

12-15-2017

Immigrant Communities, Cultural Conflicts, and Intermarriage in Ann Marie Di Mambro's Tally's Blood

Ian Brown
Kingston University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl>



Part of the [Dramatic Literature, Criticism and Theory Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brown, Ian (2017) "Immigrant Communities, Cultural Conflicts, and Intermarriage in Ann Marie Di Mambro's Tally's Blood," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 43: Iss. 2, 283–298.
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol43/iss2/25>

This Article is brought to you by the Scottish Literature Collections at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in Scottish Literature* by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

**IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES, CULTURAL CONFLICTS,
AND INTERMARRIAGE IN ANN MARIE DI MAMBRO'S
*TALLY'S BLOOD***

Ian Brown

Anne Marie Di Mambro's play *Tally's Blood* was first performed in 1990 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, directed by my namesake (then the theatre's Artistic Director). The action of the play moves from 1936 through to 1955, and its title comes from a common twentieth-century slang term for the raspberry syrup squirted onto ice-cream cones by ice-cream salespeople in Scotland, drawing on the demeaning, and arguably racist, Scots term for an Italian person, "Tally." The adjective is used for this ice-cream supplement because many of the progenitors of today's Italo-Scots communities came to Scotland to work in the food industry, especially to set up, or work in, cafés, or to tour towns in vans or on specially designed delivery bicycles, selling ice-cream and related products. Di Mambro (born 1950) is herself a member of the Italo-Scottish community, and her play deals principally and centrally with issues of assimilation (and non-assimilation) over time of Italian immigrants—specifically what would now be called economic migrants—into a Scottish host culture, chiefly from perspectives within that migrant community.

While the play undoubtedly centres on the historic mid-twentieth-century experience of this Italo-Scottish community, its continuing relevance today derives from its pioneering exploration of the relationships of new Scots to one another in their new community, and to the host community itself, so casting light also on the experience of other newer immigrant communities. Indeed, in this century other key works by the children of new Scots have emerged. These include, from the South Asian community, Suhayl Saadi's first major novel *Psychoraag* (2004), where Scots, English and Urdu languages meld into new-Scots hybridity, and Matthew Zajac's play *The Tailor of Inverness* (2008), dramatising his Polish father's experience of European war and post-war immigration into Scotland, employing not only Scots and English, but other languages including Polish, Ukrainian and German in a multilingual blend. *Tally's Blood*, however, was one of the first of such works about the immigrant

experience. Meanwhile, Di Mambro herself has moved away somewhat from theatre in her dramatic writing. After several successes in the late 1980s, and despite the success of *Brothers of Thunder* (1994), exploring issues around the AIDS epidemic and attitudes to gay men, and two more recent one-act contributions to the programme of Oran Mor's *A Play, a Pie and a Pint* lunchtime programmes, Di Mambro has successfully concentrated since 1990 on writing popular drama for Scottish and UK television, including many episodes for such leading series as *High Road*, *Casualty*, *River City* and *EastEnders*.

In *Tally's Blood*, Di Mambro, coming from a new-Scottish community, offers particular dramatic and character insights to a migration process often seen in twentieth-century Scottish literature in terms of host-community reactions. An example of this is the treatment of the looting of what was perceived as a German optician's in Bill Bryden's *Willie Rough* (1972), set in World War One. There, such looting is represented as jolly, rather than deeply disturbing. Di Mambro's play was important at the time of its première, and remains so, for offering lively insights into the viewpoints of those making their lives in a sometimes-hostile host community. It reflects often-prejudiced pre-war responses of members of the host community to Italian immigrants, and particularly their outright hostility, including the smashing of shop windows and looting of premises early in World War Two on Italy's first declaring war on the Allies. Then, even well-assimilated members of the Italo-Scottish community were declared enemy aliens, their menfolk subject to internment.

The play does this, however, without glossing over or sanitising the fact that members of the new migrant community might feel antipathy to the host community which might precede rather than be a reaction to host community prejudice. Indeed, part of the play's power arises from its clear representation of the fact that prejudice against newly arrived communities is not a one-way process: those new communities may well, as with characters in Di Mambro's play, feel prejudice against the attitudes and values of the host community. The play's readiness to address such issues of intercultural prejudice and intercommunal misunderstanding, not to say hostility, is still relevant today when both economic and refugee migration continue to be important issues in Western host societies. This may explain the continued popularity of *Tally's Blood*, not only in productions in Scotland since its première, but in its current inclusion, through which it has become, in effect, canonical, as a key study-text in contemporary Scottish secondary-school certificate curricula. The way Di Mambro deals, with a clear eye, with the ambivalences and ambiguities of being an Italian-Scot and the painful collisions and confusions that cultural heritages can generate becomes representative of such collisions and confusions, current

and past, within other new-Scots communities and between such communities and the host community.

