostly.
D: Gorgeous. Absolutely gorgeous. And this lake's name is?
R: Banagher.
D: Banagher.
R: Ja, Lake Banagher. There was a chap called Alexander McCorkindale, came out in 1856, with his wife, and ah, there was nothing. Just nothing.
D: Ton was staying they stayed in a cave?
R: That's correct, the cave is right here, on our farm.
D: Oh, on your farm.
R: On the farm, and he built this cottage, so that's very, very old. That's called McCorkindale Cottage.
D: Oh that's the cottage itself.
R: That's the cottage itself. Ja, ja and we've now made it into a guesthouse.
D: Ah, brilliant.
R: So people can stay, because it's so nice and private.
D: And were there a string of Scottish emigrants.
R: Lots, they all came out together and this is actually, Ton wrote a book about it.
D: Yes, I just bought it, I bought the book in Carolina.
R: There you go, that's it. that's where Ton wrote all the history of Chrissiesmeer.
D: Ja, he's a very interesting guy, we just went to his house.
R: He's a very intelligent, knowledgeable guy.
D: Ja, he's got all sorts of projects going, just, I mean he's really the best quality amateur historian -
R: Yes, that he is that.
D: Kind of person.
R: Yes, yes.
D: Ja, and his house is lovely.
R: Yes. The Barclay's Bank.
D: Magic. **[00:53:35]**
[Continue to discuss Ton's home. Final greetings]

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