

WHO ARE WE?

“ We packed our belongings in suitcases.
Hoping for a future in distant places.
We left our home and loved ones behind.
Their memory we carry in our hearts and mind.
In tears we left on a ship called Oceania,
Travelled for a month to Australia.

We arrived as aliens from far away.
So much hurt and pain, why didn't we stay?
Confused in this accursed land.
Why don't they understand?
We look and speak differently.
Have a unique culture and history.

We wanted to practice our religion.
But the church was of Irish origin.
Our religion venerated many virgins and saints.
Nuns and priests ensured Italians did not debase.
Even God was cold and indifferent here.
We prayed and petitioned but He did not hear.

We came as Italian immigrant.
Lonely, frightened and indigent.
Australia only needed factory fodder.
Fill mines and construction sites with blue collar.
Doctors and professional it did not want.
Regional, rural people from Italy it got.

Just good for factory labour.
Low wages, hard work and danger.
People who work long and quick.
Callused hands were not required to think.
Work horses from the immigration.
Must build infrastructure and irrigation.

All for the new white Australia superior.
The order was to assimilate but stay inferior.
Italians almost last on the social ladder.
Wogs and dagos did not matter.
We worked hard and diligent.
Understand we are not ignorant.

When can we integrate and be accepted?
We know our English is poor and accented.
Perhaps the next generation will do better.
It will be active in Australia without fetter.
Our youth will speak proper English
They will be professional and not languish.

We endured many lonely hurts and pain.
To build a new home and here remain.
It was difficult for the first migrants to do all.
But their children will achieve and stand tall.
Mate, we are Italo- Australian and ought be proud.
Noi siamo Italiani, what a nostalgic sound!”