Gioia Angeletti has drawn attention to another aspect of this concern, a complementary feminist insight, not only in the work of Di Mambro, but that of another Italo-Scottish dramatist, Marcella Evaristi. Angeletti argues that both add an enriching strand to the thematic preoccupation of “many contemporary Scottish women playwrights [with how discrimination, marginality and displacement impinge upon individual identity]”.¹ She observes: “For both Marcella Evaristi and Ann Marie Di Mambro, this concern must be added to their personal experience as second-generation immigrants from Catholic Italo-Scottish families who must learn how to come to terms with their hyphenated identities.”² As Tom Maguire has argued, Di Mambro’s “Italian roots add a further dimension of hybridity to an already hyphenated subaltern identity.”³ As a leading Scottish female playwright, then, while writing out of her own “hybridised” Italo-Scottish identity, Di Mambro, though now focussed on television writing, sits alongside such key “hyphenated” theatre-writers of her generation as Liz Lochhead, Sue Glover, Linda McLean, Anne Downie, Rona Munro, Nicola McCartney and Zinnie Harris. Both Di Mambro’s parallels with such writers and her specific treatment of gender, feminism and sexuality would form quite another article, but it should be noted here that *Tally’s Blood* represents a significant contribution to a new wave of playwriting in Scottish theatre that celebrated the power of women writers and diversity of identity.

The play is further significant in the way that it addresses issues of new-Scots citizens. While it is not the first to do so—Unity Theatre’s production of Robert Mitchell’s *The Gorbals Story* (1946), for example, includes an immigrant travelling salesman—by and large such earlier plays tend to represent such characters, if not as exotic, as certainly, even in Unity’s humane treatment, outsiders in Scottish society. What *Tally’s Blood* achieves, as it explores events in the lives of the ice-cream-parlour-owning Pedreschis, is to take for granted, as it should, their new-Scottishness—almost before we used the term—as Italians by descent and

¹ Gioia Angeletti, “Performing Cross-Cultural Relations, Identity and Conflict in Contemporary Scottish Theatre: Expatriate Italian Communities in Marcella Evaristi’s *Commedia* and Ann Marie di Mambro’s *Tally’s Blood*,” *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen*, Volume 8.2 (2015), p. 1 at <https://ijosts.ubiquitypress.com/articles/abstract/202/> (accessed 7 September 2017).

² *Ibid.*

³ Tom Maguire, “Women playwrights from the 1970s and 1980s,” in Ian Brown, ed., *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 155.

Italo-Scottish by assimilation, whose older generations made their lives in Scotland throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To do this, the play examines the experience of Italian-Scots over a twenty-year period spanning World War Two. This timescale is important because the play is not focused simply on the effects of war, nor the despicable treatment of Italian-Scots during the war years. Large as these issues are, the play seeks to address other, arguably even larger, issues of relations between immigrant and host communities and the attitudinal changes that can develop over a longer period and between generations.

The play does so, as Anne Marie Di Mambro herself explains in her Introduction to the published text, in a way that recognises that whatever pressure of prejudice there may be found in the host community against the new communities, there is also prejudice to be found among new Scots against the host community.⁴ What is more, and importantly, the play problematises the concept of what it is to be a Scot and so what it means to talk, if one can, in simple terms of a host community. In Act One Scene Thirteen, for example, we see the young characters Lucia, the motherless child of Rosinella's sister and widowed brother-in-law, Luigi, whom Rosinella has fostered and brought from Italy to Scotland, and Scots-born Hughie parody a school class. This, however, is surely not parody, but, rather, painful reminder of how in the 1930s and 1940s the intolerance and prejudices represented might exist among teachers as they dealt with new-Scot pupils. Di Mambro complicates identity in this scene by having the Scottish Hughie play an Italian-Scot, Lucia's uncle-figure, Franco: Hughie has become in some sense an incomer while Lucia, the girl born in Italy, is a Scottish teacher. After putting Hughie through a series of mental arithmetic questions until he falters, Lucia says:

Too long! I can't spend all day with one child. I've got these other little children to see to as well you know. Little SCOTTISH boys and girls. I think they deserve some of the teacher's time too. You should have done these sums last night, Franco. Why didn't you?
(p. 73)

She goes on to taunt him with his way of life in dialogue which includes the following:

Sure you weren't too busy serving the shop? ... It's not Franco's fault he lives in a shop.... Oh, so there's twelve of you living there. My oh my! Not all in the same bed I hope. Now stop laughing boys and girls, it's not funny ... I don't know what you're doing in this class in the first place. A little ruffian like you. A sleekit little, greasy little, smelly little... (pp. 73-4)

⁴ Anne Marie Di Mambro, *Tally's Blood* (Dundee: Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002).

Di Mambro conveys the prejudice shown towards some new Scots by mediating it through a child's game of teacher and pupil, but that "game" brings to mind the distinguished artist Richard Demarco's remembering having stones thrown at him as a child in Edinburgh by other children just because he was "Italian", drawing from him "Tally's Blood."

Di Mambro is, however, not engaged in some simplistic blame game. She is clear that the fraught relationship is bilateral, and indeed multilateral, and that a sense of "belonging" is fragile and complex. Diasporic identities can be profoundly entrenched and inevitably intertwined with the construction of identity of the host community. Nonetheless, given that in most host contexts the immigrant community is relatively disempowered "bilateral" relationship does not signify "equal" relationship, or one that is in every respect mutual. Very early in Act One Scene Four Rosinella, the maternal older Italian woman, says "What's it [war] to do with us? We just live here. It's no even our country" (p. 36). When war does break out, she says to her husband, "But it's got nothing to do with us, Massimo. We're Italian, we just live here. It's not our country." (p. 50) Later, when Italy has come into the war and Massimo says that may have implications for them, she says "We just live here. We're just ordinary working people" (p. 57). While her husband Massimo, born in Italy, feels part of the Scottish community and his younger brother Franco, born in Scotland, feels even more part of the community, Rosinella, herself born in Italy, but living in Scotland, represents a part of the Italo-Scottish community that sees itself as apart, alien and perhaps alienated from the community of which it forms part—a part, but apart.

Even distinct Italian identity of the kind Rosinella sees as, for her, clearly determined is complex in this play. At the end of Act One Scene Two, set in 1939, when Franco and Massimo are celebrating their Italian community, they sing a verse of a song which begins:

Giovanezza, Giovanezza,
Prima vera [*sic*] di bellezza.

This is a verse from a song that between the wars was an unofficial Italian national anthem. It became that because it was the marching song of the Fascists under Mussolini, whom verses of the song praise. In this song is reflected the division between the power of Il Duce and the King, between the hierarchy of the party whose song this is and the supposed constitutional settlement expressed in the national anthem which this song for some replaced. So imbued is this song with its Fascist meanings that it is still banned in Italy. Yet it seems clear that, although Mussolini made determined efforts to recruit diaspora Italians in the UK to his fascist movement, establishing, for example, the Casa d'Italia in Glasgow's Park Circus in 1934, ostensibly as a social centre for expatriate Italo-Scots,

neither Franco nor Massimo are Fascists.⁵ Franco goes on to die fighting against the Axis powers. Community (and Italian and Italo-Scottish) identity is complicated.

That complication is increased when families and individuals seek to settle in new communities. Some assimilate; others do not; some settle, but succumb from time to time to nostalgia. In Act One Scene Twelve just before we learn that Italy has joined the war on Hitler's side, Massimo has a speech in which he remembers, using Scots-language lexis, that,

My faither's got a house in Italy.... There no hot water, no cludgie [*toilet*], no lights, no gas. You've to walk two miles for water and cook on a big black pot on the fire. If you want a keigh [*to defecate*] you've to go outside. There's a hole in the ground with a plank across it and the flies buzz round your arse. (*A beat*) God, I wish I was there now (p. 65).

We, therefore, see varieties of response to settlement in a new environment and this play's continuing relevance lies at least in part from the way it offers parallels to the situation of more recent new Scots. For example, Di Mambro uses language throughout to remind us of the difficulties of assimilation processes. In Act One (pp. 33-34), Lucia, having now started school, refuses to speak English. In trying to persuade her she must, Franco, Rosinella and Massimo become themselves linguistically confused, mixing up "Speak English" with "Parla Inglese", Lucia is obdurate until, driven to distraction by the way she is, in effect, being torn between her own two linguistic identities, she screams at them, "Fuck off!" This violent release of tension draws Massimo into the violence of slapping her, using the Scots "You bliddy bitch!," and Rosinella in turn slapping him for hitting the "wean." Despite her conceiving of herself as still "Italian", she resorts to a Scots word when she is passionately defending her young. The ensuing verbal fight's volatility, a word used by Di Mambro here in a stage direction, marks the volatility, the mercurial shape-shifting, of the play's exploration of communities and identities.

Di Mambro's play, of course, shows us failure to communicate not simply through language differences as such, but through constructions of self-identity which are based on community prejudice. Repeatedly, Rosinella sees differences between the Scots and the Italians. Scottish girls are, in her mind, less self-respecting. When Rosinella sees Franco getting involved with Bridget, "this Scotch girl," she asserts it can be only because "she must be giving you something you can't get from an Italian girl" (p. 24). She does not see—either cannot see or refuses to see—that Bridget's

⁵ See, for example, Caroline Moorhead, "The forgotten story of Scotland's Italian fascists," *The Herald Magazine* (10 June 2017), 12-17.

“da’ll no let us go to the dancing.... Says lassies just cheapen themselves” (p. 41) there because girls “stand in a line” in a kind of human market. In other words, Rosinella cannot, or will not, see the respectability where it appears in the host community that she believes belongs only to her Italian identity. Further, she is oblivious to the point that, judging by their surname, Devlin, Bridget’s family is as much from a new-Scottish community as hers, though larger and of slightly longer standing, the Irish-Scots community, one with, in general, as strong a Catholic morality and tradition as her own. She is ensnared in a conception of family honour and self-identification within her version of an Italian-descent community that blinds her to her own cultural pre-conceptions and leaves her unable to see the values embedded in the life of her neighbours. What is more, her traditionalist view that Italians should marry only Italians—derived perhaps from her early upbringing in, and so loyalty to, Italy or perhaps from a desire to maintain through intermarriage strategic survival of a diasporic identity—is exposed in the play not only as narrow and prejudiced, but as actually emotionally crippling and potentially damaging to the future of those she loves most.

Rosinella’s determination that her brother-in-law Franco, who, unlike her husband Massimo, was born in Scotland, should not become involved with his Scottish girl-friend Bridget has, indeed, brutal results. Franco, whose birth in Scotland “makes me British” (p. 51) has a more relaxed attitude to inter-community relationships. It is clear that he cares for Bridget deeply. We are told by Franco that in Italy, “if you like someone, you buy them gold,” and he has bought Bridget a gold charm in the form of a “corneet”, his Scots dialect word for a “cornet”, or “ice-cream cone” (p. 29). (The author observes that she sees the Scots dialect of the play being set in Lanarkshire, largely from Hamilton, her home town.)⁶ This would seem an appropriate gift from someone who sells ice cream, but hidden in this gift is a cultural imbrication for Italian-Scots. The usual Italian “cornetto” charm is not in the shape of an ice-cream cone, but of a “*cornetto portafortuna*“, a chilli or chili pepper. In fact, the author has confirmed that in this scene she had conceived of the gift being of an ice-cream cone or cornet, but in the shape of an Italian *cornetto portafortuna*.⁷ Thus, though hidden from all but the most culturally knowledgeable and alert audience member, the gift is a richly significant intercultural love-token. Yet we are also reminded of the poverty of the times by Bridget’s response when he tells her she can wear her charm on a chain: she reveals she doesn’t have a chain, or a bracelet, or a watch. The daughter of a miner

⁶ Email message, 8 September 2017

⁷ Email 19 July 2017. I am grateful to Professor Carla Sassi for drawing my attention to the potential double meaning of the term “cornet” for an Italo-Scot.

with a family of eight, she is too poor for such luxuries. The irony of Rosinella's proclamation of the essential virtue of Italian women lies not least in the fact that, when her father wanted her to marry another man in order to increase the economic prosperity of her family, she and Massimo eloped. Under the conventions of the place and time, if they spent a night away with one another, however innocently, they had to marry. Yet, still Rosinella sees "Scotch" girls as easy of virtue. In fact, it is clear in the play that Franco and Bridget are committed to one another. It is only after he has joined up and is leaving for war that finally Bridget succumbs to their mutual desire and is, as she resisted earlier, "carried away" (p 42). In Act One Scene Nine, in the ginger [lemonade] store where so much of the play takes place, we see them in a post-coital embrace during which Franco asks whether she regrets what she has done. She, who has lost her father in a mine accident, says "Franco, listen to me. My mammy saw my da off to his work one morning. Never saw him alive again. I'd regret it more if anything happened to you, and we hadn't..." (pp. 53-4; ellipses in original text). Di Mambro deals with difficult issues of moral choice, the need of the young to grasp the moment, exacerbated no doubt by the fact of war and the possible imminence of death. Despite Rosinella's prejudices and antipathy, a loving Italian-Scottish liaison has come about. The moral complexity Di Mambro explores is served by dramatic plotting which is rich in ironies.

Bridget's mother apparently found it impossible to manage her fertility and it is a sad irony that Bridget in her evident innocence of contraceptive practices, no doubt shared by Franco at the period in question, becomes pregnant by him. The difference between the rigidities of Rosinella and the tender empathy shown by her husband, Massimo—who because of that ability to empathise often seems weak—means that when Bridget comes for a loan from him as the only person she can think of to ask he appears to understand why she would need one so urgently. Despite his religious beliefs, he gives her the money and she has a backstreet abortion. Meanwhile, Rosinella, who is herself desperate for a child and envies Bridget's mother, cannot come to terms with the pain of her own childlessness, seeing it in the narrow terms of her Italian prism and sense of entitlement: "And me an Italian as well." Her rigid antipathy brings her to make Bridget believe that Franco does not love her and only used her for his own pleasure. It is this that brings about Bridget's decision, funded by Massimo, to lose her child. Later, when Franco's last letter arrives after his death in the war, it begins, though very slowly, to dawn on Rosinella that there is a reality of emotion that lies beyond the strictly limited framework she believes applies in her family. She, who ran away for love herself, has not been able to see a love that grew in front of her eyes because that love did not fit into the prescribed exclusive patterns of identity, sexual politics,

narrowly-defined community and cultural inward-lookingness that she sees as gospel.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that Rosinella, who has taken in Lucia, her dead sister's motherless child, and come to love her—possessively no doubt, but truly—as her own, who is committed to the service of what she sees as her family—we are reminded more than once of her cutting of the toenails of Massimo and Franco's elderly Daddy—has reserves of love to give. Yet, she is blinkered. Di Mambro in her Introduction calls it selfishness which drives her prejudice, but arguably she does not do justice to the depth of her own creative insight. What Rosinella demonstrates is a woman trapped by her own viewpoints, which certainly lead to expressions of prejudice, but also are part of a constrained worldview derived from a restricted upbringing and a set of narrow principles. These she has never been able to question because to challenge them is in itself to succumb to the “wrong” worldview of those who would challenge her worldview. She is, in effect, for most of the play cut off in a solipsist world.

While Di Mambro develops her central characters in interaction with others, she is also, of course, drawing our attention to the wider world in which they live. The poverty of the Devlin family has already been referred to and throughout Act One the audience sees the heavy demands the ice-cream shop makes on those who work all hours in it, something emphasised by the sardonic school-room scene in which the immigrant's hard work is derided. The Devlins come, of course, from the Auld Toon. We may not know exactly where that is, but every Scottish town of any size has its Auld Toon, an area marked out by poverty and various kinds of social deprivation. Di Mambro deftly sketches the nature of this district without overdoing the impression she conveys. She also brings into her dramatic picture, beside the larger issues we have already discussed about immigration, community and (non)assimilation, the important issue of the war-time treatment of Italian-Scots. At the time she wrote, this caused something of surprise in a Scottish audience which had forgotten, or perhaps more accurately suppressed, the memory of what happened to the Italian community in Scotland during World War Two. It has also led, perhaps understandably, given the gravity of that treatment, at least one critic to misread the meaning and structure of the play. In reviewing a 2003 revival at the Byre Theatre, St Andrews, for *The Guardian*, Mark Brown was thrown by the powerful material Di Mambro addresses. Committing the cardinal critical error of not addressing the play one is faced with, but rather wishing Di Mambro had written a play about Massimo's wartime internship, he observes that such a “shameful episode from Scotland's history [is...] so inherently dramatic that it seems ready-made for the stage.” One can hardly argue with that, but his desire that Di Mambro had written a different play leads him to undervalue the skill of Di Mambro's

dramaturgy in shaping and presenting her main themes in the actual play being reviewed. He went on to comment:

Although the centre of the drama is the events of wartime, it actually spans some 20 years, from the Pedreschis leaving Italy with Lucia in 1936 to an unusual reunion some 11 years after the war. This creates an immense structural weakness at the heart of the play. While the first act follows the characters' lives before and during the conflict, the second indulges in increasingly irrelevant family affairs.⁸

In fact, those “increasingly irrelevant family affairs”, as we shall see, are central to the play’s meaning. Meanwhile, the timeframe, which, as the action develops in performance, scarcely has time to impinge on the audience’s consciousness as “weakness,” if such it is, allows Di Mambro through her craft to provide an overarching dramaturgical structure which balances the action of Act One against that of Act Two. This draws together her key themes, which are not, *pace* Mark Brown, warfare and its deplorable impacts, but issues, as we have noted, of immigration, social deprivation, cultural conflict and assimilation and, through the counterbalance of the acts, generational change.

To achieve this counterbalance, there are technical problems for the playwright. The timescale of the tale Di Mambro wishes to unfold undoubtedly presents difficult passages of time to show on stage. Tom Maguire addresses the structural solution she chooses: “with its appearance of an unfolding family chronicle, temporal gaps between events create a sense of time as mosaic rather than causally-focused narrative.”⁹ One might, indeed, suggest that the play has a filmic structure, with its short scenes and, often, cross-cutting within scenes. This filmic or, indeed, televisual analogy does make sense, but Maguire’s metaphor of a mosaic goes further to highlight an aspect of Di Mambro’s dramaturgy. With a skill that amounts nearly to effrontery, she plays with the potential of the stage in handling time.

There are, indeed, two distinct timescales in this play. Act One runs from 1936 to 1944, from Lucia’s birth until Massimo’s return from internment. In that timescale, we see the crises of upbringing that Lucia and, quite soon, Hughie go through and the moral conflicts already discussed. Act Two, however, covers a matter of months over a decade later. We still have the short scenes, but the playwright engages us in a much less leisured timescale. It is not that all is action, but that there is an acceleration of action until the final scenes take place almost breathlessly.

⁸ Mark Brown, *The Guardian* (March 5, 2003; accessed 22 August 22, 2017): <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2003/mar/05/theatre.artsfeatures2>.

⁹ Tom Maguire, “Women playwrights,” in Brown (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama*, 162.

Within this dramatic timeframe, Di Mambro is capable of a sleight of her dramatic hand that, when we unpick what happens, can be seen to involve Hardy-esque improbabilities. In the theatre, however, her playwriting skill carries us along. For example, in Act One, no sooner has Bridget received the money from Massimo for her abortion and left with a line to Massimo repeated several times earlier, "Everybody likes you," than—within a page and in the same scene—we learn Italy is at war with Britain and we are engaged in a tightly drafted scene which conveys the terror of the local community as the "Everybody [that] likes you," or a substantial part of that "Everybody" is attacking their shop, looting it and calling them, among other insults, "Greasy Tallies" and "Tally bastards." Lucia, who at this point is about four years old, wets herself in fear. Within another page, the police, whom Massimo and Rosella think will have come to apprehend the looters, come to take away Massimo and intern him. In the next scene, we learn of the tragedy of the *Arandora Star*, sunk by a U-boat when full of Italian and German internees and German prisoners-of-war being deported to Canada.

Yet this dramatic swiftness, almost that of a thunderclap, reflects the timing of the storm that broke over the Italian community. Mussolini brought Italy into the war on June 10, 1940, and the sinking of the *Arandora Star* took place less than a month later, on July 2. A dramatic narrative that has been moving on the level of family drama, darkened somewhat by the threat, and then the reality, of war suddenly reflects an agony felt as a national disaster. For many years after the war this was not discussed because the internship of Italo-Scots came soon to be seen as shameful behaviour by their UK fellow-citizens. This shame was made worse by the tragedy of the sinking of the *Arandora Star*, on which, in the play's emplotment, travelled—and died—Massimo's father, Daddy. Here, one is dealing not just with issues of family relations, personality and community identities, but with the ways in which we as an audience may have our eyes opened to that from which the information channels of our society had for many years sought to avert them. In her introduction, the playwright talks of how little was "known about the experiences of Italians in this country during the war." Her play opened those up again to our gaze.

Within her skilfully manipulated time-frames, Di Mambro's Act Two relates to and refracts the themes of Act One. In Act Two, she brings her characters into the reality of life in Italy in the mid-1950s in terms of cultural assumptions and particularly in terms of the place of women—as opposed to Rosinella's nostalgic perceptions of what Italian life means. In Act One, she was scathing about what she claims is the easy sexual availability of "this Scotch girl," the Bridget whom she insists on seeing as trying to entrap Franco who should marry a good Italian woman. We now

learn she, unsurprisingly, believes that Lucia should marry an Italian. She has lined up for her Silvio Palumbo who “cannie keep his eyes off you” (p. 101). She recognises that many young Italian women have to work hard, cleaning chickens, for example, but “my Lucia’s to marry a man that really loves HER—not to put her in a shop and make her work.” Further, her sense of the virtue of Italian men and the lack of virtue among Scotsmen is reinforced when she says: “I don’t know anybody works so hard as the Italian men.” The stage direction that immediately follows this line reads “*Hughie in: with pail and mop*” (p. 102). In this theatrical jump-cut from spoken line to stage image, we see her wilful neglect of what Hughie has done for the family business, the disparagement of Scotsmen at the expense of idealised Italian men, and how Rosinella has clearly over the years come to think of Lucia not as her sister’s and her widowed brother-in-law’s daughter, but as “my Lucia.” Of “her” Lucia she says “That’s what I want for you—a good life—with a good Italian man—here” (p. 102). After the first scene of Act One, when we saw the recently bereaved Luigi hand his daughter into Massimo’s safe-keeping, we have been allowed (or, rather, the playwright’s craft has led us) to forget that Lucia is being fostered by Rosinella and Massimo. Both have naturally formed a strong parental attachment, and clearly Lucia sees them as her parents. However solipsistic Rosinella’s attitudes especially to “her” Lucia sometimes appear, her emotional commitment to her dead sister’s daughter has developed in an understandable way which ignores the legal facts of the family relationships involved. Lucia is not “hers” and she has no right, morally or in law, to choose who might marry her, nor to expect she will live “here” in Scotland.

So far as the Pedreschi family are concerned this legal fact is the snake in their familial Eden. When Luigi, as is his legal right, demands that his daughter, handed over as a baby at the beginning of Act One, be returned in Act Two, now still only 19, to live with him, she must be returned.¹⁰ Despite the emotional resistance that Rosinella in her extrovert and

¹⁰ The contrast between Scottish and Italian attitudes to a daughter’s marriage is both legal and cultural. In Scotland, in the 1930s and 1940s, the age for attaining legal majority was 21; it moved to 18, on January 1, 1970; and to 16, with some limitations, on September 25, 1991. However, prior to 1970, Scots law made some important distinctions between younger children and “minors” (those in the age bracket 14-20), and under the Age of Marriage Act 1929, minors in Scotland aged 16 or older could marry. In Italy, in the 1930s and 1940s, the age of legal majority was 21; it was changed to 18 following a report in 1970 by the European Committee on Legal Cooperation. In broader cultural terms, in Italy even as late as the 1950s, the marriage partner of a female child was very much a choice which the father might make, as is still possible in other patriarchal societies through the process of arranged marriage.

Massimo in his introvert ways put up in Act Two Scene Six, we see the parting take place in Act Two Scene Eight, halfway through the act. Here again, Di Mambro's dramaturgical craft is evident: the second act pivots on this scene, more or less centrally in the act: 44 pages of script lead up to it and 37 follow it. This structural crafting of the central action of the Act Two plot echoes some major examples—from the usual central placing of the peripeteia and anagnorisis in Greek tragedy to the placing in *Hamlet* of the revelatory "Mousetrap" halfway through the play's action. Playwrights always work with structures of time as well as character and space.

By the time Lucia leaves for Italy, we know that she and Hughie are in love, as were Franco and Bridget, though they have, in a gently amused series of scenes, never quite been able to express that to one another. Having faced the crisis of losing "my Lucia," Rosinella in the next scene learns at last how wrong she was about the love of Franco and Bridget and how her actions appear to have been what persuaded Bridget to abort the child she and Franco had made together. Di Mambro never quite lets us know what Rosinella makes of this. The playwright leaves us to find our own understanding. What she says is that Rosinella "*backs off in disbelief*" on hearing that Bridget was pregnant with Franco's baby (p. 145), hears the story of the backstreet abortion with "*increasing horror*," and, when Bridget has finished, she is "*on her knees, blesses herself: lights down on her, but she stays there*." Then, we see Massimo and Hughie at last come to a moment of understanding when Hughie feels—after the departure of Lucia and faced with Rosinella's constant hostility to his attachment to her "daughter"—he must leave the shop. As Rosinella is dealing, though, with the loss of a possible nephew or niece because of Bridget's response to her goading, but, as far as we know, with no deep self-knowledge or sense of her own responsibility, Massimo, whose strong empathy we have already described as seeming "weak," faces her with her own self-centredness. In a scene of great dramatic power, Massimo manages to tell her the nature of her behaviour, culminating in the lines: "You love her that much, nobody else has to get loving her. Oh aye, you love Lucia alright." This is as much, one might think, as to say "you don't truly love her for her own sake at all." Rosinella is "*shattered*" (p. 149). Hughie comes in upon this scene and in three powerfully economic lines there is a reconciliation between Rosinella and Hughie in which they exchange names, she his first name, he her formal married name, and she ends the scene: "Hughie son—I'm sorry." This is a word we have not so far heard her utter. She breaks down in tears and the "[toe-rag] from the Auld Toon" comforts her.

At this point we are five-sixths of the way through the play and the final sixth takes us to Italy where, in the mind of Rosinella and even at times, despite where he had had formerly to keigh, that of Massimo, existed an idealised way of life. Very quickly we learn that Lucia is very

far from the kind of “good life—with a good Italian man” Rosinella wanted for her. She begins by being scared of a spider, which she thinks is a scorpion (pp. 150-1): this for her is alien territory. The way of life is also alien. In the same scene, Luigi says to Lucia “*affectionately*” that his wife “thinks you’re lazy. . . . I says, She’s no lazy. She’s just no used to work.” Later in this scene Rosinella enters to see Lucia, who is quite new to this way of life, making “*a real mess*” of washing clothes in the country way, using two stones. Rosinella, whose childhood in Italy made her familiar with such ways of doing laundry, releases her from this task.

While Massimo’s truth-telling has created an estrangement between Rosinella and him, it has brought her to see the value of Hughie’s integrity. She has brought him to be with Lucia, though, in another theatrical image of the different culture Italy represents to these Scots, Hughie has inadvertently let himself become sunburnt. Despite this, having taken care of him, Rosinella takes him to meet Luigi who, meantime, marks his patriarchal view of the world at the opening of Act Two Scene Twelve by “*sitting at table* [. . . and not lifting] *a finger to help*”. Here, Rosinella, in what can be seen as another example—though this time to the audience’s mind more sympathetic—of her tendency to see things only through her own eyes, proposes to Luigi that Hughie and Lucia marry. This is something which, as it dawns on Luigi what is being proposed, is for him simply ridiculous. His daughter is already engaged—although, as Lady Bracknell would think proper, she has not yet been told—on the basis of property acquisition for her father. In Italy she is his familial property to be exchanged for agricultural property. In this scene, Di Mambro makes protracted use of a theatrical device she has used already, for example in Act One Scene One, of employing Scottish English in a convention whereby the audience understands that, in context, Italian would be spoken. Such a device was, of course, used to enormous effect by Brian Friel for dialogue between monolingual Irish- and English-speakers in his play, *Translations* (1980). Di Mambro employs it effectively here: theatrically we are allowed insight to a clash of cultures from which, if original languages were used, we would be excluded.

Luigi’s rebuff engulfs Rosinella and her new friend Hughie in despair. In a line nicely expressing Italian and Scot coming together, Hughie says, “You mean that’s it? Finito?” (p. 170). Then, “*stunned/but impressed*” (p. 171) by Hughie’s passion, Rosinella remembers that the convention still applies that, when she spent a night with Massimo, they would have to marry. So she arranges for Lucia and Hughie also to elope. The final scene of the play comprises this elopement, one in which Rosinella, as in her own courtship, outrages the cultural values she had spent much of the earlier part of the play praising at the expense of those, as she saw them, of her new home, Scotland. This scene marks another dimension of Di

Mambro's stagecraft, her ability to deliver her serious themes, when appropriate, with comedy. In this case, there is a mix-up as Rosinella seeks to re-enact her own elopement, which involved a ladder, in a way that is here unnecessary. She even places her ladder at the wrong window. Lucia and Hughie come out of the door while Rosinella is lost in Luigi's house. As they leave, she is lost not only in the house, but, for now, emotionally, as any mother might be on realising that to love her child she must let her or him go to live with someone else. She had come to recognise something of the truth about her own selfishness and sought to expiate the harm she had done by bringing together her foster-daughter and the man she loves. Through this, she facilitates—in her moment both of being lost in Luigi's house and of loss of her “daughter”—what she has spent most of the play striving to avoid, the merging of versions of “Italy” and “Scotland” in a new generation. Yet, in this act of loving charity and selflessness, ironically, she actually achieves the selfish end she always wanted, to bind Lucia to living near her back in Scotland.

The final image of the play involves reconciliation. Just as Act One ended with the return of Massimo after four years of internment and a moving reunion, so Act Two ends with the entry of Massimo after a period of estrangement and a moving reunion. When Massimo returns to their Italian home town, he finds Rosinella at an upper window of the kind from which he and she eloped years before. The play ends with her descending the ladder into his arms and with their emotional reunion as fiesta fireworks explode. As a *coup de theatre* this may be somewhat over-done, but this play, which is so much about loss and rediscovery, ends, as all good comedies should, with a coming together and hope for a new life in which differences are resolved in mutual accommodation. Yet Angeletti offers a cautionary qualifying word:

Despite di Mambro's happy ending, the underlying message ... is that the reconfiguring and reinvention of identity for immigrants and expatriates must necessarily involve moments of complex renegotiation with one's origins and repositioning in the new reality—a process whose goal, in a world marked by a resurgence of nationalist feelings combined with the fear of the Other, is not always easy either to identify or achieve.¹¹

One remembers that the play's title refers to a derogatory nickname given to the raspberry syrup that topped ice-cream cones sold by Italians like Massimo and Rosinella. As Di Mambro says in her *Introduction*, that prejudicial word “Tally” reflects the various racial or, at least, cultural

¹¹ Gioia Angeletti, “Performing Cross-Cultural Relations,” *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen*, 8.2 (2015): 17-18 (accessed 7 September 2017): <https://josts.ubiquitypress.com/articles/abstract/202/>.

prejudices in the play. She also points out that the blood of the title also refers to “blood ties” (p. 3), family relationships. It also relates to “bloodshed” (p. 4), the death of so many, Franco in battle, Daddy on the *Arandora Star*, and one might add, though not actual adult deaths, the living death of the time of Massimo’s internment and of the destruction of Franco’s and Bridget’s love and the loss of their baby. Yet, in the end, the play is about renouncing, or at least reimagining, old ties as one enters new relationships, which become in turn one’s own. The fact an Italo-Scot playwright could use this pejorative term as a title marks in some way a process of reconciliation, not just of the characters in the play to one another, but, through their integration into a new social reality, one of hybridity and hope for the future. As Maguire expresses it, for Rosinella, “Destabilising her sense of place and opening up new possibilities and relationships enable her to reconfigure her sense of ‘home.’”¹²

The play goes further. This destabilisation and reconfigured sense of home relates to the audience’s being brought to fresh understandings of cultural interactions within Scottish identities, negative, positive and potentially reconciliatory and integrative. Di Mambro in this drama, like such fellow Italo-Scots in their art forms as playwright Marcella Evaristi, artist Richard Demarco, and sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi, redefines the nature of the Scottish host community as it reacts to, absorbs, and is modified by the contribution of members of migrant communities. In this, its cogent structure supports a historically significant theme, concerned with the complexities and hybridities of assimilation of new migrant communities into and between host communities in a way that is more and more relevant to the multi-ethnic communities of modern Scotland. This relevance surely lies behind the fact that, while Di Mambro has over the last three decades focused her dramatic writing in televisual modes, her *Tally’s Blood* has become a central text in the study of theatre-writing in Scotland.

Kingston University

¹² Tom Maguire, “Women playwrights”, in Brown, ed., *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama*, p. 162.